CRISIS OF THE OBJECT

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ATRICALITY

Gevork Hartoonian

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OF THE
OBJECT

CRISIS OF THE OBJECT discusses the theoretical issues pertinent to the historicization of contemporary architectural praxis. Providing a critical analysis of three important contemporary architects; Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry and Bernard Tschumi, it demonstrates the complexities involved in architecture's adaptation to media technologies and the ways the aesthetic of theatricality plays a critical role when architecture has to rethink themes such as roofing and wrapping. The text historicizes contemporary architecture in the light of the ongoing secularization of myths surrounding the traditions of nineteenth-century architecture, in general, and Gottfried Semper's discourse on the tectonic, in particular.

The main chapters of the book present a thorough analysis of the well-known buildings of Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry and Bernard Tschumi and explore the traces of modernism in their work: formalism in Eisenman, 'objectivity' in Tschumi, and regionalism in the early work of Gehry. The final chapter extends the discussion to cover the work of many other contemporary architects including Steven Holl and Renzo Piano.

This book is an important contribution to current debates surrounding architectural theory and raises important questions concerning the state of architecture in the new millennium.

GEVORK HARTOONIAN is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Canberra. His work has been widely published in international journals of architecture.

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Gevork Hartoonian

CRISIS OF THE OBJECT

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THEATRICALITY

LONDON AND NEW YORK

TO SHAOWEN AND FOR MY FRIENDS

CONTENTS

ix List of illustrations
xiii Foreword by Kenneth Frampton
xvii Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1
1 The crisis of the object

CHAPTER 2
31 Theatricality: the structure of tectonic

CHAPTER 3
45 Peter Eisenman: in search of degree zero architecture

CHAPTER 4
72 Bernard Tschumi: return of the object

CHAPTER 5
104 Frank Gehry: roofing, wrapping and wrapping the roof

CHAPTER 6
133 Surface: the atectonic of roofing and wrapping

157 Notes
193 Index

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1 Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion, 1929. Photograph by author.

1.2 Eugène E. Viollet le Duc, project for a concert hall, 1866, from Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, no. 2.25, p. 53.

1.3 Henry Labrouste, Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève, Paris, 1838–50. Reading Room. Photograph courtesy of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

1.4 August Perret, 25 bis rue Franklin, Paris, 1902–04. Photograph by author.

1.5 Peter Behrens, AEG Turbine Factory, Berlin 1908–9. From Joseph August Lux, ***Ingenieur Aesthetik*** (Munich, 1910).

3.1 Peter Eisenman, House II, 1969–70. Photograph courtesy of Peter Eisenman Architects, New York.

3.2 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Photograph by author.

3.3 Peter Eisenman, Aronoff Center for Design and Art, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1988–96. Photograph by author.

3.4 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center for the Visual Arts and Fine Arts Library, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1983–89. Exterior view of the tower. Photograph by author.

3.5 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center, 1983–89. Exterior view of the grid. Photograph by author.

3.6 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center, 1983–89. Interior stairs. Photograph by author.

3.7 Peter Eisenman, Fire station, Brooklyn, New York, 1985. Photograph courtesy of Eisenman, Robertson Architects.

3.8 Carlo Scarpa, Banca Popolare di Verona, Italy, 1973. Photograph by author.

3.9 Carlo Scarpa, Olivetti Shop, Venice, Italy, 1957–58. Photograph by author.

3.10 Carlo Scarpa, the Brion Cemetery, Italy, 1967–78. View of the pavilion and "propylaea". Photograph by author.

3.11/3.12 Alvaro Siza, the Museum of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1988–93. Photograph courtesy of Harry Margalite.

3.13 Peter Eisenman, Aronoff Center, Ohio, 1988–96. Main entrance. Photograph by author.

3.14 Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Photograph by author.

3.15 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Photograph by author.
3.16 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Aerial view. Photograph by author.
3.17 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Street elevation. Photograph by author.
3.18 Peter Eisenman, City of Culture of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. 1999 (in progress). Photograph courtesy of Eisenman Architects, New York.
4.1 Parc de la Villette competition entry, 1976. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York.
4.2 Cannaregio Project, 1978. Plan. Courtesy of Peter Eisenman Architects, New York.
4.3 Parc de la Villette, 1982. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York.
4.4 Parc de la Villette. Folie. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York. Photograph by J.M. Monthiers.
4.5 Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, Tourcoing, France, 1991–97. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York. Photograph by Peter Mauss.
4.6 Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97. Plan. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York.
4.7 Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York. Photograph by Peter Mauss.
4.8 Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts. Section drawing. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York.
4.9 Louis Kahn, Richards Medical Laboratories, Philadelphia. Photograph by author.
4.10 Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97. Photograph by author.
4.11 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.12 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. View from Broadway Street. Photograph by author.
4.13 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.14 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.15 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.16 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.17 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.18 Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. Photograph by author.
4.19 Zenith de Rouen. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York, 1998–2001. Photograph by Peter Mauss.
4.20 Zenith de Rouen. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York, 1998–2001. Photograph by Peter Mauss.
4.21 Athletic Center, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001–. Image courtesy of Bernard Tschumi, New York.

5.1 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1998–. Model. Photograph Wit Preston. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.2 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Entry plaza. Photograph by author.

5.3 Frank Gehry, Central Business District Project, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1981. Drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.4 Frank Gehry, Fishdance Restaurant, Kobe, Japan, 1986–87. Drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.5 Frank Gehry, Steeves Residence, Brentwood, California, 1958–59. Plan. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.6 Frank L. Wright, Robie House, Chicago, 1909. Main view. Photograph by author.

5.7 Frank Gehry, Steeves Residence, Brentwood, California, 1958–59. Bird's-eye view. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.8 Frank Gehry, Davis Studio and Residence, Malibu, California, 1962–72. Photograph courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.9 Frank Gehry, Davis Studio and Residence, Malibu, California, 1962–72. Interior view. Photograph courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.10 R. M. Schindler, DeKeyser House, Los Angeles, California, 1935. Overall view. Photograph by Grand Mudford.

5.11 Frank Gehry, Gehry's Residence, Santa Monica, California, 1977–78. Exterior view. Photograph courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.12 Frank Gehry, Winton Guest House, Wayazata, Minnesota, 1982–87. Plan. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.13 Frank Gehry, Winton Guest House, Wayazata, Minnesota, 1982–87. Model. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.14 Frank Gehry, California Aerospace Museum, Los Angeles, 1982–84. Section drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.15 Egyptian Temple of Edfu. From J. Gardner Wilkinson, ***The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians***, 1837.

5.16 Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California, 1997–2003. Entrance view. Photograph by author.

5.17 Frank Gehry, Vitra International Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1987–89. Elevation drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.18 Frank Gehry, Fishdance Restaurant, Kobe, Japan, 1986–87. Photograph courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.19 Frank Gehry, Vila Olimpia, Barcelona, Spain, 1989–92. Photograph courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.20 Frank Gehry, Jung Institute, project, 1976. Perspective drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.21 Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California, 1997–2003. Floor plan. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.22 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Computer drawing of steel structure. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

5.23 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Entrance view. Photograph by author.

5.24 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. View from the adjacent bridge. Photograph by author.

5.25 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Three-dimensional rendering of steel structure. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

6.1 Steven Holl, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland, 1992–98. General view. Photograph by Paul Warchol.

6.2 Steven Holl, Bellevue Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, 1997–2001. View from southwest. Photograph by Paul Warchol

6.3 Steven Holl, Chapel of St Ignatius, Seattle, Washington, 1994–97. Main entrance. Photograph by author.

6.4 Steven Holl, Chapel of St Ignatius, Seattle, Washington, 1994–97. Detail. Photograph by author.

6.5 Steven Holl, Museum of Human Evolution, Burgos, Spain, 2000. Second floor plan. Drawing courtesy of Steven Holl, Architects.

6.6 Jean Nouvel, Conference Centre in Lucerne, 1992–2000. Photograph by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Ateliers Jean Nouvel.

6.7 Renzo Piano, Foundation Beyeler, Riehn, 1994–97. Photograph courtesy of Renzo Piano's Workshop, Italy.

6.8 Renzo Piano, Foundation Beyeler, Riehn, 1994–97. Aerial view. Photograph by Niggi Brauning.

6.9 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999. Diagram drawing. Image courtesy of Eisenman Architects, New York.

6.10 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999. Interior space. Image courtesy of Eisenman Architects, New York.

6.11 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999. Image courtesy of Eisenman Architects, New York.

FOREWORD BY **KENNETH FRAMPTON**

DEPARTING FROM GOTTFRIED SEMPER'S concept of theatricality in architecture, this is a remarkably original and insightful thesis that prompts one to make a more measured assessment of the spectacular triumph of today's neo-avant-garde architects. Grounded a century and a half earlier in the ethnographic worldview of Gustav Klemm and Karl Botticher, Semper sought to transcend his own *faux de mieux* involvement with the Neo-Renaissance architecture of the nineteenth century by insisting on the cosmogonic basis of all culture, particularly as this had been made manifest in the past through the agency of ritual in relation to the framework provided by architecture. Bypassing the prestige that the bourgeoisie of his time accorded to figurative art, Semper argued that architecture was inherently closer to the rhythmically erotic discourses of music, dance and weaving than it was to the representational arts of painting and sculpture. Like Karl Friedrich Schinkel before him and Otto Wagner after him, Semper emphasized the crucial import of *Bekleidung* (dressing) in the modulation of architecture in order for its tectonic presence to be imbued with an appropriately symbolic aura. This led him to privilege the oscillation between *revealing* and *concealing*; the play, that is, between the mask and the face, although this was not to be regarded as a simplistic subterfuge since, as he put it, "masking does not help however when behind the mask the thing is false."

Hartoonian sees the relatively recent shift of expressive emphasis onto the building surface as a spontaneous if paradoxical attempt to overcome the nihilism of technology, particularly as this has become overwhelmingly omnipresent through the universal impact of the media. In order to illustrate this, at the outset of his essay he makes the case that the folded character of

Frank Gehry's architecture may be justly seen, however unconscious this may be, as a metaphor for the fluidity of globalized, international capital. Like other biomorphic projections in contemporary architecture, Gehry's anti-cosmogonic approach intends through its disjunctively plastic orientation, a seductive *mirage* rather than the condensation of a worldview. In this regard one could say that his work is indulgently predicated on Arnold Gehlen's concept of the "bad infinite," that is to say on the perpetuation of processal aesthetic form as an end in itself.

Against this, inspired by Semper, Hartoonian focuses our attention on the original avant-gardist practice of *montage* as a stratagem that in its constructivist origins was equally present in film and architecture; both of these expressive modes being equally dependent on the idea of the joint versus the seam and on the play of the *cut* and the *suture* in relation to the continuity of either the *take* in film or the *shape* in the case of architecture. In this regard the author is particularly appreciative of the role that the cut plays in sharply articulating the work of Steven Holl as opposed to the virtually unbroken continuity of the plastic surface in the work of such architects as Greg Lynn and Zaha Hadid.

Hartoonian maintains that the act of montage is inseparable from the perfection of structural technique and again taking his cue from Semper he cites him to the effect that "only by complete technical perfection, by judicious and proper treatment of material can the material be forgotten." Montage is never more present in this respect than in the generic opposition between the *roofwork* and the *earthwork* as we find this exemplified in the architecture of Jorn Utzon or in the occasional piece from the hand of Renzo Piano, as in his Beyeler Museum at Riehen, near Basel of 1997. This is exactly the kind of traditional articulation that tends to be repudiated by the neo-avant-garde despite its emerging penchant for topography.

It is significant that in treating Gehry the author is obliged to focus on the process of *wrapping* as distinct from *dressing* in an effort to arrive at a comparable critical articulation. He points out that Gehry's architecture is *dressed up* as opposed to being clad in such a way as to bring out the symbolic significance of its tectonic form. Clearly Gehry's work is so freely plastic in character that such a discourse between the *core form* and the *art form* cannot even arise, and it is just this excessive fluidity that causes Hartoonian to distinguish between Semper's architecture of theatricality and today's

theatricalization of architecture which in favoring the spectacular as the immediate gratification of fetishistic desire (see Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*) offers nothing beyond the aestheticized mirage by which the subject, to coin T.S. Eliot's memorable phrase is to be "distracted from distraction by distraction." For Hartoonian Semper's theatricality subsumes Walter Benjamin's concept of the "dream image" as we find this, for example, in the fire curtain perspective of Schinkel's Schauspielhaus in Berlin or in the equally famous rendering of the panorama of this city as viewed from the peristyle of the Altes Museum; Schinkel's *mise en scene* for a future city or nation state that today is as inconceivable as it is undesirable.

Hartoonian is by no means unappreciative of the critically creative achievements of the American neo-avant-garde, particularly as represented by the separate careers of Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi and Frank Gehry, and salient works by each of these architects are systematically analyzed in the second half of the book. The author begins this procedure by observing the way in which Eisenman's elaborate, ever-changing theoretical position has obliged his critics to evaluate his work in terms that he himself has established and to a large degree this also obtains in the case of Tschumi. Eisenman's lifelong attempt to escape from the Humanism that he inherited from Rudolf Wittkower via Colin Rowe is still the ultimate reference by which he judges the validity and rigor of his own syntactical inventions. In Eisenman's case the theatricalization of architecture attains one of its most condensed expressions in the Wexner Center, Columbus, Ohio of 1989, where a fictitious column, cut off halfway through its descent from a beam above, is poised ominously over a staircase. This typical Eisenmanian disjunction distinguishes his work from that of Tschumi for whom corporeal movement is the prime mover of a different kind of theatricalized architecture based on the expression of circulation as an end in itself. Despite such differences both Eisenman and Tschumi repudiate to an equal degree the possibility of there being any kind of valid cosmogonic content in the architectural form of the twenty-first century.

In the last analysis for Hartoonian the crisis of the object to which this essay is dedicated stems from the inherently spectacular assumption that once the basic functions have been met, a work of architecture is nothing other than a work of abstract art writ large. Gehry speaks directly to this when he refers to his architecture as expressing feelings directly unimpeded by either technique or function. Given the work of the neo-avant-garde as represented

and analyzed in this essay there is little if any feeling for the potential of architecture to function as “a space of public appearance” in the Arendtian sense of the term. To the extent that such a space is quintessentially a microcosmos to be consummated by the ritual of democracy, it clearly pertains to the Semperian concept of an architecture of theatricality as opposed to the theatricalization of architecture, which today is both the triumph and the fate of the neo-avant-garde, despite all the brilliant exuberance that has attended its emeregence and guaranteed, as it were, its worldly success.

Kenneth Frampton,
Ware Professor of Architecture, Columbia University

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CHAPTER 1
THE CRISIS OF THE OBJECT

> **We belong to the future. We must put ourselves into it, each one at his situation. We must not plant ourselves against the new and attempt to retain a beautiful world, one that must perish. Nor must we try to build, with creative fantasy, a new one that claims to be immune to the ravages of becoming. We have to formulate the recent. But that we can only do if we say yes to it; yet with incompatible heart we have to retain our awareness of all that is destructive and inhuman in it. Our time is given to us as a soil on which we stand, as a task that we have to master.**
>
> – Romano Guardini

THESE WORDS OF ROMANO GUARDINI have not lost their allure even today at the dawn of this new century.[1] Like many other thinkers of his time, Guardini seemingly addresses the sensitive issue of cultural heritage and the ways its foundation should be shaken and readjusted according to the demands of the “present”. Contemporary history is full of instances of architects’ attempts to rethink architecture in the context of socio-cultural and technical imperatives of modernity. From the 1914 debate of the Werkbund, concerning architecture of *Sachlichkeit,* to Peter Eisenman’s advocacy for the “Futility of Objects”,[2]

architecture is relentlessly reformulating itself according to formal and contextual factors. It is the intention of this volume to discuss the theoretical issues pertinent to the crisis of the object, thus historicizing contemporary architectural praxis. Of interest is the thematic shift from construction to surface, a subject central to the advocates of the international style architecture, but more important is the current turn to "surface", despite or because of the proliferation of media technologies. The project's importance has to do with the early modernist infatuation with the machine, but also with the fact that it is not the image of machine any more but the very *technique* itself that determines the processes of design and perhaps the final form of architecture. In spite, or perhaps because of the crisis of the object, a comprehensive understanding of the present state of architecture demands a rethinking of the thematic of the disciplinary history of architecture. Central to the objectives of this book is Gottfried Semper's discourse on theatricality and its theoretical potentiality in offering a different interpretation of the dialogue between construction and "expression" that permeates contemporary architecture.

The title of this introduction recalls André Breton's text, "The Crisis of the Object", published in 1932.[3] Against the early modernists' intention to transform artifacts according to the vicissitudes of technology, Breton and other surrealists presented a project of reconstitution of the object that in one way or another would problematize the total and smooth transformation of the traditional object into the "new". Their project also differed from the romantic nostalgic yearning for craftsmanship and the desire to defuse the drive of mechanization that was shaking the ethics and moralities with which the guild system was imbued. The weight of the antinomies of modernity did indeed haunt the architectural tendencies permeating both the Bauhaus School, and the work of architects like Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos, to mention two figures among a few others, whose view of the crisis of the object remained peripheral to the mainstream of the Bauhaus.

The impact of technology on art and architecture is a complex one. Mechanization and industrial production posed problems for artistic activity that had no precedent in works of art created under a pre-industrial production system. The history of the Werkbund School in Germany, the decorative arts in France, and the arts and crafts movement in England demonstrate the complex and manifold issues involved with the phenomenon of the crisis of the object. To sustain a reasonable trade balance around the turn of the last

century, each industrialized nation had to have an answer for the questions of how to reorganize a system of apprenticeship appropriate to the new educational institutions, or how to accommodate design skills developed in the old guilds to the needs and technical skills imposed by the industrial production system, and, more importantly, how "to resolve the conflict of interest between artists and manufacturers.[4]" And yet, if we broaden the scope of industrialization beyond the Romantics and their legitimate concern for the dehumanization brought about by mechanization, then the relationship between style and production is another issue that should be attributed to the socio-technical difficulties caused by the abolition of the guilds.[5] Many groups involved in the production of industrial commodities had no choice but to collaborate with each other within the newly established institutions. In spite or because of this development, the question concerning the crisis of the object retained its own momentum for the reason that architecture exercises a complex relationship both with its own disciplinary history, and with the technical and programmatic needs unleashed by modernization.

Most European architects, in one way or another, participated in the debate for the New Objectivity, i.e. the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.[6] The early modernists sought to dress both the interior space and the exterior body of architecture with a garment that was cut according to the aesthetics of abstraction; a plain form devoid of any ornamentation.[7] Le Corbusier even proposed a new vision of the city to rise above the ashes of the old one. Others, like Mondrian and the de Stijl group, saw that the time was ripe for the integration of architecture with painting and the city. Central to understanding these artists and architects is the idea of total design, one implication of which was to make homologies between private and public spaces. Another was to see the project of modernity embodying ideas and visions that framed ensembles unaccessible to the horizons experienced in pre-modern life-world. One might go further and suggest that even Loos's dichotomy between interior and exterior spaces, and his belief that only tombs and monuments deserve the name architecture, were indeed his way of endorsing the nihilism of technology, and the need for a different concept of objectivity.[8]

Modernization forced architects and historians to respond to the unfolding conflict between what, after Fritz Neumeyer's reading of Otto Wagner's architecture,[9] might be called the "culture of stone" and the rising spatial and visual sensibilities invigorated by steel and glass structures. What some

historians have termed "realist architecture"[10] is a reference to the theoretical transformations brought about in response to the situation wrought by the techniques of industrialization, but also Semper's discourse on monument, ornament and the tectonic. Equally important was another nineteenth-century German architect, Carl Botticher, and his observation that the spatial potentialities of the so-called "stone culture" were exhausted, and thus the need for architects to explore the artistic and spatial potentialities vested in new structural materials like iron.[11] The abstract forms of the International Style formulated around the 1930s nullified the dialectical synthesis of tradition and modernity expressed in the realist architecture. Again, the date recalls Breton's article and the surrealists' refusal to see and construct the object merely in terms of the organic or mechanistic paradigms at work since the modernization of the production process.[12] But were there equivalent developments taking place in architecture?

Again, Loos's architecture comes to mind. His work, unlike the abstract and homogeneous white architecture of the International Style, brings together the architectonic experience of the vernacular, modern and even classical traditions, presenting a work that is not uniform but hybrid. Equally important is Loos's criticism of the Bauhaus's blind reliance on technology, and the school's theoretical shortcomings in making a distinction between the objet d'art and the utilitarian object. While this aspect of his work demonstrates the gap separating Loos from the avant-garde, it does not suggest that there is no place for tradition in Le Corbusier's architecture: it is rather the level of abstraction involved in his early work that is in question. Loos's simultaneous esteem for tradition and modernity presents a vision of objectivity in which technology does not reduce the object to its mirror image; it rather helps to save the claim of the past, i.e. the culture of building, without denying the usefulness of modern technology. When this is established, then one might propose the centrality of the concept of montage in architecture whose use and implications differ from those of film and the work of surrealists. There is another reason for introducing the concept of montage: it recalls Walter Benjamin's idea of the "wish-images" which, as will be demonstrated shortly, was instrumental in understanding the shortcomings of the project of surrealism and the esteem for *Sachlichkeit*.

That the concept of montage was instrumental in modernism is obvious. What needs to be addressed here is the role montage might play when the

act of representation is informed by images of a technical nature. The proliferation of computer technologies has shifted the interest of architects from the tectonic of the final product to its surface. For many, the early modernists' concern for the impact of industrial building techniques on architecture is no longer a formative theme. This line of thinking is supported by the belief that the building industry, especially in America, has been unable to introduce new materials and techniques, thus the impossibility of changing the "image" of architecture beyond that of modernism. From this point of view, the use of glass, steel and even new synthetic materials in the architecture of the past two decades has not pushed the tectonic thinking beyond what the Dom-ino frame has to offer.[13] By modifying existing techniques, however, the building industry is slowly accommodating its products and techniques to the architects' esteem for virtual images. Thus we observe the moment of departure from the postmodern concept of both–and, and architecture's entry into the world of spectacle, i.e. theatricalization, the expressionistic forms of which can be associated with the virtual fluidity of capital and the information industries as capital achieves global domination.

A brief examination of the most celebrated architectural work supports the claim that, for some, the architectural form has little to do with poetic articulation. What is obvious today is an aesthetic form whose animated body can be associated with Benjamin's idea of the phantasmagoria, or the aesthetic of what Karl Marx termed commodity fetishism.[14] This development undermines the object's connection with the craft of building. Others have gone further, claiming that a Baudrillardian concern for simulacra is no longer even a critical issue.[15] Still, a few would consider concepts such as model, type or the machine relevant to contemporary architectural praxis. This line of thinking has been pushed to extremes by theoreticians and architects such as Bernard Cache, for example, who believes that "the design of the object is no longer subordinated to mechanical geometry; it is the machine that is directly integrated into the technology of a synthetical image".[16] Most recently, the discussion has shifted in favour of "digital tectonics",[17] which reduces the dialogue between structure and dressing to that of surface effect. The common thread running through these theoretical developments is that instead of emphasizing the thematic of the disciplinary history of architecture, i.e. the culture of building, what informs the index of the architectural object today is the marriage between a couple of philosophical concepts and the computer-generated form.

The infiltration of computer technology into the various spheres of production and consumption has also left its mark on architectural education. Paperless design, or virtual design studio, practised in many schools of architecture, offers a way of seeing and conceptualizing architecture that is nothing more than a series of truncated perspectives comparable to those of video games. Digital techniques can be used to generate an ideal image of the object that is independent of the specific site conditions and the forces of gravity. Such an image is an abstract floating object that suspends orientation and dispenses with the need to articulate form by reference to the idea of frontality or by part-to-whole techniques of composition. Challenging the basics of the classical vision of the object, telecommunication technologies offer a vista in which “play” performs a critical role. Computer-aided design also provides a level of formal exploration that is not available in traditional drafting techniques. Explosion of the object has ended in a truncated spatial labyrinth that ironically sustains the very basics of the perspectival regime, the Cartesian grid system. Virtual architecture gets around the “thingness” of architecture, reducing the latter to a cinematic experience, though experienced through a “paperless” frame.

The accommodation of architecture to the nihilism of technology has opened a new chapter in the book of the crisis of architecture written since the Renaissance. However, the current rush to absorb technology into every facet of culture does not allow for the ideology of postmodernism, which has to sell its architectural vision as an indicator of progress. The question to ask is whether the present esteem for technology has learned its lessons from the modernists’ understanding of the *Zeitgeist*. It is equally important to ask whether the modernists’ theorization, aiming at a uniform response to the spirit of the time, did not eliminate the possibility of linguistic difference. Paradoxically, present architectural praxis is over-determined by the very infusion of the *Zeitgeist* with linguistic multiplicity. Any attempt to answer these questions necessitates, in the first place, an investigation into the historicity of the crisis of the object.

THE MATERIAL OF TECHNIQUE

Written in 1935, Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", discusses the impact of technology on human perception, a subject already touched on by Heinrich Wolfflin, Alois Riegl and a number of other German scholars.[18] Presenting the case of montage in film, Benjamin articulated the idea of "wish-images" in conjunction with the loss of aura; that is, the magical and ritualistic origin of the work of art where space and time are intermingled, and where a harmony between the desire of the subject and the skill of the hand prevails. On another occasion, Benjamin describes the idea of aura in the following words: "in a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or resemblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be. While resting on a summer's noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour becomes part of their appearance – that is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains."[19] Juxtaposing impressions such as "the unique appearance or resemblance of distance" and "resting on a summer's noon", Benjamin presents the idea of wish-images by way of analogy to the moment of awakening when it is difficult to distinguish between dream and reality. The wish-images have no task except to radicalize the moment of awakening. This was a project where, according to Benjamin, the surrealists came short of its full realization, and their work thus remained in a state of intoxication. One might speculate that the idea of wish-images also concerns a state of mind that is purged from historicism: "In the dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch which is to succeed it", the latter, according to Benjamin, "appears coupled with elements of prehistory – that is to say of a classless society".[20] Distancing himself from historicism, and discussing architecture in reference to the work's tactile and optical dimensions, Benjamin's position both benefits and departs from the discursive horizon of art-history, and the Bauhaus interest in the New Objectivity.

Benjamin's position is important because his discourse on historical material alludes to a shift from individual to collective experience of a past that is not necessarily embedded in high art. It rather rests in anonymous works and in the detail.[21] Reflecting on both Semper and Alois Riegl's interest in applied arts and ornament,[22] Benjamin underlined the importance of the principle of montage as a means to "build up the large constructions out of the smallest, precisely fashioned structural elements. Indeed to detect the

crystal of the total event in the analysis of the small, individual moment."[23] While high art reinforces autonomy, the "insignificant" is apprehended through recollection and involuntary memory of the collective experience. For Benjamin, the point was not to reiterate those moments of the bygone past, but to underline their function for the intelligibility of the work of art and to comprehend their redemptive power in the light of what is "recent". To see the archaic in the latest technologies, as Benjamin suggests, shows a strategic position that questions the linear idea of progress without dismissing the radical potentialities of the new. What makes Benjamin relevant to the main subject of this book, however, is his insightful approach to the role of technique in modern art. Equally important is his method, delivering a strategy of criticism unavailable to most critics and historians writing before the post-war era. The importance of "construction" in Benjamin's œuvre is paramount. An attempt is made in this book to address "construction" within a theoretical paradigm that juxtaposes Benjamin's discourse on the exhibition value of art and Semper's notion of theatricality.[24]

Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", is important on another front: it maps the vicissitudes of the crisis of the object in modernity. Towards the end of the essay Benjamin reflects on architecture, though without providing a detailed discussion of the impact of technology on architecture. Benjamin's belief that buildings are appropriated by habit and tactile experience addresses the complexities involved in the idea of the crisis of the object. For Benjamin, architecture provides a model of reception comparable to film where "the distracted mass absorbs the work of art". This aspect of film "is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collective in a state of distraction."[25] Two conclusions should be drawn from Benjamin's observation. First, the most enduring elements of architecture are those that embrace both the constructive and aesthetic aspects of form. This is not to suggest that the historically received forms and typologies should be imitated as if they were written rules. Rather, these formal structures should be recoded by the "handing over" of architectural traditions to the process of modernization. Typological studies, for example, are still valid subjects of research if "type" is considered a spatial construct like "corridor", where use and the logic of making are fused into the form of a corridor. This understanding of type does

not equate it with the ossified forms of the classical language of architecture. An argument can be advanced to suggest that central to the re-articulation of the relationship between seeing and making are the memory and habits that are "glued" to a particular type. Second, the optical side of architecture is not limited merely to what a building represents, symbolically or otherwise. For Benjamin, "habit determines to a large extent even optical reception". The priority given to habit over optics recalls Loos's belief that architecture "arouses feelings in people. The task of the architect is, therefore, to define what the feelings should be."[26] But, if the habits are not permanent, then how should Loos's statement be reapproached in the light of distractions generated by film and other forms of art that are, in one way or another, conceived within the perceptual horizon opened by the process of mechanical reproduction? More importantly, how should one evaluate Benjamin's belief that after the loss of aura, the work of art seizes every opportunity to release its exhibitionist value?; an aesthetic sensibility that is formative for the present state of the crisis of the object. From fashion to videotapes, every cultural product of late capitalism stresses the exhibition value of the work. This is true even of architecture, where distraction finds its architectonic form in the fragmentation and juxtaposition of dreamlike forms with familiar tectonics that can be mistaken for Semper's discourse on theatricality.

At this point it is worth speculating that the distraction Benjamin attributed to modern technology is also applicable to Semper's definition of the tectonic. For Semper, the tectonic is a cosmic art in which the art-form relates to the core-form in "a *structural-symbolic* rather than in a *structural-technical* sense".[27] The perceived duality in the tectonic attests not only to the in-between state of architecture (compared to the opposition between art and craft), but also marks a departure from the classical *techne*. Central to the Greek understanding of making is the artistic will to sustain a homology between the technical, symbolic and aesthetic aspects of architecture. What is involved here is the possibility of radicalizing Semper's theory further. One way of advancing it would be to say that after the mechanical reproduction of art, and faced with the contemporary drive for fragmentation, the tectonic should stress the fact that the perceived spatial envelope is, literally, a fabrication: it is a falsehood. When this is established, then the question to ask would be the following: how and to what end is it useful to advance an argument making a distinction between atectonic and tectonic?[28]

The distinction between what is essential to architecture and what is excessive or ornamental was not grounded until the functional-rationalists' attempt to separate these architectonic elements from each other.[29] Leon Battista Alberti, for one, saw the relationship between the column and the wall differently. He treated these architectonic elements more like grammatical entities whose particular juxtaposition would connote certain meanings embedded in the metaphysics of humanism. Mies's architecture, to mention just one contemporary example, entertained instead the "structural symbolic" dimension of the column and the wall, and the way these elements wrap and disclose the space where the tectonic, regardless of the building's function, marks a departure from the totalizing content of *techne*. Any clarification of "structural symbolic" requires a discussion of *techne* in the first place.

The Greek word for technology, *techne*, connotes the art of making that is fundamental to every activity involved in cultural production. The architectonic implication of *techne* is present in the Vitruvian triad of *firmitas*, *venustas* and *utilitas.* The triad characterizes the Greek understanding of an object in the most general connotation of the word. In the Renaissance reading of Vitruvius, however, *techne* was imbued with the values of a culture where "resemblance" was a formative theme.[30] In this context, architecture functioned as a symbol of mediation between the life-world and the mythologies of the divine forces. First, during the Renaissance, a transparent maze surrounded the object through which the masses could perceive something beyond the immediate usefulness of artifacts. Like every icon of Christianity, the object was made to last, and by its very durability it also endorsed the permanence of the world cherished by Christianity. Second, the suggested perception of transparency alludes to the homology that connects the desire of a craftsperson, and the product of that person's skills. These qualities of the object were dramatized by a perspectival regime, the visual cone of which clothed, metaphorically, the durable integrity of an object with the fabric of Christian morality. Thus, for a long time, art and architecture would not possess any meaning that was not bathed in the cultural changes wrought by Christianity. We are reminded of the importance of centrality of the cruciform that permeated the design of Renaissance churches. Nevertheless, since the Renaissance, the constructive content of *techne* has been diminished and the word's connotation is reduced to mere intellectual practice, perpetuating the notion of architecture as style building, with a compositional character similar to that of language.

This brief historical detour is not meant as a lament for the bygone past. Even Martin Heidegger's recourse to *techne* was not a nostalgic yearning for the Greek way of seeing and making. The nihilism of technology is understood by recalling *techne,* and by demonstrating the potential embedded in technology if the metaphysics are brushed aside. The loss of aura, and the separation of art from technique are historical; thus, today, art and architecture cannot avoid the importance of technique. Therefore, the duality in Semper's tectonic is historical, and yet his discourse on the subject hinges on the dialectic between the core-form and the art-form. The tectonic speaks of the materiality of form, construction and purpose. One implication of this is that the tectonic has the potential to represent values that have no direct connection with the logos of construction,[31] meaning that, if "purpose" is reduced merely to representing values extraneous to those emanating from construction, then the line between atectonic and tectonic is blurred and architecture is relegated to the realm of the scenographic.

The implied hinge, or joint in Semper's tectonic, is suggestive of presenting montage as a mode of making that relates architecture to the experience of film.[32] This association can be articulated differently from Benjamin's association of film with architecture. Consider this: the etymology of the word tectonic goes back to *tekton,* signifying a carpenter.[33] In addition to Semper's emphasis on the essential experience of carpentry for architecture, most traditional builders were good carpenters in the first place.[34] There is no doubt that film and carpentry are two unrelated professions; however, one might speculate that filming and carpentry are engaged with raw materials, and the fragmented processes involved in the preparation of the various frames and dramatizations of these cuts through montage and visual effects recollect some archaic moments of making that are essential to joinery. A carpenter, too, makes each part of an object separately; a process that sometimes is carried even to the last stage of the object's artistic embellishment. Only when all the cuts have been prepared are the fragmentary pieces assembled together by means of joints, moulds and reveals. What makes the analogy between film and carpentry interesting has to do with the fact that in these two *métiers,* technique and artistic embellishment, are connected, though serving different purposes: Film is a non-objective entity whose virtual nature has leaked into every facet of today's life-world. In contrast, a work of carpentry is a "thing" that occupies space,

as does the body, and its products have been good companions to the body in more ways than one.

Kasimir Malevich once said that "a chair, bed and table are not matters of utility but rather, the forms taken by plastic sensations, so the generally-held view that all objects of daily use result from practical considerations is upon false premises".[35] Like weaving and ceramics, carpentry enjoys an ontological bond with the body. More importantly, the aesthetic and technical skills invested in film and joinery are appreciated by the masses through habit and use. And yet, in both montage and the tectonic, technique is embellished through artistic means without reducing one to the other. If the concept of montage is emptied of its artistic dimension, then film is nothing but technical reproduction. Likewise, the tectonic cannot avoid the above-mentioned hinge; that is to say, a chosen structural system imposes certain limitations on artistic embellishment of the constructed form. Mies's Barcelona Pavilion, for example, is erected on a regular steel frame structure. The final form, however, appears to be made of horizontal and vertical planes sustaining the tectonic dialogue between the column and the wall. Furthermore, the implied duality in the tectonic alludes to the historical fact that by the nineteenth century, *techne* could not continue its classical poetics. Both the subjective and objective transformations of the time necessitated an architecture whose complexities are worth examining through the idea of wish-images.

1.1 Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavilion, 1929.

WISH-IMAGES: THEN AND NOW

Again, since the Renaissance and through various re-interpretations of classical idioms, architecture had to wait until the early nineteenth century to think of itself as architecture. The century's loud yearning for style alludes to the disintegration of *techne* and architecture's desire for autonomy. The fact that the century's best architecture made room to juxtapose a masonry construction-system with iron-made structural elements should be considered positive. It was a step towards the deconstruction of the metaphysics of *techne,* a transformation that made both Romantics and the academicians of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts uncomfortable. According to Neil Levine, "the dematerialization of structure and abstraction of space that has come to characterize modern architecture, along with the consequent transparency of surface and reflexive relationship between exterior and interior, or container and contained, has its sources in that particular object of 19th-century mechanomorphism celebrated by Hugo". And he concludes that, this "allowed architecture to break out of the confines of classicism. . .".[36] There were moments in architectural history that are critical for the main theme of this introduction, i.e. an examination of the result of the association of the idea of the wish-images with the idea of theatricality.

Apart from arcades, other building types illustrate Benjamin's idea of wish-images. Not every building of the nineteenth century was conceived in the image of Classical or Gothic architecture. Many architects attempted to reinterpret the culture of building with an eye to what was going on in the technical field and to the values produced by modernization. Consider the tectonic qualities of the visionary projects proposed by Viollet le Duc. In the interior of what seems to be a concert hall the stone is cut, not to receive another piece of stone, but to allow for the insertion of a structural iron bar. The structural network covering the central space weaves together steel and stone, presenting a structural image that provides a links between the memory of the Gothic ribbed vault and the as yet unborn space-frame structure of Buckminster Fuller.

Viollet le Duc's architectonic montage was also at work in Henri Labrouste's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève. In the main reading room of the library, the stone pedestals provide a base for iron columns that are shaped and detailed to simulate the flutes used in classical stone columns. More dramatic, as far as the idea of wish-images is concerned, are the cast-iron arches

1.2 Eugène E. Viollet le Duc, project for a concert hall, 1866.

1.3 Henry Labrouste, Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève, Paris, 1838–50. Reading Room.

of the main reading room. The exposed truss of these arches juxtaposes structural logic with a classical sense of ornamentation: like a burdened row of leaves forming a cyma and abacus, the floral forms, cut out of the fabric of the truss, are meant to increase the inertia of iron. Kenneth Frampton observes that "Labrouste strove for a consistent tectonic expression, one in which the ornamentation would be derived directly from the process of construction."[37] And Robin Middleton notes that, besides their utilitarian use, iron was employed for symbolic reasons. According to Middleton, Labrouste "aimed not just at making evident the structural system, but to present it as part of a civic décor appropriate to the nineteenth century".[38] Middleton's position recalls Semper's idea of theatricality in architecture, discussed in chapter 2. What should be added to Middleton's observation, however, is the use, if not the abuse of "nature" in domesticating the new industrial materials. The idea of masking structural members with references to natural forms reappears in August Perret's 25 bis rue Franklin. Here the concrete structural frame is framed

with ceramic sunflower infills, representing the duality between the core-form and the art-form. In these examples, the tectonic speaks for the form derived from construction and the values laid down by the Enlightenment; in particular, the desire to juxtapose history with nature, the outmoded with the new. The intention was to “return” to a mythic time when the natural world was not separated from the experience of everyday life. The cladding of rue Franklin disguises the frame and, at the same time, expresses the desire for a repressed state of the natural, as depicted in Laugier’s hut.

Exploring many other examples of late nineteenth-century architecture, one wonders why the use of iron was confined to the interior spaces that were enclosed by masonry walls. A plausible answer to this question might have to do with the metaphysics of monument, whose language was for a long time associated with the classical language of architecture. It also speaks for the impact of Semper’s theoretical speculation concerning the lack of corporeality of iron, and thus, its unsuitability for monumental effects. In fact, in an early

struggle to redeem architecture from the classical vocabulary, architects were not yet able to articulate the tectonic forms suited to steel and glass without reducing architecture to the dazzling work of engineers, as displayed in the new building types such as exhibition halls and train stations. In this mutation, Peter Behrens' Turbine Factory is an exemplar that demonstrates the centrality of "purposefulness" in any tectonic consideration.[39]

On the one hand, the solid battered corners of the main façade of the AEG Factory are conceived to suggest the masonry wall's non-load-bearing character. On the other, the exterior architrave conceals a triangular girder visible from the inside. What is involved here is Behrens' misuse of the tectonic hinge to inject monumental sensibility into the main façade of a factory. The details used in this building show Behrens' awareness of the ways in which steel-frame structures work. But the perception invested in the overall form of the building has less to do with the forms derived from the chosen construction

1.4 August Perret, 25 bis rue Franklin, Paris, 1902–04.

technique. The difference between the front façade and the side elevation, facing the factory's ground, reveals Behrens' understanding of the dichotomy between art and technology, and his inclination to turn the dichotomy in favour of traditions of symbolic representation, rather than tectonic culture.[40] In the AEG Factory, most of the detailing, cutting and putting together of different materials serve ultimately to convey the temple-like image of the main facade. Frampton's reading is convincing: "While accepting the ascendancy of science and industry with pessimistic resignation, Behrens sought to bring the factory under the rubric of the farm – to restore factory production to that sense of common purpose innate in agriculture, a feeling for which the newly urbanized semi-skilled labor of Berlin would supposedly still have a certain nostalgia."[41] As discussed before, when the horizon of "purpose" is limited to representation of a kind that has nothing to do with the expressive potentialities of construction, then, not only is the line between atectonic and tectonic blurred, but the complexities invested in wish-images are compromised by historicism.

1.5 Peter Behrens, AEG Turbine Factory, Berlin, 1908–9.

To shed critical light on some aspects of modern architecture, the observation should be extended to a discussion that centres on the difference between theatricality and theatricalization.

The early history of modern architecture demonstrates the fact that architects were forced to revise the classical discourse of construction. While the historicists covered construction by historical styles and pumped new blood into humanism, the Jugendstil, for example, used artistic freedom to advocate a modern vision that goes beyond the ordering principles dictated by the machine and mechanization. A few architects who wanted to resist the forces unleashed by technology sought refuge in primitive art. An ancient sculpture or a vase, for instance, was admired either for its unspoiled expressive qualities, or for the material and technical aspects that were seen unseparated from the myth surrounding primitivism. Joseph Masheck associates the first inclination with German Expressionism and the widespread interest in themes such as empathy and expression discussed by Wilhelm Worringer and others.[42] The second line of thinking might be traced in Semper, William Morris and G. V. Plekhanov, a group that, in one way or another, underlined the importance of labour and material over "play".[43] In addition, upon the arrival of modernity, the century was already divided into revivalist camps in favour of Renaissance humanism or Gothic transcendentalism. Both movements offered alternatives to modernity's will to disintegrate totalities of every kind. The salvation was seen in the sensuous beauty of classical architecture, and/or in the power of expression attributed to Gothic architecture.

In the context of this polarity of ideas, Semper's simultaneous aspiration for Renaissance architecture and primeval art is intriguing. Central to his theory is the ways in which the materials and techniques used in the four industries of carpentry, ceramics, masonry and weaving contribute to the art-form of architecture. Even Worringer, who disliked Semper's views on Gothic architecture, claimed that Gothic sculptural modelling belongs "not to the history of art, but to the history of handicraft".[44] Here Worringer sounds like a Semperian materialist. However, what Semper saw in Renaissance architecture was structural flexibility, providing more options for carrying primitive motives from their craft-based roots into a "higher" order, i.e. architecture. This may have been his way of saving past traditions and juxtaposing the new with the old. That Gothic architecture was a tectonic form did not concern Semper. It was rather the absence of duality between the core-form and the art-form that

made him sceptical about the tectonic potential of Gothic architecture. The lack of flexibility in the Gothic form robs the stone wall of its expressive potential, and minimizes the tectonic expression of enclosure, an essential aspect of Semper's theory of theatricality.

The duality in the tectonic pondered here has to do with the need for a flexible relationship between the art-form and the core-form, and thus the possibility of the "lawful" articulation of a chosen construction method. The duality also alludes to the historical fact that, although by the nineteenth century the gap between theory and practice was institutionalized, architects were still able to consider construction as the sole domain of "artistic design".[45] Now, we should ask if the tectonic is attainable only when the duality between structure and the skin is established. Should we associate Semper's distinction between the core-form and the art-form with the historical division between the object and the subject? For it turns out that in monolithic structures the tectonic does not necessarily reveal its poetry through an actual separation of the load-bearing members from the enclosure. Paradoxically, in Semper's discussion of the evolution of the Assyrian column, we are reminded that, at one point, the wooden shaft (the core-form) disappears and the metal sheathing is used to function as both the core-form and the art-form.[46] The case can be made for arguing that the embellishment of the art-form might, at some point, attain a degree of autonomy that, without referring to its initial dualistic origin, can still stand for the tectonic. If this is so, are there moments in modern architecture when construction was conceived as a "self-illuminating" form?

An argument can be advanced to suggest that contemporary interest in displaced objects of surrealism, and the work of some Russian Constructivist architects is partly due to the work's anonymous rapport with an archaic past. Interestingly enough, according to Benjamin, constructivism and surrealism "accepted the antinomy of bourgeois thought (not identical with being), the subject-object division – in order later to protest against it even extremely sharply". Precisely for that reason, expressionism and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, according to Benjamin, "could not produce any artistic result but a pathological insight or a dry abstraction".[47] This observation is critical not only because it maintains the importance of technology for early modern architecture, but because it offers a paradigm to postulate the centrality of wish-images in Russian Constructivist architecture.

There is a tendency to discuss Russian Constructivism to conflate its achievements with those of the International Constructivists, or else to value their work strictly in terms of technology. We are reminded of Manfredo Tafuri and Hubertus Gassner, who highlight the historical avant-garde's huge investment in technology.[48] The criticism of these two scholars is valid if the subject matter is seen strictly from the historical perspective of the project of modernity, and if the inevitability of accepting modernization as an alternative to expressionism and historicism is established. The question to ask then is how we should assess the project of modernity if it is necessary to make a distinction between art and architecture without reducing diverse tendencies within constructivism to formalism. According to Christina Lodder, even in the Russia of 1917–22, "there were important differences between Gabo's constructions with their rather mathematical approach to form and the more empathically textual, abstract work of Tatlin".[49] Indeed, the constructivism permeating Vladimir Tatlin's reliefs and counter-reliefs, and his numerous kiosks and stage set designs were primarily inspired by the iconological tradition of pre-modern Russia, and a vision of primitivism that would emphasize the texture of material (*faktura*), use of simple techniques and disdain for "artistic design".[50]

At the conceptual level, however, even Boris Arvatov's stress on technology differed from the Bauhaus attempt to reduce art and architecture to the modalities of technological transformation. The fact is that, from its inception, the Bauhaus had close ties with the leaders and representatives of industrial institutions. This was not the case with the constructivists: after the Revolution not only did Russia have no organized industrial representatives, the constructivists' collaboration with educational institutions enjoyed a degree of autonomy that lasted at least until 1922. Moreover, the advocates of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* considered technology as belonging to the sphere of production, with no major relevance in the realm of values, i.e. the realm of "everyday things".[51] For constructivists, instead, theoretical comprehension of the dialectic between production and consumption was critical in any consideration of technology as part of "material culture". It is indeed in the realm of consumption where, according to Arvatov, "The ability to pick up a cigarette-case, to smoke a cigarette, to put on an overcoat, to wear a cap, to open a door, all these 'trivialities', acquire their qualification, their not unimportant 'culture', which find their meaning in the maximization of economy and

precision, in maximum cohesion with the things and their purpose."[52] Here technology is presented as an engine of collectivization of culture in the broadest meaning of the term.

The position put forward by Arvatov and others was not meant as a denial of the past; to subdue the object with explicit references to vernacular elements of the kind used in Walter Gropius' Sommerfeld House, for example. The stone base and symmetrical composition of Gropius' design frames a romantic vision of architecture whose form is derived from the nature of material. The uniform use of wooden structural elements in Rodchenko's constructs, and in Melnikov's design for the Russian Pavilion in Paris, on the other hand, does not mimic the rational organization of the world of technology. Here the rawness of metal and wood are embellished beyond the utilitarian attributes of material and those pumped into the design by the artist. These constructs demonstrate the ur-forms of material culture and its latent potential to resist the reduction of the world of consumption to mere commodities. When nostalgia for past forms and sentimental appreciation of material are suspended, then even the most archaic has the possibility of redemption through ur-images, i.e. when technological nature "flashes together with the old in an anticipatory image of humanity and nature reconciled".[53] Thus, the European avant-garde stopped short of entertaining the wish-image quality of constructivist objects. This is not to disregard the fact that this quality lost its critical edge as soon as the ideological apparatus of the Soviet State asked artists and architects to produce practical objects; the move slowly diminished the aura of revolution and reduced architecture to a normative practice. Not long afterwards, Stalin forced architects to abandon every norm except those represented by the classical language of architecture. This was an uncanny return to the "natural" state of the object, an ideological rebuff to the crisis of the object indeed!

In associating "wish-images" with the Russian Constructivists, the intention is not to ignore Benjamin's interest in the work of Le Corbusier, Loos and Paul Scheerbart.[54] In different ways these architects also rocked the foundations of tradition, making room for an architecture that was relevant to the experience of modernity. What should be underlined here is that constructivists neither pursued the Bauhaus project, nor used technology merely for aesthetic purposes. For constructivists, technique was a derivative of material, and both were perceived to be at the service of material culture.

Tecktonica, *factura* and construction, discussed by Aleksei Gan, presented a conceptual triad capable of charging the object with various semiotic layers in accordance with an optimistic ambiance informed by the tide of revolution.

The tendency to tie technique to raw material and purpose is epitomized in Tatlin's monument to the Third International, and in Lyubov Popova's stage set designs. These works were conceived and constructed using the simple techniques and skills of the Russian craft of log cabin making. Consider Tatlin's monument to the Third International, where three different volumes, made of glass and wrapped by steel structures, represented the constructive dimension of the October Revolution. "My monument is a symbol of the epoch. Unifying in it artistic and utilitarian forms, I created a kind of synthesis of art and life."[55] Tatlin's explanation recalls the ready-made objects of his counter-reliefs; a montage of material, technique and purpose. There is another filmic side to Tatlin's monument: Renouncing every additional element from the body of architecture, his tectonic articulation intends to transform human perception. Like Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye, Tatlin's monument upholds the world "without a mask as a world of naked truth",[56] and avoids using shock effects of the kind entertained by the formalist avant-gardes. The same nakedness energizes Popova's stage set design: these simple wooden constructs set the stage free for the "event" to unravel. If architecture was meant to be a socio-political agent for modernism, then the minimalism and lightness of constructivist architecture mark a departure from any longing for silence and redemption; themes essential for European Constructivists' tragic encounter with modernism.

Furthermore, the monism implied in *tecktonica*, *factura* and construction does indeed undermine the duality between the core-form and the art-form of any tectonic form. Constructivist architecture might be considered to produce monolithic structures of the kind that would not use symbolic geometry, as was the case with the architecture of the French Revolutionary architects. Like a filmic frame, constructivist work demonstrates the fusion of "idea" with technique, stressing the materiality of the object. The animated body of such architecture enchants the viewer, as do the images perceived at the moment of awakening from sleep, that momentary pause when construction recalls the dormant and forgotten experiences that reside in the subconscious.

Consider A. Leonid and Victor Vesnin's design for "Pravda Building", Ivan Leonidov's "Lenin Institute", Melnikov's "Commissariat of Heavy Industry"

and, more importantly, Iakov Chernikhov's "Architectural Fantasies". These projects bring together the prehistoric sense of construction with the aesthetics of machine technology. In "Industrial Tales", for example, we are confronted by an architecture that is devoid of applied decoration, and yet the final object is represented as an ornament *per se*. Chernikhov's architectural drawings are comparable to Piranesi's engravings where technique becomes, to use a Semperian phrase, "self-illuminating symbols", directing the spectator's eye to the particularities of construction.[57] More importantly, his drawings address the problematic theme of the frame and cladding that had been at work since the nineteenth century. Conceiving construction as an artistic design, Chernikhov's work unleashed the fear that Sigfried Giedion had observed lurking beneath the historicists' masking of construction. According to Giedion, "Construction in the nineteenth century plays the role of the subconscious. Outwardly, construction still boasts the old pathos; underneath, concealed behind facades, the basis of our present existence is taking place."[58] While Giedion was making rather radical remarks in connection to the early architecture of Le Corbusier, Russian Constructivists were weaving the anticipatory potentialities of technology with the collective practice, grafting revolutionary sentiments into the linguistic potentialities of architecture.

Now, putting behind the architecture of the machine age, the question to ask is what the implications are of the idea of wish-images for the present architecture. More specifically, how should we discuss the neo-avant-garde's apparent esteem for an expressionism that is motivated either by computer technologies, or by the hybrid formulation of an abstract and yet vigorous form of the kind that might be associated with constructivism?

If the distraction Benjamin alludes to is caused by the everyday experience of the metropolis, then architecture stands outside of such experience and, paradoxically, architecture has no choice but to internalize some aspects of that very experience. It might be claimed that architecture is the art of construction of the conditions of life: The integration of architecture with life is intense enough to suggest that one cannot separate it from the habits developed through collective experience. On this subject, Sandor Radnoti has this to say: "Every transformation, every reform of aesthetics is accompanied by a paradigm shift. . . . Even more than drama, Benjamin links more closely with the social mission and effect of collective art than all other arts. Even the collective, social possibilities which find expression in a technical culture are

manifested with striking transparency in the technical foundations of architecture."[59] The complex picture presented here of architecture's relation to ideology is the crux of current theoretical debates and is expressed through discussions concerning the relevance of themes such as ornament, construction, and cladding. It is the intention of this book to address these issues in the light of Semper's theory of theatricality.

Central to the idea of theatricality is the communicative dimension of architecture.[60] As will be discussed in the following chapters, the tectonic represents the art-form in relation to the core-form by relating architecture to the vastness of a given cultural experience. What is involved in the "relation" has to do with Semper's idea of *Stoffwechsel*;[61] where skills and techniques immanent in the art of building play a significant role in transforming and modifying motifs from the domain of cultural productivity into that of architecture. The modification is carried out by techniques that are architectural. Only in this way can we discuss the aesthetic dimension of the tectonic and avoid attributing the poetics of construction to the artist genius, and/or attempt a superficial understanding of the import of aesthetics for the tectonic. There is a historical dimension to this claim: the nineteenth-century style debate, especially in German-speaking countries, was instrumental in generating aesthetic discourses (such as the theories of empathy and the place of the beholder in the work of art) that were not mere abstract speculations, but aimed at orchestrating a visual culture that was not accessible to previous generations.[62] To put it differently, what was considered to be "dream-work" in the nineteenth century had turned into the "real". Therefore, one of the main theoretical objectives of this book is to show the centrality of the nineteenth-century dream of theatricality (Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, as well as Semper[63]) for the neo-avant-garde architecture, and to present a different interpretation of the current state of architecture. The intention is not to approach contemporary architecture based on Semper's theory; rather to say that one reason why Semper has been topical for the past couple of decades has to do with the historical coincidence between his concept of theatricality and the spectacle that permeated late capitalism.[64] One might go further and argue that *technique*, as subtext, is what makes Semper so interesting a figure for contemporary architecture. The present turn to Semper is also informed by electronic technologies and perceptual horizons that are endemic to a different way of seeing and making.

At this point it is necessary to caution the reader with two problems concerning the idea of theatricality. First, the esteem for totality implied in Semper's theory might be seen as responding to both the tragic dimension of modernity, i.e., the deterritorialization of all kinds of totalities, including the cultural homogeneity of pre-modern communities,[65] and the broken connection between the classical language of architecture and the ethics and moralities of the theological world that had existed since the Renaissance. However, in the context of postmodernity and the globalization of the information industry, any attempt to restore the communicative dimension of architecture might fall in the populism of "learning from Las Vegas".[66] Even if this might not be the case with the entirety of today's architectural practice, it could still be argued that the present situation, marked by the saturation of life-world with techniques of image-making, demands a reading of neo-avant-garde architecture in association with the impact of technology on disciplinary history, rather than theorizing architecture using concepts borrowed from other disciplines. Each chapter in this book attempts to discuss contemporary architecture through tropes such as roofing, wrapping and the tectonics of skin and structure.

Second, to read Semper's concept of theatricality and to restore past traditions of architecture is one thing; to read him in the light of Benajmin's discourse on wish-images and the exhibition value is quite another. The communicative side of architecture demands that architecture be approached through a web of ideas and concepts generated by various activities of production and consumption. Central to the idea of theatricality is the possibility of embellishing the constructed form to a point where the art-form remains anonymous; anonymous because the final form is not tied to the conceptual process of design. When this is established, a distinction can be made between the concept of theatricality and the theatricalization of architecture. Central to this differentiation is the permeation of the aesthetic of the commodity-form and its impact on architecture. Thus the argument that there might be another dimension to the visible, self-referential and yet playful character of neo-avant-garde architecture; that the unconscious dimension of the object/subject relationship experienced in modernity is, in postmodernity, inflected by the aesthetic of the commodity-form.[67] In this context, the tectonic embellishment of the culture of building possesses the seeds of critical practice if the art-form is not informed by the spectacle.

The idea of theatricality discussed throughout this book, and the stress put on the recollection of the culture of building also dismisses the argument which claims that, at a theoretical level, the tectonic aims to "confer unity on the disparate procedures of design and construction" or, for that matter, a hermeneutic interest in the past.[68] The architecture of theatricality communicates through the tectonic of the art-form and core-form that has the capacity to retain that which is immanent to architecture; meaning that architecture is not a direct product of construction, and yet the core-form, the physical material of building, inevitably puts architecture on the track of technological transformations and scientific innovations. The same might be said about the art-form; in suspending the romantic idea of genius, the art-form remains the only means by which architecture is charged with aesthetic sensibilities that, interestingly enough, are informed both by the perceptual horizons offered by the world of technology, and by the tactile and spatial sensibilities deeply rooted in the disciplinary history of architecture. Therefore, while the core-form assures architecture's rapport with the many changes taking place in the *technique* of construction, the art-form remains the sole domain where the architect might choose to imbue the core-form with those aspects of the culture of building that might sidetrack the formal and aesthetic consequences of commodification essential to the cultural production of late capitalism, and yet embrace the latest technological developments.

Moreover, the introduction of technical programming (software) as a determining factor in the formal potentialities of the final object,[69] questions the classical discourse of the object beyond the modernists' intentions. Computer-generated forms take for granted the distinction between the *Kernform* and *Kunstform*, and charge the art-form with a degree of autonomy that has the potential to represent any icon, including those of the mainstream of commercial culture. Unlike industrial techniques, however, telecommunication technologies have no direct impact on the construction process, and yet their impact on the perception of the object is enormous. Once this is established, the task is to explore strategies by which one might cultivate the nihilism of technology, and animate the duality between structure and clothing, for example, beyond the tradition of lineaments and the modernist engagement with the free façade. It is important to mention once again that a thin line separates the Semperian idea of theatricality from theatricalization

induced by the culture of spectacle. It is the aim of this book to capitalize on the difference by discussing selected projects from neo-avant-garde architects.

Finally, the increasing pressure of commodity-form on architecture demands recoding themes such as monument, ornament and the tectonic beyond and yet within the disciplinary history of architecture. There are two reasons for this. First, even a cursory examination of present architectural practice supports the claim that their forms have little to do with construction, let alone artistic re-presentation. The animated body of neo-avant-garde architecture intends to cut the cord that links the object to the culture of building. Even if metaphysics is the main subject matter of deconstruction architecture, we can still ask if it is possible to dismiss the ontological dimension of the culture of building. This is not a call to return to historical models and types, nor even a leaning towards postmodern eclecticism. The infatuation of early modern architecture with the question concerning technology, and the attempt to see architecture as the by-product of a machine should be rethought as architecture enters the virtual world of telecommunications technology. If Mies van der Rohe, for example, was able to charge the steel-frame structure with the aesthetics of monumentality; and if Le Corbusier could ponder the impossibility of poetry without technology, then is it not the time to claim that the late 1950s concern for civic architecture has evaporated; and that computer programming is capable of charging architecture with an excess that makes one wonder if the idea of monument has not become ornament *per se*?[70] Second, by reducing the matrix of architectural object to the images invoked by computer technology, neo-avant-garde architecture has opened architectural discourse to literary criticism and philosophy. It is true that Vitruvius recommended architects arm themselves with the vast available knowledge of wind and earth as well as philosophy; nevertheless, the inclusion of architectural topics in recent philosophical texts indicates that metaphysics cannot erect its own "ground" without concurrent deconstruction of architecture's foundation. The missing point in the writing, teaching and even the built work of today's mainstream architecture is "the intrinsic nature of the building art",[71] the thematic of which is essential to the argument advanced in this volume.

The theoretical underpinning of the next chapter aims at presenting an in-depth analysis of the specificity of Semper's idea of theatricality in the

purview of the spectacle of late capitalism. The argument benefits from Benjamin's discourse on "exhibition value", and takes into consideration the appropriation of "theatricality" in poetry and painting discussed by Charles Bernstein and Michael Fried respectively. Differentiating Semper's idea of theatricality from theatricalization, the intention is to make analogies between the sense of totalization that is embedded in what Semper, Wagner and Nietzsche saw in the Greek theatre, and that of the culture of spectacle unfolding globally today. To do this, the discussion centres on the disciplinary history of architecture, presenting a critical understanding of "excess" in contemporary architecture. Chapters 1 through 3 provide an in-depth discussion of selected buildings and projects by Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi and Frank Gehry. There are three reasons for these choices. Firstly, the intention is to historicize the traces of traditions of modernism in the work of the three architects: formalism in Eisenman, "objectivity" in Tschumi and regionalism in the early work of Gehry. The argument wishes to demonstrate the impossibility of stepping out of the historicity of modern architecture, let alone the culture of building. Moreover, the playful dialogue established between the element of wrapping and the roof in Gehry's most recent work recalls this author's previous remarks concerning the problematic nature of theatricality today, and the relevance of the culture of building not only in Gehry's work, but in many other contemporary architects whose work is briefly discussed throughout this book.[72] Secondly, the work of Eisenman and Tschumi is important because their theoretical ruminations have put a cap on the scope of any constructive criticism of their architecture. Most inspiring criticism of these two architects' work, and one might extend this observation to the entire work produced during the past two decades, is haunted by the weight of contemporary philosophical ideas. One consequence is to turn architecture into a text mirroring epistemological debates,[73] or else, as mentioned before, to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between design theory and the work itself. Thirdly, the selection concerns contemporary architecture's dialogue with the *Zeitgeist*: while Eisenman attempts to transgress the issue, Tschumi problematizes it by recoding the concept of "objectivity", a theme central to the very incompleteness of the modernism of the 1920s. Gehry, instead, maintains a non-critical position *vis-à-vis* the cultural logic of late capitalism, to recall Fredric Jameson, and allows "design" to be inflated by spectacle. In addressing these issues the author wishes to raise questions that concern

the state of architecture in the new millennium. To this end the final chapter wishes to demonstrate that the current proliferation of the tectonic rapport between the two elements of roof and enclosure is informed by the conflation of architecture's interiority with digital techniques. Once a semi-autonomous understanding of architecture is established, the argument takes up two recent works of Peter Eisenman and Renzo Piano, advancing an argument that plots the recent interest in "surface" by analogy to the tectonics of topology. The binary underpinning of this comparison is problematized when Greg Lynn's views on the tectonics of blob are included in the fuzzy picture of current architectural practice.

The argument presented throughout the book will raise many questions, including the following: Is the accommodation of architecture to the nihilism of technology adding a new chapter to the book of the crisis of architecture? In what ways can the dialectic between modernity and tradition be nurtured beyond what has already been done by the protagonists of modern architecture? What is the place of history in architecture at a time when abstraction gets around the "thingness" of architecture, reducing it to a textual phenomenon? And last, but not least, while the point has been passed where one would associate monument with the classical language of architecture, in what ways does the enduring aspect of architecture speak not only for the simultaneity of ornament and structure, but for a marginal truth, as Heidegger would have said?

What are the fruits of this rather bleak vision compared to the celebratory approach of postmodernism? Instead of pursuing the *Zeitgeist* in current architectural practice; to become enchanted, if not intoxicated, by what telecommunications technology could do for architecture; to avoid the culture of building and discuss architecture as a text among other interdisciplinary texts. The following chapters intend to discuss architecture from the point of view of themes that have been developed through the history of architectural theories and practice. Particular attention is given to the place of theatricality, monument and ornament and their relevance for contemporary architecture. This book attempts to show how the neo-avant-garde's strategic position, of continuing the dream of the project of the historical avant-garde, turns out to be no more than another technique in the implementation and expansion of the horizon of instrumental reason. To demystify neo-avant-garde architecture is not to flatten its achievements. The aim rather is to historicize, to

show the material presence of the past and to re-empower the thematic of the culture of building even at the dawn of this new century when the commodification of culture is almost total and the historical energy of the project of modernity is seemingly exhausted.

CHAPTER 2

THEATRICALITY: THE STRUCTURE OF TECTONIC[1]

SEVERAL QUESTIONS PROVIDE AN OPENING for a discussion of Gottfried Semper's idea of theatricality. Is there room for excess within elements basic to a constructed space? How does excess sneak into the purpose of the object and legitimize itself beyond recognition? Is our fascination with structures like the Eiffel Tower and the work of engineers at the turn of the last century, and even the recent structures conceived and built by Santiago Calatrava, due to the absence of excess? Or, contrary to our expectations, is it excess in its full representation? And, finally, what does excess have to do with the tectonic? For a positive response to these questions it's enough to recall Semper's idea of constructed-form as "self-illumination" of technique, or look at Carlo Scarpa's architecture and drop the subject right here! But what about the present neo-avant-garde architects and the excessive theatricality in their work that is usually theorized along the lines of Gilles Deleuze's discourse on "fold"?[2]

The subject of theatricality is important not only because it was first introduced to architecture by Semper, but also because of the communicative dimension of architecture: the way a person relates to architecture by experiencing a building's space as well as appropriating its form. The communicative dimension of architecture, however, has changed since the crisis of the object induced by modernization and the introduction of new technologies into the process of architectural production. We no longer understand the classical language of architecture as pre-modern architects did; nor do we understand a building as an integral part of a coherent ensemble. Modernization disintegrated every kind of totality underlining the process of making artifacts as a formative theme for architecture. As will be demonstrated shortly, Semper's discussion of theatricality is indeed the highlight of his discourse on the

tectonic: how the revealed poetics of construction becomes part of a larger cultural milieu while architecture appropriates available technical means and concepts developed in the realm of aesthetics.

The intention of this chapter is to explore the developmental tendencies of the culture of spectacle, and to examine its implications for rethinking the idea of theatricality. The point is not to prove the presence of "excess" in Semper's discussion of the tectonic, but to probe the idea of theatricality in a situation when spectacle is the only common visual and spatial experience available to the citizens of most metropolitan cities. The total commodification of everyday life did not emerge suddenly. It was, according to Hal Foster, the third stage of a process, starting with the radio days of the 1920s, followed by the communications technologies of the post-war era, and the present digital techniques.[3] The development is of interest since a sense of delirium overshadows modernism's abstraction and the rhetorical mood of postmodern eclecticism. Central to the discussion advanced here is the issue of the appropriation of art and architecture and the object's potential for absorption. Before discussing Semper's idea of theatricality, however, it is useful to address the way the subject is considered in poetry and painting.

Charles Bernstein discusses theatricality and differentiates poetry from other forms of writing.[4] According to him, an ordinary written text communicates with the reader by the transparency of the information delivered. However, a poem transcends such textual transparency by utilizing formal and technical means intrinsic or external to poetry. The result is an artifice, a textual fabrication, whose relationship with the reader mutates between two poles of absorption and impermeability. By absorption Bernstein means "engrossing, engulfing completely, attention, arresting attention. . .". By impermeability, on the other hand, he means ". . . distraction, digression, transgressive, baroque. . .".[5] Some of his suggested techniques for absorption were utilized by the architecture and literature of the nineteenth century. We are reminded of the Romantic quest to integrate architecture into a picturesque environment. For impermeability we should look instead for the techniques such as shock, transgression and defamiliarization that were employed by dadaists and surrealists. Providing examples from various art forms, Bernstein makes the case that, by combining techniques of absorption and impermeability, a poem or any other work of art can reach the level of theatricality; a state of artistic deliverance by which the reader or the spectator is attracted to the work even

when an artist uses non-absorptive techniques. The point is not to lower the quality of the work by calculating what kind of means would generate certain expected impressions on the reader or beholder. Such an intention, according to Bernstein, "is in a certain sense simulation, theatricalization. That's what the commodifcation of product is."[6] Theatricality, instead, cloaks poetry with anonymity: the message is understood in an indirect way through the manifold play of the visible and the invisible. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Bernstein suggests that "absorption and impermeability are the warp and woof of poetic composition – an intertwining or chasm whose locus is the flesh of the word".[7] The same is true for architecture. Theatricality is the flesh of construction whose thickness speaks for the invisible presence of the dialectics of seeing and making, that is the way a building relates to its site, framing a constructed space and opening it to the many horizons of today's culture.

Theatricality is also present in dance and music, the two artistic products that Semper considered closer to architecture than painting. Semper's view on the subject will be discussed shortly. What should be brought to the reader's attention is Michael Fried's discourse on theatricality and absorption that precedes Bernstein.

In *Courbet's Realism*, Fried discusses the dialogue between absorption and theatricality in mid-eighteenth-century painting and pursues the subject's importance for contemporary abstract art. According to him, Denis Diderot's writings on drama and his contempt for theatricality or gestural expression put the French painters in a difficult position. How to seal off the beholder from the world of painting became a rather critical task for painters, especially when the subject was a dramatic mood, such as death in Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Filial Piety* (1763), or "farewell", as depicted in Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1785). It is indeed in David's history paintings that Fried sees the seeds of dedramatization of action, especially in David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799), in the "sleek-limbed figure of Romulus posed to throw his spear". The idea is also at work in the "crowding of the pictorial field with innumerable personages at different distances from the viewer. . .".[8] According to Fried, two developments were essential for Courbet's Realism to take place. First, a change in the subject matter of painting, i.e. a move from historical subjects and court personages to simple human beings and their habits. Following Jean-François Millet, Courbet depicted movement, action and

dramatic scenes by focusing on various aspects of everyday life such as peasants working in the field. Second, an awareness of the sense of embodiment and its effect on perception enticed the body (and in this case Courbet's body) to emerge, initiating a unique dialogue between absorption and theatricality. To depart from Diderot's concern for theatricalization, Courbet not only made the beholder imagine that he or she had entered into the depicted world, but he painted the "literal merger of himself as a painter-beholder with the painting which he was working".[9] Introduction of corporeality into the field of painting prevents gestural expression and blurs the line separating absorption from theatricality.

Fried also reminds us of another development that shed a different light on the subject of theatricality. The invention of daguerrotype in the mid-nineteenth century – a mechanical means of representing aspects of the world – encouraged some writers to see the invention of photography as a major motivation for Courbet's Realism. Even in Cubism's transition from analysis to synthesis, one important subject of discussion was how to leave the "superficial realism of Courbet" for Paul Cézanne, who combined the empiricism of the senses with the conceptualization of the mind.[10] Disputing these ideas, Fried observes that, "the issue of theatricality turns out not only to have been relevant to photographic practice but to have been given a particular inflection by the powerfully veristic character of the photographic medium."[11] Which is to say that a person posing in front of a camera is unconsciously aware of the gestural act and the theatricality of the effect. Such a theatrical atmosphere does not exist in representational painting where a presumed organic coherence between the subject matter and the final work overrides any unconscious impulses.

The significance of the idea of theatricality in architecture has to do with Semper's denunciation of architecture as an imitative art and the sense of spatiality embedded in his theoretical departure from the Vitruvian triad. Semper formulated an architectural discourse whose main themes are derived from skills and perceptions developed in other cultural activities. For him the original motives of architecture reside in the production process of the four industries of textiles, carpentry, ceramics and masonry. Exercising such radicalism in political life cost him several years of exile and poverty during the period when he wrote most of his theoretical work. While in London, Semper had the chance to follow closely the debates stirred up by John Paxton's design

for the Crystal Palace. Against his British colleagues, who argued for the duality of construction and ornament – as implied in the historicist tendency for ornamenting construction, as well as in the modernist zeal for the construction of ornament – Semper mapped the subject from the perspective of the cultural anomalies of capitalism. "This process of disintegrating existing art types must be completed by industry, by production, and by applied science before something good and new can result."[12] Reading these lines in the context of the current nihilism of technology and commodification of culture leads us to draw some analogies between Semper's discourse on theatricality and the mystique of commodities that have enforced fad and fashion as the ultimate new. This is convincing not because of Semper's architecture, whose theatricality was suggested by iconographic references, but because of his belief in the importance of architecture for cultural communication and for his idea that art, even when expressing tragedy, should break up tragic elements "in such a way that one could extract enjoyment even from its most affecting parts".[13] The implied theatricality in Semper's statement could be taken for theatricalization if we fail to recall Carl Botticher's assertion that in a tectonic form the symbolic dressing is simultaneously juxtaposed with the structural function. Both Semper and Botticher stressed the dialogical relation between a structural system and the expected sensations evoked by the dressing. Addressing this subject, Botticher reminds us that,

> The aim is to grasp the principle of the statics and construction and the law and form of each part of the structural system that characterizes the style in question. Once this is understood, then the key is found to the riddle of the art-forms that have been applied to these parts as a kind of explanatory layers. Since these parts have been made for the sole purpose of creating a spatial structure, any forms applied to them that do not serve this material function and to make visible the concept of structure and space that in its purely structural state cannot be perceived.[14]

To put it in Semper's words, adornments are "structural-symbolic" when the art-form, in essence, enhances the structural values of the core-form through dressing.[15] By making clear that the final form of architecture should not correspond to its structural system directly, Botticher charges the tectonic with an excess, the art-form, that is robbed by eclecticists and formalists alike. The difference between Semper and Botticher will be addressed shortly.

What needs to be added here is that Semper's theory proposes two issues of importance to modern architecture; first, that as far as the notion of *Stoffwechsel* – the transformation of motifs from one industry to another – is concerned, technique is not in itself accountable for the art-form. An idea that casts doubt on monumental potentiality of iron structures permeating the nineteenth century, it also puts most of contemporary architecture's use and abuse of steel-frame structure in a difficult position. This is important because Semper's theorization of style relies heavily on the principle of dressing and the role played by the element of wall in monumental effects. Second, attention should be paid to his criticism of historicism, and that branch of formalism whose "tendentious nature" has little to do with the themes of "purpose" and "construction" so important to Semper's discourse on the tectonic of theatricality. Here, again, what should be underlined is the principle of dressing through which "tectonic structures achieve monumentality", and that this transformation takes place "only through emancipation from structural-material realism, through a symbolic spiritualization of their functional expression".[16]

Harry Francis Mallgrave is one of the few scholars to have explored the idea of theatricality and to have made connections with the thought of two other giants of Semper's day, Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner. According to Mallgrave, one reason why "a limited biographical format is called for in the case of Semper, is the importance his theory and built works possess for more broadly based cultural studies. The Semper–Wagner–Nietzsche triangle of ideas alluded to above underscores the centrality of Semper's thought to the nineteenth century, but it is a presence yet to be adequately perceived and assessed."[17] This last point deserves attention not only because of the association that might be made between the uncertainties surrounding these last decades of our century with those of the end of the last one, but also because of the formativeness of the theme of surface and a perception of theatricality stirred up by telecommunication technologies. Moreover, current diversities in theories of architecture perpetuate a state of confusion equal to the nineteenth century's quest for style.

Mallgrave depicts Friedrich Schinkel as the forerunner of the concept of theatricality through which Semper saw an alternative to the crisis of architectural historicism in Germany. Schinkel sought to resolve the contemporary architects' fluctuation between utility and imitation by what he termed the "refinement of feeling", anticipating Adolf Loos's belief that the task of the

architect is to arouse feeling and sensation in the beholder. Travelling around historical sites, Schinkel was absorbed by the formal aspects of the buildings he visited. He was equally attracted to a sense of theatricality caused by the modifications that were needed to accommodate an ideal form to a given landscape and its topography.[18] Yet Schinkel's interest in stage set design, panorama and landscape sets him apart from those architects who sought abstraction and denunciation of history as a way to avoid the complexities, if not the anxieties, generated by modernity. In defiance of the fallacies of an arbitrary simulation of history and a reduction of architecture to utility and construction, Schinkel believed that the tectonic should provide an artistic expression of a building's purpose. According to Mallgrave, the Berlin Altes Museum demonstrates the architect's willingness "to draw from the historical treasury and forms but at the same time to modify these motifs in an original manner, taking into account contemporary ideals and conditions".[19] As well as new building techniques and materials, what was contemporary for Semper and others of his school of thought was the unfolding of a different experience of time and space, and the latter's tectonic expression. According to Kurt W. Forster, "Schinkel recognized in the human imagination a native tendency to extend the transformation of nature into history beyond its time-bound order, to expand the process into the internal realm of desire."[20] Drawing on drama and stage set design, both Schinkel and Semper saw architecture as a frame accommodating human experience. The tectonic of such a "frame" should absorb the beholder first and then direct his/her attention to the drama of life.

Schinkel's theory also alludes to a shift of paradigm at work in eighteenth-century French architecture. Those known as the "revolutionary architects" did indeed depart from the sense of beauty associated with the proportions of the body for the aesthetic of the sublime. In the context of the experience of modernity, the sublime was charged with psychological feelings of both joy and sorrow. A feeling for "play" was also invested in the aesthetic writings of the century, whose original intrusion into the world of art might have to do with the primeval struggle against not-yet-tamed nature. Semper, echoing the Romantic tradition, would "set up play as the basis of the aesthetic drive, and the means by which man confronts an often hostile world and deals with its imperfections". For Semper, "play is humanity's 'cos-mogomic instinct' through which he creates his own 'tiny world' (lawful and decorative) and mediates his contact with the world".[21] In recapitulating these

words, it seems fair to suggest that not only play, but also an interest in mask and tattoo, were indeed a reaction to the anxieties generated by modernization. This is where Wagner's music and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* enter the complex picture of Semper's life and architecture. Aware of Wagner's problematic concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Mallgrave underlines the similarities between Semper's understanding of theatricality and Richard Wagner's zeal for dramatization and the architecture of theatre, if only to illustrate the ultimate union of all the arts. Nietzsche also underlined the understanding of art in association with the Greek chorus as a way out of the will to knowledge.[22] Indeed, it is those non-visual and plastic qualities of music that enticed Nietzsche, Wagner and Semper to emphasize the dramatic potential of architecture that was at work in the festive ensembles of Greek and other early civilizations. As Semper put it – and, according to Mallgrave, Nietzsche gleaned it from him – "the haze of carnival candles is the true atmosphere of art". In a footnote to his theory of style, Semper continues, "The denial of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous creation of man."[23]

What is intriguing in Semper's idea of theatricality is his continuous attempt to weave adornment with the legitimate execution of material and technical means. Furthermore, his reflection on theatricality is full of allusions to drama, theatre, carnival and mask. In note 23 we read, "The spirit of masks breathes in Shakespeare's dramas; we meet the humor of masks and the haze of candles, the carnival sentiment (which truly is not always joyous) in Mozart's *Don Juan*. For even music needs a means to deny reality. Hecuba also means nothing to the musician – or should mean nothing." And, in order to prevent any misunderstanding of his emphasis on the necessity for architecture to deny reality through theatricalization, Semper advises that "Masking does not help, however, when *behind* the mask the thing is false or the mask is no good." He continues, "In order that the material, the indispensable (in the usual sense of the expression) be completely denied in the artistic creation, its complete mastery is the imperative precondition."[24] Finally, my favourite Semperian line: "only by complete technical perfection, by judicious and proper treatment of the material according to its properties, and by taking these properties into consideration and creating form, can the material be forgotten, can the artistic creation be completely freed from it, even a simple landscape painting can be raised to a high work of art."[25] This statement is important

because it moves beyond the Romantic view of form as exclusive to the nature of material while, at the same time, it stops short of further intensifying, by pushing the nihilism of modernity to its extreme, the destruction of the received tradition. Semper moves in between the broader lines separating theatricality from theatricalization, to deny material through the embellishment of material itself.

Semper's discussion of theatricality is also an aspect of his theorization of architecture as a cosmic art analogous to dance and music. Indeed, the delight experienced in dance and music has no imitative basis. These arts pursue similar laws of structure and ornamentation implied in the Greek word *Kosmos,* meaning the simultaneous presence of order and ornament. As I have discussed elsewhere, " Music and dance differ from imitative arts in that a distinction between what is essential to them and what is excessive is almost impossible."[26] For Nietzsche, "the cosmic symbolism of music resists any adequate treatment by language, for the simple reason that music, in referring to primordial contradiction and pain, symbolizes a sphere which is both earlier than appearance and beyond it". This statement from *The Birth of Tragedy* alludes to the Greek artistic mind and a Dionysian desire to express nature symbolically. Emphasizing the significance of polychromy for Greek architecture, Semper saw monumental architecture as more than a decorated shed or an iconographic representation of its language. For him, architecture is an active part of an ensemble similar to the primitive sense of communal gathering for dance and choreography. Stressing the principle of dressing, such a setting would, at the end, become a stage set in itself; a theatrical montage, indeed. In addition to painting, Semper reminds us,

> We should not forget the metal ornaments, gilding, tapestry-like draperies, baldachins, curtains, and movable implements. From the beginning the monuments were designed with all these things in mind, even for the surroundings – the crowds of people, priests, and the processions. The monuments were the scaffolding intended to bring together these elements on a common stage. The brilliance that fills the imagination when trying to visualize those times makes the imitations that people have since fancied and imposed on us seem pale and stiff.[27]

Semper's vision of architecture is a symbolic form experienced in association with other cultural products. Indeed, architecture is the crust of the life-

world, framing, almost like the horseshoe-shape of the stage, the totality of the everyday life experience; even those most remote archaic ones that are presumably washed out from the present objective world.

Now what would be the consequences of such an experience in the realm of contemporary architecture? And what would be the index of totality in the present high-tech modern capitalism? What kind of shared collective experience is left to us after the loss of aura? In response to these questions it is appropriate to recall Walter Benjamin's discourse on experience. According to Benjamin, the ritualistic value of the work of art is embedded in two things: first, that prior to the mechanical reproduction of art, the symbolism of the work was understood indirectly, and second, that in order to communicate with this symbolism, one has to enter into the work itself. Mechanization and the introduction of mechanical reproduction into the world of cultural artifacts have dissolved the aura and adorned the work of art with different qualities. In a photographic or filmic reproduction of a painting or an event, the final work breaks the crust of its symbolic function by the very possibility of being exhibited and appropriated beyond its original context. The work also attains some qualities that are pumped into it by technology, thus repressing its cult value. Benjamin describes the new horizon opened by technologies of reproduction in terms of the "optical unconscious" by which "a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious".[28] Redemption of the work of art from its aura, therefore, generates a world of phantasmagoria, the spectacle, which in the present context of the commodification of the life-world should neither be considered as a mere technological effect nor, as Guy Debord reminds us, as "something added to the real world – not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society's real unreality."[29] Once this is established, it is essential to explore the developmental tendencies of the culture of spectacle for rethinking the idea of theatricality.

Studying the impact of the nihilism of modernity, Benjamin was sceptical of the restoration of any collective experience of the kind felt through religion and language in pre-modern cultures. Knowing that the disintegration of every possible totality is essential for the project of modernity, one is left, according to Benjamin, with the choice of either maintaining an active affirmative, or a passive reactive position: "One takes the destruction as an opportunity to establish a new configuration of experience, the other intensifies

the destruction."[30] To put his ideas in the context of current problems in architectural theories, the neo-avant-garde's exploitation of the formal implications of computer technology could be justified for two reasons. First, the theatricalization of architecture might be seen as a radical move for those who see technology as the only index of totalization. This point of view considers technology as a determinant for social and cultural evolution. Second, theatricalization takes for granted the perceptual experience of telecommunications technology and cuts all ties that might connect architecture to the beholder. The result is an abstract form whose discreet charm competes with the fetishism of commodities.[31] Like commodities, abstract forms are invested with excess; the disappearance of tradition generates an architecture that is anonymous and unfamiliar to the beholders' collective memory. The absence of tradition, occupied and energized by image-making forces of telecommunication technologies, has endowed architecture with theatricalization. It is the excess invested in the totality of the culture of spectacle that makes architecture today less remote from the everyday life experience of the beholder. In late capitalism, everything is "designed" and all products, including architecture, should look "cool"![32]

Abstraction and anonymity are aesthetic implications of architecture's entanglement with the drive of commodification. There is also a degree of abstraction and anonymity in theatricality as far as the tectonic exceeds the technical exigencies of construction. Theatricality might be associated with what was alleged to be Courbet's "superficial realism", that is to say, the aspect that caused Courbet's realism to be seen as superficial is also suggestive of the fact that theatricality does not deny construction, but alludes to the latter's "structural-symbolic" expression. The differences also have to do with the fact that unlike the pictorial realm of painting, the beholder's relation to architecture is rather indirect. One does not design a building while having in mind the place of the beholder. Rather, in the manner of stage set design, one conceives architecture as a back-stage, in front of and around which the life-world unravels.[33] The intention is not to present a passive picture of architecture but to underline the active role architecture plays in the construction of the condition of life, the project of architecture. Exploring Benjamin's concept of experience, Howard Caygill suggests that "Architecture provides the main site for the interaction of technology and the human, a negotiation conducted in terms of touch and use. It is both a condition and

an object of experience, the speculative site for the emergence of the 'technological *physis*.'"[34] Through use and touch and perhaps in spite of theatricality architecture has the capacity to absorb our attention and then direct us to a larger totality.[35] This does not require a one-to-one correspondence between form and context, but envisions an architecture that is more than either construction or a familiar sign. Excess questions the foundations, setting the work in the "mirror-play of the world".[36] Obviously, in differentiating theatricality from theatricalization (gestural expression) the emphasis is put on the "thing" character of architecture while undermining its pictorial appeal. The thingness of architecture necessitates a turning from pictorial considerations of the place of the beholder to his or her experience with architecture.

Beyond the fashionable appeal of neo-avant-garde position, we are left with the choice of accepting the nihilism of technology, not because of its apparent radicalism, but because architectural tradition can survive only by being galvanized through new modalities opened in the dialectic of seeing and making. Furthermore, most architects believe that construction and the relationship of architecture to nature transcend the problematic duality between the subject and the object. How architecture relates to nature, to the forces of gravity, landscape, light and wind, is the bedrock of a shared collective experience as far as architecture's project is concerned. An affirmative approach to the nihilism of technology necessitates the recollection of tactile sensibilities and tectonic solutions that are central to architecture's ontological rapport with nature, recoding these received traditions in the light of the latest technological innovations.[37] Interestingly enough, in the prolegomenon to his theory of style Semper speculates that "These phenomena of artistic decline and the mysterious, phoenix-like birth of new artistic life arising from the process of its destruction are all the more significant to us, because we are probably in the midst of a similar crisis. . . ."[38] Here Semper sounds Benjaminian. However, a phoenix-like architecture similar to the work of Surrealism has the potential to release in a snapshot what Benjamin referred to as the "involuntary memories" of an "auratic" experience. In historicizing the "latest new" in the context of memories of an archaic, architecture has an opportunity to counter excess. Architecture is construction plus something else. The implied surplus speaks for a joint articulation of the dialectic of tactile and tectonic solutions, juxtaposing a dormant past with the present technological experiences. In this context theatricality does not suggest formal

playfulness: it vindicates the formative themes of architecture that are interwoven with the socio-political, cultural and technological developments of the first decade of the new millennium. Appropriation of architecture in the vastness of culture is indeed at the heart of Semper's discourse on theatricality.

The "spatiality" implied in Semper's discourse on theatricality underpins the present discussion of space and theatricality in the context of the spectacle of late capitalism. Equally important is the fact that, although virtual reality is a significant aspect of the present technological experience, it is not necessarily the only one that should be grafted onto architecture. Both theatricality and "spatiality" as such have been at work in various aspects of the early experience of modernity, the more so in cinematography and montage. Previously I have discussed the idea of montage as a mode of construction appropriate to an architecture that accommodates the project of modernity.[39] Here I would like to suggest that what Semper, Wagner and Nietzsche saw in the Greek theatre is true of film, itself an ensemble of music, art, technology and "the crowds of people". Pursued closely, montage, from its fragmentary stage setting to the art of cutting and sewing, frames a sense of theatricality equal to Semper's zeal for the "masking of reality". The occasional return to film and its analogy with architecture also have to do with the fact that, in terms of reaching out and communicating with the masses, and the ties that every cultural product has made with capital and the marketplace, film is the only industry that comes close to architecture.[40] Still, as with architecture, the art of filmmaking has been transformed by the constant innovations taking place in the world of technology. The introduction of sound, colour, wide screen and, lately, digital techniques, has opened up new horizons in the filmic experience and yet montage is still essential for the art of filmmaking. This is also true of architecture. The entire history of architecture can be construed in the light of changes that have transformed the concept of construction from *techne* to technique, and from the tectonic to montage. As in film, so in architecture, montage can be utilized to evoke sensation and feelings appropriate to the purpose of a constructed space. This potential of montage is exploited in the best schools of architecture in the two-dimensionality of digital technique. Perhaps, if ever the forces of gravity and thus nature are overcome, then virtual reality might be translated into architecture in its full capacity. Until the time that such a daydream is realized, we are better off dwelling on the concept of montage and articulating

the tectonic of lightness and the experience of spatiality that are prevalent in the various production activities of today's culture.

Finally, Semper's and Botticher's ideas should not be taken as dogma. Faced with the historical eclecticism of his time, Botticher suggested that one should neither take tradition for granted nor discard it totally. Beyond these two extremes he drew two conclusions that are worth citing here: "First, we must for the time being hold on to what has been directly handed down to us. . . . Second, it follows that we must not make use of tradition for its own sake. . . ." And he continues, we should "decide what part of tradition merely belongs to the past, was valid only then, and therefore must be rejected and what part contains eternal truth, is valid for all future generations, and therefore must be accepted and retained by us".[41] Eternal truth? Perhaps this is too strong an idea for these days. However, Botticher's critical position on tradition is even more valid today. As mentioned previously, the forces of gravity and the importance of landscape are proper benchmarks to make a site (sight?) or a spectacle, or exhibit an architectonic event, the experience of which would induce "disorientation", to recall Heidegger, and open a different window onto the life-world. This is not a far-fetched theoretical demand. The following chapters will show two things: First, that present architectural practice is full of projects and buildings that affirm, in different degrees, the importance of montage, and theatricality, if not theatricalization. Second, in addition to the recent hasty association between Semper's remarks on dressing and the structural forms generated by digital technology, Semper's discourse on the four elements of architecture and his idea of theatricality are of interest today when techniques central to the culture of spectacle pervade most areas of endeavour, and the same techniques have the potential to make architects re-think the principle of dressing. The difficulty facing architecture today is how to use digital techniques and yet resist the prevailing culture of spectacle. How to extend, for example, Mies van der Rohe's skilful handling of the tectonic rapport between filling and frame in the National Gallery, Berlin, where the glass enclosure does not reinforce the frame. In Mies's aspiration to monumental effect, the frame rather seems to the eye to be completely rigid *in itself* while the glass enclosure is recessed.[42] Therefore, in addressing theatricalization in the neo-avant-garde architecture, this book also intends to demonstrate the importance of the thematic of the disciplinary history of architecture (the culture of building) for the architecture of theatricality.

CHAPTER 3

Peter Eisenman:

In search of degree zero architecture

WHETHER ONE AGREES OR DISAGREES with what he has built and written, the fact remains that Peter Eisenman has secured for himself an important position in contemporary architecture. His work has opened and left behind many formal and theoretical territories. From his engagement with the New York Five Architects, to his recent projects, Eisenman has relentlessly and uncompromisingly pursued the tradition of modern formalism. With its huge investment in intellectualism, his work, ironically, does not touch on the basic premises of the project of the historical avant-garde. Instead of challenging institutions or wanting to integrate architecture with the life-world, Eisenman cultivates the progressive fruits of humanism; a discourse initially formulated by Andrea Palladio, then given a radical twist by the work of Piranesi,[1] and later institutionalized in the Neoplasticism of the De Stijl Group and the Elementarist Constructivism of the early twentieth-century avant-garde movements. If this is a plausible theoretical window through which to look into Eisenman's work, then one should also consider two other vectors of his work. First, like Roland Barthes in *Writing in Degree Zero*, Eisenman has launched a radical challenge to architecture as an institution, denying it any purpose yet subjecting it to the thematic of the very process of such a denial. Dialectically, and this is the second vector, he has left himself with no choice but to indulge in architectural history to the point that he is a good teacher for those who want to pursue architecture's disciplinary history from a formalistic point of view. There is a price to be paid for all this: Eisenman's intellectual vigour has forced critics to see and analyze his architecture primarily from the point of view of themes and concepts on which he has written or lectured. In this encounter, the least that can be expected of his work is a

demonstration of the developmental process of postmodern "theory", an interdisciplinary approach to cultural discourse without which a fair assessment of Eisenman's work would be difficult, if not impossible. That said, we should also notice another turn in Eisenman: the velocity unleashed by electronic technology has nullified any theory that does not conform to the logic of this technique. This much is clear from Eisenman's "silence" during the last couple of years; whereas before this, his writings disclosed not only the state of his own architectural praxis, but also presented a concise formulation of the ongoing problematic of contemporary architecture. The architectonic implication of the suggested "closure" will be discussed in Chapter 6. What needs to be said here is that a sense of period is central to any critical assessment of Eisenman's work.

An argument can be made for recognizing three departures in Eisenman's career: First, the early experimental years (it is not useful to mark the exact date of these periods since one stage overlaps with the next one) that culminated in what is called the Five Architects, during which Le Corbusier's legacy was examined primarily from a formalistic point of view. At this initial stage, Eisenman's theoretical work was concerned with the developments that followed; here, mention should be made of the post-war rapprochements on the thematic of humanist discourse since the Renaissance. We are reminded of Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949), where architecture's symbolism is discussed in the light of the convergence taking place between religious and scientific ideologies. Wittkower's aspiration had already been given a radical twist by Colin Rowe in the "Mathematics of the Ideal Villas", first published in 1947 in the *Architectural Review*, where the author makes analogies between Le Corbusier's Villa Garches and Palladio's Villa Malcontena, while benefiting from ideas developed by Cubism. Eisenman recodes these traditions, first, through Noam Chomsky's discourse on "deep structure", and later through Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. In the second instance, attention should be given to the role Eisenman played in reinterpreting the received ideas of modernism in conjunction with themes borrowed from philosophy and literary criticism. Addressing semiotic issues, particularly the Saussurian split between the signifier and the signified, Eisenman articulated a disenchanted white abstract architecture, the silence of which recalls the impossibility of continuing the project of the historical avant-garde. This much is also clear from his fascination with and yet intelligent

criticism of Aldo Rossi's work, the content of which speaks for what might be called "the dawn of mourning".[2] And yet the austere, sad appearance of his House II exhausts the formalistic energies of both the Dom-ino frame and the legacy of neo-plasticism.

The best of Eisenman's work in this period discloses a struggle between two structures whose logos will be shaken first in House X (where a two-dimensional L-shaped form is extracted from squares and cubes), and then the entire formal structure of the cube will be taken apart in the Fin d'Ou T HouS of 1985. In these projects, Eisenman purposely dismissed the fact that the Dom-ino frame was a construction system designed initially to facilitate the convergence between the art of building and modern techniques. He is aware of the inevitability of the impact of construction and its implications for the façade's relation to the plan in any building. This much is clear from his analysis of Giuseppe Terragni's architecture: Discussing the textual relationship

3.1 Peter Eisenman, House II, 1969–70.

between the corner and the façade in Casa Giuliani-Frigerio, Rowe's contribution is recognized in the distinction he makes between the idea of façade and the idea of elevation, and the implied shift from the modernist engagement with the plan to the façade.[3] While the elevation was traditionally conceived as the plane separating the inside from the outside, or presenting the vertical datum of the planimetric organization, the idea of frontality introduces an autonomous surface, which, since the Renaissance, according to Eisenman, has been manipulated to express symbolic and functional meanings. In addition, the plan is understood in a sequence of movements, the experience of which is a perception, whereas the façade "can be both actually perceived and conceptually understood".[4]

In the "Houses of Cards" (1987), the idea of the façade is presented as an abstract surface with no reference point, except that it conveys meanings initiated by its own textuality. This was indeed a design strategy to give a radical twist to Rowe's emphasis on the façade and to recode the traditional understanding of the façade/plan relationship. From now on, the façade is related to its own plan. In Eisenman's words:

> The façade has a different conceptual basis from the plan, section, and volume. In one sense, it can be seen as a vertical plan or section that constitutes the outermost surface of a volume. While it is analogous to plan and section in this way, unlike these other two documented cuts, the façade has an actual quality by virtue of the fact that it can be physically perceived, calling for a different type of reading. In fact, the façade can be seen as a flattened three-dimensional entity with its own plan and section. With conceptual equivalence to the two-dimensional plan and section.[5]

It might be suggested that, at this stage, Eisenman's projects were informed by the historicity of the departure of the architecture of the eighteenth century from the hegemony of the classical language of architecture. Regardless of how long the perceived rupture lasted, Eisenman approached that historical moment as the *primal scene* from which one should extract a different reinterpretation of the very nature of the *event*. Employing contemporary philosophical discourses, the central task that Eisenman took upon himself at this stage of his career was to recode the metaphysics of origin, progress, and history.[6] We might also see in Eisenman's relentless attempt to secure the

autonomy of architecture, the anxieties motivated by the project of modernity in which "everything solid melts into the air", to recall Marshall Berman (1985). Interestingly enough, it was the idea of breaking down the box through which the site came to Eisenman's attention first in the Fin d'Ou T HouS (1985), and then in the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Ohio State University (1989). As will be discussed shortly, the physical and historical properties of the site of this latter project did indeed save Eisenman from drifting away from history, and thus we see the inauguration of a different reasoning for his indulgence of the arbitrary game of fragmentation and formal playfulness.

To give an order, even a chaotic order, to the classical canon of architecture, Eisenman had to pick up the idea of "spine", which in conjunction with a given site would generate two important themes and enable him to put behind the early experimental houses. Two projects, the Frankfurt Biocenter,[7] BDR (1987) and the Wexner Center, were conceived with an eye to the programme, the exigencies of the site, and the theoretical break from semiotics. From now on Eisenman would take advantage of the formal promises traced in Jacques Derrida's writings which in due time would be energized by incorporating computer programming into the process of design. The second departure in Eisenman's work also testifies to a vigorous intellectual conviction, though of a different nature: the metaphysics of architecture that he had intended to deconstruct earlier, are now recognized as deeply rooted in the logos of humanism. The logos of the Cartesian grid implied in the Dom-ino frame, the deep structure of which had ignited the years of the Five Architects, now had to be revisited and worked around. While site and programme still remain important, Eisenman's work in the second period would "fold" and unfold the right angle so dear to Le Corbusier, theorizing the result in terms of what is called "weak form".[8] During this period, the early geometric forms, the cage of reason, are sliced into layers with no significant "purpose" except brushing the body of architecture with fictive texts to the point that architecture becomes nothing less than a textual ensemble. This operation unfolded the possibility of a different strategy; most recent projects of Eisenman are centred on diagram;[9] an abstract drawing motivated by the exigencies of the site or programme, but charged with layers of woven fabric-like tissues waiting to be "translated" into architectural forms. What remains significant in Eisenman's discourse on "diagram" is a turn to the disciplinary history of architecture, albeit perceived from a formalistic point of view.[10]

3.2 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93.

3.3 Peter, Eisenman, Aronoff Center for Design and Art, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1988–96.

3.4 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center for the Visual Arts and Fine Arts Library, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1983–89. Exterior view of the tower.

A few blocks away from the Wexner Center, on the campus of the University of Cincinnati, Eisenman has built two buildings that are a prelude to a fresh beginning. Borrowing from Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss' useful reading of George Bataille's concept of "formless", Eisenman intended to question the "legitimacy of the formal decisions made" in the name of function or the content of an object.[11] In the Columbus Convention Center and in the Aronoff Center for Design and Art, total dematerialization and further intensification of the aesthetic of abstraction are called forth. Here Eisenman articulates an architecture that in more ways than one is formed and informed by "interiority",[12] and a spine whose horizontal elongation alludes to the deconstruction of the cave as one possible origin for the architecture discussed by historians. Another characteristic of these two projects is their allusive "attachment" to something else, suggesting that the "weak form" cannot stand on its own except when is turned into prosthesis.[13] The design of the Wexner Center dwells on the ghost of a bygone tower and the skeletal trace of a historic path. The Aronoff Center, in contrast, leans meticulously against an old structure stretching its own body along with the topography of the site. And yet, in the absence of any historical trace in the deserted site of the Columbus Center, the building had to mimic the twisting forms of the adjacent highway visible from the top floors of the hotel next to the project. Does the implied "absence", the trace of factual and fictive topography in these projects, resonate Eisenman's surgical approach to the once-upon-a-time dependency of architecture on nature? Or is it an allusion to a concept of beauty that is informed by geometry and the human body? If these speculations have merit, then we should ask another question: What other aspects of architecture are still to be tested in the laboratory of deconstruction theory? This is a dilemma, indeed, which, according to Kenneth Frampton, stems from Eisenman's "contradictory desire to both dissolve the essentially Humanistic body of architecture and yet to still remain capable of bringing its shadow into being".[14] The suggested dilemma is perhaps the only continuous thread running through Eisenman's work to date.

In one of his latest writings Eisenman presents a convincing argument for the continuity of architectural "tropes" generated since the Renaissance. Examining the dialogue between void and solid in some Renaissance architecture, Eisenman prepares the ground to test his newest strategy, the "interstitial". The idea of the interstitial is, according to him, "different from

and at the same time subverts Bramante's interstitial". He continues, "The process of the interstitial does not begin from either a container or a contained, even though all architecture is in some way traditionally legitimated by its function as container. This is not to say that there is no container or contained, only that these terms are no longer used to legitimate the work."[15] The rest of the article enumerates the "design methodology" used in the Bibliothèque L'Institut Université, Geneva. The term 'design methodology' here recalls Christopher Alexander's attempt in the 1960s to introduce scientific and mathematical paradigms into the design process.[16] The idea of borrowing from other disciplines was welcomed by the neo-avant-garde whose departure from both classicism and high-modernism had left architects with no choice but to see architecture through windows opened by philosophy and literary criticism. A theoretical blockage which, according to Fredric Jameson, highlights a different dilemma – the simultaneous return of the figurative and abstract aesthetics of modernism.[17]

Having established the three periods crucial to understanding Eisenman's architecture, it is now possible to propose three theoretical problematics that run through his œuvre, each informed by theories of structuralism and post-structuralism with which he has had a rapport since the 1960s. First, the dichotomy between the historicity of architecture and the autonomous nature of architectural ideas: no matter how hard one pushes for architecture's autonomy, the thematic of the disciplinary history of architecture should be considered central to any reinterpretation of architecture. Second, the critic's, i.e., Eisenman's, reading of the problematic of the institution of architecture is ideological through and through. To put it simply, how could Eisenman shake the foundations of architecture without grafting his own ideas onto the textuality of architecture? Manfredo Tafuri, for one, claimed that in writing of Terragni, "Eisenman redesigns him; the free present is a further theoretical manifesto sustaining his architecture without a homeland, liberated beyond space and time. Eisenman too is a master of the art of *simulation*."[18] Third, to walk along the tightrope that Eisenman travels, we have no choice but to approach his work through the dual protagonists of architect and author. Problematic as this might seem, we should, nevertheless, accept the fact that Eisenman is one of the few contemporary architects to have made an effort to attend to, develop and transform the discursive modalities of his own project more frequently than his critics could keep up with. Added to this observation

is the historicity of Eisenman's project, the challenge he wants to launch against the institution of architecture.

Whereas the historical avant-garde's drive for formal autonomy and abstraction was informed by late nineteenth-century historicism, Eisenman's discourse on autonomy is motivated by, first, the recognition of the interiority of architecture, that which is architectural in architecture, a point of view that, paradoxically, is motivated by Eisenman's reading of deconstruction theory. If Derrida intended to underline the uncertainty central to any theoretical narrative, the project's transformation into architecture had no choice, at least in Eisenman's hand, but to give a new twist to the split between sign and signifier that had already been established by structuralism. What this means is that Eisenman embarked on a project whose main goal is to deconstruct the logos of formalism. To do that he had to update *form* in the purview of the latest available theoretical development. Second, seen against the background of postmodern eclecticism, the interiority Eisenman sought for architecture had no choice but to entertain the idea of *play* introduced into architecture by Robert Venturi's discourse on "both-and".[19] To create a distance from the by then exorcised functionalism, meant that architecture had to engage in the game of assemblage for two related reasons: first, to confirm architecture's learning from Las Vegas; second, in the neo-avant-garde's attempt to secure itself from popular culture, the art of building had no choice but to opt for a level of abstraction compatible with that of the aesthetic of commodity fetishism. Since the 1990s, theatricalization was the only terrain left in which the form could sustain its telos of avant-gardism.

To present a convincing argument for the suggested doubling involved in the theatricalization permeating Eisenman's architecture, the discussion should centre on the diagrammatic vision of site, where the introjections of the grid and the spine take place. To this end, the rest of this chapter will analyze two of Eisenman's important projects, and will note the architect's inclination for surface-topography, a subject that will be picked up in Chapter 6.

THE ASHES OF THE GRID

Consider the Wexner Center, where a figurative tower and an abstract grid structure represent the metaphorical demise of both classicism and modernism.

The dream-image quality of the tower, and the robust look of the scaffold recall the traces of the fortress and the path that once existed on the site. Every feature of these two structures is embellished to allude to the aesthetic of ruin: the brick veneer of the tower *appears* as much a fake as the synthetic stucco covering the hollow parts of the tower. The tactile quality assigned to the entrance façade also endorses the idea of ruin, which, ironically, pays lip service to the classical idea of frontality. What this entails, in Eisenman's words, is that "representation insists on a completion that it cannot identify as absolute . . . therefore it [representation] is always ruined in advance".[20] Furthermore, the juxtaposition between the picturesque qualities of the main façade and the abstract scaffold is a reminder of the postmodernist idea of "both–and" noted earlier. More interesting, is the main façade and its potential for association with those eighteenth-century drawings where the everlasting life of nature is depicted next to a ruined structure. Eisenman's masquerade of the main façade adheres to the aesthetics of the fossil, rendering the stone stonier, as is the case in Piranesi's Carcceri. In the Wexner Center, the scaffold suggests the eternity of the Cartesian grid even though conceived to simulate the ruin. The body of the building is indeed rotten!

3.5 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center, 1983-89. Exterior view of the grid.

And yet, running on the north–south axis, the empty and the naked body of the scaffold eludes the death of the corpus of humanism. With its dominant position, the scaffold endorses the enduring qualities of the aesthetic of abstraction. Interestingly enough, the tower and the grid represent the two major compositional elements central to the early modernist fascination with formalism. In the Wexner Center, the line and the point define and confine the placement of other parts of the complex: the entrance is placed next to the tower but perpendicular to the scaffold. The library is placed underground on the east side of the site with no direct access to natural light; a design strategy implemented perhaps to prevent formal confrontation between the library's presumed massive volume and that of the scaffold. To assign the latter a dominant position in the overall composition of the complex, the entire body of the building is sliced into many layers, each following diverse axes, and a grid system that is motivated by the initial diagrammatic analysis of the site. Here theatricalization is sustained by the diagrammatic energies of the two elements of point and line. In retrospect, one might argue that it is the abstraction of the site and its permutation to a surface-plane that will later sneak into Eisenman's architectural language, forcing the banishment of the line and point from his future projects.

In the Wexner Center, however, Eisenman's design economy departs from his previous experimental work, and intends to scale down the vertical and volumetric demand of the right angle dictated not only by geometry of form but also by the tectonic dialogue between the elements of load and support. The architectonic intentions of the scaling down are visible in every section drawing of Eisenman's latest projects. In these drawings a truncated and contorted cladding suppresses the tectonic of load and support. The strategy aims at a theatricalization of architecture whose tropes are sometimes carried into the interior space too. Next to the entrance, inside and above the stair leading to the main exhibition area of the Wexner Center, a suspended column stops short of touching the ground. To dramatize the theatrical scene further, the bottom of the suspended column is dropped a few inches below the imaginary plane of intersection, where other columns and beams meet each other. Is this an accidental misfit between the structural grid system and the location of the stair that stands perhaps where it should be? Or is this a cardboard column painted the same colour to resemble other structural members of the grid? Such a theatrical stage set recalls the technique of shock

3.6 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center, 1983–89. Interior stairs.

utilized by the dadaists and surrealists, a strategy that will be abandoned soon when “surface” emerges as the sole element, initiating a different reading of what is called the interiority of architecture.

The analysis of Eisenman’s project thus far should first be qualified at theoretical level, and then revisited in conjunction with selected projects designed by Carlo Scarpa and Alvaro Siza, to mention just two architects whose work shares motifs central to the Wexner Center. The intention is to historicize the tropes that are dependent on contemporary architecture, and to demonstrate the architectonic implication of the difference between the tectonic of theatricality and theatricalization.

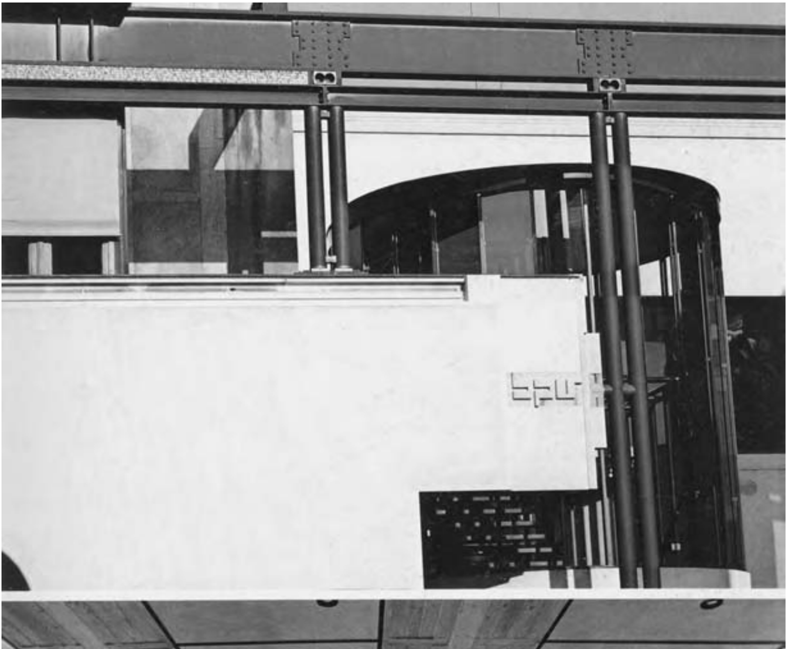
By way of introduction, it is necessary to reiterate the well-known story that the dadaists’ and surrealists’ use of shock techniques was a response to the compulsive situation inaugurated by the Metropolis. This was also conceived as an attack on the bourgeois idea of the autonomy of art, and the modernist trust in technology. Not only have those techniques exhausted

their formal effectiveness, the very enduring foundation of the historical avant-garde is rather questionable today. According to Peter Burger, "a further difficulty inheres in the aesthetics of shock, and that is the impossibility to make permanent this kind of effect. As a result of repetition, it changes funadamentally: there is such a thing as expected shock."[21] If the first occurrence of the concept of shock was dependent on the Europe of 1916, its re-use at the turn of the century seems like the "return of the repressed", a phenomenon which ironically fits the cultural spectacle of late capitalism, where the return of the same indifference is the major ordering principle of everyday life. In welcoming all kinds of "returns", capitalism perhaps wants to endorse the idea of the end of history as one manifestation of the globalization of its political and cultural structures.

Taking Hegel's idea of repetition, Slavoj Žižek has this to say about the changed symbolic status of an event in modernity: "When it erupts for the first time it is experienced as a contingent trauma, as an intrusion of a certain non-symbolized Real; only through repetition is this event recognized in its symbolic necessity – it finds its place in the symbolic network; it is realized in the symbolic order."[22] If convinced by Žižek's position, then we need to ask what symbolic order does the suggested return of avant-garde techniques in Eisenman's architecture aim to sustain? Eisenman's entire œuvre demonstrates an attempt to question the symbolic content of architecture. In post-modernity, however, the re-use of modernist techniques simply facilitates architecture's entry to the "symbolic order" that is unfolding under late capitalism. This is another way of suggesting that the theatricalization permeating neo-avant-garde work places architecture at the heart of the culture of spectacle. There remains, in Eisenman's work, a conscious attempt on his part to avoid the tectonic of a trabeated construction system embedded in the orthogonal grid, which is central to the ontology of construction.

To make these theoretical remarks more relevant to the problematic of contemporary architecture, it is necessary to recall the tectonic rapport between the columnar system, the wall, and the roof in Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion; Mies' recoding of the classical understanding of the relationship between column and beam in the National Gallery in Berlin; and, finally, his rethinking of the tectonic of these elements in the Crown Hall, ITT Campus.[23] In the latter project, the tectonic of an exposed steel truss and column would become, interestingly enough, a point of departure for Eisenman to rehearse

3.7 Peter Eisenman, Fire station, Brooklyn, New York, 1985.



3.8 Carlo Scarpa, Banca Popolare di Verona, Italy, 1973.

Van Doesburg's aesthetics of the diagonal in the Brooklyn Fire Station. The play between the orthogonal and the diagonal is another trope, by which Eisenman has chosen to liberate architecture from the encumbrance of the tectonic of column-and-beam. Eisenman's investment in abstraction has pushed architecture into a realm of theatricalization, the aesthetic gravitation of which remains as seductive as that of the fetishism of commodities.

The recourse to Mies is not meant to cap the tectonic possibilities of the column-and-beam, experienced throughout modern architecture. A case can be made for a perception of theatricality that is centred on the tectonic, and yet the work might address the motifs noted in the Wexner Center. Carlo Scarpa's entire work, for one, braces together the purposefulness of a chosen structural system and its theatrical articulation, to the point that the final product "appears" like an artifice. In numerous buildings, including the Banca Popolare di Verona, and the Museo di Castelvecchio, Scarpa's treatment of column-and-beam reconciles the nineteenth-century structural rationalists' vision with the theatrical embellishment of material and form. In the Olivetti shop, for instance,[24] the joint connecting the column to the beam, or the wall to the ceiling, operates as a disjoint. It gives these architectonic elements a chance for self-expression beyond the dictates of the forces of gravity or function. The vision of seeing and making that permeates Scarpa's work provides the stone of the interior stair with the chance to stretch itself further, to look lighter and to dance in a space whose theatrical gesture does, ironically, emphasize the tactility of stone and steel. If the theatrical ambiance of this shop alludes to the consumer world of commodities, the broken body of the column in the Brion Cemetery recalls the eternity of death and ruination. Here theatricality speaks for the dialogue between making and fabrication; between materiality of steel and its denial through tectonic embellishment: the steel column has to be cut first, then tied together meticulously and, finally, fixed in the pond, to imply a second cutting as detected in the column's reflected image in the water. Here the broken column anticipates its broken image in the water.

Dedication to material, purpose and the tectonic of theatricality, noted in Scarpa, is also at work in Alvaro Siza's architecture. To shorten this detour from Eisenman's work, and to demonstrate how other contemporary architects entertain ideas such as fragmentation and theatricality, it is worth discussing only one particular work of Siza. In the Museum of Contemporary Art in

3.9 Carlo Scarpa, Olivetti Shop, Venice, Italy, 1957–58.

3.10 Carlo Scarpa, the Brion Cemetery, Italy, 1967–78. View of the pavilion and "propylaea".

3.11/3.12 Alvaro Siza, the Museum of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1988–93.

Santiago de Compostela, the tectonic of load and support is articulated through the dialogue between cutting and connecting. Like other projects of Siza's, the building is designed to accommodate the exigencies of the site. The triangular shape of the site splits the body of building into two wings that converge at the southern edge. The composition aims at underlining the location of the portico and the main entrance, both placed at the opposite end. To dramatize the implied hinge, the northern face of the wing that shelters the ramp and the stairs at the entrance, is cut from its base and then connected by two short steel columns. The strategy of cutting, at first glance, recalls Mies' Concrete House, where a continuous ribbon-like fenestration challenges the expected tectonic convention embedded in a masonry construction system. Siza's tectonic articulation is rather modest. It recalls the nineteenth-century dialogue between the culture of stone and steel, and the centrality of the idea of necessity for the tectonic. In this project, the cut makes an opening to pour light into the stair, and to stress the position of the main entrance. There is an ambiguity in Siza's tectonic imagination that is also worth addressing: An opening flanked by two columns and a beam above is essential for the image of the gate permeating the architecture of antiquity. The image was given a new twist by the nineteenth-century American architect, Frank Furness, who would reduce the columns standing next to the main entrance to a decorative element. In Santiago, Siza recodes such an image without falling into the pitfall of simulation or repetition. The two short steel columns in this project disconnect the blank granite wall of a two-storey volume from its base, creating a tectonic form whose theatricality alludes to the hinge on the other end.

THE SPINE OF THE GATE

Interestingly enough, the ghost of the Greek image of the gate haunts the Aronoff Center for Design and Art. Here the two concrete columns, standing in front of the main entrance, raise a volume that is grafted onto the space between the new addition and the existing building. To dislocate the tectonic vision discussed in Scarpa and Siza's buildings, Eisenman's design discloses an image of the relationship between load and support that is nurtured by concepts developed in other disciplines. The second difference between Eisenman and Scarpa or, for that matter, Siza, has to do with the fact that

3.13 Peter Eisenman, Aronoff Center, Ohio, 1988–96. Main entrance.

for Eisenman, space and its expressive quality are instrumental in the theatricality of the final form. Space, as such, has less importance in the archicture of Siza and Scarpa: it is experienced through the tectonic of the constructed form and the tactility of the material employed.

These critical observations are borne out on entering the Ohio Convention Center, where the spine of the building is flanked by the large exhibition hall and the meeting rooms. The planimetric organization employed here is typical of Eisenman's public projects in the early 1990s. What is involved is the play at work between the structural frame system and the volume that envelops various meeting rooms: these volumes are perceived to demonstrate their autonomy from the space marked by the structural grid. According to Eisenman, "while there are actual columns in a regular pattern, the space is not conceptually gridded".[25] In the Ohio Convention Center, the spatial disjunction between the internal volumes and the structural grid is dynamized by what might be considered the volumetric extension of a plane marking the

3.14 Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93.

3.15 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93.

loading ducts located at the edges of the exhibition hall. The formal effect of this diagrammatic interjection is carried through the spine, ending at the face of the street façade. This formal play gives rise to two readings. First, the composition attempts to deconstruct the classical vision of part/whole relations, in general, and Louis Kahn's idea of served/service spaces in particular. In Kahn, the dialogue between these two spaces sustains the formal logic of a chosen type. Eisenman, instead, intends to deconstruct typological order. Second, seen from the bird's-eye-view, the mass of the Convention Center looks to be made out of many volumetric layers (Möbius strips?) each extending along the spatial traces of a hypothetical moving truck. The design strategy makes the building simulate the undulating forms of the adjacent highway. It also divides and scales down the main street façade; the latter looks like a row of terraced houses stacked next to each other, perhaps to subdue the expected civic dimension of the complex.

The cladding of the street façade is a colourful synthetic stucco, various layers of which are inscribed by a hypothetical axis. The best that can be made of these fractured surfaces is by way of association with the disjunction noted earlier between the interior volumes and the structural grid. Furthermore, the

3.16 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Aerial view.

3.17 Peter Eisenman, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio, 1990–93. Street elevation.

façade is a reminder of the ruined look of the tower of the Wexner Center. Here too the "face" of building looks pale, soft and bodiless. What design incentive might initiate the choice of colour and the virtual-look of this façade? Is the prevailing colourfulness and the virtual-look of this project a reaction to the aesthetics of the white architecture of the so-called International Style, and the Five Architects? Or is it perceived in reference to the nineteenth-century debate on the polychromic origins of Greek architecture? If the latter guess is far-fetched, the fact remains that Eisenman's work tends to internalize the aesthetic of artificiality, a strategy used to undermine the thingness of architecture in the first place, and to neglect the role of the tectonic in the spatial experience of a building.

This much is clear from a first encounter with the Aronoff Center, where a whipped-cream-like coated surface covers the interior spine (see Fig. 3.3), a space that operates like a "time machine". Eisenman's intensive use of artificial light next to the daylight pouring through skylights negates any expected unity between time and space. Here the morphic effect, the fact that the spectator's vector of sight and body is constantly challenged by the

asymmetrical and undulating walls and the grid of ceiling, produces a cinematographic experience of the kind that Auguste Choisy and Sergei Eisenstein attributed to the Acropolis.[26] From point of entry to the other end of the spine, where an exit door opens on to a vista of the city, one is exposed by the spatial permutation of a series of ascents and turns, each framing a partial image of the spine, the totality of which remains out of reach. A *promenade architecturale*? Yes, though different from the one at work in the Villa Savoye, for example. In the latter, the courtyard located on the main floor of the building balances the ascent to the roof and out into the open space. Le Corbusier's vision of space might be associated with what Eisenman characterizes as the classical and mechanistic sense of spatial organization.[27] In the Villa Savoye, however, most architectonic decisions, including the "free façade", are made in order to externalize the interior volume of the building. This spatial experience is facilitated by the idea of the *promenade architecturale*.

The vision at work in the Aronoff Center operates towards different ends. Here, the feeling is informed by the virtual quality of the space that is wrapped in layers of partition, the surfaces of which are exploited to endorse the singularity of the spine at the expense of other spaces. This much is clear from the corridor that leads to the design studios where a bare and almost depressing atmosphere reminds one of the *excess* invested in the spine. It also demonstrates the architect's intention to deconstruct the formal logic of served/service spaces, a typology that haunts the design in a disfigured composition that is ordered by the adjacent existing building and the topography of the site. Having experienced the excess inscribed into the spine, the access to the open air at the other end of what might be called a Möbius strip, rekindles the kind of redemptive feeling discussed by Gaston Bachelard.[28]

Throughout his career, Eisenman has taken every opportunity to question the culture of building, themes internal to the disciplinary history of architecture.[29] Even though his design strategies aim at the abstract articulation of dualities such as column/wall, structure/space and void/solid, his main intention remains centred on denying these oppositions any substantial role in the tectonic articulation of form. Only the deconstruction of the metaphysical content of these dualities and its formal results are considered worthy of attention, and this to him is enough of a strategy to inform the content of "critical" practice. According to Eisenman, "Form in architecture is all we have. So formalism in architecture is different from formalism in language,

in painting, in literature, because formalism in language is only one means of communication; in architecture it is the only means."[30] His critical eye does not fall on the ideological content of the problematic rapport between technology and architecture. Interestingly enough, Eisenman's writing never addresses the question of technology and its implications for architecture, particularly the historical transgression from *techne* to the tectonic, and montage.[31] The concept of making and the way it is woven into the ideological domain, at least in late capitalism, has no place in his theoretical work either. Instead of addressing the relationship between technology and ideology, Eisenman is, seemingly, more interested in discussing the loss of architecture's power in the amelioration of social ills.

Consider the following observation: according to Eisenman, "Since the mid-eighteenth century, architecture has been sustained by ideological politics. With the demise of ideology we ask what role architecture plays in international capital. Can plastic architecture still ameliorate social problems, or is only an architecture of infrastructure viable?" And he continues, the "ideology of form that once resided in the plastic is seen as irrelevant".[32] Obviously, the major objective and subjective thinking, essential to the formation of the modernist vision of architecture, is inaccessible today. Gone also is the position that would consider technology a critical force in moving the newborn industrial society away from the physical and aesthetic remnants of the old regime. It is even arguable that the trust of the Werkbund and the Bauhaus in technology was aimed at distancing architecture from historicism. Nevertheless, Eisenman's claim for the "demise of ideology" dismisses the importance of the process of the technification of architecture,[33] a subject that might be considered of critical significance in his own turn to formalism.

That the post-war situation was informed by a different understanding of technology might be detected in the following statement of Mies, dated 1928. According to him,

> Technology follows its own laws and is not man-related. Economy becomes self-serving and calls forth new needs. Autonomous tendencies in all these forces assert themselves. Their meaning seems to be the attainment of a specific phase of development. But they assume a threatening predominance. Unchecked, they thunder along. Man is swept along as if in a whirlwind. Each individual attempts to brace himself singularly against these forces. We stand at a turning point.[34]

In retrospect, what is significant in Mies' claim is a concept of technology that is independent of the modernist's social vision of architecture, but that also anticipates the present situation where technology is "visibly" functioning as an ideological force. This is not to deny the fact that today there is no broad consensus among architects, artists and thinkers about the redemptive power of technology. Nevertheless, since Mies, and theories advanced by Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger, we must consider if modernism's strive for formal autonomy was not itself centred on the ideology of technology, and the latter's drive to conquer architecture, among other cultural products, and, finally, to what extent such a project, i.e. the technification of architecture, is facilitated by the advent of electronic techniques.

That there is no reason today to discuss socialist, democratic and even fascist architecture is obvious. What should be noted, however, is that everyday life does not unravel in a vacuum of political and economic decision-making,[35] even though the present globalization of capital and information technologies attempts to ensure the possibility of overriding every perceivable ideological obstacle, even those motivated by the politics of late capitalism. Modern institutions and corporations, like pre-modern palaces and churches, exercised a certain pressure on architecture, albeit discreetly, through what Žižek calls "ideological fantasy"; this is not an escape from a given reality, but a way of offering "the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic real kernel".[36] Whether the kernel of contemporary trauma in architecture can be attributed to Mies' de-territorialization of the language of modern architecture, or to the failure of the project of the historical avant-garde,[37] the loss has raised several critical issues as far as the crisis of architecture is concerned. Globalization of capital and the infusion of telecommunication technologies into every aspect of the life-world should be considered critical for the permeation of "ideological fantasy", and its contribution in pushing architecture into the bedrock of spectacle nurtured by the politics of late capitalism.

Along with other neo-avant-garde architects, Eisenman has made an attempt to transgress the *Zeitgeist*'s disregard of the latter's dialogical rapport with technology.[38] He is correct in insisting on the importance of technology for opening new perceptual horizons and affecting artistic production process,[39] and he also strikes a major chord in warning young architects about the two-dimensional and diagrammatic function of drawings produced by computer, and the fact that those drawings are far removed from

the realm of architecture. He, and other architects, check those diagrams constantly against architectural tropes.[40] What Eisenman dismisses in his rather promising remarks is the essence of technology, which, according to Heidegger, is not technological.[41] Unnoticed by Eisenman and other neo-avant-garde architects in their unreserved fascination with what computer programming can do for architecture, is the backward gaze of Walter Benjamin's angel. Reminding his reader of Adolf Loos's search for *place*, Massimo Cacciari observes that:

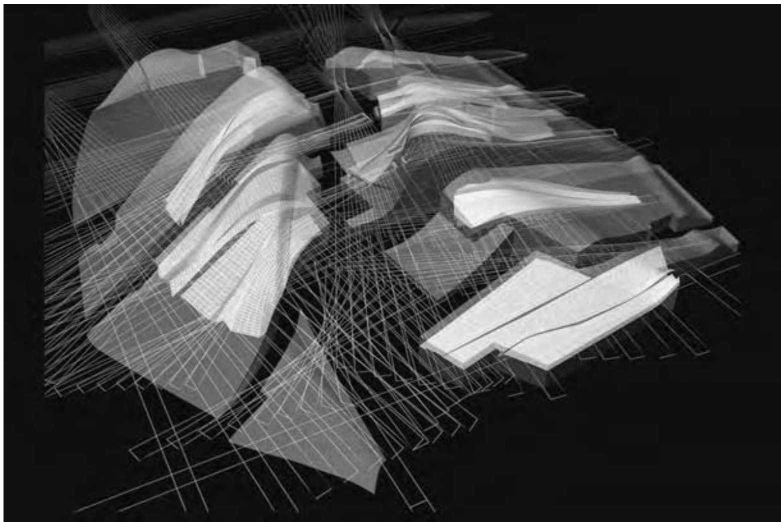
> The "freedom" of the avant-garde and the hubris of its criticism shatters the delicate balance of the figure of the Angel and dissipates the feeble messianic strength that it announces to us. On the other hand, the avant-garde decrees the "once upon a time," and reduces things to "eternal images" – on the other, it turns its gaze on the future and, like a future teller, looks for "what lies hidden in the womb." For the Angel, on the other hand, the ephemeral of the present *senses* that of the past, and its future lies in the moment, which is origin. And in any case, how could the Angel destroy all presuppositions, if the very happiness for which he yearns is itself presupposed?[42]

What is involved here is the following; the "freedom" experienced through media technology denies the intelligibility of the dissonance existing between techno-scientific space and how such a dissonance can be the subject matter of what Cacciari calls a "game of a combination of places".[43] The denial also involves the tectonic, how to make a virtue out of material without losing the sight of the dialogical relationship between the ephemeral and the permanent.

Even though the prospects of winning over digital seem dim, the fact remains that in late capitalism, technology is infused into the culture, and plays a dramatic role in framing contemporary ways of seeing and making. And yet technology does more. Discussing Heidegger, Leo Marx recalls Georg Lukács and Karl Marx's idea of reification, arguing that, similar to commodities, technology exerts some power over us to the point that social relations are "mysteriously endowed with an objective, even autonomous character".[44] Here the idea of autonomy alludes to something more than the eighteenth-century separation of the mechanical arts from the fine arts, and the subsequent autonomy of architecture from pre-modern political and cultural institutions. Leo Marx's discussion of autonomy speaks for the ways in which commodities "appear" to be independent from their use-value, thus

sublimating the object within the aesthetic of fetishism. Uprooted from "Real", to use Žižek's word, telecommunication technologies enforce the aesthetic of theatricalization; seductive and autonomous forms floating in a field empty of purpose and material, waiting to be rendered as form. It is in this context that Eisenman's critical practice is channelled into a formalistic game, thus yielding to the aesthetic of commodity fetishism. His most recent works, however, are appealing, beautiful, and cool![45] These projects also celebrate the spectacle and the virtual victory of ideology. Eisenman's architecture also recalls what *écriture* meant to Roland Barthes:[46] the "morality of form", the zone of freedom where personal signature connotes nothing but the thirst for identity.

It remains to be seen in what direction the tropes emerging in Eisenman's most recent work, the Cultural Centre at Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, will lead. For one, *technique* is used in this project to recall the most archaic, the merging of architecture into the landscape more vigorously than the subject was treated in his previous work. What is involved in Eisenman's turn to the surface-topography is the possibility of a more radical departure from the tropes central to humanist architecture, the singularity of geometry, the idea of frontality, and the anthropomorphism that he had wished to deconstruct in his early experimental work.



3.18 Peter Eisenman, City of Culture of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. 1999 (in progress).

CHAPTER 4

Bernard Tschumi: return of the object[1]

PETER EISENMAN'S SEARCH FOR AUTONOMY of form involves recoding the tropes of humanist architecture. His deconstruction of architectural themes that have accumulated since the Renaissance uses a strategy derived from textual analysis, one that dispenses with the importance of the ontology of construction, the art of building. Indeed, a crusade against architecture is the thread running through neo-avant-garde architecture.[2] In contrast to Eisenman's "play" with the metaphysics of architectural discourse, Bernard Tschumi thinks of architecture as being in line with conceptual art.[3] This artistic tendency of the 1970s projects the object into the dialogue between art and language, the architectonic implication of which is to repress themes endemic in the modernist vision of the object. To do away with the convention of approaching the work based on its sensual properties, its relationship between form and content, the conceptual in architecture concerns the process and the object. Here the object is "both the form and the meaning simultaneously".[4] To this end, the conceptual in architecture involves the synthetic dimension of form; the relationship between various elements that informs the structure of its form. Conceptual architecture, therefore, involves *a priori* a design intention that not only informs the design process, but also structures the final result, i.e. the object. Underlying this attitude is a return to the theme of nihilism whose devaluation of architecture aims at an object that is not formalistic, and yet – like Michel Foucault's reading of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*[5] – seeks to shake the image of architecture held in the eye of the beholder. Tschumi's contribution to contemporary architecture has to do with his theoretical distance from the formalism of Collin Rowe,[6] on the one hand, and the Eisenmanesque deconstruction of Rowe's formalism, on the other.

In Tschumi's work, the normative element in architecture is achieved not by fragmentation or shock techniques, but through the insertion of "event" into the space separating the object from its signification. Disjunction between architecture and its institutional hegemony involves removing the object from its conventional connotative context, and reinterpreting a given programme free of its formal contingencies. These two strategies suspend the axiom of "form follows function", and charge architecture with a sense of space that is pregnant with event. In this development, rehabilitation of earlier avant-garde work such as constructivism and situationist "terror" is utilized not for their original ends,[7] but as a radical choice against postmodern historicism and the formalistic play practised by some members of the New York Five architects. The specificity of Tschumi's architecture has to do, I claim here, with a sense of objectivity where matter-of-factness compromises the historicity of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* with the theatricality that prevails in the present culture of spectacle. What this means is that instead of demystifying "return" by strategies that emphasize the process of design, Tschumi attempts to recode the idea of objectivity in the purview of tactile and spatial sensibilities that are central to the concept of return.

The critical nature of Tschumi's work presupposes a theoretical paradigm different from modernism. What needs to be looked at here are the architectonic implications of a major theoretical shift, from a tradition in which the critic or the historian would mediate between a work and its signification to a postmodernist situation where the architect sets the theoretical premises of any criticism addressing his or her work.[8] Thematic dualities such as theory/practice, form/content and subject/object are rethought within the limits of the discipline of architecture, and in the theoretical space opened by themes developed in other disciplines.

The spatial opening I am alluding to has its own historicity. In the nineteenth century, modernization had already expanded architects' horizons of sight and construction. Among the other reactions to this historical opening, Gottfried Semper's position is unique; he mapped architecture in the vicissitudes of industries that at a glance have little to do with the art of building. His writings on style and the origin of architecture embody a sense of spatiality that should be read as part of a larger process of recoding the intellectual and physical space of modernity. One might suggest that postmodernity means, in the first place, an expansion of the disjunctive spatiality (at work since the

early years of modernization) beyond economic and technical domains to include the cultural. This last development not only has distanced us from the ethos of modern architecture, but more importantly, it has drastically transformed everyday life to the point where the totality nestled at the heart of Semper's discourse on theatricality is no longer sustainable.[9]

And yet, what differentiates the present cultural discourse from modernism should also be addressed. Among many other developments, the 1966 publication of Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* initiated a different approach to modern architecture.[10] During those years, modern architecture was checked and reexamined by extraordinary paradigms – most notably, literary paradigms such as semiotics and structuralism. Communication theories and phenomenology also mapped the crisis of architecture differently.[11] The New York Five, for example, approached architecture as more than a mechanistic interpretation of the relationship between form and function, presenting it as a conceptual phenomenon devoid of "purpose". Their approach was deeply motivated by formalistic issues that had been at work since De Stijl and the Russian Constructivists. Eisenman was among those who first charged architecture with theories of semiology, and then straitjacketed it with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. On the other side of the Atlantic, influenced by the student uprisings of the 1960s and the work of Archigram, Tschumi framed architecture in the light of concepts such as "disjunction" and "event",[12] embedded in cinematic experience. However we differentiate Tschumi's work from the Five and others, the fact remains that the architecture of the post-1960s is touched by the idea of the "death of the author" and its implications for "design" are worth examining.[13]

To question the role of the author does not mean literary "death", or the banishment of meaning in architecture. The idea of the death of the subject rather speaks for the end of the "grand narrative" – a subject dear to the project of the Enlightenment – whose absence from postmodern discourse has opened a space where "theory" undermines the limits enforced by history and disciplinary considerations. This move from history to theory has given architects the chance to resume a different rapport with their subject matter.[14] Neither the tropes of this or that style, nor the formal articulation of a given function, not even the symbolic or semiotic representation of an idea – none of these invigorate the realm of design today. Nullification of history and themes evolved through architectural practice, at least during the 1980s, has

shifted architects' attention either to interdisciplinary discourse or to the tropes that were marginal for modernists. One implication of this development is that "through careful efforts, one can disclose the repressed contents of a work and gain access to a new interpretation".[15] If this is suggestive of an object whose actual realization necessitates the banishment of the architect's (author's) design aptitudes, then, Tschumi is right to claim that:

> To achieve architecture without resorting to design is an ambition often in the minds of those who go through the incredible effort of putting together buildings. Behind this objective is the desire to achieve the obvious clarity of the inevitable, a structure in which the concept becomes architecture itself. In this approach, there is no need to design "new" abstract shapes or historically grounded forms, whether modern, vernacular, or Victorian, according to one's ideological allegiance; here the idea or concept would result in all the architectural, spatial, or urbanistic effects one could dream of without reliance on proportions, style, or aesthetics. Instead of designing seductive shapes or forms, one would posit an axiom or principle from which everything would derive.[16]

Nevertheless, the axiom dearest to Tschumi is "programming", if understood not as an end in itself, but as a departure point for an architecture of disjunction.[17] Reinterpreting a given programme, Tschumi's architecture is concerned with the fabrication of space, the body's motion in space, and the space–time–programme axiom.[18] Through *reprogramming* (deconstruction), Tschumi turns these rather abstract themes into concrete and site-specific "building elements". The body, space, and event unravel a peculiar sense of objectivity, the architectonic implications of which I intend to explore in several of Tschumi's projects.

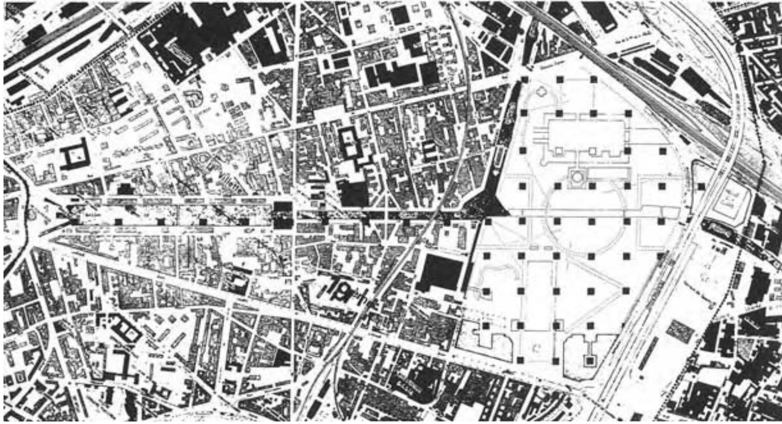
THE GARDEN OF FOLLIES

On 8 April 1982, the late François Mitterand announced an international competition for a "21st-century Park" to be located at the heart of a working-class district near Paris. In December of the same year, Bernard Tschumi, then a 37-year-old artist/architect and instructor at the Cooper Union, won the first prize out of 472 entries from 37 different nationalities.[19] The Parc de la Villette, "the

largest discontinuous building in the world", was Tschumi's first built project and, according to him, the first building worthy of the name "architecture of disjunction".[20]

An earlier competition had been announced on 22 January 1976, during the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, that involved planning a 55-hectare park, La Villette. Different concepts of urban park, time and programme mark the differences between these two competitions. During the 1970s, the heyday of postmodern architecture and urbanism, the city was still treated as a monument whose image was shaped by the fine composition of many fractured urban parts. Such a romanticized urban typology was best depicted in the Krier brothers' projects, where the design aimed at patching up the fragmented metropolis. For them, the collective memory of the past and its representation was seen as a major factor in enforcing any order. This was a logical reaction, for some architects, against the brutal urban renewal projects that mowed down miles of existing urban fabrics only to replace them with an instant pop-up version of commercial landscape. Whether an aestheticized planning filled with Arcadian civility and bourgeois elegance could reconcile the broken promise of utopian modernism was the right question to ask in light of the postmodernist approach to the city. The irony, at least in the case of the La Villette competition, was that a lush urban park packed with bulging vegetation, picturesque pathways, and meadows running through the network of canals and parkways was also the vision of the French state officials.

The programme for the 1976 competition called for a general plan to create a park and to patch up built-up areas, and to keep the main focus on filling an "open space" – the land released after eviction and demolition – with the French state's vision of a park. It is telling to examine the entries for the 1976 competition (published in *Architectural Design Profile 15*) as an illustration of how much things would change in just six years. However, for the 1976 competition, Tschumi submitted a baroque plan, emphasizing fortification along the north-eastern border of La Villette and a bar of low-rise courtyard houses hugging the curved periphery of Paris. In the introduction to his submission, Le Jardin de Don Juan,[21] Tschumi portrays the modern architect as a Don Juan who would sell his/her formal solution with seductive metaphors. Tschumi traces this line of thinking in the urban vision of Marc-Antoine Laugier, Le Notre and even Le Corbusier, to demonstrate how, since the eighteenth century, architects have tried to mask the fact that the city has become



4.1 Parc de la Villette competition entry, 1976.

a battlefield of order and disorder, chaos and regularity, rationality and sensuality.

Tschumi reminds us of Laugier's conviction that "one must look at a town as a forest", and that "he who knows how to design a park could conceive a plan for a city".[22] This analogy, or assemblage of garden with the city, attains its modernist vision in Le Corbusier's *Urbanisme,* where the alleged idea of the "mask" combines variety with uniformity in detail.[23] Against these historical references, Tschumi recounts the eagerness of architects in planning a visionary landscape that would give rise to a mutual exclusion between existing conditions and its potential interpretations. To avoid this dilemma, Tschumi renounces representation and makes analogies between representation and mask. According to him, although a mask might enhance the material quality of the appearance, nevertheless, "by its very presence, it says that, in the background, there is something else".[24] This allusion to "appearance", or rather the "disappearance" of all other possibilities, allows the "Don Juan architect" to indulge in "games of interior reflection and fulfillment of hidden desires".[25] Pointing to the seductive power of the mask, Tschumi rejects utopian solutions based on utility and reason, arguing that these solutions exclude sensuality and eroticism. Pursuing excess in pleasure rather than seeking pleasure in excess, he sees the ultimate pleasure of architecture in "that impossible moment when an architectural act, brought to excess, reveals

both the traces of reason and the immediate experience of space".[26] Thus, the actualization of pleasure demands manipulation of the space that rests between the "mask" and the building.

Tschumi's proposal for the 1976 competition entry is a hybrid of Piranesi's Il Campo Marzio dell'Antica Rome, Parc Monceau de Carmontelle, and the Parc de Versailles. The design strategy posits architecture as a language game that is not in search of meaning, but maps a site where conflict overcomes order, where concept collides with the movement of the body in space. However, in 1976, even after the successful transposition of Barthesian "pleasure" and its "subtle subversion" – eroticism – into Le Jardin de Don Juan, the pleasure of the "mask" still could not find its full expression. It is in Le Fresnoy, as we will see shortly, that Tschumi finally conceives architecture as a place for the production and dissemination of artwork though blended with didactic taste.[27]

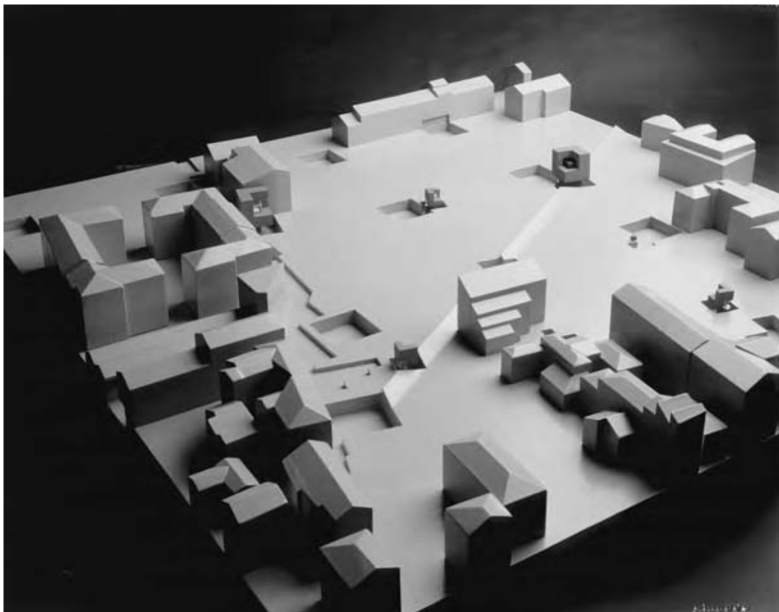
The International Competition of 1982 called for a new model of urban park appropriate to the coming century. Surrounded by railways and highways, the 55 hectares area of the Parc de la Villette is marked by two perpendicular waterways: the Ourcq Canal to the east of Paris, running into the suburbs, and the St Denis Canal, which extends from one loop of the Seine to the other.[28] Instead of emphasizing the urban greenery, the 1982 competition aimed at turning a peripheral location – both geographically and ethnically – into a centre of activity, creating parallel networks where "[m]etropolitan unity disintegrates into plurality and peripheries", as described by the initiator of the programme, François Barre. There were intense and often quarrelsome debates throughout the process over whether to combine wilderness and geometry or to secure a man-made landscape; to guarantee the stability of a natural setting, or to reinstate a system of values; and, finally, how to extend the spirit of science and technology into the next millennium.

Mitterand wanted a complex and imaginative ensemble that would incorporate the City of Music and the National Museum of Science, Technology and Industry into the future park to compose a "little city" within the city of Paris. Thus a new type of space had to be invented and Tschumi's entry provided the best solution for several reasons: it recognized the need to de-structure and de-centre programmatic needs; it dispersed the sheer scale of the required facilities; it treated the periphery as an urban landscape rather than as a boundary separating the cultural from the natural; and, most

importantly, it planted the “follies” as constantly evolving spaces to allow superimposition or juxtaposition between function, form and event. We read in Tschumi’s proposal:

> We aim neither to change styles while retaining a traditional content, nor to fit the proposed program into a conventional mould, whether neo-classical, neo-romantic or neo-modernist. Rather, our project is motivated by the most constructive principle within the legitimate “history” of architecture, by which new programmatic developments and inspirations result in new typologies. Our ambition is to create a new model in which program form, and ideology all play integral roles.[29]

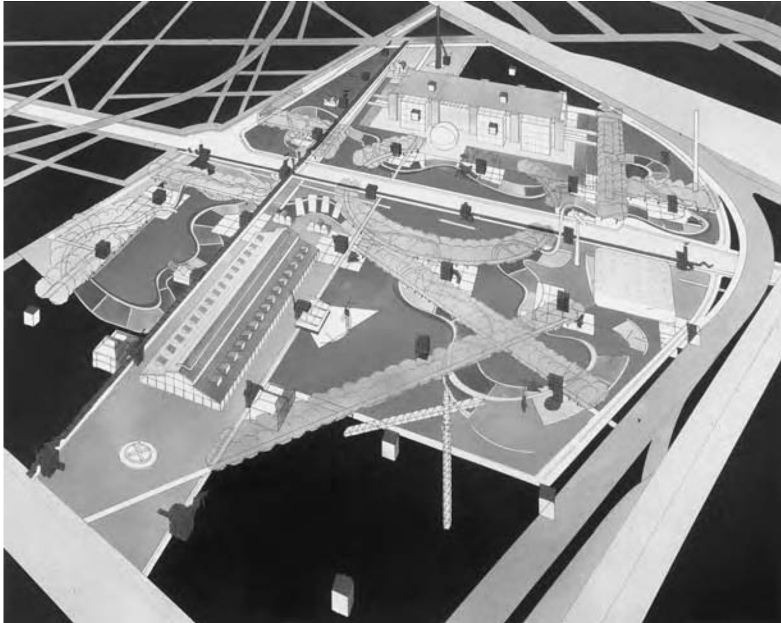
Superimposing an abstract system of geometry – point, line and plane – over the existing location, Tschumi envisioned a “degree zero” situation which would soften the binary conflict between programme and site, and would mediate between concept, programme and all given constraints. His proposal combines a network of paths that are punctuated by freestanding structures.



4.2 Peter Eisenman, Cannaregio Project, 1978. Plan.

The grid system employed by Peter Eisenman in the Cannaregio project (1978) comes to mind. Eisenman wanted to expose the "constraining" or "framing" power of geometry on architecture. Articulating the void left by modernism and the rationality epitomized in Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital project (planned for the same site), Eisenman plots Le Corbusier's grid throughout the site. A series of square holes punctuates the intersections of the grid where the ground is excavated to expose the virgin earth as *tabula rasa*. These square holes were occupied by several pink – (or Venetian red) – red objects that, according to Eisenman, "contained nothing upon close examination": they only contaminated the squares.[30] Inserting "theory" into the process of conceptualization and design, both Tschumi and Eisenman expose and thus displace the doctrine of modernity. However, the differences between these two architects' strategies should also be underlined. Expanding the horizon of abstraction beyond the scope of modern architecture, Eisenman framed the ontology of architecture within a chain of empty signs. His rewriting of the avant-garde doctrine introduced a severe architecture that could collapse under its own weight. Tschumi dispensed with the metaphysics of form-giving process and instead registered the architectonic expression of the body-in-motion, and event-space within and beyond the limits of architecture. If the power of architecture resides in its limits, then one could claim that Tschumi activates the energy resting in the zone between architecture and its limits of signification.[31] In Parc de la Villette, the abstract system of point–line–plane shields the site beyond the exigencies of the context, yet this network is thickened and given its formal body through time–event–space, to use terms suggestive of the conceptual and physical traces of the body-in-space.

The red "follies" punctuate the entire site at 120-metre intervals, as the point-grid coordinate system. Each of these 10×10×10-metre cubes offers a variation upon one theme, a neutral space waiting to be programmed and transformed. Constructed with reinforced concrete and clad with red-enamelled aluminium panels, the dematerialized follies become the instant collage or pastiche of signs that makes room for the event to take place. And yet, transgressing the classical and modern canons, the follies fall somewhere in between the two realms of architectural and machine objects. Tschumi's machines are not alien objects; they are disintegrated and incomplete cubes, each offering a different solution to the problem of function and structure. Tschumi maps these objects in a structure of points, grids and planes.



4.3 Bernard Tschumi, Parc de la Villette, 1982.

Tschumi's project combines Paul Klee's ideas of composition with Le Corbusier's vision of the city. But where Le Corbusier's Vision Plan would undermine the cultural values of the status quo, Tschumi maps La Villette as a possibility already present in modern architecture. This esteem for the "Other" of the Same favours *difference* rather than dabbling in the invention of new forms. "I am not interested in form," says Tschumi. "I attack the system of meaning. I am for the idea of structure and syntax, but no meaning."[32] One cannot dismiss the presence of Wassily Kandinsky's *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) in Tschumi's strategy of system of event–movement–space. It is also impossible to avoid detecting the ghost of Russian Constructivism in the red follies spotting La Villette. No matter how hard the avant-garde struggles to get away from history, the latter comes back to "mask" the maker's original "sin" – an act of intervention – as evidenced by the frequent "return of the repressed". Tschumi's appropriation of Iaokv Chernikhov's drawing for *The Construction of Architectural and Machine Forms* (1931) is a telling tale in the modernists' utilization of the idea of found object; itself

4.4 Bernard Tschumi, Parc de la Villette. Folie.

4.5 Bernard Tschumi, Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, Tourcoing, France, 1991–97.

one symptom among many others of the “returns” endemic in postmodern conditions.

However, once history is suspended, the process of disjunction reduces the object to an empty shell in need of new life. The red-painted metal cladding of the follies is indeed a transparent mask; it hides as much as it reveals, both in terms of the form’s underlying structure, as well as the form’s dormant history, i.e. constructivist objects. The excess (theatricality?) here breaks the limits forced by the dialogue between structure and ornament. Here ornament stretches its body to infuse into the thin layer of the red cladding. Thus the body of architecture is immunized and the red paint ossifies the historical avant-garde’s political intentions. There is a price to be paid for any transgression: the playful constructs of the Russian Constructivists spoke for the pleasure sought in changing the mode of production; in Parc de La Villette, the pleasure has shifted from the antinomies of the production system to the discreet realm of consumption.[33] The body is charged with erotic sensations as one wanders around, within, and moves up or down the follies. Gone also is the collective body, whose education and emancipation from the toil of the labour were the goal of at least some circles of the Russian Constructivists. Their failure has made room for the current neo-avant-garde to pursue a hedonistic notion of pleasure that ends in theatricalization of space – a step heading directly into the fetishism of commodities.

LE FRESNOY: MASKING THE ROOF (1992–98)

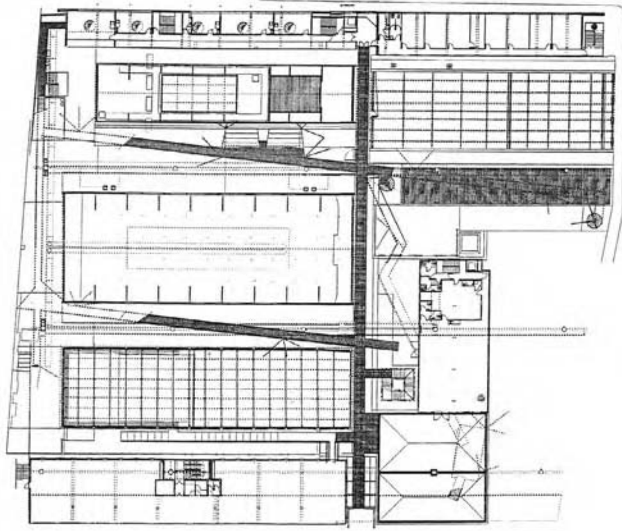
Bernard Tschumi won the competition for Le Fresnoy in February 1992. The proposed programme by the National Studio for Contemporary Arts in Tourcoing fitted perfectly with Tschumi’s major theoretical concerns. Quite apart from the interdisciplinary nature of Le Fresnoy, the chosen site was an immensely popular entertainment complex from 1905 to the early 1970s. Among the existing buildings, a thousand-seat cinema and a huge roller-skating rink with a metal-frame roof dominated the site. These empty shells, ruins if you wish, provided an ideal site for Tschumi to test his early ideas in a context totally different from La Villette.

Dwelling on the experience of cinematography, *The Manhattan Transcripts* presents “architecture of disjunction” in a diagram superimposing the gridiron

blocks of Manhattan over the plane of Central Park. In this process, "the geometrical and rectangular blocks of the Manhattan grid begin to interpenetrate, to superimpose themselves on the organic contours of Central Park, before transforming into something radically different".[34] The concept recalls a previous exercise, a montage of the Rietveld-Schroder House, in Utrecht, the Netherlands, with Palladio's Villa Rotunda. The final result had no direct references to either building, and yet, looking closely, the formal traces of both villas in the final composition cannot be dismissed. This early exercise is the underpinning strategy in Le Fresnoy: Tschumi charges the existing buildings with a different life, and grafts new institutional and technical "bodies" onto objects that already have been detached from their previous organism.

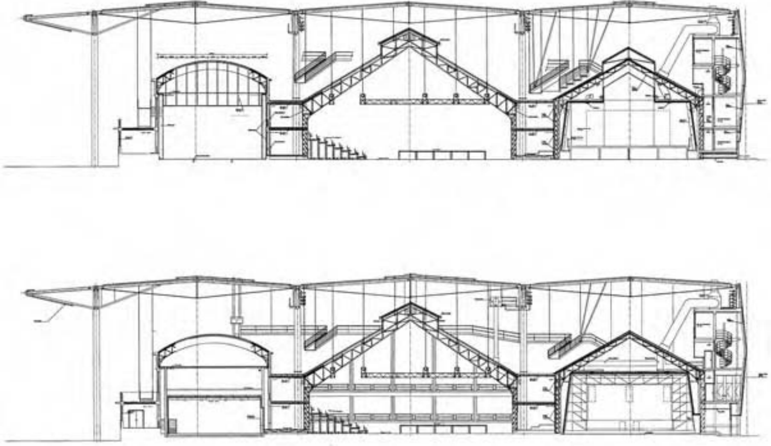
Tschumi's solution is straightforward but complex: he inserts two new volumes (perpendicular to each other) into the empty lot of the existing L-shaped buildings. The kernel of Tschumi's concept involves a roof-plane that hovers over the entire complex. His proposal recalls Mies van der Rohe's two photomontages: the Chicago Convention Center (1953), and the Concert Hall (1942). In the latter, the freestanding figure of the roof is dramatized by the invisibility of the structural supports. Standing under the roof of Mies's Concert Hall, a person could have experienced an in-between space that floats within and around the horizontal and vertical planes. Nevertheless, Tschumi's concept of roof is different, operating like a mask with visible connections to the body beneath. Looking at the presentation drawings as well as experiencing the actual building of Le Fresnoy, one cannot but think of the roof as a mask covering an upward-looking face. The surface of this mask is shaped, cut out and framed in response to the actual needs of the body beneath. Tschumi's operative approach does not stop here; he deconstructs the very idea of mask itself. It is in this project, 15 years after Le Jardin de Don Juan, that Tschumi, I believe, has finally achieved the architectonic equivalent of a Barthesian "third term" – pleasure without a cause.

The surface of the mask-like roof is devoid of anything representational or symbolic. Moreover, contrary to the conventional idea of mask, Tschumi radicalizes the space between the mask and what is masked. This in-between space, whose floor is the roof of the existing building, its ceiling forming the surface that covers the entire complex, is the site of "event". The space also houses the media technologies needed to energize the existing ruins. It also



4.6 Bernard Tschumi, Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97. Plan.

4.7 Bernard Tschumi, Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97.



4.8 Bernard Tschumi, Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts. Section drawing.

4.9 Louis Kahn, Richards Medical Laboratories, Philadelphia.

provides room for stairs and catwalks that operate almost like the infrastructure of an urban landscape. These "service" elements are suspended from the roof, stretching up and down and around the existing buildings without touching them. Looking at the section drawings of this building, one is reminded of the metal fire escapes that hang from the solid masonry walls of Manhattan's townhouses; it is also a reminder of the sense of placeless space envisioned in Piranesi's Carceri.

Through disjunction, Tschumi embellishes and elevates a marginal space to the level of an ornament. In his words, "This extraordinary space derived from the concept appears as a 'gift' or 'supplement:' a space where anything might happen, a place of experimentation; a place located on the margins. This in-between space quickly became a fundamental condition of the project."[35] The space between mask and the face becomes the site of accidental events and bodily pleasure.[36] It also charges architecture with qualities beyond its conventional limits. Here "begins the articulation between the space of senses and the space of society, the dances and gestures that combine the representation of space and the space of representation".[37]

In the report on the Le Fresnoy project, Tschumi designates László Moholy-Nagy and Frederick Keisler as the precursors for his ideas of space, event and the body. However, with regard to his intention to transform a marginal element into "supplement", I would like to introduce another precedent that is mostly deleted from the index of neo-avant-garde circles. Tschumi's rumination on in-between space and its architectonic implications at Le Fresnoy could be associated with Louis Kahn's discourse on served/service spaces.[38] Consider Kahn's Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building, on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, completed in 1965. Here, multiple staircases and service ducts are grouped and turned into major tectonic figures. Furthermore, the building's concrete structure, partly cladded and partly revealed in the façade of research rooms, houses the conduit of technical services whose tectonic articulation at the entrance porch deconstructs the conventional distinction between structure and ornament.

Tschumi's reversal of this tradition ends in a concept of roof that shelters a heterogeneous body, unfolding a different dialogue between structure and ornament. For Kahn, the tectonic is the site for articulating structure ornamentally; Tschumi's strategy aims at transferring the attention from the tectonic to space. It is true that "event" cannot take place in the absence of architecture,

however, in subduing the power of architecture's representational dimension, Tschumi radicalizes the pleasure experienced in event. "[A]rchitecture seems to survive in its 'erotic' capacity only when it negates itself . . . in other words, it is not a matter of destruction or 'avant-garde' subversion, but of transgression."[39] Obviously the "erotic capacity" of architecture is embedded in a space whose architectonic elements, I believe, are denied any significance, and yet this space provides an enclosure (mask?) for rationally organized programmatic needs.

Thus, in spite of Tschumi's intellectual capacity to subvert the literal idea of excess, his work posits a sense of "objecthood" absent in the work of some of his deconstructivist colleagues. There is no room in Tschumi's work for formalistic playfulness, nor does he wrap architecture's structure with folds. "The challenge is to try to find the poetry in the excessive rationality," Tschumi claims, and he continues, "I always say that the excess of rationality is irrational."[40] In spite and perhaps because of this strategy, in Le Fresnoy, the roof, an important tectonic element, stands above everything, including the event triggered by it.

4.10 Bernard Tschumi, Le Fresnoy National Contemporary Arts, 1991–97.

A CONTEXTUAL RENDEZVOUS: THE LERNER STUDENT CENTER

In a lecture delivered to the Graduate School of Architecture at Columbia University in 1998, Tschumi presented three projects that are framed by an existing context. Besides Le Fresnoy, both the competition entry for MoMA's expansion and the Lerner Center demonstrate architecture's problematic relationship with institutions and the linguistic forces of the context. Focusing on the Lerner Center raises the question that if it is true that there is a sense of nihilism in Tschumi's discourse, then in what ways does his architecture differ from the early modern architect's appropriation of the same theme? And, in spite of or perhaps because of this difference, what is the architectonic dimension of the objectivity implied in the Lerner Center?

Tschumi has correctly suggested that a matrix of two languages, the city of New York and the campus of Columbia University, inform the Lerner Center building. Thus the final project accommodates the civic language of the architecture of Broadway Street, and keeps intact the morphology of the campus designed by MacKim Mead and White. The façade on the Broadway side makes room for a rusticated base and a wall clad in brick, the surface of which is punctuated in harmony with the general features of the architecture of Broadway. One noticeable peculiarity of this building, among others of Tschumi's work built to date, is a sensible juxtaposition of different materials, though mostly embellished beyond conventional detailing. Thus the rustic base at the street side ends with a cornice made out of glass-block, to mimic the cast-stone cornice of the adjacent building.

The campus side also enjoys a mixture of different languages whose overall composition creates a sensible rapport with the surrounding buildings and the main library in particular. The row of windows on this façade follows the rhythm of the library's columns, and ends in a freestanding cylindrical column covered in cast stone. This latter is a reminder of Aldo Rossi's architectonic language in *Edificio lungo a residence e uffici.* And yet, the storefront that wraps the space behind the corner column turns 90 degrees to the north, first, to free the corner column, and second, to project a diagonal axis into the orthogonal morphology of the campus. This strategy draws the attention to the huge glass hung in front of stairs, and ramps that connect the east and west platforms of the building. The theatrical movement of these ramps and stairs energizes the interior space and leads the students to the mailboxes

4.11 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

4.12 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99. View from Broadway Street.

that are located along a ramp separating the assembly theatre from what is called the hub.

The overall scheme of the Lerner Center is informed by programme; it combines administrative, leisure and student activities. These requirements create, according to the architect, "a dynamic hub that acts as a major social space". The result is a u-shaped plan whose parallel arms are kept apart by what is described as "black box theatre", with a mansard-like roof that mimics the traditional skyline of New York City. The copper roof and the linguistic diversity employed both in the campus face and the civic face, ironically recall Adolf Loos's design strategy in the Goldman and Salatsch building, Michaelerplatz. The association is not far-fetched if we recall Loos's nihilism; he denied architecture's capacity to carry any symbolic representation except in monuments and tombs. In the Lerner Center, as in the Looshaus, a montage of different languages recodes the theme of nihilism. While Loos's strategy was

4.13 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

directed at the modernists of the Bauhaus and the secessionists of Vienna, Tschumi, instead, uses the gravitational forces of institutional languages to turn the glass façade into a theatrical stage set.

This move definitely departs from Loos's negative thought: to save the protean claim of the past from the modernists' zeal for the new. Loos was also obsessed, according to Massimo Cacciari, "with renouncing language that claims to be liberated from all presuppositions and to serve as text in itself. He sees in it the diabolical gesture of those who abandon the past, who do not recognize the right that it has over us, and hence persist in desiring its overthrow." Juxtaposing Loos's thought with Walter Benjamin's "angel of history", Cacciari suggests that "the freedom of avant-garde and the hubris of its criticism shatter the delicate balance of the figure of the Angel and dissipate the feeble messianic strength that it announces to us".[41] However, a closer

4.14 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

study shows that, despite his different take on "nihilism" and his departure from the Loosian rearguard position, Tschumi's strategy has special merit.

The tactile quality invested in the interior space of the Lerner Center alludes to a discourse of space/time that broadens the gap between this building and the Looshaus. Where Loos would choose interior materials to raise the sensation of *heimliche*, and to resist the silence of Metropolis, Tschumi reverses Loos's strategy by internalizing "bourgeois nothingness" (see p. 94) into an architectural idiom. Cladding concrete slabs with wood or stone, and covering ramps and stairs with glass, Tschumi creates a "cool" ambiance whose tactile qualities are further stressed by the exposed concrete beams, perforated metal sheets, and a space-frame structure that hooks the stairs together and supports the front glass. The *unheimliche* sensation of this public space is balanced by the sheer pleasure of the body in ascending and descending the ramps and stairs, and, more importantly, in the excitement experienced upon anticipation of an "event" as one approaches the mailboxes. Nevertheless, the hub, housing the public stairs and ramps, is a generic space: it is an atrium rotated in ninety degrees to expose its face not to the sky but to the campus and through a large glass. The space is also mundane in terms of its "raw" use of steel, glass, stone and concrete. These materials are entertained to create a haptic sensation peculiar to the early twentieth-century industrial buildings of the SoHo area, if not the tactile sensibilities invested in the best subway stations of New York City.

These historical allusions could be extended further: in the Lerner building, a montage of different materials and languages recalls the dialogue between stone and steel employed in the best buildings of late nineteenth-century Europe. These historical structures, mostly wrapped by a classical or gothic garment, house exposed steel structures in the interior. This analogy is assured by the kind of details Tschumi employs to connect (or to hang) the stairs at the centre of the hub with the adjacent concrete beams. Here a three-dimensional space frame mimics an upheld image of a hand to recall details depicted in Viollet le Duc's visionary drawing for a "concert hall", where a finger-shaped steel member leads the forces of gravity from the roof to the masonry wall. It also recalls Alvar Aalto's wooden truss in the Saynätsalo Town Hall building, just to mention a more contemporary precedent. These historical associations endorse the import of the theme of renunciation in Tschumi's work. And yet, what makes his architecture different from the image-

4.15 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

oriented-world of postmodern architecture is that these historical allusions are ironically channelled through another return; the return of the idea of new objectivity prevalent in early 1920s architecture.

To discuss the presence of objectivity in Tschumi's work involves examining Ernst Bloch's "Building in Empty Spaces". In this short essay, Bloch criticizes the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and characterizes the abstract non-ornamental surface of such architecture as "bourgeois nothingness".[42] For Bloch, the New Sobriety, even through generous use of glass, cannot hide its emptiness. Bloch presents the following conclusion that foreshadows the neo-avant-garde aspiration for an aesthetic of abstraction that is motivated by the recent marriage between electronic technologies and architecture:

> Today's technology, which is itself still so abstract, does lead out of the hollow space, even as it is fashioned as an aesthetic one, as an artistic substitute. Rather this hollow space penetrates the so-called art of engineering

(*Ingenierkunst*) as much as the latter increases the hollowness by its own emptiness. The only significant thing in all this is the direction of departure of these phenomena generated by themselves, i.e. the house as a ship.[43]

Bloch's statement provides a conceptual tool to charge Tschumi's architecture with critical importance: in the Lerner Center, engineering and technology elevates a functional "box" into a theatrical stage set; not to allude to "the house as a ship", but to call attention to the status of the object in a culture dominated by the fetishism of commodities. Tschumi's architecture meets with the phantasmagoria of the world of commodities through the remnant of an image of objectivity that is peculiar to the architecture of the *Neue Sachlichkeit.* The latter's matter-of-factness is in part a remnant of the realist architecture of the first decade of the last century which stayed faithful to the claim of the past without rejecting modernization.[44] In realist architecture there is an ideological pretence of reality and the necessity for its artistic

4.16 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

presentation that sneaked into the abstract forms of *Neue Sachlichkeit.* In this transmission, the traces of the past were hygienically purged to equate the final product to the exigencies of the production line.

Tschumi's architecture recollects this historical moment of the objecthood but, at the same time, his architecture internalizes a different level of the aesthetic of abstraction that marks the transformation of culture from modernism to postmodernism. Here I am benefiting from Fredric Jameson's insightful distinction between realism, modernism and postmodernism.[45] For Jameson, artifacts associated with these three periods of artistic production differ from each other according to the level of abstraction that separates one period from the other. Accordingly, "The ideological and social precondition of realism – its naïve belief in a stable social reality, for example – are now themselves unmasked, demystified, and discredited; and modernist forms – generated by the very same pressure of reification – take their place. And, in this narrative, the suppression of modernism by the postmodern is, predictably enough, read in the same way as a further intensification of the forces of reification, which has utterly unexpected and dialectical results for the now hegemonic modernism itself."[46]

Thus, from now on, detached from the exigencies of labour, tools and regional limitations, money becomes capital – an abstract floating entity – moving from one region to another, and expanding its horizon while leaving behind many "empty lots", i.e. bourgeois nothingness. In this historical development, every cultural product is charged not only with the cool fetishistic attraction of commodities, but also with the floating and hyperactive world of images that are generated by telecommunication technologies. Postmodern architecture appropriates this aesthetic moment of abstraction in both neo-avant-garde and historicist idioms. However, the peculiarity of Tschumi's architecture rests in the way it appropriates theatricality not through images but by structuring free-floating images (architectural languages?) through a perception of objectivity that is encoded in the architecture of the *Neue Sachlichkeit.*

There is another facet to the Lerner building that I like to associate with Bloch's article, cited earlier. Facing the linguistic power of the architecture of the campus and Broadway Street, Tschumi deserves credit for inserting the architectonic site of pleasure in the empty lot separating the Lerner Center from the existing building to its north side. The lesson one might learn from his

strategy is rather ironic: in a metropolis like New York City where "bourgeois nothingness" is spread wall-to-wall, the empty lot, a degree zero state of signification, provides the only site where an architect could leave his/her mark on the city. At the same time, such a mark cannot escape its own historical limitations: most early avant-gardes could not secure architecture from the aesthetic impact of abstraction and the images set in motion by the technologies of modernization.

Likewise, the neo-avant-garde has no choice but to entertain the current level of abstraction expressed in the aesthetic of commodity fetishism. The huge glass crowning the hub of the Lerner Center presents a stage set that recalls one moment of the 1920s avant-garde fascination with theatrical stages, but also the current esteem for the theatricalization of architecture. This reading is convincing when one approaches the Lerner Center from the monumental stairs of the Law School building. The freestanding corner column

4.17 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

4.18 Bernard Tschumi, Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York, 1994–99.

subverts the classical symmetry of the campus in a "weak" mood, and yet accentuates a diagonal axis. The implied diagonal perceived from the campus-side is felt strongly in every turn of the body's movement from one ramp to the next stair or vice versa. Here Tschumi has generated a well-proportioned "interior" space that transcends the bourgeois emptiness for theatrical ends.

Taking two strategic steps, the "architecture of disjunction" takes pleasure in the separation of architecture from its collective function. Obviously, the current emphasis on the autonomy of form limits architecture's critical engagement with what might be called the "construction of the condition of life": a socio-political network comprising production, communication and the very act of place making.[47] Devoid of any political function, architecture is directed towards defining its own boundaries. In addition, the modernist zeal for temporality (fashion?) dispenses with the culture of building; a move enforced by the prevailing capitalist ideology, the ultimate goal of which is to drag architecture further into the orbit of commodification. These moves, ironically, and perhaps because of the neo-avant-garde reluctance to resist

ideology, embellish architecture not in the realm of tectonics, but in continuation of the aesthetic at work in the culture of spectacle. In this mutation, excess ceases to respond to the dialogue between structure and ornament; it rather ends in the embellishment of the object by cashing in forms from the historical past, if not from other resources.

This observation could be taken as a general denominator of an avant-garde architecture that is touched by post-structuralist theories. If this is the case, then one could suggest that two thematic changes inform the present architecture. First, suppressing architectural tropes such as style, ornament, monument and the tectonic, the neo-avant-garde architects entertain the formal heritage of modern architecture as a found object empty of any historical connotations. Second, the post-structuralist emphasis on the autonomy of the text has opened a horizon of intellectual work in which "theory" transcends disciplinary boundaries. While this last development has underlined cultural issues concerned with gender and ethnic diversity, its reception in architecture has been rather mixed.[48] Nevertheless, the neo-avant-garde sees the interdisciplinary approach as a means of overcoming the long-lived attachment of architecture to power and institutions. Ironically, Le Fresnoy – an interdisciplinary artistic institution by inception – turns out to be the best site for Tschumi to practise the architecture of disjunction. This is also the case with La Villette and the Lerner Center, where institutional ties are cut by metamorphosing architecture to "mask".

Tschumi's stress on the deconstruction of programme has been successful in shifting design away from metaphysical issues, thus differentiating his own architecture from other neo-avant-garde projects. An interest in the deconstruction of programme sets the stage for a spatiality whose pleasure is experienced by the body's movement along ramps, stairs and even escalators. Moreover, his hesitation to indulge in the invention of new forms, programmed through computer technologies, and the suggested objectivity, insulate his architecture against the dominion of image. Interestingly enough, there is a dichotomy in Tschumi's search for pleasure in architecture and the objectivity, which ironically exists in the aesthetic of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and in Gottfried Semper's discourse on theatricality. In Tschumi's work as well as in the new objectivity of the 1920s, the pleasure is sought in a form whose material and technique are charged with excess. The abstract forms of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* were enchanting not only because of the banishment of ornamentation, but

also because the object looked surreal and unfamiliar. The same is true for the idea of theatricality; even though the discourse of tectonic is centred on "necessity", the implied sense of objectivity in Semper's theory is not framed by material or technique but the way the matter draws attention to construction artistically. What this means is that in the tectonic, technique is embellished metaphorically.

Of interest here is one of Tschumi's most recent projects, Zenith de Rouen in France. Designed to house various public events, the final form comprises a rectangular exhibition space and a concert hall whose half-circular envelope is in sharp contrast to the former's horizontal posture. Here, every aspect of these two main volumes of the complex is embellished to convey tectonic metaphors. Framed out of a trabeated structure and clad in steel and glass, the lightness and aesthetic delicacy of the exhibition volume contrast with the heavy and robust concrete-cast volume of the concert hall. More interesting are the ways in which all kinds of different elements of this project are articulated tectonically; including those originating in structural and mechanical needs, as well as those initiated by the deconstruction of programme. Thus,

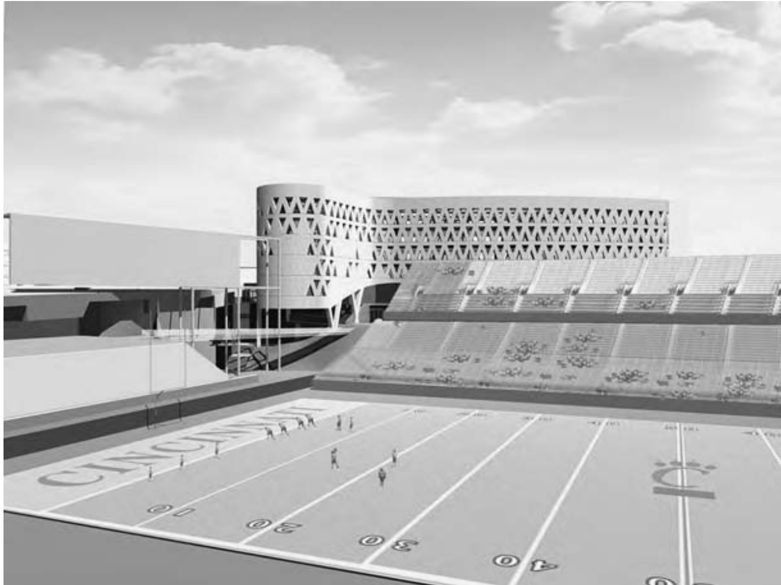
4.19 Bernard Tschumi, Zenith de Rouen. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York, 1998–2001.

4.20 Bernard Tschumi, Zenith de Rouen. Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York, 1998–2001.

according to the architect, "acoustical concerns led to a complete double-envelope surrounding the concert hall".[49] On the other hand, the space separating the concrete-stepped seating and the inner skin of the exterior is doubled by the form of a broken torus of insulated corrugated metal that envelops the entire complex. Columns and stairs, creating an ambience of event, mark the space that fills the void between the concert hall and the exterior envelope. Similar to the Lerner building, the entire project in Rouen is seemingly conceived to underline the theatrical nature of a public event. Not only is theatricality experienced in the crowds' movement in the interior space, it is also inscribed in the corrugated exterior enclosure; it looks like a fabric hung from three masts. In addition to the tension cables holding part of the roof system, the vertical extensions of the masts, visible from a distance, recall the primordial tectonics of tents and festive structures. Also noteworthy is the tectonic rapport between the envelope and the roof, a motif dismissed by architects' obsession with "surface", a subject explored in Chapter 5, discussing Frank Gehry's architecture.

The Zenith project is of significance for two additional reasons. First, the theatricality attributed to this project confirms the following theoretical observation central to the tectonic: that architecture is not a direct product of construction, and yet the physical material of the building, the core-form, puts architecture on the track of technological transformations and scientific innovations. The same might be said about the art-form, the only venue by which architecture is charged with aesthetic sensibilities that are, interestingly enough, informed by perceptual horizons offered by the world of technology, and tactile and spatial sensibilities deeply rooted in the disciplinary history of architecture. Therefore, while the core-form assures architecture's rapport with the changes taking place in the *structure* of construction, the art-form remains the sole domain where the architect might choose to imbue the core-form with those aspects of the culture of building that might sidetrack the formal and aesthetic consequences of commodification essential to the cultural production of late capitalism, and yet avoid dismissing the latest technological developments.[50] In the Zenith de Rouen the dialogue between constructed form and clothing is dramatized not just by the materiality of concrete, steel or glass, but by the way in which one material is clad with another. This building enjoys a sense of "nothingness", if not the Miesian "almost nothing", seemingly unravelling the tectonic of Tschumi's idea of empty space pregnant with event.

Second, the parti entertained in most of Tschumi's projects subscribes to a concept of contextualism that is radically different from postmodern semiological concern and the present rush towards digital imagery. Holding the space behind, the envelope of the Zenith de Rouen achieves a sense of autonomy (objectivity?) capable of conceptualizing the context. Located in the district of Rouen, outside Paris, the tectonic configuration of the envelope of the concert hall alludes to vernacular sensibilities of the kind legible not only in the early last century's industrial structures, but also in the early villas of Le Corbusier, and a few early works of Mario Botta, as noted by Kenneth Frampton. And yet, unlike these two architects, Tschumi does not exploit the separation of enclosure from structure for stylistic or aesthetic ends; Tschumi's articulation of the envelope in the Lerner Center, for example, aims at decontextualizing the classical vocabulary of the campus architecture. Again, what this means has to do with the objectivity implied in Tschumi's work, the materiality of which is embedded in the tectonic articulation of the cladding and the frame, if only to invigorate a different experience of the context. This



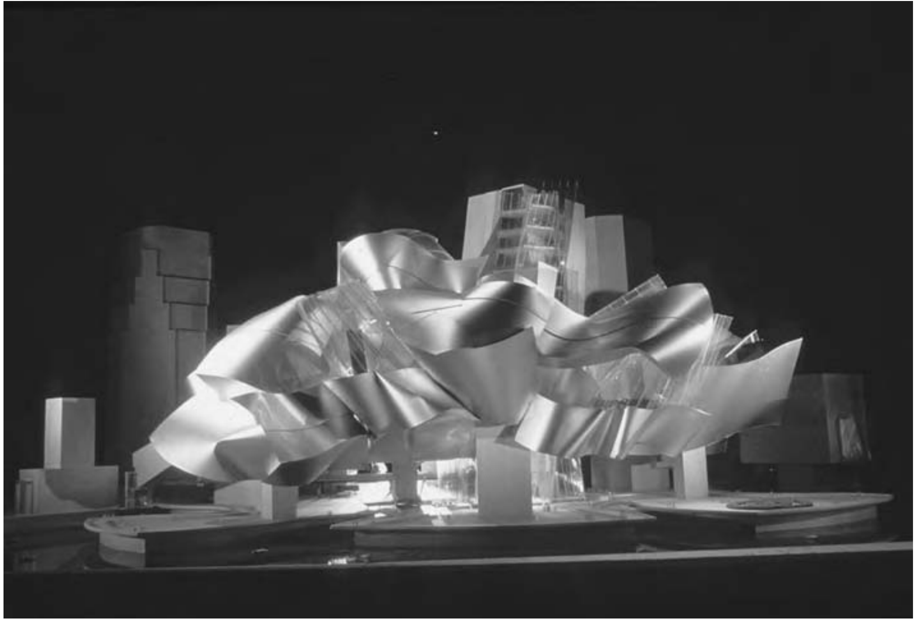
4.21 Bernard Tschumi, Athletic Center, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001–. Image courtesy of Bernard Tschumi, New York.

much is clear not only from most of the projects discussed in this chapter, but it is also the case with the Athletic Center, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, a project under construction at the time of writing. Here the design concept evokes the metaphor of the organic implied in Semper's following concern; how to give life to dead material.[51] In the Athletic Center, the form and fenestration of the envelope recall motifs central to a twining structural fence, the main structural elements of which merge with the columns below. The tectonic and aesthetic articulation of the body animates the creature-like head of the building, as if looking towards the adjacent stadium. In return, the animated form of the building, considered either as a freestanding infill or a contextual freeform, evokes its context, even though the attention remains focused on the building itself.

CHAPTER 5

Frank Gehry:
roofing, wrapping and wrapping the roof[1]

A PARTICIPANT IN THE MoMA's 1988 "Deconstructivist Architecture" show, Frank Gehry has come a long way, securing both institutional and public support. He is one of the few contemporary architects with little interest in theorizing his work, yet, he shares the neo-avant-garde's tendency to renew architecture by borrowing from conceptual art.[2] He is not, according to Francesco Dal Co, a passive recipient of ideas generated by contemporary artists, rather, he "understands that it is possible to 'occupy' with architecture, the spaces that art is no longer able to dominate, assigning to architectural design the task of taking the experiments of the historical avant-gardes to their extreme consequence."[3] Throughout long years of practice Gehry has pursued a self-imposed challenge; to avoid leaving any kind of personal signature on his work. He has taken every commission as an opportunity to generate something different. With the Disney Concert Hall and, most recently, with the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, however, he has introduced a major note into the noisy debates on architectural theory and practice. But what will be the next turn in his architecture after Bilbao? The question is an important one because the language of the Guggenheim Museum evolved out of a paradox in Gehry's own work, i.e. an "obsession" with biomorphics of the fish[4] – as an emblem of formal autonomy – and a desire for regionalism, especially in the element of the roof and the workaday look of materials that were prolific in his early projects. Knowing about the role played by computer programming in the Bilbao project, one wonders if there is some formal limitation to computer-aided design, a viable alternative to which still seems to be a return to the orthogonal and the striated space[5] of modern architecture. This technical limitation has a theoretical corollary: how far can we stretch the formal



5.1 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1998–. Model.

implications of the "fold", another favourite Deleuzian term in the neo-avant-garde vocabulary, beyond what Gehry and others have already done? These limitations are evident in the "repetition" that is haunting Gehry's recent projects: both the addition to the Corcoran Museum and the Concert Hall for the Bard College are mini-replicas of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, as is his recent proposal for the Guggenheim in Lower Manhattan.

I do not intend to discuss Gehry's complete work in this chapter.[6] Instead, I will focus on buildings and projects that are pivotal in the argument that theatricalization permeates present architectural practice. The metaphor of the fish, with its twisting and bouncing body, is suggestive of an architectural image whose space could be wrapped beyond the dictate of the "regulating lines" envisioned by Le Corbusier. To go beyond the horizontal and vertical datum of the tectonic, architecture might enter into the world of plastic arts where the tension between the art-form and the core-form, discussed by the nineteenth-century architect Carl Botticher,[7] evaporates. In Gehry's recent buildings the neo-avant-garde's tendency to deny architecture any purpose

except a formal one takes a different turn: his work is informed neither by popular images of the mainstream of pop culture, nor by the metaphysical issues that preoccupy most architects who have read Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. From a certain angle, the Bilbao building stands as a phantom-like image comparable to the visual effects seen in the best Hollywood movies. It is an exuberantly modelled three-dimensional space. Here architecture is not a stage set, around and within which an event should take place, but the event itself. Again, the idea is to ponder a distinction evident in Gottfried Semper's discourse on the architecture of theatricality and the theatricalization of architecture: one representing tradition materialistically, the other drawing tradition into the phantasmagoria of a world of commodity.[8]

The argument presented here is that the surreal quality of Guggenheim in Bilbao, a found object with discreet charm, evolved out of Gehry's move from regionalism towards a montage of fragmented masses and volumes. In

5.2 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Entry plaza.

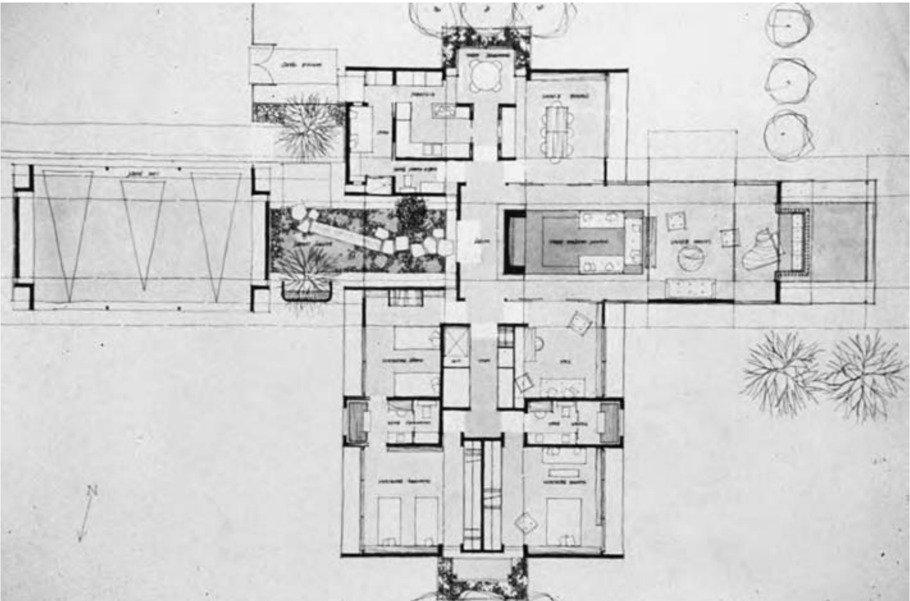
this mutation the year 1981 is important: in a housing project for Kalamazoo in Michigan, the entire landscape is marked and dominated by a freestanding hotel envisioned in the shape of a vertical fish. Here we witness the return of a childhood memory of fish as the emblem of both formal perfection and the "other" that is charged with therapeutic function. "The fish evolved further," Gehry recalls in an interview, and continues, "I kept drawing it and sketching it and it started to become for me like a symbol for a certain kind of perfection that I couldn't achieve with my buildings. Eventually whenever I'd draw something and I couldn't finish the design, I'd draw the fish as a notation."[9] Hence the proposition that Gehry's architecture evolved out of a dialogue, at times confrontational, between a montage of fragmented forms and the plastic quality of folding surfaces that is analogous to the bouncing body of a fish.

ROOFING

Consider Steeves House and the Ronald Davis Residence, built almost ten years apart from each other. In both buildings the roof stands out as an architectonic element responding to the landscape and the region's vernacular tradition. The crucifix plan of the Steeves House recalls the planimetric organization entertained by Frank Lloyd Wright, with the difference that the hearth (where two perpendicular arms of the plan come together) was for Wright the existential nucleus of dwelling whose architectonic presence is stressed either by the vertical expression of the chimney in the façade (the Robie House), or by a hovering roof that shelters the house like an umbrella (the Ward Willis House). Gehry, instead, approaches the crossing point of the Steeves House pragmatically. Here the crossing point makes room for the main entrance, keeping the bedroom wing apart from the other three wings. The horizontal roof of this house is another element that should be associated with Wright's design in the Goetsch-Winkler House in Okemos, Michigan. Again, absent in Gehry's approach is the importance Wright would assign to the roof, not only at a tectonic level, but also at metaphysical level. In the Goetsch-Winkler House, the roof attains its particular form by being anchored to the entrance. Should the absence of narrative of the kind Wright would weave in tectonic forms be considered a weakness in Gehry's architecture? Even a positive response to this question can't ignore the attention Gehry gives to

5.3 Frank Gehry, Central Business District Project, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1981. Drawing.

5.4 Frank Gehry, Fishdance Restaurant, Kobe, Japan, 1986–87. Drawing.



5.5 Frank Gehry, Steeves Residence, Brentwood, California, 1958–59. Plan.

5.6 Frank L. Wright, Robie House, Chicago, 1909. Main view.

5.7 Frank Gehry, Steeves Residence, Brentwood, California, 1958–59. Birds-eye view.

5.8 Frank Gehry, Davis Studio and Residence, Malibu, California, 1962–72.

5.9 Frank Gehry, Davis Studio and Residence, Malibu, California, 1962–72. Interior view.

the client's needs and the local landscape, thus endowing the architecture with regional qualities. In the Steeves House the roof stretches out to make openings for a patio and a pergola above the living room. The split body of this roof generates a draught that cools the patio and it also allows light to penetrate indirectly to the living room and the garage.

Gehry's vernacular sensibilities attain a different level in the Davis Studio and Residence. A two-bedroom house with a painting studio, this house is conceived almost like an overturned box, several volumes that are connected to each other by wooden stairs. The space between the shell and the interior volume acts as a passage, overriding the conventional distinction between interior and exterior spaces. The posts connecting the wood joists to the partition walls below stress the detachment of the roof from other parts of the house. The exposed wooden structure of the roof floats over interior volumes while its sloping form echoes the mountains of Malibu. Here Gehry combines the image of an American ranch-house, a single freestanding object in the

5.10 R. M. Schindler, DeKeyser House, Los Angeles, California, 1935. Overall view.

midst of landscape,[10] with spatial sensibilities derived from modern architecture. The expressive quality of the roof in the Davis Studio is in part a regional element utilized previously in non-residential buildings such as the Public Safety Building and the Merriweather-Post Pavilion, both in Columbia, Maryland. In Davis's Studio, however, Gehry uses corrugated galvanized steel and exposed plywood, charging the building with an industrial/vernacular look. The tactile sensibility experienced in this building, is indeed rooted in the tradition of modern architecture. We are reminded of R. M. Schindler's DeKeyser House in Hollywood, where the living room volume is entirely sheathed in a green rolled roof which projects over the lower floor. More compelling is Schindler's Armon House in Mount Washington, California, where an expressive roof and exposed wooden structure shelter an otherwise a disjunctive plan where three volumes penetrate into each other. This work anticipates Gehry's own house. According to Margaret Crawford:

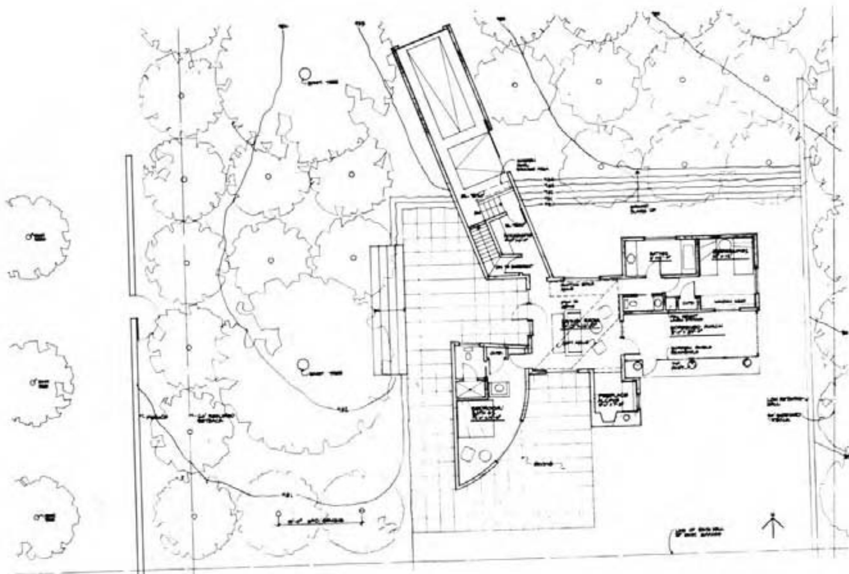
> Like Schindler, Gehry tended to develop interior spaces independently from exterior facades. Directly antithetical to the modernist insistence on the legibility of the interior on the exterior, this produced interesting slippages that Schindler exploited to create complex spaces and Gehry to produce complex exterior forms. Paradoxically, the influence between Schindler and Gehry are reciprocal; if Schindler made Gehry possible, Gehry's work illuminates Schindler's in new ways. For example, Gehry's far more dramatic use of exposed studs (as in his own house) to reveal the nature of wood frame construction make it possible to see Schindler's less explicit and more integrated use of exposed studs (as in the living room of the DeKeyser house) in a new light.[11]

Using inexpensive and ordinary materials such as chain link, corrugated metal and unfinished plywood, Gehry's own house brings together two design themes essential to his departure from regionalism.[12] In several interviews Gehry has expressed his fascination with unfinished quality of paintings, sculptures and even buildings under construction: "I was interested in the unfinished – or the quality that you find in paintings by Jackson Pollock, for instance, or de Kooning, or Cézanne, that look like the paint was just applied. . . . We all like buildings in construction better than we do finished – I think most of us agree on that."[13] The fact that contemporary painting can mediate with the outside world through use of paint and even sometimes by use of

5.11 Frank Gehry, Gehry's Residence, Santa Monica, California, 1977–78. Exterior view.

plain metal and wood evokes a primitive tactility rooted in the vernacular arts. In Gehry's house, the juxtaposition of the unfinished wood studs with highly articulated white cladded surfaces, however, could be associated with the aesthetic sensibilities implied in the idea of both–and discussed by Robert Venturi.[14] Nevertheless, under Gehry's hand, the thematic dualities such as inside/ outside or old/new do not end in either/or resolutions. His own house marks a departure from what one might call architecture's interiority[15] for a way of thinking in which architecture is perceived as "modelling". Comparing Aldo Rossi with Gehry, Giovanni Leoni suggests that Rossi perceived architecture as analogous to stage construction, and concludes that, "the anti-architectural force of Gehry's architecture, which is perhaps what makes it appeal so much to the general public, can on the contrary be called modeling". According to him, Gehry's buildings "seem to be architectures which live in complete serenity within world of the form, and with their procession of dancing objects, . . ."[16] I will address the problems implicit in Leoni's view shortly; first, I will introduce the idea of formal playfulness as another important theme in Gehry's departure from regionalism.

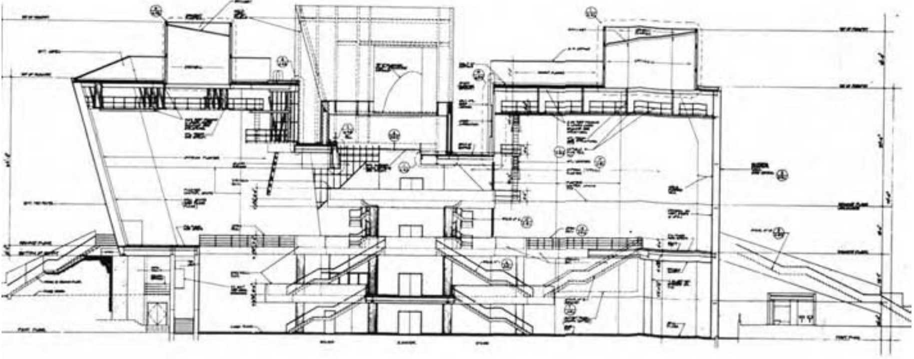
Having considered programmatic requirements and the situation of the site, Gehry embarks on an open-ended path of formal experimentation similar to that of scientific research; it is the gestalt of compositional elements that informs each stage of decision-making in design. "I guess," Gehry says, "I approach architecture somewhat scientifically – there are going to be breakthroughs, and they're going to create new information. It's adding information on the pot – not necessarily regurgitating other, older ideas."[17] Gehry's interest in the spontaneity of the design process ends in a distillation of his architecture from metaphysical considerations. At the same time he avoids engaging with issues such as the pleasure of the body in space, themes central to the architecture of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi respectively. Also undetected in Gehry's architecture is the duality between construction and appearance, a crucial theme for the tectonic. Considering his interest in the "unfinished", however, one might suggest that Gehry's design paradigm is rather similar to that of an artist; no one except the painter, for instance, knows why a painting is 'finished' at a certain point in time.



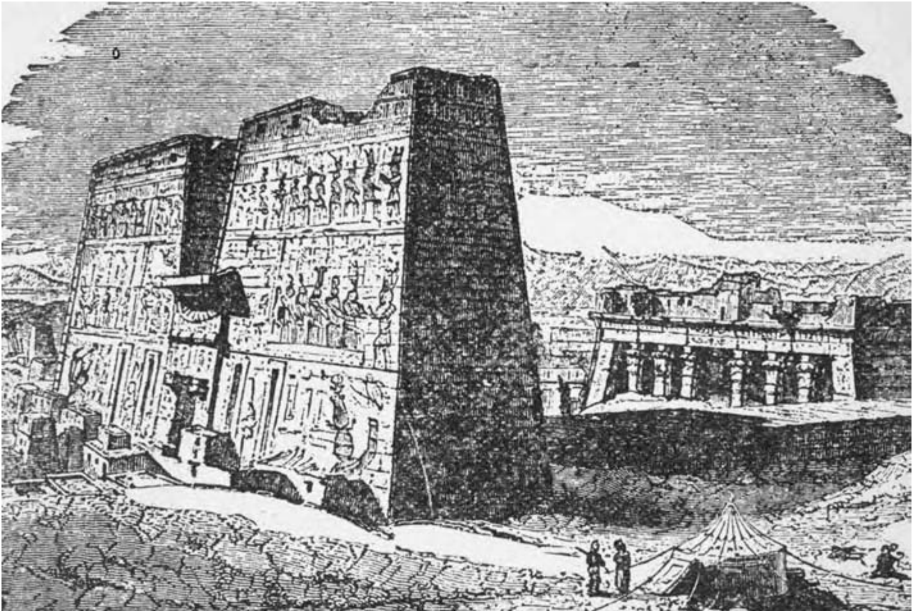
5.12 Frank Gehry, Winton Guest House, Wayazata, Minnesota, 1982–87. Plan.

5.13 Frank Gehry, Winton Guest House, Wayazata, Minnesota, 1982–87. Model.

The formal implications of a design informed by the aesthetic of unfinished and spontaneous playfulness is best demonstrated in the Winton Guest House, Wayazata, Minnesota (1982–87). This house embodies architectonic elements from the past and from what would become formative for Gehry's future architecture. The Winton House employs the idea of montage and theatricalization of architecture simultaneously: each room is perceived and shaped based on programmatic needs and clad with different materials without addressing any particular narrative. One bedroom is clad with local kasota stone, while the other is sheathed in painted metal panels. These boxed volumes are playfully arranged around a core (the living room) built next to a house designed by Philip Johnson in 1952. Such a theatrical composition, however, dismisses the serenity of regional sensibilities, in particular the element of roof. The design also lacks the kind of animation permeating Gehry's recent projects. The Winton House is, indeed, an extension of ideas already at work in the California Aerospace Museum where dreamlike images collide with each other to express their formal autonomy. Also noticeable in these two buildings is the central void, whose presence is stressed by a vertical volume rising above the other elements. The living room (the void) of the Winton House is shaped by surrounding volumes and a truncated cone at the



5.14 Frank Gehry, California Aerospace Museum, Los Angeles, 1982–84. Section drawing.



5.15 Egyptian Temple of Edfu. From J. Gardner Wilkinson, *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1837.

top. With metallic flesh and the void within, the truncated cone of the Winton House can be associated with the vertical fish figure. If this last observation seems subjective, the fact remains that the architectonic of a truncated cone compromises the line separating the roof from the wall.

The implied pyramidal form of the living room at the Winton House is a reminder of the ancient Egyptian temples which, according to Gottfried Semper, "rose chiefly from that element we have called the enclosure, . . . The other element, the roof, manifests itself in a twofold way: at times symbolically in the *sekos* as a pyramidal headpiece. . . ., and second, as the flat cover over the courtyard. There it ceased to appear from the outside, but inside, as an unfurled sail, it fell into the province of the wall filter, the motive to which it originally belonged."[18] For Semper, the element of roof and its support evolve out of a conscious tectonic response to the essential act of walling. The reference to Semper and the tectonic rapport between the roof and the enclosure is not meant to put limitations on formal creativity. The intention rather is to underline the importance of the image of the fish in Gehry's work and the way such an image induces a world of pure figurative forms that raise questions about the tectonic rapport between the enclosure and the roof. Obviously, a certain kind of "image" occupies a particular place in the architect's mind, to the point that, like a craftsman, he/she attempts to correspond to the final form of design with that particular image. What is important, however, is the way an image is recoded to probe issues internal to architecture as well as those forces framing architecture within a material and aesthetic network of a given production and consumption system.[19] The discussion thus far presented is not primarily concerned with the atectonic architecture of Gehry. What needs to be emphasized here is that he produced an architecture that, in one way or another, stand against the drive of the commodification of culture and its aesthetic connotations for architecture.[20] In raising this point, however, I am aware of the difficult task I am imposing upon Gehry, or any contemporary architect: How would one practise a critical architecture in a situation when production and consumption of images have become essential for the culture?

THE TECHNIQUE OF SPECTACLE

Giovanni Leoni is right to remind us of the anguish caused by combining "aura and market". Nevertheless, he is wrong to conclude that architecture survives in Gehry's work through "new expressionism".[21] Architecture has been thriving under the pressure of commercialization of the landscape since the 1960s, most tangibly in America. The anguish was first theorized by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in the language of "complexity and contradiction" and then domesticized in their lessons drawn from Las Vegas.[22] If we see architecture's survival in the expressive language of telecommunications technology, as does Leoni, then we stop short of learning a lesson from the experiences of the 1960s, as well as being unable to distinguish the theatricalization that is taking over current architecture from the expressionism of the 1920s.[23] In search of the lost spirit of the war years, expressionism envisioned fantastic forms that "would suspend the forces of gravity and overcome the obstinate solidity of matter. . . ."[24] If the utopia of glass architecture was the representational mode proper to a class of disenchanted modernists, then one could say that irony and rhetoric are tools by which postmodernists disguise the entry of architecture into the realm of the "culture industry". Is it history's irony that today we can witness how expressionism (a familiar language, though with origins in high culture) smooths the passage of architecture towards the aesthetic of commodity fetishism? Francesco Dal Co makes a similar assessment by suggesting that, by updating techniques used by the historical avant-garde, Gehry makes "significant innovations in professional and design practice, because this program can be realized only when the constructed work is assigned the task of establishing a relationship not to a public of users, but with an audience of spectators. In this way architecture tends to mutate, to change its nature, eschewing usage and becoming entertainment."[25] This ironic turn in design practice, indeed, speaks for the popularity of Gehry's architecture. It also discloses the fact that the dancing body of his architecture reconciles the biomorphics implied in the image of the fish with an animation that is internal to electronic technologies.

The impact of technology on architecture is not new: I do not intend to examine the issues here.[26] What should rather be stressed here briefly, though, is the way technification of architecture (to use Theodor Adorno's term) empties the tectonic of any significance for architecture. Using techniques developed outside of architecture's interiority reduces architecture to an appendage of

technique.[27] Discussing the technification of music, Adorno casts light upon Gehry and other architects who use computer techniques not just as a means but as a force to shape the end itself. According to Adorno, "extramusical technique is no longer present to act as a corrective but becomes instead the exclusive authority. The whole official music culture is moving in the direction of fetishizing of means, and it is even celebrating a triumph among its enemies in the avant-garde."[28] If, at the turn of the last century, architecture enjoyed a unique sense of cosmopolitanism inaccessible to other cultural products, the aesthetic homology unfolding through technification is detectable in the metallic, sensuous and puffed-looking design of the latest cars as well as in the theatricalization that permeates the Disney Concert Hall building. What is involved here, speaking architecturally, is the role of section in design. While the façade is liberated from the plan through the frame-structure, and its surface can be articulated based on the design of its own plan, in the architecture of theatricalization, the section has turned to be the site where the relationship between cladding and the frame is exploited, subjecting the former to a vision of aesthetics that has the least connection to function, type or model, and the frame.

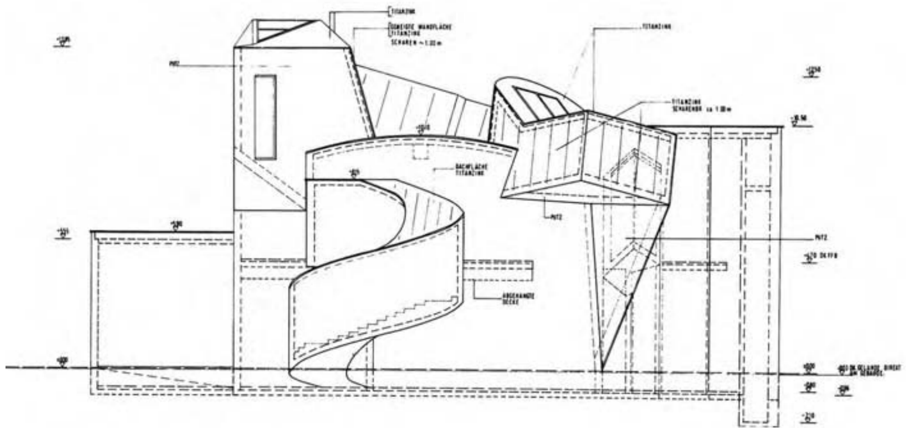
There are two reasons for introducing the subject of the technification of architecture here. First, the introduction of industrial techniques made it impossible to conceive architecture according to the classical notion of *techne*. This development also had repercussions for the work of architectural historians and critics. Briefly, and at the risk of ignoring many significant details, I would like to suggest that major contemporary architectural discourses, in one way or another, are framed by the multiple consequences that modernization has forced on architecture.[29] More interestingly is the issue of architecture's interiority and its resistance to commodification, a process that uproots architectural production and reception from its craft-based domain, subjecting the building to the laws of the capitalist market economy. The second reason for examining the technification of architecture here has to do with the changing socio-political nature of the contemporary avant-garde. If the historical avant-garde embraced technology in order to construct utopian enclave whose cultural matrix remained "high art" and inaccessible to the masses, the fusion of electronic technologies with everyday cultural production and consumption has adorned reification – induced by the project of modernity – with a mysticism shared by everybody.

To the embarrassment of Peter Eisenman and many others, you no longer have to know the philosophical implications of the "weak form" in order to appropriate his or Gehry's architecture. It is enough to watch pop culture on MTV or in Hollywood's latest movies and get attuned to the morphic temperament of deconstructivist architecture. "Hey," an excited Venturi exclaims, "what's for now is a generic architecture whose technology is electronic and whose aesthetic is iconographic – and it all works together to create decorated shelter – or the electronic shed."[30] This populist view suggests that the distance once felt when confronted with the abstract aesthetic of early modern art and architecture is neutralized in part by the computer-generated images that have been grafted onto every aspect of the life-world. Again, it should be stressed that Semper's idea of dressing and his concept of theatricality differ from notion of the phantasmagoria of the postmodern world. For Semper, the dressing of the core-form, even when negating the material basis of building, comes to life out of a rapport between the roof and the enclosure, or the earth-work and the frame-work. Accordingly, "the correct relation of the enclosure to the enclosed should, moreover, be apparent in the fact that the former (in all its formal properties and colours) forcefully emphasizes and supports the effect of the latter. The enclosed should present itself unmistakably as the principal theme and be placed upon a suitably chosen background. But, again, this goal will be achieved only by using precisely those properties of ornamentation that develop a priori from the formal concept of the *surface* as such."[31] In this line of thinking, one is reminded of Semper's emphasis on the theatricality of the afterlife of an event. According to him, "The monuments were scaffolding intended to bring together", not only various cultural artifacts, but "the crowds of people, the priest, and the processions".[32] The challenge of maintaining such a position today has to do with the fact that spectacle, discussed by Guy Debord, has overtaken the collective space.

WRAPPING

In the context of these theoretical considerations and, taking some exceptions into account, it can be argued that, since the Winton House, Gehry's architecture has moved further away from form-giving potentialities of construction

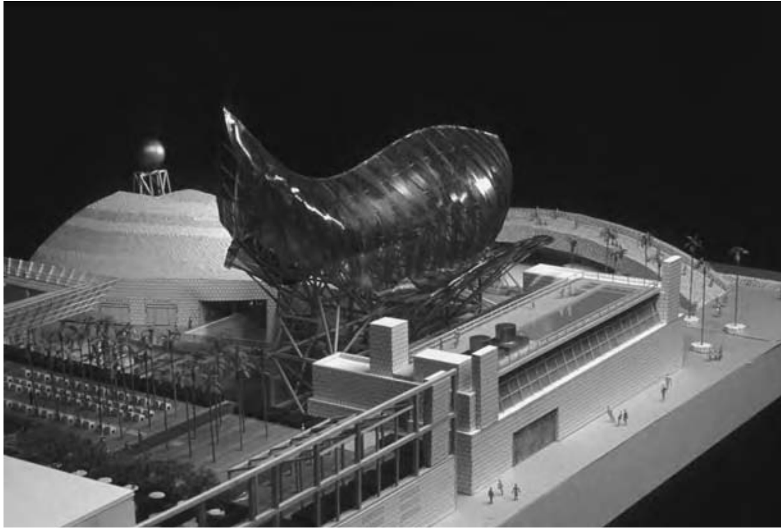
5.16 Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California, 1997–2003. Entrance view.



5.17 Frank Gehry, Vitra International Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1987–89. Elevation drawing.

to the point where the element of clothing has emerged as the formative means for his most recent work. This development is forcefully expressed in Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall project where an icon of mass culture and music orchestrates the theatricalization of architecture The Disney Concert Hall, in evolution since 1989, is an important work that needs to be experienced in order to complete the evolutionary chain leading to the Bilbao building, if not for any other particular reason. The project marks a definitive departure in Gehry's design: it resolves the conflict between the montage of fragmented forms and an expressive clothing whose many layers come together to emphasize the vertical void in the middle. In the Vitra Museum, completed in 1989, we already witness the presence of undulating surfaces intermingled with fragmented volumes, anticipating the formativeness of the element of wrapping in the Disney project. At Vitra, the element of roof, mostly covered by titanzink, is presented as another enclosure wrapping a cluster of fragmented volumes. Only by experiencing inside space can we experience the presence of the

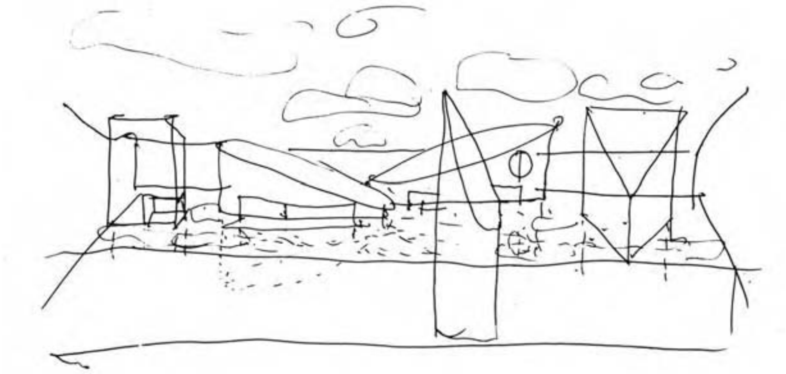
5.18 Frank Gehry, Fishdance Restaurant, Kobe, Japan, 1986–87.



5.19 Frank Gehry, Vila Olimpia, Barcelona, Spain, 1989–92.

roof; a situation that recalls Semper's observation about ancient Egyptian temples. Meanwhile, during the years separating the Winton House from the Disney project, the fish metaphor continued to occupy a visible place in Gehry's œuvre. Besides being the subject of several artistic installations erected between 1983 and 1986, the metaphor leaves the two-dimensional realm of Gehry's drawing board and attains major architectonic form, first in the Fishdance Restaurant (1987) and, later, more forcefully in the Vila Olimpia in Spain (1992). In this last project, a fish that is 160 ft long and 100 ft tall achieves its visibility and landmark position by hovering above a complex of commercial buildings.

Gehry's design for the Disney Concert Hall departs from the postmodern fascination with historical images and the architecture of spectacle. By doing so, he sounds an off-note in the tectonic thinking. The Concert Hall project is fashionably dressed up to designate a volumetric mass that denies any coherent and hierarchical order, and yet relates the building to its site heterogeneously. Seen from Hope Street, the main body of the central hall sits on a horizontal volume that houses the servant spaces. This parti was also used in the Jung Institute for Los Angeles in 1976. The sketches for this unbuilt project

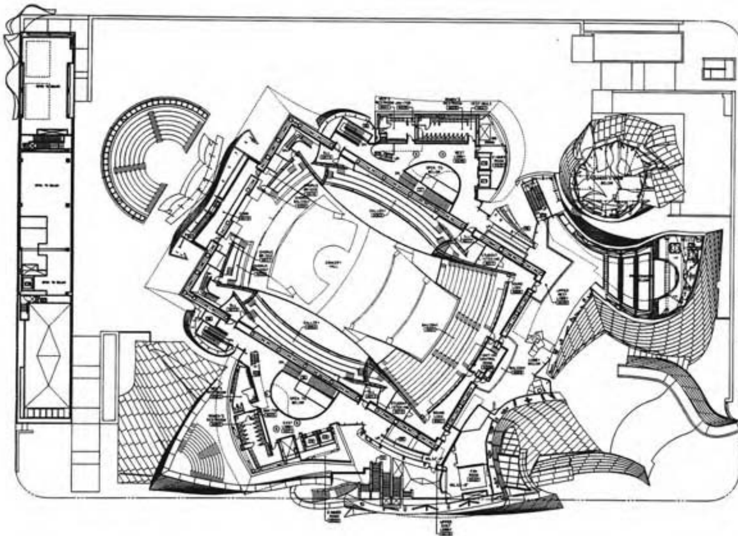


5.20 Frank Gehry, Jung Institute, project, 1976. Perspective drawing. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

depict an L-shaped rectangular box whose roof is marked by a number of playful and independent volumes. According to Kurt Forster, Gehry was "obviously discovering something important at this stage, when he relaxed, and even severed, the links that had hitherto locked the various parts of a building into a single whole".[33] This observation is paralleled in Gehry's design for the Familian Residence and his own house. In the Jung Institute and the Disney Concert Hall, we witness a disintegrated whole that is achieved not through fragmentation but through a compositional distinction between what is necessary and what is excessive. In the Disney project, the rational articulation of the base stands in contrast to the vertical and dynamic configuration of the central volume. The podium in these two projects supports a vibrant form evoking the relationship of a dancer to the stage. The seam connecting the building to the ground in the main façade, on the other hand, is treated more in line with the dressing of the concert hall. Here, the fragmented and twisted surfaces are dramatized by cuts that mark the main entrance. This figurative gesture is stressed by rotating the plan of the amphitheatre against the main axis of the site. The inflection projects the figure of the main volume forward and up, as floors are stacked one on top of the other. Seen from the angle of

the main entrance (see Fig. 5.16), the vertical cut through the enclosure makes room for a glazed volume to jut out, disclosing the central void. Through the same opening we can see the structural columns, whose form indicates a distinction between what is dressing and what is constructional. Each column has a short, tree-trunk base from which structural, vertical elements stretch out to support the enclosure. The cuts on the body of the amphitheatre emulate the idea of "ruin in future", a visual sensibility fashionable in the "grunge" style of dress of urban youth circa 1980. However, it is to Gehry's credit that he utilizes the space between the metal wrapping and the "shoebox" amphitheatre with terraces, gardens and other programmatic requirements; an arrangement that saves the project from being a mere postmodernist "decorated shed".

The metaphoric analogy between dress and the vertical configuration of the central volume in the Disney Concert Hall recalls the posture of a dancer. There is an intriguing dialogue between the disintegrated seam in the front part of this building and the soaring volume of the concert hall. Somewhat similar to a ballet dancer, the vertical volume appears to defy the forces of



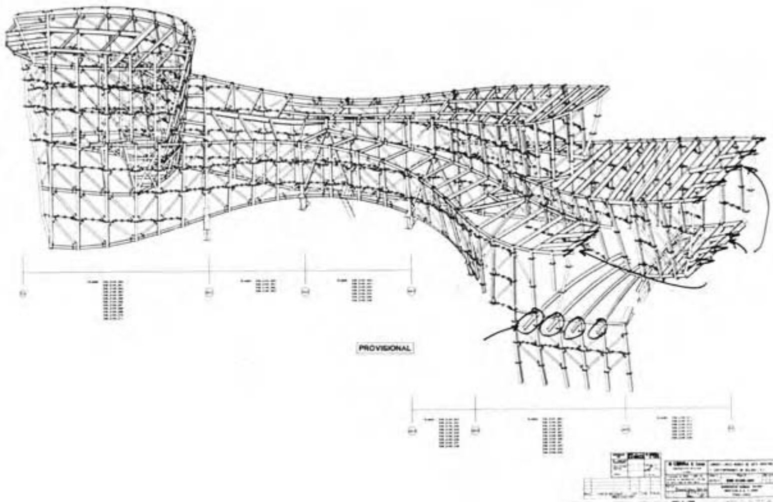
5.21 Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California, 1997–2003. Floor plan. Courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

gravity. This "theatrical posture" does not, however, simulate total weightlessness. The building's configuration evokes the posture of a dancer who, after soaring up and twisting around, eventually stands firm and maintains minimum contact with the ground. The fragmented and torn surfaces of the amphitheatre could also be associated with the fabric used to cover carnival scaffolding and, of course, tent architecture. This analogy is important not because of the twist that might be given to the debate on the origins of architecture, but because of the importance of textiles for architecture (whether implied in Semper's idea of dressing or derived from the architecture of the tent) and the concept of fabrication as a way of seeing and making that is implied in the word fabric. The art-form of the Disney Concert Hall suggests that the perceived spatial envelope is literally a fabrication; the etymology of the word suggests both the style or plan of construction and woven material. Reminding his readers of that ambiguous moment of intersection between gravity and the unconscious, particular to the animated world of cartoons, Michael Sorkin makes the observation that "the Disney project is also a distortion, a cartoon that inflates the unseen ideal form: those shapes in the Disney hall are both dancing flowers or hippos but also dancing not-cubes and not-rectangles, distorted away from the familiar but not so far as to cease affinity".[34] The implied defamiliarization in Sorkin's statement discloses a formalistic approach to architecture, one that would free the enclosure from any constraint, including the geometry induced by the structural logic, which results in the absolute autonomy of form.

Although the discrepancy between the art-form and the structural logic is endemic in the tectonic,[35] nevertheless, Gehry does not address this gap in an attempt to articulate the rift between the formal (sculptural) and the structural beyond an either/or resolution. We might speculate that Gehry utilizes the analogy between fabric and dressing beyond the nineteenth-century architectural discourse. We might also suggest that his architecture folds the tectonic thinking back to a state of primitivism when architecture, according to Adolf Loos, was realized by putting up four carpets, and the structural elements were seen as auxiliary; they just support the carpets.[36] Was not the idea of the Dom-ino frame (and its consequences for the free façade and the free plan) in part motivated by tent architecture, whose regulating lines still refer to the importance of cubes and rectangles, even seen through the distorted lens of postmodernity? By investing in "fabrication" and demystifying the

classical discourse on construction, Gehry's design entertains an early modernist vision in which a primitive sense of freedom was sought as a means of rebuffing, even if only temporarily, the constraints forced on architecture by modernization. The "actualization" of the past through the present (what Walter Benjamin termed allegory) reaches a critical dimension in Gehry's appropriation of the aesthetic of fabrication. The aesthetic appeal of the wrapping surfaces of the Disney project is a reminder of the "mystical" character of commodities whose fetishism speaks of the dissociation of the commodity from its use-value.[37]

The theatrical character of Gehry's design, its allusions to the posture of the dancer and the expressive falseness of its dressing, are suggestive of an architecture of spectacle. As a metaphor, "spectacle", in this particular case, stands for the programmatic and iconic connotation of the Disney Concert Hall. In Kahn's words, Gehry's building wants to be the architecture of event that has no reference point, and yet, by bringing together the spectacle (the stage) and the spectator, the building itself becomes part of the culture of spectacle. The idea is given a new pitch in the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.



5.22 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Computer drawing of steel structure.

5.23 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Entrance view.

This building is, indeed, Gehry's ultimate statement in defiance of Semper's theory of dressing, i.e. *Bekleidung*, and favouring the aesthetic of the dressed-up.[38] While the former is achieved by the embellishment of a constructed form and its poetic expression in the surface, the dressed-up, instead, suggests a vision of wrapping that is implied in the formal and aesthetic freedom embedded in the frame-structure that has been used since the inception of the Dom-ino frame. The Bilbao building also recollects two themes that are important in Gehry's work; first, the image of the fish, which, in this particular project ,attains a contextual quality, partly owing to its waterside location, and, second, the specifics involved in a sculptor's vision of the object at hand.

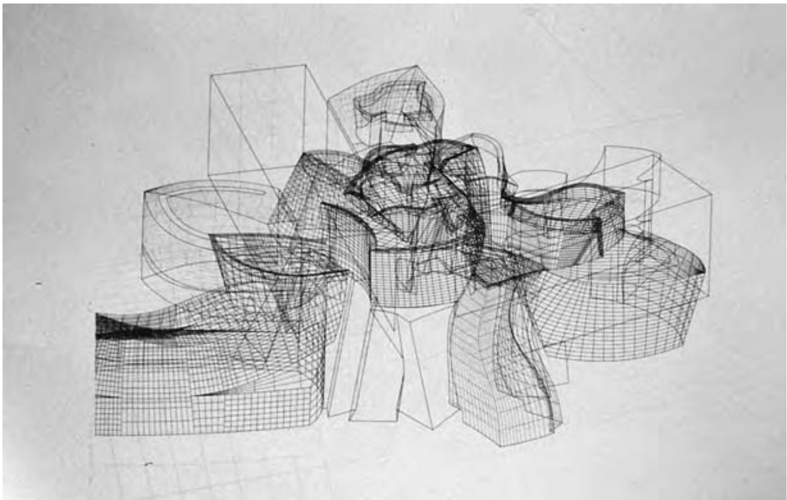
While the overall form of the Bilbao building discloses nothing short of an image of spectacle, the building's relationship to the site is of most interest here. The tactile qualities of the metal cladding and the formal energies pumped into different parts of the building connote the restless situation of

the body of a fish wanting to free itself from the hook. The significance of the analogy, though presented in visual terms, should be elaborated in architectonic terms. What is involved here is the dichotomy between the site plan and the overall volume of the building. While most published pictures of the project emphasize the sculptural nature of the volume and its allusive geometry, the site plan instead discloses the way in which Gehry has skilfully infused aspects of the idea of landform architecture into his design. This much is clear from the location of the main entrance where we are invited first to step down to the level of the adjacent river, and then to climb back up almost to street level and, from there, to the upper galleries. Thus the Semperian idea of earth-work and terrace making, and its necessity for the building's grounding in the site. Also of interest, as far as the issue of landform is concerned, is the volume of the gallery (the largest one houses the work of American artist Richard Serra), the body of which is extended to occupy the underground of

5.24 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. View from the adjacent bridge.

the highway above. It is to Gehry's credit that he has combined architecture with infrastructure, the highway and the river, marking the building as a pleat where what was once "natural" has to be folded into the city, the spectacle. The implied dichotomy is legible in the montage of the overall volume of the complex where the sculptural form seen from the city is balanced with volumes whose form is edited in reference to the surrounding landscape.

This aspect of Gehry's architecture, the building's relationship to its context, has been interpreted differently. Rosemarie Haag Bletter reminded us, as early as in 1986, of the importance of the idea of constant change invested in Kurt Schwitters's Merzbau (1933) and Gehry's house in Santa Monica: "Schwitters's sculpture gradually grew from inside out to absorb the old house," Bletter observes, whereas Gehry, "works from the outside in by entrapping the original bungalow of his Santa Monica house within a new shell."[39] More recently, Dal Co has picked up on the Merzbau to discuss the Bilbao building.[40] What is intriguing in the Merzbau, however, is the endless transformation of the project to the point that the work precludes any possible representational dialogue between material, construction and representation. According to Dal Co, the "operative" technique utilized by Schwitters "makes



5.25 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1991–97. Three-dimensional rendering of steel structure.

its constituent elements imperceptible: the only presence it permits is the continuously evoked presence of its artifice."[41] An artifice indeed, but one that is more in tune with the language of parody than the tectonic, even when the incompleteness of the final form is wrongly taken for the filmic technique of montage.[42] The "operative" technique is the form-giving principle in the Guggenheim's titanium dressing of the overall surface, which reveals no trace of the steel frame beneath.

To underline my concern for the rapport between a constructed form and the clothing, it is important to draw the reader's attention to Claes Oldenburg, an artist dear to Gehry's heart. In Oldenburg's entry for the Chicago Tribune Tower Competition of 1968, a skyscraper is envisioned in the form of Lorado Taft's sculpture, *Death*. Here, Oldenburg wraps the body of his work with fabric, stressing the flesh and evoking a sense of verticality and ruin. Oldenburg's skyscraper recalls Gustav Klimt's painting, *The Kiss*, where the physicality of the depicted body disappears behind a wrapping cloth. However, important to my concern for the tectonic is the way in which Jon Utzon draws analogies from both the visual arts and the natural world in the Sydney Opera House. According to Françoise Fromonot, the repetitive coil in the waving hair of Venus in Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, or the fanned pleats falling from the shoulder over the protruding knees in the figure of Christ, found on the Tympanum of Vezelay, encouraged Utzon to make visible what is load-bearing and what is cladding. In doing so, he avoided the temptation of indulging in expressionistic forms such as clouds, instead favouring standardized elements that would shape the dialogue between cladding and "the primary tectonic order of building".[43] This last observation does not suggest that Gehry's design world is empty of imagination. I rather want to stress a problem inherent in the interiority of architecture: since the experience of the Domi-ino frame,[44] the frame-structure has provided an opportunity for the architect to avoid the tectonic dialogue between structure and the element of wrapping. The pictures taken during construction of the Bilbao building suggest that the steel framework was entertained primarily as a supportive mechanism to hold up a pre-conceived shell. The expressive freedom of the clothing of Gehry's recent building recalls Gilles Deleuze's association between the idea of "fold" and Baroque architecture.[45] And yet long before Deleuze's text became the textbook for deconstructivist architecture, Hans Sedlmayr had recognized the "artistic structure" of Borromini's San Carlo in the repetition

of an undulating wall four times in the plan. Here, "structure is found paradoxically in a surface element without structural function".[46] I would like to suggest that, independent of structure, the element of wrapping has become the form-giving impulse in the Bilbao building. Gone in Gehry's vision is the Miesian tectonic that is revealed in the dialogue between column and wall, and between earth-work and frame-work. Gehry also dispenses with Kahn's attempt to reveal the way a space is conceived and constructed. Instead, Gehry says, "I have been interested in expressing feelings in my work, that means you don't distil them with rationalization. You solve the practical stuff but don't take the juice out while you are doing it." The "juice" perhaps refers to the protein of the formal voyeurism that resides in computer-generated images, which Gehry appropriates so skilfully.

CHAPTER 6

SURFACE: THE ATECTONIC OF ROOFING AND WRAPPING

> **The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgments about itself. . . . The surface-level expressions, however, by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things. Conversely, knowledge of this state of things depends on the interpretation of these surface-level expressions. The fundamental substance of an epoch and its unheeded impulses illuminate each other reciprocally.**
>
> – Siegfried Kracauer[1]

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION PROVIDES an opening for a discussion of the permeation of roofing and wrapping in contemporary architecture. What is the role of the disciplinary history of architecture when the tendency among most architects is to see form as an abstract entity, and to attempt to theorize architecture from an interdisciplinary point of view? That architects should equip themselves with the broad available knowledge is obvious and has been part of architectural praxis since Vitruvius's famous text, *De Architectura*. What needs to be added here is that, when built, architecture belongs not so much

to the designer's ideas, let alone concepts developed in other disciplines. It is rather the work's relation to themes, forms, and haptic experiences that are central to differentiating the art of building from other disciplines. The suggested distinction, however, was compromised during the 1970s for reasons that are not the concern of this chapter.[2] Suffice it to say that, in order to move beyond the theoretical premises of post-war architecture, contemporary architects, especially those practising in America and Europe, seemingly had no choice but to revise their strategies in the light of concepts derived from structuralism and post-structuralism. Even if Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory was once an essential text for theoreticians and some architects, today, architectural form is usually contemplated in reference to Gilles Deleuze's discourse on the fold discussed in a book of that title.[3] The fold has inaugurated a way of seeing and discussing architecture that dispenses with some aspects of classical and anthropocentric assumptions central even to modernist discourse, and it is this that has made the subject so dear to neo-avant-garde architects.

The argument presented in this chapter does not intend to underestimate the role of theory in architecture. The intention is rather to highlight the fact that theory today operates in an autonomous realm separate from architectural praxis. To map a productive relationship between history, theory and criticism, this chapter will attempt to turn the focus of analysis to the historicity of architectural discipline. Deploying Gottfried Semper's theory of dressing, the argument presented here gives particular attention to Semper's discourse on the tectonic rapport between the two elements of the roof and enclosure, and will examine its theoretical implications for current architecture. Semper is also important because his idea of theatricality provokes discussion of the expressionistic tendencies of computer-generated forms in reference to the aesthetic of commodity fetishism.[4] A different understanding of roofing and wrapping would plot architecture in the domain of landscape. To this end, the final section of the present text examines two recent works by Peter Eisenman and Renzo Piano, to demonstrate the significance of the idea of architecture/landscape for critical practice. The binary underpinning of this comparison is further complicated by placing Greg Lynn's views on the tectonics of blob in the fuzzy picture of neo-avant-garde architectural practice.

THE RETURN OF SURFACE

Any discussion concerning the tectonic rapport between wrapping and roofing involves examining the historicity of these two architectonic elements. Recent architectural theories discuss "surface" in reference to the visual aesthetics of media technologies with a vague reference to Semper.[5] In "Digital Semper",[6] for example, Bernard Cache dwells on Semper's theory of *Bekleidung*, dressing.[7] However, he fails to notice the difference between "surface" and the idea of dressing, as well as the difference between dressing and the dressed-up.[8] The dressed-up suggests wrapping a constructed form with surfaces that might evoke a particular style or symbolism of the kind in vogue during the late 1970s' eclecticism. Semper's theory of dressing, in contrast, is primarily concerned with the artistic articulation of the material of the exterior clothing in relation to the load-bearing elements. The difference should also be discussed with reference to the clothing that corrects or brings forth the shape of the body *vis-à-vis* that used in carnivals. In the latter case the body is dressed-up for theatrical effect with little concern for comfort. Cache uses Semper's theory to justify the present interest in surface, understood as a thin film covering the mass of a building. He also does not discuss the idea of surface with reference to architecture's rapport with landscape. This last point is important for two reasons: firstly, the tectonic evolves primarily in moulding the seam connecting the building to its ground. In addition, any technically-oriented approach to architecture stops short of historicizing the current visual and tactile experiences in relation to the disciplinary history of architecture. For some, the most significant issue in architecture today is to invent new forms using the available digital techniques. To clarify these observations, it is necessary to review Semper's theory of dressing closely.

In the "Preliminary Remarks on Polychromic Architecture", Semper argues that unpretentious lavishness is a natural need for architecture if the whole matter is treated artistically. This conditional endorsement of excess in architecture is fulfilled when, as in the ancient Greek monuments, the architect combines painting, sculpture and other arts, creating a chorus.[9] Juxtaposing dance and fine art, Semper did underline "necessity" and the architectonic means by which one should handle such a subject artistically. In fact, the idea of necessity was critical for nineteenth-century architecture in more ways than one: a utilitarian understanding of the socio-cultural consequences of the industrial revolution and the emergence of new building materials and

institutional needs were both developments instrumental in generating an esteem for realism and "objectivity" which was shared by many architects and artists.[10] Making a distinction between the core-form and the art-form, Semper argued that in early civilization, the interior space was wrapped by carpets hung from a frame that fulfilled the structural and practical needs of sheltering. According to him, the carpets were later conceived as stylistic or tectonic surrogate, dressing the building's physical structure.

Several decades later, in an article entitled "The Principle of Cladding", Adolf Loos gave a new twist to Semper's idea of dressing.[11] For Loos, the primary task of the architect is to embellish the material of dressing in such a way that its tactile qualities would evoke particular sentiment. The second task of the architect, according to him, was to think of a structure that holds the enclosure up, for example, the four carpets implied in Semper's theory of dressing. Obviously there is a rift between Semper and Loos's interpretation of dressing that sheds some light on the present tendency to wrap the space with surfaces (folds?) that have no tectonic rapport with what holds the enclosure together.

Semper's theory of dressing had two goals. First, to underline the importance of the textile industry in the origins of architecture. For Semper, the idea of the wall evolved through a sequence of spatial enclosures; primitive screen or woven mat, then metal sheathing and, eventually, carpets, whose colourful images were applied to the surface of masonry building to evoke a sentiment of monumentality.[12] Second, Semper was concerned with the difficulty involved in the artistic use of iron in monumental architecture.[13] His argument was also a response to those who believed that Greek architects shunned the use of colour in monuments. Dwelling on necessity, Semper argued for a concept of dressing through which the architect could wrap the structure, the core-form, in an art-form that might even deny the material basis of the former. According to him, "architecture could only attain a pivotal status among the fine arts by elevating the 'poetic idea' of the building's purpose (using types, metaphors and functional forms) to such a level that the physical material of the building disappeared from the subjective consciousness, leaving only the contemplation of its transcendental meaning".[14] The statement discloses Semper's re-interpretation of the nineteenth-century drive for realism and objectivity with an eye to the disciplinary history of architecture.

There were other interpretations of "necessity" as the nineteenth century came to an end. Otto Wagner, for one, discussed realism in terms of

faithfulness to material and the practical demands of modern life.[15] While challenging Semper's theory of *Bekleidung*, Wagner came short of proposing a clear alternative to the ways in which architecture attains a particular art-form out of a chosen structural system. His early views recall Marc-Antoine Laugier's interest in the rational expression of construction. As Peter Haiko reminds us, Wagner's later practice unfolds a tectonic form in which the actual structure often remains hidden. In the main façade of the Postsparkasse, for example, the nails adorning the façade were not used to visualize the structure *per se*, "but [of] that which reminds us of it. . . . The task of the bolts is to point out to the viewer the novelty of the encasement, namely the slabs, to make it obvious and eternal."[16] The semantics invested in Wagner's tectonic were mainly motivated by the physical material of construction.

Wagner's understanding of the tectonic could be associated with J. Winckelmann who saw the poetics of Greek temples as driven by a stone construction system. Questioning the rationalist distinction between the structural and the ornamental, Semper's discourse on dressing, instead, equates architecture with dance and music. He refers to architecture as a cosmic art. As discussed in Chapter 2, music and dance differ from the imitative arts in that a distinction between what is essential to them and what is excessive, or ornamental, is almost impossible. The implied idea of theatricality in Semper and his reference to the Greek chorus and dance suggests that excess in architecture should be seen as a conscious attempt by the architect to include architecture within a broader cultural experience. And yet, central to the idea of theatricality is the embellishment of the constructed form while mastering the material; the form is a fake, according to Semper, if there is nothing behind the mask.[17]

Semper's idea of theatricality is important because, contrary to the accusation that he was a die-hard materialist,[18] he attempted to draw the attention to that aspect of architecture which, like other commodities, has to do with the realm of consumption. In order to be "attractive", like products of fashion, and to be appropriated by the masses, architecture, like every other modern product, should constitute "antiquity anew out of the most recent past".[19] The implied dialogical relation between past and the present demonstrates Semper's inclination to bringing architecture together with other cultural products, including motifs produced by the applied arts such as weaving and ceramics, but also dance and chorus, material experiences that are absent in Wagner's discourse on realism.

The historicization suggested here perhaps speaks for this author's fascination with Semper. But there is more to it. Besides Semper's belief that fabrication is essential to architecture's interiority, what Semper wrote and built were charged, in a disguised way, with a glimpse of what has become a century later an experience of everyday life;[20] that is, the permeation of the aesthetic of commodity fetishism. The totalization implied in Semper's idea of theatricality, his reference to the Greek chorus, are meaningful today if recoded in the context of a mass culture that is not orchestrated by historical forms, but by animated surfaces, folds and blob architecture. What the blob, a generic name for computer-generated form, offers is not the new, but a sense of aesthetic appreciation that runs through the entirety of the present culture of spectacle. For further understanding of the difference between "dressing" and "dressed-up", the historicity of organic forms implied in blob architecture should be addressed.

THE RETURN OF ORGANIC

There is another dimension to the need to historicize current architectural theories. The biomorphic forms permeating computer-generated images might look like the work of modern expressionists, or evoke Wright's organic theory. An argument can be made for suggesting that neither of these tendencies of modernism has anything in common with the conceptual potentialities vested in current interest in biomorphic forms. And yet, the "return of organic" should be understood in conjunction with the recent history of the concept of organic that permeates architectural discourse. Criticizing the totalizing tendency of the international architecture, Peter Collins presented "biological analogy" as one paradigm among four others that frames the horizon of his discourse in a book entitled *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*. Collins traces the origin of biological analogy back to the mid-seventeenth century when biological studies were used to study laws governing social phenomena.[21] The analogy was further modified during the nineteenth century when vegetation was discussed in reference to a particular environment. Collins's classificatory mode, however, haunts him: In an attempt to contextualize modern architecture, he uses an organic metaphor to show how architecture is "constantly shifting like an evolving, living being".[22] He goes further and recognizes two

directions in modern architecture that were influenced by biological studies: the idea that form follows function, and the view that attempts to associate architectural form with a particular environment, i.e. regionalism. Both ideas have a foot in the nineteenth-century discourse on organicism. What is of most interest in organicism, however, is the drive for singularity and individuation without rejecting the totality of history. Here is how Caroline van Eck describes the significance of organicism for nineteenth-century architecture. According to her, organicism presented "a strategy of invention, by which stylistic decisions are made and justified, or as a strategy of interpretation, through which the meaning of architecture, and especially the architecture of the past, can be formulated".[23] In any case, Collins's paradigm should be revisited in the light of blob architecture, and the historicity permeating the two concepts of organic and mechanic.

In a seminal essay Joseph Rykwert locates the etymological roots of the word organic in *organon*, which, according to him, "came from an archaic term, *ergon*, work". Rykwert suggests that, the Latin use of "*organicus* did not mean anything very different from *mechanicus*: something done by means of instruments indirectly".[24] The Latin use of the term had come to an end by the seventeenth century when minerals, vegetables and animals were regarded as entities belonging to separate domains. Interestingly enough, the mechanistic philosophy evolved in the seventeenth century supported the idea of using techniques derived from classical aesthetics, thus creating an illusion of life and movement perceivable in nature.[25] The word *organon*, and its appeal for the archaic unity between organic and mechanical, Rykwert reminds us, resurfaced in many nineteenth-century functional theories, especially in the work of those architects and theoreticians who wanted to totalize the rift between structure (mechanics/necessity) and ornament (excess/aesthetic pleasure).[26] Confronted by the orthodox modernist denunciation of ornament, and the postmodernist simulation of historical forms, Rykwert may have wanted to underline the bad conscience of the 1980s and to draw our attention to the eternity of the classical. His argument is useful if read in conjunction with Walter Benjamin's discourse on the actuality of the present. For Benjamin, "the present must be relieved from its identification with the eternal past and be nourished by the now".[27] But the now of the present is pregnant with the most archaic, and for Benjamin the culture of modernity is nothing but the clash between the ever new and the outmoded past.

Benjamin's "doubling," the return of the past in the new, leads us to see the present esteem for biomorphic forms neither as an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, nor as a direct product of electronic technology. In fact, an argument can be made to suggest that since antiquity,[28] in addition to plant and animal forms, human figures were utilized for symbolic and structural ends. While Semper's observation concerns the organic idea implied in the tectonic articulation of ornament and structure, the following remarks make a point that is relevant to the present obsession with surface architecture. For Semper, the organic content of the tectonic of Greek order was anticipated in the Assyrian column, though without the "animating spark of Prometheus". Here he presents a perception of shell that permeates *surface*. Following Semper, and to paraphrase him, it might be argued that in blob architecture the function of the structure is transferred to the shell, the "structural scheme and the artistic scheme are one", and that "organic" haunts the image. In this context, Anthony Vidler is correct to characterize the neo-avant-garde architects' interest in fold as part "of conscious literalization, deployed in the service of an architecture that takes its authority from the inherent 'vitalism' – of computer-generated series".[29] What should be added to Vidler's observation is Greg Lynn's discussion of tectonics of biomorphic forms.

The blob attempts to provide an alternative theory to those architects who invest in contradiction (formal or contextual) and search for bygone coherencies exemplified in the work of some traditionalists. This third alternative, according to Lynn, wants to do two things. First, to underline the situation where the velocity of computer-generated images has put architects in a defensive position. This is the case with those who are seeking to reassess the importance of architecture's disciplinary history for current practice. Second, dwelling on themes like "anexact geometries" or vague forms, Lynn sees smoothness in the blob having the potential to nullify the contradictions so dear to the "reactionary call for unity" and the "avant-garde dismantling of it".[30] Smoothing over the contradictions, together with an esteem for pliancy, gives rise to the simultaneous existence of disparate and seemingly distinct elements. Lynn's biomorphic alternative dismisses the possibility of architecture having any rapport with the ideology of late capitalism; the blob indeed represents a totalized space, having the least to do with its context. What is also missing in Lynn's theorization is a discussion that concerns the return of the familiar, the organic and its capacity to domesticate both the shock effects

and anxieties unleashed by a capitalist system, the culture of which is moving beyond the modernist aesthetic of abstraction. In addition, mention should be made of the alienation induced by globalization of capital and the information industry. To naturalize, or domesticate the very mechanistic logic of computer technology, the blob wraps "anexact geometries" with surfaces, the very appearance of which might be associated with zoological forms, if not with the tectonic transformations that reshape the landscape.

Any discussion concerning the subject of domestication of the "new" and its implication for architecture needs to be historicized too. Was not "nature" appropriated as a means of domestication when eighteenth-century architecture seemed to depart from classical wisdom? And did not most modernists recode "real" as natural to substantiate their mechanical analogies? One is reminded of the sublime beauty of the so-called French Revolutionary architects and the abstraction envisaged by technological products. Mention should also be made of the silos, the liners and the machine-objects that were characterized as the second nature. Of interest here is the way neo-avant-garde architects' fascination with digital techniques ends in bringing to the surface once again ideas such as "anthropomorphizing the material world", or the "humanization of nature", which, interestingly, had been utilized in ancient sculptures. Speaking of the great collections of natural and human objects, Horst Bredekamp suggests that, "automatons were the most obvious expression of the desire to imitate life by inspiring movement".[31] In any event, there is a difference between blob architecture and that of modern buildings, quite apart from ancient sculpture, that should be addressed. Within the torn-apart landscape of the pre-modern world, the white and abstract forms of the early modern buildings stood aloof and looked surreal. On the other hand, the early twentieth century's organic theories of architecture and the work of expressionism were indeed formulated in tandem, if not in opposition, to the emerging metropolis and a straitjacket understanding of functionalism. This is not the place to discuss these issues; the discussion[32] should rather turn to the postmodernity of the blob-form, which does not produce the shock effect that modern architects guarded against. This change in perception in the appropriation of architecture has to do with the total effects of the commodity-form. What this means is that the phenomenon of blob is the result of the unmediated internalization of technique into the processes of conceptualization and production of architecture. Losing its modernist agenda, architecture

today is plunged into the spectacle of the culture industry. One architectonic manifestation of this unique development is the return of surface in architectural discourse. And yet, the blob touches the realm of the uncanny; it neutralizes the animated surfaces of architecture, tossing the Venturisque vanilla ice cream forms to the ashes of history. The disappearance of post-modern historicism from the main scene of today's architecture should be considered the most positive contribution that digital techniques have offered to architecture thus far.

The theoretical position presented in the previous pages gives rise to the following question. Is there any other dimension to the notion of organic with positive architectonic implications? Besides the idea of landscape (discussed next), the return of the organic provides the opportunity to visit a few projects of Steven Holl, another architect who has not yet joined the club of the total digitalization of the architectural form. Even though I suggested earlier that the return of organic should be considered in conjunction with the dialectic of organic and mechanical, it is of significance here to recall the idea of body implied in the word organic. It is not the humanist discourse on the subject of the body and architecture that is of interest,[33] but a phenomenological one central to Holl's architecture.[34] If light and the perceptual horizon of space and its haptic dimension were formative themes for his early work, in Holl's most recent projects the body is introduced as an uncanny living phenomena with architectonic implications more complex than those of the blob or fold. Contrary to the theatricalization permeating neo-avant-garde architecture, in Holl's work, the profusion of excess, fundamental to making a form look animated, is abruptly curtailed. Central to this strategy is the concept of "cut", which first occurred in his work to suggest the incompleteness of form, and was later utilized to connote the act of castration. The typological modification that is taking place in his work while the body of building is animated is noteworthy.

To begin with, mention should be made of the Helsinki Museum of Contemporary Art (1998). Here the dialogical relation between the idea of cut and the organic were essential to editing the final form that, interestingly enough, accommodates the major form-giving elements of its site; the cityscape with its historic monuments on the west, and the infrastructure, Eliel Saarinen's Helsinki Station, on the east. If the building's response to the site is a reminder of Frank Gehry's Bilbao project, the association goes no further.

6.1 Steven Holl, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland, 1992–98. General view.

What makes Holl's project different is the concept of cut that in this particular work literally prevents the organic form from expressing itself fully. Similar to the idea of cut in cinematography, the final form "appears" incomplete, although it fully accommodates the spatial needs of the given programme.

Without wanting to address Holl's work in its entirety, two other architectonic implications of "cut" should be discussed. The idea of cut, implemented in the Helsinki project, the Bellevue Art Museum, Washington (2001) and the competition entry for the Zollikerberg Housing Complex, Switzerland, is essential to the actualization of the suggested incompleteness, so that the overall form of each mentioned project is not treated as a fragment. The uncanny animation central to Holl's most recent projects speaks instead of anonymity; the form is cut from something whose presence is not perceivable, but the form is also incapable of fully releasing its own internal energies. This last point is one reason why his architecture fails to touch the realm of theatricalization. In addition, the idea of cut initiates a unique perception of surface. Where in the architecture of theatricalization the surface

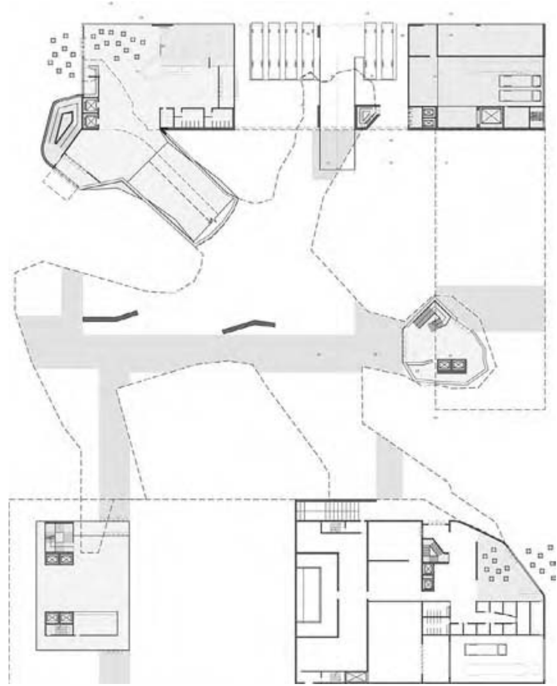
6.2 Steven Holl, Bellevue Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, 1997–2001. View from southwest.

plays a critical role in wrapping the space, in Holl's work, the idea of cut generates a concept of surface that cannot be fully appreciated in terms of cladding or wrapping: in the projects mentioned here, the surface seems to be nothing but the trace of the very act of cutting, though cladded and embellished excessively. As Kenneth Frampton notes, in the Helsinki Museum, "sectional amputation also curtails the form at its greatest width, at the northern end facing out over the water. Here the cropped section assumes the form of a relief-façade lined in copper."[35] This much is also clear from the Chapel of St Ignatius, where the cut achieves tectonic dimension by interlocking concrete panels around windows. Here the placement of the cuts is intertwined with the extension of three vaulted roofs designating the transitions that take place in the planimetric organization. The idea of cut here is also meshed with the surface cladding where the hooks used to lift the panel upright are capped with bronze covers. The detailing somehow recalls Otto Wagner's Post Office Savings Bank, Vienna.[36]

Finally, the idea of excess attains complex and metaphorical dimension in a competition project for the Museum of Human Evolution, Burgos, Spain. Here the organs of a zoological form are twisted and stretched, bringing

6.3 Steven Holl, Chapel of St Ignatius, Seattle, Washington, 1994–97. Main entrance.

6.4 Steven Holl, Chapel of St Ignatius, Seattle, Washington, 1994–97. Detail.



6.5 Steven Holl, Museum of Human Evolution, Burgos, Spain, 2000. Second floor plan.

together different parts of the plan, and shoring up a fragmented courtyard typology. Interestingly enough, this creature-looking volume houses most of the vertical and horizontal circulation of the complex. As the architect suggests, one reason to animate the form is “the phenomenon of the body moving through space”.[37] Seen from a bird’s-eye view, the central criss-crossed figure recalls Pablo Picasso’s later drawings where human bodies float weightlessly; they also remind us of the tortured and amputated bodies depicted in Bacon’s work. Perhaps what makes the return of the organic in Holl’s work singular is the architect’s conceptualization of the dialectics involved in art and science where the ontological dimensions of architecture are excessively stressed to balance out the theatricalization induced by the commodification of culture.

BACK TO ROOFING AND WRAPPING

The theoretical formulation presented thus far provides a lens through which to look at the tectonic of the elements of roof and clothing from a different angle. Consider Jean Nouvel's design for the Conference Centre in Tours, France, and the Culture and Conference Centre in Switzerland. In these two projects, the roof is articulated in reference to its ur-form, the idea of sheltering. Thus, the tectonic rapport between the slab and the beam, especially in the Swiss project, recalls Wright's deliberate transgression of the sheltering image of a hip roof, charging the overhanging part of the roof with the modernist esteem for the aesthetic of horizontality. Against, or in spite of the theatricalization of architecture by Frank Gehry and others, Nouvel's tectonic articulation restores the archaic purpose of the roof, rendering it as the foremost architectonic element of monumentality. This aspect of his work not only recalls Mies van der Rohe's National Gallery in Berlin (1968), but also Renzo Piano's

6.6 Jean Nouvel, Conference Centre in Lucerne, 1992–2000.

design in the Foundation Beyeler, Riehn (1997), a project that is fundamental to presenting a different understanding of the theme of organic.

The Beyeler project stresses the essentiality of the roof work and its tectonic dialogue with the wall and the site. Here Piano takes us back to Mies's Barcelona Pavilion where architecture is perceived in dialogue with landscape, water and sky. Both projects enjoy a lightness experienced in the building's reflection in the pond, and the smooth spatial transition that takes place between interior and exterior spaces. In the Foundation Beyeler, the building's stepping into the water dramatizes the image of ruin in the future: a high-tech glass roof shelters stone-cladded columns and walls that are sunk into the water. One is reminded of Carlo Scarpa's fascination with water and landscape, as re-presented in both the Brion Family Cemetery (see Fig. 3.10) and the Fondazione Querini-Stampalia, Venice.[38] Piano, however, goes a little further than Scarpa. Looking at the pictures taken from the bird's-eye view of the

6.7 Renzo Piano, Foundation Beyeler, Riehn, 1994–97.

Foundation Beyeler, one cannot dismiss the tectonic rapport between the surface of roof and the texture of the adjacent vineyard. More important, and perhaps in reference to the de Menil Collection and the Cy-Twombly Museum (both in Houston, Texas), Piano treats the roof surface almost like an element of clothing in its own right. Similar to the texture of a woven fabric, the roof in the Beyeler represents a hybrid fabric, weaving together the grid of structural support (columns and beams) and the infill through which light seeps into the galleries. Water, sky and light orchestrate the tectonic of roof and wall, evoking the idea of monumentality.[39] In Piano's words, "a monument evaporates like snow in the sun, that is to say organically, almost like the notion of excellence. Excellence vanishes the moment you proclaim it."[40] In the Foundation Beyeler the "organic" is returned to mediate the building's relation to the landscape. According to Piano, the exterior walls give the impression that "they were part of a terrain, projecting from the ground beneath as static,

6.8 Renzo Piano, Foundation Beyeler, Riehn, 1994–97. Aerial view.

geological elements. The only additional feature was the transparent glass roof, which had alighted like a butterfly on the wall and spread out its wings."[41] Piano's work recodes the return of organic in architecture's indispensable relation to landscape.

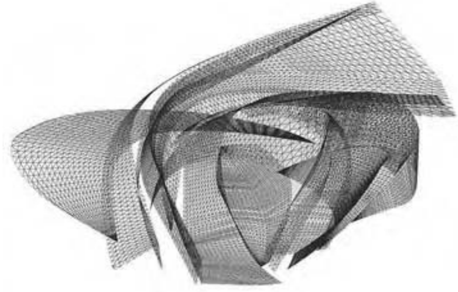
Eisenman gives a different twist to the architecture/landscape dialogue. If Piano's tectonics of the roof, and the dialectics of the roof and the wall recall the Semperian tradition, an argument can be made to suggest that Eisenman's most recent projects attempt to dispense with the essential nature of the tectonic, yet he makes an attempt to place architecture in the fabric of landscape. Consider the Staten Island Institute of Art and Science where the image of the hurricane-eye is conceptualized in a form that is primarily dictated by a fabric-like layer that wraps the body of the building. The reference to the eye of the hurricane is not direct: using morphing techniques, the initial image of an organic phenomenon is transposed into a form whose dressing operates in many ways; at one level, the roof functions as an enclosure, if not a path, but then it becomes the floor for a space beneath. Here the roof-work is reduced to covering the spaces that are left between the adjacent and dynamic surfaces, the overall form of which comprises the line separating the element of roof from the wall. Far more interesting is the way this alien-looking object (Eisenman calls it "ghost of the real")[42] sits on the site facing Manhattan, eye to eye with the destroyed Twin Towers. The image recalls mythologies of the metropolis: King Kong conquering the tall buildings, for example. The "soft" alien-looking object of Eisenman's project, with its peculiar gesture towards the metropolis, looks as human as ET in Spielberg's film. The image also discloses Eisenman's misreading, at least at the time of conceiving this project, that postmodernism represents the end of ideology. This limitation has opened a path towards a critical practice, the idiom of which fluctuates between the tectonic and topological tectonics.

Eisenman's design strategy aims at transcending dualities such as inside/outside, figure/ground, real/virtual and spectacle/event.[43] Among these it is the second duality that needs to be discussed here, though briefly. Without dwelling on the history of the idea of figure/ground, it is enough to say that the figure necessitates a ground distinct from the object. This compositional principle sustains the classical analogy between the vertical posture of the body and the pavilion-type building, if not the hut discussed by Antoine Laugier. The weakening of the seam connecting the building to the ground (or

6.9 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999. Diagram drawing.

6.10 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999. Interior space.

the earth-work to the frame-work discussed by Semper) entails two developments. First, it weakens not only the perspectival perception of an object, but also the parallelism that is assumed between the object and the viewer. Second, like Eisenman, we should be keen to rethink the Cartesian perception of space, perhaps in reference to the Deleuzian differentiation between matt and felt.[44] In Eisenman's words:



6.11 Peter Eisenman, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1999.

> The Staten Island project began with a finely gridded Cartesian matt, which was eventually turned into smooth topological strands that retain in their striations a memory of their original gridding. In the twelve diagrams of the process of transgression, the movement from a Cartesian mesh (ground) to a figured set of striations is achieved by passing a flow through the mat, analogous to the pedestrian flow through the ferry terminal. The resultant interior space is not formed by function, nor is it centralized, but appears to be a random overlay of layers revealing of spaces which appear and disappear at a glance, not allowing the observer to have a directed route or a fixed gaze.[45]

Eisenman's strategy utilizes fabric and separates the interior space from the outside. And yet, instead of articulating the tectonic of the enclosure and structure, he seemingly agrees with Loos that the support element is secondary to the idea of wrapping. In doing so he recodes the idea of dressing; his design process involves laying down a virtual mat, proceeding towards the formation of an object that meets the horizon of landscape and the verticality of the body midway.

Eisenman's turn to landform is also inspired by Georges Bataille's remarks on alteration, another term associated with Semper's interest in textiles. In discussing the surrealist artwork, the idea of alteration meant to Bataille a strategy to recode classical dualities like high and low and base and figure, and thus the possibility of placing the work somewhere between devolution and evolution.[46] In this process, the "surface" emerges as a symptom of horizontality, if not the "flatbed picture plane" discussed by Leo Steinberg.[47] In Eisenman's architecture, the space is perceived in the interplay established between surfaces needed to wrap the interior space and the play of tectonics.

To put it differently, the physicality of Eisenman's architecture is fissured in the diagrammatic representation of topography of the site and the programme.

What makes Eisenman's recent architecture different from Piano's has to do with his formalistic rethinking of the interiority of architecture, discussed in Chapter 3. Taking into consideration the available materials, building techniques and programmatic needs, Piano's tectonic articulation recollects the modernist's tradition of *Bauen*. Eisenman, instead, reiterates the ethos of the avant-garde, yet resists falling into the trap of the *Zeitgeist* entertained by architects who reduce architectural form to the images generated by electronic technologies. In operating in such a contradictory zone, Eisenman wishes to recode the early modernist formalist theories in line with contemporary intellectual life. The Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences addresses architecture's relation to a society that is deeply entangled with the spectacle of late capitalism. Eisenman's architecture involves readjusting architecture's interiority, and in doing so, his work highlights the difficulty of retaining some kind of critical distance from that theatricalization of architecture that would submit the art of building to the aesthetic of commodity fetishism.

In discussing Piano in conjunction with Eisenman, the intention is not to put these two architects against each other. In arguing that wrapping and roofing are formative for any critical engagement with contemporary architecture, the aim was to say something more: we are witnessing a historical situation where Semper's discourse on theatricality might be taken for the present culture of spectacle. Furthermore, if it is still useful to claim that Mies exhausted the tectonic potentialities of steel and glass architecture,[48] then it is necessary to explore the dialogical relationship between the roof-work and clothing differently. It is this last point that makes Semper's idea of theatricality essential for a critique of contemporary architecture.

To begin with, attention should be given to the distinction Semper makes between the planar and linear motifs fundamental to any fabric. According to him, "the cover's purpose is the opposite to that of binding. . . . If the basic form of binding is linear, the surface appears as the formative element in everything intended to cover, protect, and close." And he continues, "the most important general factor affecting the style of cover are the attributes of the surface; that is the extension in breadth and length, the absence of the third dimension. . . ."[49] The suggested distinction between the linear and planar motifs is crucial for understanding Semper's differentiation between the

tectonic potentialities of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. It also offers a theoretical paradigm to discuss current architecture's turn to surface. Technically, what is involved in the "turn" is that in the architecture of blob and fold, the grid and the linear dimension of the frame-structure are treated as a surrogate for the wall. What this entails is the critical position occupied by section in the design of playful surfaces.[50] From now on, the element of clothing can be seen as a thin membrane, the exterior face of which is embellished in its own right, but is also independent of the frame structure behind. When the surface is reduced to an all-encompassing unified enclosure, then the seam, "the principle making a virtue out of necessity",[51] vanishes. In the present rush to digital surface, the latter is treated like a carpet with a major difference; unlike the fabric of a carpet, the digital surface disguises the grid of its fabric on both sides. Thus, the inevitable dismantling of the tectonic rapport between the roof and the structural frame, and the ways in which dressing is expected to re-present that relationship.

Lynn's argument in favour of blob tectonics is noteworthy. According to him, in the blob, the element of roof is not made of repetitive and identical elements covering a long span with singular height. It is rather perceived as "a surface that continuously connects across all heights like a wet-cloth".[52] Here an attempt is made to redefine the tectonic of a trabeated structure in the light of recent advances taking place in the field of structural engineering, and the organic forms in some of the images produced by digital technology. Recalling the nineteenth-century debate on ornament and structure, Lynn's remark on ornament remains vague, even when he makes a distinction between ornament as applied decoration and that which to him characterizes "a dependency on collaboration that transforms" decoration and structure in "some unforeseen and unprecedented way".[53] When the surface is turned into the structure of ornament, then the organic rapport between the art-form and ornamentation, to recall Semper again, is not bound and influenced by the principle of surface dressing, without which it is is impossible to separate the art-from from decoration.[54] Therefore, Lynn's position, like that of other advocates of "digital tectonics", is primarily informed by the structural-technical dimension of the tectonic, and the aesthetic sensibilities permeating the present culture of spectacle. At a different level, it might be argued that Lynn's alternative is suggestive of a structural organism that is analogous to the global corporate organization where complexity is not achieved through

resolution of contradictions, but through pliancy. Blob is indeed a totalized system, leaving no space outside of its surface. From this point of view, one might argue that the blob maintains a non-critical position against the ideological rapport running between architecture and the cultural logic of late capitalism, to recall the title of Fredric Jameson's famous book.[55]

In the early decades of the last century there was enough space in the landscape under capitalist reconstruction where architecture could still sustain its disciplinary history and yet present itself as the social engine of modernity. That space today has been overtaken by the culture of spectacle. If one agrees with this observation, then it is possible to suggest that Eisenman's architecture attempts to make an opening through the suggested "closure", and thus the possibility of entering the realm of topology. Lynn, on the other hand, retains the closure as a datum to gauge the contemporaneity of architecture. The comparison raises the following question: In what creative ways can architects today keep hold of Semper's tectonic of theatricality without dismissing the tactile and visual sensibilities permeating contemporary culture? And, more importantly, and particularly in reference to neo-avant-garde architects, how can architecture deconstruct itself, go beyond its interiority, and yet retain that level of autonomy that was critical to the modernist departure from the classical language of architecture?

If it is true that architecture cannot touch the realm of landscape (where it belonged in the first place) without overcoming its own limits, what should we make of the association made here between Piano's architecture and the modernist tradition of the *Neue Bauen*? The association is a useful one: it foreshadows a criticism of the idea of theatricalization that takes advantage of idioms central to the modernity, even though this project may remain forever incomplete.[56] Lynn's blob, instead, formulates an alternative to Eisenman's intention in dressing up the void left by the failure of the project of the historical avant-garde. To put it differently, if the culture of building is dispensed with, then the deconstruction of the limits of architecture leads the art of building nowhere but into the whirlpool of the culture of spectacle. As Juan José Lahuerta reminds us, "if architecture had ever desired to become the scenario of human relations – in the heroic period of history – now it had finally achieved this, functioning as an indispensable backdrop for perfumes and automobiles in television advertisements, i.e. becoming raucously visible in the moment of its disappearance".[57] Such a moment, to some architects,

alludes to architecture's loss of its own scaffolding, and thus the tendency to legitimize the return of organic forms, the surface of which is scribbled with theories of formal autonomy. The development suggests that the temporality within which architecture was perceived to be the engine of society is gone, and perhaps cannot be regained for a long time to come.

Therefore, one possible way to get around the former political agenda of architecture is to exploit the historicity of that loss and to make architecture critical to the present culture of spectacle. To this end, the return of "surface" to the main scene of contemporary architecture should be seen as useful: it sheds a different light on Semper's theory of cladding, and provides an opportunity to underline the essentiality for the tectonic of roofing and wrapping, in spite of architecture's entanglement with a culture that is totally commodified. What this means is that criticism should discuss the work itself; how architecture addresses the culture of building in rapport with the objective and subjective situation of late capitalism. Interestingly enough, in his criticism of the present culture of the visual, Hal Foster has recently underlined the usefulness of what he calls "strategic autonomy" for a critical practice.[58] His argument is based on the historicity of the modernism of the 1920s, when the situation was sufficiently unclear for the subject to claim autonomy from the fetishism of the past, and thus had no choice but to jump on the machine of progress. Today the situation has changed drastically; commodification of the life-world is total and the subject is constantly defined and redefined by an everydayness that is saturated with visual images. In the present commodified world, the predicament of architecture centres on the fact that, by definition, it is a collective and constructive art, and might never achieve the autonomy of the other visual arts. Even modernism's claim to autonomy was nothing but a foil whose ideological delusion needed only a couple of decades to unveil its affiliation with capitalism. In the dialectics of autonomy and semi-autonomy, the idea of theatricality, as presented in this book, operates like an antinomy. In an attempt to reach that which is architectural, the tectonic of theatricality facilitates architecture's rapport with the constructive structures of capitalism.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1 According to Fritz Neumeyer, Mies van der Rohe was influenced by Romano Guardini's thought in general, and his ambivalent approach to technology, in particular. Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991. "Thus Guardini called for something with which Mies was in profound agreement: another, new, but not unilateral modernism in which subjective forces were restrained by objective limits, but, in which, conversely, the potentially threatening objective powers inherent in technology were subordinated to the subject, to man and his life." Ibid., 201. The dichotomy between the will of technology and the state of cultural products, and architecture as well, is a valid point of view for discussing current architecture while telecommunication technologies are influencing every facet of our daily experience.

2 Peter Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects", *Harvard Architecture Review* 3, winter 1984, 65–82.

3 Haim N. Finkelstein, *Surrealism and the Crisis of the Object*, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979.

4 Nancy J. Troy, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991, 52.

5 For a concise discussion of this subject in German Werkbund, see Fredric J. Schwartz, *Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, especially, "Individuality", 151–63. See also Walter Curt Behrendt, *The Victory of the New Building Style*, trans. W. F. Mallgrave, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2000.

6 In various disciplines, the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* is interpreted and applied differently. G. F. Hartlub used it in its general connotation during an exhibition in Mannheim in 1923. Most participants inclined for formal objectivity and minimal ornamentation. See Fritz Schmalenbach, "The term *Neue Sachlichkeit*", *Art Bulletin* 22, no. 3, 1940, 155–65. According to Harry Francis Mallgrave, Richard Streiter introduced the word *Sachlichkeit* to architectural discourse, and Hermann Mathesius

later reinterpreted it in the context of the 1914 Bauhaus debate on norm and innovation in architectural style. See Mallgrave, "From Realism to *Sachlichkeit*: The Polemics of Architectural Modernity in the 1890s", in Harry F. Mallgrave (ed.), *Otto Wagner*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993, 281–322. While realism in architecture compromised with *Sachlichkeit* in the first decades of the twentieth century, in painting and literature, some scholars have discussed the two terms from a political point of view. See Weiland Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit and the German Realism of the Twenties*, London: Hayward Gallery, 1979, 7–32. Recently, Fredric J. Schwartz has looked at the subject from a fresh point of view. His main thesis is that, by aligning architecture with technology, the Bauhaus of Walter Gropius came short of touching the other side of production, i.e. exchange and consumption. Schwartz sees the theoretical discourse of the Werkbund as the first step towards formation of a mass culture that debunks the idea of style motivated by historical forms or craft-oriented techniques. Schwartz, op. cit. 1996. Most recently Detlef Martins has contextualized the 1920s' discourse on German architecture in his introduction to Walter Curt Behrendt, op. cit. 2000.

7 For a full discussion of the implication of fashion and dressing for modern architecture, see Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

8 For an extended discussion of Adolf Loos, see Gevork Hartoonian, "Adolf Loos: The Awakening Moments of Tradition in Modern Architecture", in *Ontology of Construction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 43–55.

9 Fritz Neumeyer, "Iron and Stone: The Architecture of the Großstadt", in H. F. Mallgrave (ed.), op. cit, 1993, 115–56.

10 On this subject, see the entire Part III , in H. F. Mallgrave (ed.), ibid.

11 On this subject, see Mitchell Schwarzer, "Freedom and Tectonics", *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, especially 189–200. A comprehensive study of the differences between Gottfried Semper and Carl Botticher on the concept of tectonic is awaited. Schwarzer characterizes the differences thus: "unlike Semper, who was not concerned with visually expressing new structural developments, and who condoned the wrapping of the structural frame by a decorative wall system, Botticher required maximum visibility of the structural/serial frame", Ibid. Consider Stanford Anderson's reflection on the subject too. According to him, Semper, "specifically chastised Botticher for his *Strukturschemen* and his applied symbolic ornament". Anderson, *Peter Behrens*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, 117. The differences between these two respected authors become obvious when Anderson reminds us that, for Semper, the very artistic dimension of form was itself a derivative of a "production-related concern", ibid. For Harry F. Mallgrave, the differences between Semper and Botticher rest in their approach to Greek architecture: "Semper rejected Botticher's claim for Greek cultural artistic autonomy, for the creation of these tectonic symbols in stone temples rather than in other prototypical forms." However,

Mallgrave underlines Botticher's theoretical contribution to Semper. H. F. Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, 222.

12 On this subject, see Hal Foster, "Exquisite Corpses", in *Compulsive Beauty*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993, 125–53.

13 For a discussion of the history of frame-structure, see Colin Rowe, *Mathematics of Villa and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989. For the aesthetic, but also the political implications of contemporary use of glass and steel frame architecture, see Annette Fierro, *The Glass State: The Technology of the Spectacle, Paris, 1981–1998*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

14 "A Commodity is therefore a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor." Karl Marx, *Capital*, New York: International Publishers, 1967, vol. 1, 35–93. For Marx, fetish is a subjectified object, the return of the familiar with a different appearance. Confusion for Marx recalls "the misty realm of religion" where "the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own". Ibid., 165.

15 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

16 Bernard Cache makes a distinction between craftsmanship and mechanical production based on the meaning of "contract" in each period. The change from an understanding of contract based on custom and norm to the maximization of utility was brought about by computer. Here, "the primary image is no longer the image of the object but the image of the set of constraints at the intersection of which the image is created. This object no longer reproduces a model of imitation, but actualizes a model of simulation." Cache, *Earth Moves*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 87–94, at 96.

17 Neil Leach, David Turnbull and Chris Williams (eds) *Digital Tectonics*, London: Wiley-Academy, 2004.

18 The nineteenth century is famous for its positivism and knowledge of history. In Germanic countries, however, the importance of aesthetics for art and architecture as well as the way we appreciate and enjoy form and space impacted on technology with issues such as perception, empathy and style. See Harry F. Mallgrave's introduction to *Empathy, Form, and Space*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994. The book is an important one in that it compiles essays by many authors, including Heinrich Wolfflin and Alois Riegl, where the theme of the aesthetic in art and architecture is discussed from different positions.

19 Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, London: New Left Books, 1979, 250.

20 Walter Benjamin, "Paris – The Capital of the Nineteenth Century", in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1983, 159.

21 This attention to the marginal was for Walter Benjamin the result of a major methodological discovery by Alois Riegl. According to Benjamin, Riegl's study, *Late Roman*

Art Industry, "broke with the theory of 'periods of decline,' and recognized in what had previously been called 'regression into barbarism' a new experience of space, a new artistic volition [*Kunstwollen*]". Quoted in Thomas Y. Levin, "Walter Benjamin and the Theory of Art History", *October* 47, winter 1988, 80. The lengthy attention I have given to Riegl and Benjamin has also to do with my interest in Gottfried Semper, who broke away from the classical wisdom of architecture and suggested looking for the origin of monuments in marginal works such as the stage sets for carnivals and the skills developed in industries such as textiles, carpentry, ceramics and masonry. See Gevork Hartoonian, *Ontology of Construction*, op. cit., 1994. On Semper and the controversial dialogue between him and Riegl, see Mallgrave, op. cit, 1996.

22 See Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, trans. J. E. Jung, New York: Zone Books, 2004.

23 Walter Benjamin, "N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]", in Gary Smith (ed.), *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 48.

24 I have picked up this subject in "Looking Backward, Looking Forward: Delightful Delays", *Architectural Theory Review*, special issue on Walter Benjamin and Architecture, Gevork Hartoonian, guest editor, 2005.

25 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations,* New York: Schocken Books, 1969, 239. Rosemarie Haag Bletter reminds us that Adolf Behne's discussion in *Das reproduktive Zeitalter* (The reproductive era) prefigures Benjamin's thesis "about the effect of mass produced images on art". The association was first noted by Arn Bohm in an essay published in *The Germanic Review* 68/4, 1993, 146–55. See Bletter's introduction to Adolf Behne's *The Modern Functional Building*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996, 5.

26 Adolf Loos, "Architecture", 1910, in *Architecture and Design: 1890–1939*, Charlotte Benton and Dennis Sharp (eds), New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1975, 45.

27 This aspect of the tectonic is indeed the theoretical underpinning of Gottfried Semper's theory of style. For a comprehensive understanding of Semper's theory of architecture, see Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or Practical Aesthetics*, Introduction by Harry F. Mallgrave, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and M. Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2004.

28 The distinction is essential for Kenneth Frampton's discourse in *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

29 See Anne-Marie Sankovitch's comprehensive work on this subject. "Structure/ Ornament and the Modern Figuration of Architecture", *The Art Bulletin*, December 1998, vol. LXXX, no. 4, 687–717.

30 I am thinking of Michel Foucault's claim that up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. "The universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing

themselves reflected in the stars". Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things*, New York: Vintage Books, 1973, 17.

31 See Harry F. Mallgrave's preface to Kenneth Frampton, op. cit., 1995, ix.

32 See Gevork Hartoonian, "Montage: Recoding the Tectonic," op. cit., 1994, 5–28.

33 See Kenneth Frampton, "Introduction: Reflections on the Scope of the Tectonic", op. cit., 1995, 3. Also see Indra Kagis McEwen, "Daedalus and the Discovery of Order", in *Socrates' Ancestor*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993, 41–78.

34 The analogy between architecture and carpentry goes back to the importance given to Laugier's hut in the development of Greek architecture as discussed in eighteenth-century architectural theories. In his theory, Quatremère de Quincy, for example, claims that "one is able to affirm that the school of carpentry is able to make architecture a rational art". And how he continues is relevant to my analogy between architecture, film and carpentry: "In effect, it will take little to recognize that the essence of architecture, and in large part the means by which it pleases us, is in raising this agreeable fiction, this ingenious mask, which, in association with the other arts, permits them to appear on its stage and furnishes architecture with an occasion to rival them as well." Quoted in Harry F. Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 73.

35 Kasimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, Chicago: Paul Theobald Company, 1959, 98.

36 Neil Levine, "The Book and Building", in Robin Middleton (ed.), *The Beaux-Arts*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1982, 138–173.

37 Kenneth Frampton, ibid., 1995, 45.

38 Robin Middleton, "The Iron Structures of the Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève as the Basis of a Civic Décor", *AA Files*, no. 40, 2000, 33–52.

39 Many scholars have discussed this building. See Stanford Anderson, "Modern Architecture and Industry: Peter Behrens and the Cultural Policy of Historical Determinism", *Oppositions*, 11, winter 1977, 52–71; Mechtild Heuser, "La Finestra sul Cortile Behrens M. Rohe: AEG-Turbinehalle, Berlin", *Casabella*, no. 65, January 1998. See also note 40, below. My interest in this subject was inspired by Fritz Neumeyer's discussion in "Iron and Stone: The Architecture of the Großstadt", in Harry F. Mallgrave (ed.), 1993, 115–53.

40 According to Stanford Anderson, "Behrens designed the public street facades of the building, incorporating modern engineering construction into forms which he conceived through the adaptation of established architectural conventions to the new problem of representing modern industrial enterprise." See Anderson, "Modern Architecture and Industry", *Oppositions*, 1977, 68.

41 Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, 112.

42 On this subject, see Harry F. Mallgrave's introduction to *Empathy, Form, and Space*, op. cit., 1994.

43 Joseph Masheck, "Raw Art: 'Primitive' Authenticity and German Expressionism", in *Res*, 4, autumn 1982, 93–116. In this article Masheck sides with the expressionist reading of primitive works of art and seemingly misses both Joseph Rykwert's and Harry F. Mallgrave's discharge of the crude materialistic content of Gottfried Semper's discourse. On this subject, see Mallgrave's *Gottfried Semper*, 1996, especially the last chapter. On the subject of empathy see *Empathy, Form, and Space*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, op. cit., 1994. However, whether it was the influence of Darwinism or the result of archeological research, some similarities can be seen between Semper's emphasis on the importance of practical arts for aesthetic laws and G. V. Plekhanov's argument that the origin of ornament goes back to hunting, and how the early wooden elements incised into the body as part of the act of hunting would later become the source for ornaments made out of metal. See G. V. Plekhanov, "Labour, Play and Art" and "Art and Utility", in *Art and Social Life*, London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1953, 75–129. For Semper's idea of *Stoffwechsel*, i.e. "the carrying over of motifs visually from one material to another", see Wolfgang Hermann, *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984, 86. See also Gottfried Semper, *Style*, trans. W. F. Mallgrave, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 2004.

44 Quoted in Joseph Masheck, "Raw Art", op. cit., 1982, 96.

45 For a discussion of the tectonic in contemporary architecture, and Gottfried Semper's discourse on what he called the core-form and the art-form, see Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994, and Kenneth Frampton, op. cit., 1995, *passim*.

46 See Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper: The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 38.

47 Sandor Randoti, "Benjamin's Dialectic of Art and Society", in Gary Smith (ed.), *Benjamin*, 1989, 146.

48 See Manfredo Tafuri, "U.S.S.R.-Berlin, 1922: From Populism to 'Constructivist International'", in Joan Ockman (ed.), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985, 121–81. See also Huertus Gassner, "The Constructivists: Modernism on the Way to Modernization", in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932*, New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1994, 298–319. After exploring various utopian manifestations of German humanitarian populism and expressionism, Tafuri sees the impact of the 1922 exhibition of Russian artists in the politicization of dada and the introduction of a constructivist utopia based on the technical organization of the real. Tafuri concludes that "the soviet avant-garde, . . . found itself objectively carrying out the task of revealing that the only 'politicalness' possible for the avant-garde was that of announcing the advent of a universe of *non-values*, *amoral*, *elementary*: exactly the technological universe of the organized development of great capital denounced by Grosz as a terrifying universe 'without value'", op. cit. 1985, 179. While Tafuri

suggests the inevitable failure of any project within the problematic of the history of modernity, Gassner seemingly sees in suprematicism and other more subjectively-oriented tendencies within constructivism the missing chance to oppose the move of Russian Modernism towards total modernization of life and art.

49 Christian Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983, 38.

50 In addition to the influence of Picasso and Western Futurism, Christian Lodder stresses the importance of "native Russian artistic traditions and Primitivism as manifest in peasant and children's art, employing icons. . .", for Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Futurist movement. Lodder, ibid., 1983, 11. In a remarkable essay Kenneth Frampton also discusses the importance of Primitivism, a tendency to "preserve the inherent material quality of the transformed substance and, at the same time, to express directly the nature of its transformation", and, finally, a sensibility derived from the use of simple techniques and raw materials advocated by film makers like Dziga Vertov, for Productivism. See Frampton, "Constructivism: the Pursuit of an Elusive Sensibility", *Oppositions*, fall 1976, no. 6, 26–44.

51 Boris Arvatov, "Everyday Life and the Culture of Things (Toward the Formulation of the Question)", (trans.) Christina Kiaer *October*, 81, 1997, 120. For Arvatov's ideas, also see Christian Lodder, op. cit., 1983, 105–8.

52 Boris Arvatov, Ibid., 126.

53 Susan Buck-Morss relates Benjamin's utopia assessment in the *Passage-Werk* to communist goals stated by Karl Marx, and suggests that, "It is with the new, technological nature that human beings must be reconciled.". And the paradox of such reconciliation is that one has to give up "nostalgic mimicking of the past and paying strict attention to the new nature, the ur-images are reanimated. Such is the logic of historical images, in which collective wish-images are negated, surpassed, and at the same time dialectically redeemed." Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, 146. Christina Kiaer associates Arvatov's vision with Benjamin's belief in the possibility of "redeeming the past" through wish-images. See Christina Kiaer, "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Objects", *October*, 81, 1997, 105–18.

54 Here I am alluding to John McCole's reading of Walter Benjamin's discourse on technology in terms of what he calls "anthropological materialism". The latter traces the "bodily collective" in the outcropping of images depicted by the surrealists and by Proust, and "a bodily sphere (*Leibraum*), which was beginning to come into its own through recent developments in technology", McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993, 172. According to McCole, Benjamin's understanding of the place of technology in culture was closer to Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier than to the advocates of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. For a brief and concise documentation of Benjamin's attraction to the work of modern architects, especially Le Corbusier and Scheerbart, see Detlef Mertins, "The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass", *Assemblage*, 29, April 1996.

55 See Christian Lodder, op. cit., 1983, 65. With regard to the intuitive dimension of Tatlin's work, Lodder sees the presence of "an almost mystical element, which is related to the messianic conception of the artist's role, as creator and interpreter of the environment". Lodder, op. cit. 1983, 66.

56 Annette Michelson, "The Man with the Movie Camera: From Magician to Epistemologist", *Artforum*, March 1972, 60–71.

57 For an extensive elaboration of theatricality in Gottfried Semper, see Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996. See also Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994, 89.

58 Sigfried Giedion, *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995, 87. It was this last statement of Giedion's that in part stimulated Walter Benjamin to invest in technology as the source of new collective needs. After receiving a copy of Giedion's book, Benjamin responded thus: "I am studying in your book . . . the differences between radical conviction and radical knowledge that refresh the heart. You possess the latter, and therefore you are able to illustrate, or rather to uncover, the tradition by observing the present." Ibid., 53.

59 Sandor Randoti, op. cit., 1989, 142.

60 I am taking advantage of Harry Francis Mallgrave's translation/interpretation of "theatricality" in Semper's theory of architecture. See Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996. For further references on the subject of theatricality, see Chapter 2 in this volume.

61 In his theory of architecture, Gottfried Semper reminds us of how much architecture throughout history has benefited from the formal achievements of the applied arts. On the concept of *Stoffwechsel*, see Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996, 284–6.

62 See *Empathy, Form, and Space*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, op. cit., 1994.

63 The desire to see modernity by way of analogy to antiquity was widespread in nineteenth-century discourses, and among architects as well. Perhaps the schism between the cultural and technical was an incentive for thinking about an integrated culture. For the relevance of the mentioned figures and their thoughts on theatre as an analogy for bringing art and life together, see Stanford Anderson, op. cit., 2000, especially Chapter 3. On the importance of the theme of theatre in the early avant-garde, see Manfredo Tafuri, "The Stage as 'Virtual City': From Fuchs to the Total Theater", in *The Sphere and Labyrinth*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987, 95–112. Discussing the optics of Walter Benjamin, Donald Preziosi locates the problem of his art and A. Riegl's contribution in perpetuating an "immanentist organicism", in the historicist project of modernity: "Riegl's art history occupied a significant juncture in the playing out of this problem, and his theory of art and history constituted an attempt to articulate an organic historicism capable of addressing both facets of this problem." Preziosi, "The Crystalline Veil and the Phallomorphic Imaginary: Walter Benjamin's Pantographic Riegl", in Alex Coles (ed.), *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 1999. 131.

64 On this subject, see Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, London: Verso, 2002.

65 I am thinking of what is characterized as the tragic dimension of modernity. See Harry Lieberson, *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology, 1870–1923*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988.

66 Obviously I am thinking of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour in *Learning from Las Vegas*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972. For Kenneth Frampton's response, see "America 1960–1970: Notes on Urban Images and Theory", *Casabella*, 359–60, XXV, 1971, 24–38. Also see Neil Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. Leach presents a point of view that is of great importance for the historiography of contemporary architecture and the place of mass-culture and the populist vision of the Independent Group in London. For the more recent views of Venturi, see his introduction to *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. Guy Debord presents "spectacle" in many different ways. Consider this one: "The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images." Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, New York: Zone Books, 1994, 12.

67 Reviewing Peter Eisenman's work at a 1985 exhibition at the Architectural Association, Robin Evan reminds us, "if we are still sometimes touched by the ancient idea that rocks are animate, we ourselves are in the grip of a similar sentiment amplified by language when we think of building as *animated*", and he continues, "In its modern form it has less to do with the willful breathing of life into inert objects, more to do with a willful unrealizing of them. The hallucination of a transcendental yet entirely corporeal world is involved." Evan, "Not to be Used for Wrapping Purposes", *AA Files*, no. 10, 1985. Walter Benjamin has discussed the ways in which techniques invented in modern times generate the optical unconscious: "The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses." Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", op. cit., 1969, 237. On the optic aspect of Benjamin's work on technology, see Detlef Martins, "Walter Benjamin and the Tectonic Unconscious: Using Architecture as an Optical Instrument", in A. Coles (ed.), *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, op. cit., 1999, 196–225. And Fredric Jameson has discussed the impact of rationalization and capital on the senses in *The Political Unconscious*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981. Rosalind Krauss demonstrates the inevitable presence of "contradictions produced within the real field of history" in a structuralist's understanding of art in *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.

68 Stan Allen, "Introduction", *Practice*, Ibid., 2000, xv. What is missing in Allen's correct stress on the dialectics between theory and practice is his aspiration for a pragmatism that dismisses "alienation", perhaps a worn-out subject these days. Putting aside Allan's "post-ideological turn", his discussion throughout many insightful chapters on the relationship between drawing and construction and his emphasis on the physical body of building opens a different window to architectural criticism that is not available to poststructuralism.

69 I am thinking of Bernard Cache in op. cit., 1995. Influenced by Gilles Deleuze's idea of the "fold", Cache presents an idea of image that according to him is the by-product of a second generation of computer-assisted design in which "objects are no longer designed but calculated". Ibid., 87. However, I agree with his advocacy for a sense of lightness in design and his observations that our experience of weightlessness "was aesthetic before it became technological". Also noticeable is his reflection on the relationship between fold and structure which ends with the following conclusion: "Two architectural principles thus confront one another: the principle of structure and that of the skin. Modern architecture could be described as the site of confrontation between these two principles." According to him, if Le Corbusier and Gropius invoke the primacy of structure, Loos, following Gottfried Semper, stresses the primacy of skin. Ibid., 70.

70 For a theoretical discussion of this subject, see Gianni Vattimo, "Ornament/ Monument", in *The End of Modernity*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, 79–89.

71 On this subject, see Fritz Neumeyer, "The View into the Intrinsic", op. cit., 1991, 30–5.

72 While finalizing this book, I had the chance to read Rafael Moneo's *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects*, Barcelona: ACTAR, 2004. Alhough originally prepared for a seminar, the text does not present a convincing theoretical agenda in putting together diverse architects such as A. Siza and R. Koolhaas.

73 Here I am rephrasing my own conclusions on deconstruction architecture. See Gevork Hartoonian, *Modernity and its Other*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997, 46–7.

CHAPTER 2

1 This text is a revised version of an essay presented to the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia/New Zealand, in Wellington, New Zealand, 2000, re-published in *Art Criticism*, 18(1), 2003, 64–71.

2 Drawing from W. Wolfflin's reflections on Baroque architecture and W. Leibniz's philosophy, Gilles Deleuze presents the idea of fold in analogy to a house with two tiers: one is stretched horizontally and the other vertically; one is adorned with the pleats of matter and the other, like the soul, is opaque and windowless. These two levels (floors?) are distinct from each other and yet stay in harmony. The harmony is held intact by the "point of inflection" where one fold unfolds into another. In this inclusion or enveloping, the need for relational correspondence between the outside and the inside is eliminated. See Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, especially the chapters

on "the Fold", and "What is Baroque?" For Deleuze's idea of "point of inflection", see Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

3 Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, London: Verso, 2004, 11. Foster's position capitalizes on a kind of technological determinism where he sees the "image"-making as central to the entire development of architecture since the post-war period. See Foster, "Image Building", *Artforum*, October, 2004.

4 Charles Bernstein, "Artifice of Absorption", in *Poetics*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, 9–90.

5 Bernstein, ibid., 29.

6 Charles Bernstein, "On Theatricality", in *Content's Dream: Essays 1975–1987*, Los Angeles: Sun and Light Press, 1986, 205.

7 Bernstein, op. cit., 1992, 86. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, see *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968, especially the chapter on "The Intertwining—The Chasm". Reflecting on visibility and touch, Merleau-Ponty suggests that: "It is that the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication." Ibid., 135. Transcending the idealist and empiricist discourse, Merleau-Ponty presents a concept of "object" that does not stand on its own but rather is woven into the many horizons of a given culture. His position is intriguing in the context of the current shift from the object to the text.

8 Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 17. For a detailed discussion of Denis Dedroit's ideas on theatricality, see Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Dedroit*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

9 Fried, op. cit., 1990, 224.

10 On this subject, see Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989, 299–361.

11 Fried, op. cit., 1990, 45.

12 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 144.

13 Harry F. Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, 232. Mallgrave's book on Gottfried Semper is a fine supplement to the present proliferation of Semper's œuvre. Besides the early translations of Semper's major texts, in the last two years several publications have made an important contribution by shedding light on various aspects of Semper's discourse. These books explore themes such as the tectonic, *Bekleidung* (the principle of dressing), and *Stoffwechsel* (transforming motifs from one production activity into another). This attention to Semper comes full circle in Kenneth Frampton's *Studies in Tectonic Culture,* 1995, followed up by the *ANY*, no. 14. Mallgrave's work, however, stands out for its fine and detailed biographical account and the way he weaves the formative themes of Semper's architectural theory within

the socio-political, cultural and technological developments that have characterized the heroic period of the early experience of modernity.

14 Carl Gottlieb Wilhelm Botticher, "The Principles of the Hellenic and Germanic Ways of Building with Regard to Their Application to Our Present Way of Building", in *In What Style Should We Build?*, trans. Wolfgang Herrmann, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1992, 147–68, at 163.

15 Gottfried Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts", in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Hermann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 252. For the full translated text, see note 16, below.

16 Gottfried Semper, *Style*, Introduction by Harry F. Mallgrave, trans., H. F. Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Texts and Documents, 2004, 760.

17 Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996, 9.

18 Barry Bergdoll, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: An Architecture for Prussia*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1994, 28. According to the author, the true heir of Schinkel's architectural vision is Friedrich Gilly whose design "drew on more than the latest archaeological knowledge. It embodied the contemporary theory that through the manipulation of mass and proportion, light and shade, rhythm and texture, architecture constituted a formal language that spoke more directly to the senses than even speech." Ibid., 14.

19 Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996, 87. See also Mitchell Schwarzer, "Freedom and Tectonics", in *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 167–214. Presenting the nineteenth-century philosophical debates on realism and idealism, Schwarzer suggests that, like Kant, Schinkel accepted semi-independence processes for architectural materiality and ideality. Unlike Kant, however, Schinkel believed that "nature, not the subjective mind, contained the essence of architecture". Ibid., 173.

20 Kurt W. Forster, "'Only Things that Stir the Imagination': Schinkel as a Scenographer", in John Zukowsky (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel*: *The Drama of Architecture*, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1994, 18–35, at 18.

21 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, op. cit., 1989, 35.

22 For Nietzsche, music was the art that could overcome its material basis and, by intensification of its melody, could also surpass the domain of the "will to power". There is a sense of formlessness in music that architecture could achieve only by denying the forces of gravity. Tilmann Buddensieg reminds us of Nietzsche's speculation on music's possible belonging "to a culture in which the dominion of men of power, of every kind, has already come to an end". These kinds of reflection point to Nietzsche's interest in an architecture that could eliminate the symbolic and religious burden of classical revivalism permeating the late nineteenth century. For a comprehensive study of Nietzsche's reflections on architecture, see Alexandre

Kostka and Irving Wohlfarth (eds.), *Nietzsche and "An Architecture of Our Minds"*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999. The above quotation is from Buddensieg, "Architecture as an Empty Form: Nietzsche and the Art of Building", ibid., 270.

23 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, op. cit., 1989, 257.

24 Implied in this statement of Gottfried Semper's is the importance of the tectonic in any discussion of "dressing" or the mask in architecture. Without relating the mask to the tectonic, one might end up negating the importance of construction for the dialectic of theory and practice. Perhaps, aware of this risk, Kenneth Frampton was hesitant to touch the idea of theatricality in his massive work on the tectonic. From a different perspective, Anthony Vidler stresses the uncanny space behind the mask, thus dismissing the tectonic. He discusses the mask as an analogy to Nietzsche's esteem for formless architecture. Vidler, "The Mask and the Labyrinth: Nietzsche and the (Uncanny) Space of Decadence", in Alexandre Kostka and Irving Wohlfarth (eds), op. cit. 1999, 53–63.

25 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, op. cit., 1989, 258.

26 Gevork Hartoonian, *Ontology of Construction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 88.

27 Harry F. Mallgrave, 1996, op. cit., 59.

28 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

29 Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, New York: Zone Books, 1994, 13. For a thorough elaboration of the concept of phantasmagoria, see Susan Buck-Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, 78–109.

30 Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Color of Experience*, New York: Routledge, 1998, 32. For Benjamin's reflection on experience, see "The Storyteller" and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (ed.), New York: Schocken Books, 1969. Benjamin's position is the theoretical underpinning of Massimo Caccari's discourse on modern architecture. See Caccari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.

31 Exploring the origin of the fetish, William Pietzs remind us that the word fetish derives from Latin *facticius*, meaning "artificial in the sense of materially altered by human efforts in order to deceive" as opposed to genuine. The word "factitious" also has been used to connote the "unnatural fabrication of appearance, of the signifiers of exchange value, without the substance or use value that the appearance promised". Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, II", *Res*, 25, 23–45. Reflecting on Karl Marx's idea of commodity fetishism, Jacques Derrida locates the "mystical character" of the commodity form in "some theatrical intrigue: mechanical ruse (mekbane) or mistaking a person, repetition upon the perverse intervention of a prompter. . . . There is a mirror, and the commodity form is also this mirror, but since all of a sudden it no longer plays its role, since it does not reflect back the expected image,

those who are looking for themselves can no longer find themselves in it." Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, New York: Routledge, 1994, 155.

32 Reminding his reader of the distinction A. Loos and K. Kraus would make between an urn and a chamber pot, Hal Foster correctly argues for architectural strategies that might resist the total design and "provide culture with running-room". Foster, op. cit, 25.

33 Here I am benefiting from Michael Fried's discussion of Denis Diderot's differentiation between the place of audience in the construction of the dramatic tableau and the theatricality of the Rococo kind. See Fried, op. cit., 1988, 93. According to Diderot, "had it been understood that, even though a dramatic work is made to be represented, it is necessary that author and actor forget the beholder, and that all interest be concentrated upon the personages, . . .". Fried, op. cit., 1990, 94.

34 Howard Caygill, op. cit., 1998, 116.

35 See Gianni Vattimo's discourse on the interplay between locality and region in *The End of Modernity*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, 83.

36 Martin Heidegger, "The Thing", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971. Gianni Vattimo prsents an intriguing analogy between Heidegger's idea of Stoss and Walter Benjamin's discourse on shock discussed in "The Origin of the Work of Art." For Benjamin, see "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Written around 1935, these two essays benefit from Georg Simmel's discourse on the human life in the metropolis. According to Vattimo, both Benjamin and Heidegger emphasize, in their own way, the importance of art as a work disorienting the beholder by freeing his or her expected sensations and habits. See Vattimo, "Art and Oscillation", in *The Transparent Society*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 45–61. Also see Howard Caygill, "Benjamin, Heidegger and the Destruction of Tradition", and Andrew Benjamin, "Time and Task: Benjamin and Heidegger Showing the Present", both in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (eds) *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy*, New York: Routledge, 1994, 1–31 and 216–50.

37 According to Walter Benjamin, "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that precedes us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power to which the past has a claim. This claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that." Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", *Illuminantions*, op. cit., 1969, 254.

38 Gottfried Semper, *Style*, Introduction by Harry F. Mallgrave, trans., H. Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Text and Documents, 2004, 71.

39 Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994.

40 Interestingly enough, Michael Kahn, who has edited Steven Spielberg's films, suggests that "The director is like the architect—it's his or her vision—and the editor is the

builder, . . . with Steven, it's like building a beautiful house." Quoted by Bernard Weintraub, "Hollywood's Kindest Cuts", *The New York Times*, 20 August 1998, E1.

41 Carl Gottlieb Wilhelm Botticher, op. cit., 1992, 161.

42 Here I am paraphrasing Gottfried Semper in *Style*, op. cit., 2004, 627–8. After emphasizing the antithesis between filling and the frame, the architect argues that "the filling should never reinforce the frame, which in structural terms is *not even present*. The frame should seem to the eye to be completely rigid *in itself*, and the filling should be recessed, either *actually*, *apparently* (by means of color), or ideally by both means at once" (italics his).

CHAPTER 3

1 For a recent reflection on this subject, see the analogies Luca Galofaro makes between Peter Eisenman's design in the Aronoff Center and Piranesi. Galofaro, "A Starting Point", in *Digital Eisenman*, Basel: Birkhauser, 1999.

2 This subject is theorized in Colin Rowe's assessment of the limits experienced by architects after the failure of the historical avant-garde. For Rowe, the emergence of "form" in the work of the New York Five Architects should be seen as the residue of a modernism that has exhausted itself. See Colin Rowe's Introduction to *Five Architects*, New York: Wintenborn, 1972.

3 On this subject, see Gevork Hartoonian, *Modernity and its Other*, College Station, TX: Texas A & M University, 1997.

3 Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformation, Decompositions, Critique*, New York: Monacelli Press, 2003, 33.

4 Peter Eisenman, ibid., 115.

5 Peter Eisenman, ibid., 34.

6 I am thinking of Peter Eisenman's "The End of Classical: The End of the Beginning; the End of the End", *Perspecta* 21, summer 1984, 154–72.

7 This project is discussed in Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1997.

8 The idea of "weak form" was driven not only by J. Derrida's writing, but also by Gianni Vattimo's discourse on "weak thought". For Vattimo, see *The End of Modernity*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

9 Peter Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, New York: Universe Publishing, 1999.

10 Differentiating his ideas from those critics who discuss diagram strictly in terms of G. Deleuze, Eisenman defines diagram in relation to what he calls architecture's interiority, and underlines "three conditions unique to architecture: (1) architecture's compliance with the metaphysics of presence; (2) the already motivated condition of the sign in architecture, and (3) the necessary relationship of architecture to a desiring subject". Eisenman, "Diagram: An Original Scene of Writing", ibid., 1999, 30.

11 Peter Eisenman, "Zones of Undecidability: The Interstitial Figure", in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anybody*, New York: Anyone Corporation, 1997, 240–7. For Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, see *Formless: A User's Guide*, New York: Zone Books, 1997.

12 "Interiority", according to Peter Eisenman, "has nothing to do with the inside or the inhabitable space of a building but rather of a condition of being within. However, as is the case with the grotesque, interiority deals with two factors; the unseen and the hollowed-out." Eisenman, "En Terror Firma: In Trails of Grotextes", in Arie Graafland (ed.), *Peter Eisenman: Recent Projects*, Amsterdam: Sun, 1989, 23.

13 According to Silvia Kolbowski, the design of the Arnoff Center "leans" closely towards the existing building, and the "conceptual models used to generate the parti—the overlapping, torquing, shifting, and stepping of series of forms and motifs, some of which are modified by open-ended logarithmic functions", Kolbowski, "Fringe Benefits", in *Eleven Authors in Search of a Building*, New York: Monacelli Press Inc., 1996, 234.

14 Kenneth Frampton, "Eisenman Revisited: Running Interference", in Artie Graafland (ed.), op. cit., 1989, 47–62, at 60. Frampton continues, "It is surely significant that this dilemma seems to be capable of a convincing outcome where, as in the Biocentrum project, the thematic of the work is nature herself and where the lost authority of secularization is seemingly restored through the presence of an irreducible demiurge, even if this presence is acknowledged as perennially re-constituted of the human brain."

15 Peter Eisenman, in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), 1997, op. cit. 32.

16 See Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964. Alexander was addressing a broader theoretical spectrum of post-war America where architects had either to channel design decision-making based on historicism, or else to utilize problem-solving methods and techniques, which had passed their test in American military industries and were now available to be used in other production activities. This was indeed part of the new positivism that Alexander and others found useful, especially when design involved decision-making concerned with environmental and regional issues.

17 Fredric Jameson, "End of Art or End of History", in *The Cultural Turn*, New York: Verso, 1998, 73–92.

18 Peter Eisenman, op. cit., 2003, 292.

19 Robert Venturi, "Contradictory Levels: The Phenomenon of 'Both-And' in Architecture", in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: The Modern Museum of Art, 1966, 30–45. See also my reading of the "both-and" in Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1997.

20 Quoted in Andrew Benjamin, *Architectural Philosophy*, London: The Athlone Press, 2000, 182.

21 Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 80. Criticizing Burger's historicization of the avant-garde, Hal Foster further

elaborates the theory of the avant-garde based on a Freudian reading of "repetition". See Foster, "What is Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?", *October* 70, 1994, 5–32. For a distinction between the American avant-garde of the 1970s and the historical avant-garde, see Andreas Huyssen, "The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Post-modernism in the 1970s", *New German Critique*, 22, winter 1981, 23–40.

22 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, New York: Verso, 1995, 61.

23 For an extended discussion of these issues see Gevork Hartoonian, *Ontology of Construction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 68–80.

24 For a comprehensive discussion of the tectonic in Carlo Scarpa, see Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in the Tectonic Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 299–334.

25 Peter Eisenman, "A Conversation with Peter Eisenman", *Elcroquis*, 83, 1997.

26 I am thinking along the line of Yves-Alain Bois's introduction to "Sergei M. Eisenstein: Montage and Architecture", in *Assemblage*, 10, December 1987, 111–31. See also Yves-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara", *October*, 29, summer 1984, 33–62, where the author explores the play of "parallax" in Richard Serra's work, with concluding remarks on Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and the *promenade architecturale*.

27 Peter Eisenman, "Vision Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media", in Luca Galofaro, op. cit., 1999, 87. The title of the essay recalls Walter Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Reflecting on the historicity of the mechanistic vision inscribed in perspective, Eisenman attempts to discuss the architectonic implications of the fold for a different vision of architecture's interior space. On the literature of contemporary discourse on vision and visuality, and its implications for Le Corbusier's *promenade architecturale*, see Gevork Hartoonian, "The Limelight of the House Machine", *The Journal of Architecture*, 6(1), spring 2001, 53–80.

28 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

29 In an interview with Robert Lock, 27 July 2004, Peter Eisenman said: "My whole position is that architecture participates in what I call the continual unfolding of existence, that architecture, like any other discipline, has the capacity to do that, and that there is what I would consider to be a disciplinary specificity to architecture, so that even though the deconstructionists say that everything is one, and there's an intertextuality, and that there is no subject, I believe there is a subject, I believe there is a disciplinary specificity to all disciplines and what I believe one is looking to do – in addition to anything else – is find what that disciplinary specificity is in architecture."

30 Peter Eisenman, "Interview with Peter Eisenman," *Zodiac*, 15, March/August, 1996, 105–15, at 107.

31 See my discussion in the introduction to Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994.

32 Peter Eisenman, "Eleven Points on Knowledge and Wisdom", in Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *AnyWise*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996, 49–51.

33 I have picked up this subject for the first time in "Critical Practice", *Architectural Theory Review*, 7(1), 1–14.

34 Quoted in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, 207. According to Neumeyer, Mies van der Rohe was touched by the thoughts of Romano Guardini who saw "human existential conditions in dialectical opposition between 'dynamic and static,' 'duration and flux,' and 'position and change'". On Guardini's influence on Mies, see Neumeyer, ibid., 196–236.

35 Interestingly enough, Peter Eisenman has this to say about politics and architecture: "I think architecture is a form of politics. I believe that architecture does make political statements. There is no doubt. I mean, I was just in Naples recently, and three of the great buildings that I saw in Naples, in the most beautiful shape, were built by Mussolini. But that doesn't mean I agree with Mussolini's politics." And later in the same interview he adds: ". . . my work basically says that while I may have my own personal political leanings, or I may have affinities to conservative politics, when it comes to architecture, ultimately its politics is autonomy." Robert Lock, op. cit., 2004.

36 Slavoj Žižek, op. cit., 45.

37 On this subject, see Gevork Hartoonian, 1997.

38 This position of his concerns a state of "critical" architecture that wants to avoid the formalism formulated by Colin Rowe and the historicity attributed to Manfredo Tafuri's discourse. See Peter Eiseman's introductory remarks in *Eisenman Inside Out*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004, xi. What "critical" means to Eisenman has to do with a project, at work in various forms since the fourteenth century, that concerns the continuity of architecture's autonomy to represent nothing but its own interiority, while using both the theoretical and technical potentialities permeating the *Zeitgeist*.

39 Peter Eisenman, "Vision Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media", in Luca Galofaro, op. cit., 1999, 84–9.

40 Peter Eisenman, "Processes of the Interstitial", *Elcroquis*, 83, 1997, 21–35, at 29.

41 See Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper, 1977, 3–35.

42 Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993, 149.

43 Massimo Cacciari, ibid., 172.

44 Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept", *Social Research*, 64(3), fall 1997, 965–88. While praising Martin Heidegger, Marx insists on the socio-political rather than the metaphysical aspect of technology, and warns us of how technology is infused into everyday life so that we are unable to define it or see its perils and yet since the nineteenth century we always have considered it to be a sign of progress.

45 On Eisenman's most recent work, see Chapter 6 of the present work.

46 Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1968.

CHAPTER 4

1 First published in *Ai*, the essay was expanded for this volume.

2 Georges Bataille, for one, articulated the theoretical premise of the idea of questioning the institutional power of architecture. See Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

3 During the mid-1960s, institutionalization of the modernist vision of art and architecture gave rise to deteriorating conditions which, according to Charles Harrison, launched a twofold task: "the first requirement was to establish a critique of the aesthetics of Modernism. This entailed the development of appropriate art-theoretical and art-historical tools. The second requirement was to establish a critique of the politics of Modernism. This entailed the application of socio-economic forms of analysis." See Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art and Critical Judgment", in Christian Schlatter (ed.), *Conceptual Art, Conceptual Forms*, Paris: Galerie de poche, 1990. To this end, Harrison, and other writers on this subject, remind us that most artists of those days composed the early work of art and language.

4 Peter Eisenman, "Notes Towards a Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition", in Eisenman, *Eisenman Inside Out*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004, 14. The essay was first published in *Design Quarterly*, 1971.

5 In reading René Magritte's painting, Michel Foucault points to two developments that have taken place in Western painting since the Renaissance: the first reveals the separation between "plastic representation and linguistic reference", and the second, the long reliance of painting on resemblance as a communicative means. See Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983.

6 Peter Eisenman's return to the tropes of humanism has to do with Rudolf Wittkower's book *Architectural Principles of the Age of Humanism*, London: Taranti, 1952. The book challenges George Scott's reading of Renaissance architecture paving the way for a formalistic reading of architecture which will become significant, as far as architecture theory is concerned, for both Colin Rowe's essays collected in the *Mathematics of Ideal Villas and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976, and the work of New York Five Architects. For the historicity of Wittkower's text, see Alina Payne, "Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 53(3), September 1994, 322–42.

7 In *Modernity and its Other*, I have discussed the return to the language of the historical avant-garde as one symptom of post-1960s architecture. Interestingly enough, Hugh D. Hudson Jr. has this to say about the neo-avant-garde use of language associated with Russian Constructivists. According to Hudson, the Western architects "carried revolutionary Soviet architecture home not in its genuine revolutionary form—as a series of social problems centered on the question of how to organize human activity within and around the built environment in such a manner as to transform human interaction from capitalist competition to socialist cooperation—but rather as merely another style of art, as a collection of glass

rectangles within which corporate chiefs could sit comfortably while watching the urban poor on the streets below." See Hudson, *Blueprints and Blood: The Stalinization of Soviet Architecture*, Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 1994, 14. For this author's reading of the current return to historical forms, see Gevork Hartoonian, *Modernity and its Other*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997.

8 On this subject see Mark Jarzombeck, "The Disciplinary Dislocations of (Architectural) History", *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians*, 58(3), September 1999, 488–93.

9 On this subject, see Chapter 2 of the present work.

10 See Kate Nesbitt (ed.), *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture Theory, 1965–1995*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996, 16–71.

11 For an early collection of essays discussing the possibility of "meaning" for architecture beyond orthodox modernism, see Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds), *Meaning in Architecture*, New York: George Braziller, 1970. The book brings to the fore views concerning the application of semiology to architecture, the importance of the public and private dimensions of architecture and, finally, the "use" and typological study of architecture. For a critical evaluation of the architecture of the recent past, see Michael Hays and Carol Burns (eds), *Thinking the Present: Recent American Architecture*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1990.

12 See, for example, *The Discourse of Event*, a catalogue of the architectural exhibition held by the Architectural Association in London in 1979. According to Bernard Tschumi, "This perverted form of history borrowed from semiotics the ability to read layers of interpretation, but reduced architecture to a system of surface signs, at the expense of the reciprocal, indifferent or even conflictive relationship of spaces and events." Tschumi, ibid., 6. For another view on the idea of event, see Gilles Deleuze, "What is an Event?", in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1993, 76–82. For Deleuze, the conditions making an event possible are "produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under conditions that a sort of screen intervenes". This statement is taken from a literal correspondence between blob architecture and the idea of fold. In Tschumi's architecture, the idea of event is experienced in a space that is informed by his vision of the objectivity.

13 The idea of the death of the author is implied in most philosophical and literary texts written since the second half of the twentieth century. The term was first used by Michel Foucault in *Language, Counter-Counter Memory, Practice*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972. See also Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s", in Sohnya Sayer and Andres Stephanson (eds), *The 60s Without Apology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

14 Elsewhere I have suggested that "In deconstructivist architecture, the architect functions as an operative 'critic' rather than a planner. This development has made the task of an architectural critic more difficult. Rather than analyzing the concrete

formal and compositional aspects of a work, the critic now has to develop a meta-narrative in order to disclose the architect's operative mode of thinking. From now on, architecture will be the formal result of one analytical procedure among many other possible ones by which an architect can deconstruct the metaphysics of architecture." Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1997, 37. Reading Bernard Tschumi's work, Sylvia Lavin frames my observation in the following words: "Two developments that may appear to move in opposite directions have together left contemporary architecture in a kind of discursive black hole: the tendency to pursue theoretical issues within an increasingly distant historical context, a development initiated by Manfredo Tafuri; and the total instrumentalization of theory as operative design method." Her suggested solution to this dilemma is "autocriticism", at work in Tschumi's reading of Le Fresnoy. See "Inter-Objective Criticism: Bernard Tschumi and Le Fresnoy", in Bernard Tschumi, *Le Fresnoy: Architecture In/Between*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999, 175–6.

15 Kate Nesbitt, op. cit., 1996, 150.

16 Bernard Tschumi's introduction, op. cit., 1999, 9.

17 Louis Martin, "Transpositions: On the Intellectual Origins of Tschumi's Architectural Theory", *Assemblage*, 11, 1990, 22–35. Martin traced Tschumi's early fascination with the concept of "paradigm" as defined by Thomas Kuhn. He pointed out the fact that Tschumi "replaced the word 'science' of the original text [*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*] with the word "architecture" in his own" without mentioning Kuhn's book as the main reference. In Tschumi's defence, Martin thought that since Kuhn's original idea, "in the field of science", had been "integrated into architecture" by Tschumi in his text, and since this grafted paragraph had been appropriated into Tschmi's architectural theory, therefore, "Tschumi's text remained autonomous". Hence the equation – architecture is science – has been there since the beginning of Tschumi's formative years. The idea of "axiom" in relation to architecture reads like the replacement of scientific truth with epistemology in the post-Kuhnian age, both of which are efforts to re-examine, break away and somehow still carry on the project of modernity.

18 For further elaboration of these themes, see Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, London: Academy Editions, 1981.

19 See Marianne Barzilay, *L'Invention du Parc*, Paris: Graphite Editions, 1984. The entire book is a documentation of the 1982 competition.

20 A. Papadakis, C. Cook and A. Benjamin (eds), *Deconstruction: Omnibus Volume*, New York: Rizzoli Publications Inc., 1989, 174–83.

21 Bernard Tschumi, *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 187, October–November 1976, 82.

22 Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture* (1753), Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc. 1977, 121–33.

23 See Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow,* translation of *Urbanisme* (1925), New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1987, 72–80.

24 Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998, 91.

25 Bernard Tschumi, op. cit., 1976.

26 Bernard Tschumi, op. cit., 1998, 89. Pluralism has been a favourite theme of postmodern architecture, first in Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* where the general tendency of modern movement for formal homogeneity is criticized and the juxtaposition of different languages is suggested as a rhetorical source. The subject achieves a critical dimension outside the discipline of architecture, most importantly in Roland Barthes's small book *The Pleasure of the Text*, inspiring Tschumi to seek pleasure in architecture. In order to break away from Structuralism's binary system, Barthes points out the split between the text (object) and its reading (writer/reader/subject). He suggests that only a subtle subversion, a "third term", can escape the structural paradigm linking the apparent forms with the contested potentialities. In literature this "third term" is pleasure as argued by Barthes: "The text of pleasure is not necessarily the text that recounts pleasures . . . The pleasure of representation is not attached to its object . . . one could say that the site of texual pleasure is not the relation of mimic and model (imitative relation) but solely that of dupe and mimic (relation of desire, of production)." Susan Sontag (ed.), *A Barthes Reader*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1982, 404–13.

27 To Roland Barthes's concern, textual pleasure is never conceived with the text by its author, but exists only because of the possibility of reading and hence re-writing by the reader. Barthes establishes a metaphorical link between text and the human body, "the text itself, a diagrammatic and not an imitative structure, can reveal itself in the form of a body, split into fetish objects, into erotic sites. All these movements attest to a figure of the text, necessary to the bliss of reading." Susan Sontag, op. cit, 1982, 410.

28 The circulation of the Parc is a composite of an orthogonal system for expressing pedestrian movement, and several seemingly random curvilinear routes called "thematic garden paths". The first route connects the two Paris gates (east and west) to subway stations (north and south) forming a cross along two canals with direct access to the most frequented areas. The thematic garden paths link various parts of the Parc to form a circuit. These lines are given architectonic expression by a north-west 5-metre-wide covered structure with an express lane for mass movement at park level. And the south-west 5 metre-wide bridge structure provides two levels of walkway, which slice the park into two zones at the lower level and reconnect visually at the higher level for a broader vista. The straight lines are for speedy movement with maximum protection, the curvilinear routes are for pleasure with maximum variety. The ribbons of the thematic garden paths allude to William Kent's picturesque layout and are joined by different surfaces, which are infused with assorted thematic gardens. These surfaces (planes?) are the receivers and containers of the regularity of a grid and the flux of the movements; they provide horizontal spaces for play, games, markets, mass entertainment, etc. In the shapes of a circle, triangle, square and free curve, these surfaces are each determined

programmatically: grass for prairie plains, stabilized surfaces for light athletics, and so forth.

29 Bernard Tschumi, "The Park: An Urban Park for the 21st Century", *Progressive Architecture*, 66(1), 1985, 90–3, originally published in *International Architect*, 1, 1983, 27–31.

30 Jean-François Bedard (ed.), *Cities of Artificial Excavation: The Work of Peter Eisenman, 1978–1988*, New York: Rizzoli International, 1994.

31 Bernard Tschumi, "Architecture and Limits, I, II & III", in Kate Nesbitt, op. cit., 1996, 152–67. All three essays were originally published in *Artforum*, December 1980, March 1981 and September 1981 respectively.

32 Peter Blundell Jones, "La Villette", *Architectural Review*, August 1989.

33 I am alluding to Fredric Jameson's insightful criticism of Roland Barthes's shift from a political discourse detectable in the *Mythologies* to one where class issues are swept aside. If Barthes's *Writing Zero Degree* could escape what Jameson calls the "nightmare of history", his next work, *The Pleasure of the Text*, took rather a different direction. "It is now through reception rather than production that History may be suspended, and the social function of that fragmentary, punctual jouissance which can break through any text will then be more effective to achieve that freedom from all ideologies and all commitments (of the Left as much as of the Right) that the zero degree of literary signs had once seemed to promise." Fredric Jameson, "Pleasure: A Political Issue", in *The Ideologies of Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, vol. 2, 68.

34 Bernard Tschumi, op. cit., 1999, 36.

35 Bernard Tschumi, ibid, 1999, 42.

36 Bernard Tschumi, op. cit., 1981.

37 Bernard Tschumi, "Architecture and Limits II", in Kate Nesbitt (ed.), op. cit., 1996, 160.

38 Interestingly enough, in his reading of the roof at Le Fresnoy, Alain Guiheux recalls Louis Kahn's Great Synagogue of Jerusalem where "a space is closed by the simple proximity of thick dividing walls". See Guiheux, "Critical Workshop", in Bernard Tschumi, ibid., 1999, 89.

39 Bernard Tschumi, "Architecture and Transgression", *Opposition* 7, winter 1976.

40 Bernard Tschumi, *GA Document Extra*, 10, 1997, 151.

41 Recalling Walter Benjamin's metaphor of the angel of history, Massimo Cacciari continues: "On the one hand, the avant-garde decrees the 'once upon a time,' and reduces things to 'eternal images'—on the other, it turns its gaze to the future and, like a fortune teller, looks for 'what lies hidden in its womb.' For the Angel, on the other hand, the ephemeral of the present senses that of the past, and its future lies in the moment, which is origin. And in any case, how could the Angel destroy all presuppositions, if the very happiness for which he yearns is itself presupposed?" Cacciari, "Loos and His Angel", in *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993, 149.

42 Ernst Bloch, "Building in Empty Spaces", in J. Zipes and F. Mecklenburg (trans.), *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, 186–99.

43 Ernst Bloch, ibid., 190.

44 For a comprehensive study of the different facets of architecture realism, see Harry F. Mallgrave (ed.), *Otto Wagner*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993, particularly Part III, "The Changing Dialectics of Modernity", and Stanford Anderson's essay, "Sachlichkeit and Modernity, or Realist Architecture", 323–63.

45 Fredric Jameson, "Culture and Financial Capital", *Critical Inquiry*, 24(1), autumn 1997, 246–65. Reading Giovanni Arrighi's book, *The Long Twentieth Century*, Jameson reassesses postmodern culture in terms of the complexity of abstraction involved in a situation when capital has become global. "Today, what is called postmodernity articulates the symptomology of yet another stage of abstraction, qualitatively and structurally distinct from previous ones, which I have drawn on Arrighi to characterize as our own moment of finance capitalism: the finance capital moment of globalized society, the abstraction brought with it through cybernetic technology." Jameson, ibid., 252.

46 Fredric Jameson, ibid., 1997, 256.

47 On this subject, see the last chapter in Gevork Hartoonian, *Ontology of Construction* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p89.

48 The most interesting voice concerning this issue will be Mary McLeod's "Everyday and 'Other' Spaces", in Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Hendersson (eds), *Architecture and Feminism*, New York: Princeton University Press, 1996.

49 Giovanni Damiani, *Bernard Tschumi*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, 124.

50 Interestingly enough, the idea was first formulated to discuss the influence of Russian constructivism in the work of Kenneth Frampton, Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, and to mark these architects' difference from others who were equally influential in the formulation of architectural discourse of the 1980s. See Gevork Hartoonian, "An Architecture of Limits", in Harriet Edquist and Helene Frichot (eds), *Limits; SAHANZ04*, vol. 1, Melbourne: Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand, 2004, 214–20.

51 Making observations about stone and stereotomy, Gottfried Semper suggests that in tectonic construction "different parts have resulted" not from 'a structural mechanical formal expression", but from a " very different kind of activity. Artistically enlivened, supporting elements become organicism". See Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or Practical Aesthetics*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Texts and Documents, 2004, 728. On the significance of "organic" for the tectonic discourse, see the final chapter of the present work.

CHAPTER 5

1 A version of this chapter was first published in *The Journal of Architecture*, 6(1), spring 2002, 1–31, and is slightly revised and edited for this volume. The original essay was written before Hal Foster's essay on F. Gehry. See Foster, "Master Builder", *Design and Crime*, London: Verso, 2003, 27–42.

2 Frank Gehry has always worked with artists: "I have been very involved with their work; I think a lot of my ideas have grown out of it, and that there's been some give and take." From an interview with Peter Arnell in *Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects*, P. Arnell and Ted Bickford (eds), New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1985. Gehry's collaboration with Richard Serra is special; Gehry noticed the expressive potential of the fish while designing with Serra a bridge for Manhattan. Germano Celant sees some similarities between Gehry's work and that of Claes Oldenburg. According to him, "Gehry, like Oldenburg, takes advantage of the Surrealist idea of the ready-made: The position that Gehry and Oldenburg seem to share must be examined by studying the relation to the contextual determinations that the object—icon has as it interacts with its context in reality. . . . This is how the meaning of Oldenburg's *Bat Column* and *Flashlight* may be understood in their dialogue with, respectively, Chicago and Las Vegas; the meaning of Gehry's fish may be deduced from its functioning with respect to the aquatic element that surrounds Manhattan." G. Celant, "Reflections on Frank Gehry", in P. Arnell and T. Bickford (eds), ibid.

3 Francesco Dal Co, "The World Turned Upside-Down: The Tortoise Flies and the Hare Threatens the Lion", in Kurt W. Forester and Francesco Dal Co (eds), *Frank O. Gehry*, New York: Monacelli Press, 1998, 42.

4 According to Thomas Hines, his grandmother stimulated Frank Gehry's obsession with fish. Gehry recalls, "Every Thursday through much of my childhood we would go to the Jewish market, we'd buy a live carp, we'd take it home . . . we'd put it in the bathtub and I would play with this . . . fish for a day . . . until she killed it and made gefillte fish." Recalling that anti-Semitism prevailed during Gehry's youth, the architect was given the ironic nickname of "Fish" by "his tormentors, presumably to suggest a bad odor, and he would not realize until much later that the 'fish' was a Christian symbol. His ambivalent identity with the image, however, would last until exorcised in his fish sculptures of the 1980s." Hines, "Heavy Metal: The Education of F. O. G.", in *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986, 11–24, at 13–14.

5 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "The Smooth and the Striated", in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987, 474–500.

6 See Kurt W. Forster, Francesco dal Co, op. cit., 1998.

7 On the subject of theatricality, see Chapter 2 of the present work.

8 Here I am alluding to the term "phantasmagoria" as discussed by Walter Benjamin. Borrowing Karl Marx's articulation of the deceptive appearance of commodities (the fetishism of commodities), Benjamin underlined the optical illusions stimulated by

the spectacular look of Paris. According to Susan Buck-Morss, Benjamin's point of departure "was a historical experience rather than an economic analysis of capital, the key to the new urban phantasmogoria was not so much the commodity-in-the-market as the commodity-on-display, where exchange value no less than use value lost practical meaning, and purely representational value came to the fore". Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcade Project*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, 81–2. After the Crystal Palace, it is reasonable to speculate that museums today have inherited the visual allure of the world exhibitions of the 1850s. In the context of nineteenth-century cities, the Crystal Palace enjoyed a level of phantasmagoria invested in the commodities displayed inside.

9 See note 2, above. On another occasion, Frank Gehry has this to say about the importance of the fish in his design: speaking of his participation in Tigerman's call for the Chicago Tribune Competition, Gehry recalls that "since I was never able to finish the Tribune drawing, I started making the colonnade with the eagle. And then I decided—well, I should have more columns. And that's when I drew the fish standing up. . .", in P. Arnell and Ted Bickford (eds), op. cit, 1985.

10 Germano Celant tells his readers that "the O'Neill Hay Barn and the Ron Davis House pay tribute to the architectural tradition of the Indian of the Northwest. . . . The architectural language of the Ron Davis House is linked to the craftsmanship tradition of tribes living from California to Alaska, who consider the shaping of their environment to be one of the highest artistic expressions." Rosemarie Haag Bletter considers Gehry's sensibilities as in part derived from "toying with a conflation of the world of perception and conception". See Celant, "Reflections on Frank Gehry", in P. Arnell and Ted Bickford (eds), op. cit., 1985. See also Bletter, "Frank Gehry's Spatial Reconsiderations", in Thomas Hines, op. cit, 1986, 26.

11 Margaret Crawford, "Forgetting and Remembering Schindler: the Social History of an Architectural Reputation", in *2G*, 7, 1998, 129–42.

12 I will not expound on Frank Gehry's well-discussed house here. Among others, Fredric Jameson has noticed the spatial qualities of Gehry's house, suggesting that it marks a departure from modernist understanding of the dialectic between interior and exterior spaces. More interesting to me is Jameson's idea of "wrapping" versus the modernist tendency towards "grounding": one stressing the figure/ground relationship derived from the forces of gravity, the other envisioning floating forms comparable to dancing figures in Surrealist art, if not similar to the floating nature of commodities in late capitalism. He describes the "wrapping" intervention into the old house thus: "both the now sunken living room and the dining areas and kitchen opened up between the loosely draped external wrapper and the 'withering away' of the now seem to me the thing itself, the new postmodern space proper, which our bodies inhabit in malaise or delight, trying to shed the older habits of inside/outside categories and perceptions still longing for the bourgeois privacy of solid walls (enclosures like the old centered bourgeois ego), yet grateful for

novelty of the incorporation of yucca plants and what Barthes would have called Californianity into our newly reconstructed environment." Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991, p. 115. For Jameson, the idea of wrapping is a formative theme for postmodern architecture. My remarks on the importance of "clothing" in Gehry's architecture aim to demonstrate both his departure from regionalism and the popularity of his most recent architecture.

13 B. Diamonstein, *American Architecture Now*, New York: Rizzoli Publishing Inc., 1986, 36.

14 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966. Criticizing what he calls the "tradition of either-or", in orthodox modern architecture, Venturi emphasizes the contradiction and hierarchy that "yields several levels of meanings among elements with varying values. It can include elements that are both good and awkward, big and little, closed and open, continuous and articulated, round and square, structural and spatial." Venturi, ibid., 31.

15 By architecture's interiority I mean tropes accumulated through the history of architectural theories and practice. I am thinking of ideas concerning inside/outside relations, the dialogical rapport between column and wall, the tectonic achieved by symbolic embellishment of a constructed form, or that of the earth-work and the frame-work as discussed by the nineteenth-century German architect Gottfried Semper. My discussion of architecture's interiority differs from Peter Eisenman's recent reflection on the "interiority of architecture", arguing for a formalistic understanding of architecture. See Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, New York: Universe Publishing, 1999, 27–43.

16 Giovanni Leoni, "Modeling Versus Building", in *Area*, 41, 1998, 4–5. Interestingly enough the author is well aware of the absence of the tectonic in Frank Gehry's work: "It is not necessary to quote either Semper or Mies to assert that modeling denies architecture as technique, while construction as assembly denies architecture the possibility of being an individual creative act."

17 See B. Diamonstein, op. cit, 1986, 37.

18 Gottfried Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture", in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 115.

19 It is important to recall the place of the image of silos or liners for Le Corbusier and that of the hut for Mies van der Rohe. It is equally important to remember how each of them re-articulated architecture in reference to earth, sky and the impact of the metropolis on architecture.

20 Kenneth Frampton for one has presented the tectonic essential for a "critical practice" in postmoderm conditions when the "novum" has lost its validity. "While the crisis of the neo-avant-garde derives directly from the spontaneous dissolution of the new, critical culture attempts to sustain itself through a dialectical play across

a historically determined reality in every sense of the term." K. Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 25.

21 Giovanni Leoni, op. cit., 998, 2.

22 For a critical reflection on Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, see Kenneth Frampton, "America 1960–1970: Notes on Urban Images and Theory", *Casabella*, 359–60, XXV, 1971, 24–38. For Scott Brown's response to Frampton's charges, see ibid., 39–46. More recently, Neil Leach has this to say about architectonic implications of *Learning from Las Vegas*: "once one enters an argument of 'form for form's sake' where form is abstracted from other concerns, it is not easy to 'resynthesize' these concerns into form in the final design. It is this principle of aestheticization, then, that allows Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenhour to remain so oblivious to the socio-political questions at the heart of Las Vegas, to anaesthetize it, and to adopt an approach that is epitomized by their celebration of the advertising hoarding." Leach, *The Anesthetics of Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999, 63.

23 The same could be said about Kurt W. Forester, who makes analogies between the playfulness of Gehry's architecture with that of Francesco Borromini. See Forester, "Architectural Choreography", in Kurt W. Forester and Francesco Dal Co (eds), *Frank O. Gehry*, New York: Monacelli Press, 1998, 9–38. I will discuss the analogy between current esteem for "expressionism" and Baroque at the end of this essay. It is necessary to add here that analogies made between the theatricalization of current architecture with either Baroque or the expressionism of the 1920s go beyond modernist historicism, but also stop short of stressing the historicity of current architecture. According to Alan Colquhoun, historical analysis would have to reconcile "the uniqueness of our culture, which is the product of historical development, . . . with the palpable fact that it operates within a historical context and contains within itself its own historical memory", Colquhoun, "Three Kinds of Historicism", in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, 16.

24 Fritz Neumeyer, "Nexus of the Modern: The New Architecture in Berlin", in Tilmann Buddensieg (ed.), *Berlin 1900–1933: Architecture and Design*, Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Museum of Design, 1987, 52.

25 Francesco Dal Co, op. cit, 1998, 42. I would like to recall Fredric Jameson's periodization of art as three modes of "realism", "abstraction" and the fetishism of commodity production, each marking an aesthetic appropriation of art and architecture proper to a particular stage of modernization. Also important is Fredric J. Schwartz's discussion of the Bauhaus: Following George Simmel's "Philosophy of Money", published in 1920, Schwartz underlines the presence of "spectacle" articulated by Guy Debord as an important element in smoothing an artifact's way to the realm of consumption. See Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

26 See the first chapter of my *Ontology of Construction*, 1994, where I discuss the historical transformation from *techne* to the tectonic, and the montage of

construction in contemporary architecture. See also the last chapter of *Modernity and its Other*, 1997, where my reflection on technology and architecture is motivated by Theodor Adorno's discourse on the subject as presented in his *Aesthetic Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

27 The subject has been around since the nineteenth-century rationalist approach to architecture and was emasculated later by those who wanted to underestimate the creative and symbolic dimension of architecture. At a theoretical level, Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, first published in 1960, and the author's emphasis on Richard Buckminster Fuller, postulate an idea that can be traced back to Hannes Meyer's "antipathy to composition in architecture", to use Kenneth Frampton's words, as well as Walter Gropius's prefabricated Torten Housing of 1926, where the final layout and forms were dictated by the technologies of the assembly line. As I discuss below in the main text, the infliction of technology on contemporary architecture has touched the historical vision of authors like Sigfried Giedion and Banham. For a collection of essays looking at this subject, though from a different angle, see Peter Galison and Emily Thompson (eds), *The Architecture of Science* , Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. Frampton's quotation above is cited on page 354. Also see Alan Colquhoun's review of Banham's *Theory and Design* in *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981, 21–5. Banham's original text was published in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, January 1962, 59–65.

28 Theodor Adorno, "Music and Technique", in *Sound Figures*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, 202.

29 I am reminded of Demetri Porphyrios' insistence on the tectonic of stone architecture inherited from the classical tradition, as the sole language to be practised today. Without pushing the envelope to this extreme, Manfredo Tafuri has persuasively launched a relentless critique of modernity and its implications for architecture, in a way that makes contemporary architecture seem like a by-product of a schizophrenic mind, one that has no choice but to enter the dead-end alley of modernization as the only escape from modernity itself. Alberto Perez-Gomez projects the crisis of architecture back to the time when the poetic rapport between *logos* and *mythos* disappeared. His position can be characterized as a vision of modernity whose objective and subjective forces have never achieved hegemony. See Perez-Gomez, *Architecture and the Crisis of the Modern Science*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983.

30 Robert Venturi, *Iconography and Electronics upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996, 11.

31 And he continues, "these properties should at the same time be easily depicted or produced and should drive from techniques first used in the production of such surface dressing (namely textile)". See Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or Practical Aesthetics*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Texts and Documents, 2004, 127–8.

32 Gottfried Semper, op. cit, 1989, 65. This conception of theatricality is implied in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's description of a non-theatrical public spectatordom: "But what then will be the objects of these spectacles? What will be shown in them? Nothing, if you like. With liberty, wherever abundance reigns, well-being reigns as well. Plant in the middle of a square a pole crowned with flowers, bring the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better still, make the beholders the spectacle; make them actors themselves; make each of them see himself and love himself in the others so that they will all be more closely united." Quoted in Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980, 221.

33 Kurt W. Forster, "Architectural Choreography", in Kurt Forster and Francesco Dal Co (eds.), op. cit., 1998, 24.

34 Michael Sorkin, "Frozen Light", in Mildred Friedman (ed.), *Gehry Talks: Architecture + Process*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1999, 31. Sorkin's observation also brings to light a particular aspect of film making that is important to Frank Gehry's work. According to Sorkin, "both cartoons and films evolved out of a process of bringing single frozen cuts or images together by animation. In this process, however, there is no limit to such a distortion as far as familiar objects and images are not totally washed out. While Mickey resembles a mouse but looks like no mouse we've ever seen, nevertheless, the cartoon holds its familiarity to our eye as long as Mickey plummets to earth when being conscious of walking in air." Ibid.

35 This subject is convincingly discussed in Hubert Damisch's structuralist reading of Viollet le Duc. See Damisch, "The Space Between: A Structuralist Approach to the Dictionary", *Architectural Design Profile*, 3–4, 1980, 84–9. Discussing Jon Utzon's Sydney Opera House, Kenneth Frampton also reminds us of two historical occasions when the gap between structural logic and architectonic form comes to closure. "The first of these occurs during the high Gothic period, while the second arises in the second half of the nineteenth century with the perfection of ferro-vitreous construction." Frampton, op. cit., 1995, 273.

36 Of course, Adolf Loos was aware that this was not the case with architecture. He used the idea of carpet as a means of stressing his idea of cladding and the architect's intelligent choice of a particular material and cladding to generate specific spatial effects. Loos, "The Principle of Cladding", in *Spoken into the Void*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982, 66–9.

37 I am alluding to the idea of commodity fetishism and the possibility of relating architecture of the spectacular to fetish that is "an object endowed with a special force or independent life". See Hall Foster, "The Art of Fetishism: Notes on Dutch Still Life", in Sarah Whiting, Edward Mitchell, and Greg Lynn (eds), *Fetish*, *The Princeton Architectural Journal*, 4, 1992.

38 I have discussed Gottfried Semper's theory of *Bekleidung* and Adolf Loos's idea of dressing. Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994, 20–5, and the chapter on Loos. See also Hartoonian, op. cit., 1997, 178.

39 Rosemarie Haag Bletter, "Frank Gehry's Spatial Reconstruction", in Thomas Hines (ed.), op. cit., 1986, 25–63, at 47.

40 Francesco Dal Co, "The World Turned Upside-Down: The Tortoise Flies and the Hare Threatens the Lion", in F. Dal Co and K. Furster (eds), op. cit., 1998, 39–61.

41 Francesco Dal Co, ibid, 40.

42 I am thinking of Pierluigi Nicolin's argument in "Merzbau", *Lotus International*, 123, 2005, 13–17. This issue of the journal attempts to discuss contemporary architecture, including the work of Peter Eisenman, F. Gehry, Steven Holl, Rem Koolhaas, among others, in reference to the dadaist appropriation of the experience of metropolis and the theme of incompleteness permeating Kurt Schwitters's Merzbau project.

43 Françoise Fromonot, *Jon Utzon: The Sydney Opera House*, California: Gingko Press, 1998, 167. According to the author, to articulate the fan-shaped glass walls, Utzon draw analogies from the wings of a seagull in flight.

44 On this subject, see Gevork Hartoonian, "The Limelight of the House-Machine", *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 6, spring 2001, 53–79.

45 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. According to Deleuze, "Baroque architecture can be defined by this severing of the façade from the inside, of the interior from exterior, and the autonomy of the exterior, but in such a condition that each of the two terms thrusts the other forward." Ibid, 28. The severing of the façade from the interior in Baroque architecture speaks for the independence of the element of wrapping from structure. This of course marked a departure from the classical language of architecture where there is a one-to-one correspondence between the façade and the plan and organization of the interior space. On this last subject, see Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994, 12.

46 Christopher S. Wood, *The Vienna School Reader*, New York: Zone Books, 2000, 32–3. According to Wood, "the deliberate, paradoxical reversal of the structure-surface hierarchy characteristic of baroque or rococo architecture became in effect the fundamental maneuver of *Struktur-analyse*". One could follow Hans Sedlmayer's "*Struktur-analyse*" to discuss the dialogical relationship between the roof and the enclosure as the "structure"; a design principle informing not only Gehry's work but also the recent architecture of the neo-avant-garde.

CHAPTER 6

1 Quoted in Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001, 32.

2 In *Modernity and its Other: A Post-Script to Contemporary Architecture*, College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1997, I have presented "culture of

building" to map themes that are fundamental to the tectonic discourse. Most recently, Peter Eisenman has introduced the idea of "interiority" to underline an understanding of "form" that is architectural. See Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, New York: University Publishing, 1999.

3 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Thus far Anthony Vidler has presented the best critique of architects who entertain a literal interpretation of the idea of fold. See Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

4 On this subject see Chapter 2 of the present work.

5 For a discussion of surface that is informed by Gottfried Semper's discourse, see David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mosstafavi, *Surface Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

6 Bernard Cache, "Digital Semper", in Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anymore,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000, 190–7.

7 According to Harry F. Mallgrave, for Semper "hanging carpets remained the true walls; they were the visible boundaries of a room. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for protection, for supporting a load, for their permanence, etc." Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, 180.

8 The suggested differentiation was first introduced in the final chapter of *Ontology of Construction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. For the architectonic implication of dressing and "dressed-up", see Gevork Hartoonian, "The Tectonic of Camouflage", *Architecture Australia*, 92(2), March/April 2003, 60–5.

9 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 45–73.

10 For a concise summary of the suggested development, see Harry F.Mallgrave's introduction to *Otto Wagner*, *Modern Architecture*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1988, 1–54.

11 Adolf Loos, "The Principle of Cladding", in Jane O. Newman (trans.), *Spoken into the Void*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982.

12 Here I am benefiting from Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996, 293.

13 See Harry F. Mallgrave, "A Commentary on Semper's November Lecture", *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 6, spring 1983, 23–31.

14 Scott C. Wolf, "Karl Friedrich Schinkel: The Tectonic Unconscious and New Science of Subjectivity", 1997, unpublished dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Princeton University, UMI Dissertation Services.

15 In defence of his proposed *Nutz-Stil*, Otto Wagner underlines the French experience where the architect functioned both as artist and building technician. And considering realism in French painting, he observes that "such Realism in architecture

can also bear quite peculiar fruit. . . .” Wagner, *Sketches, Projects and Executed Buildings*, trans. Peter Haiko, New York: Rizzoli International Publications Co., 1987, 18. For the theme of theatricality in French realist painting of the early nineteenth century, see Michael Fried, *Courbet’s Realism*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

16 Peter Haiko, “Introduction”, in Otto Wagner, ibid., 1987, 10.

17 See Gevork Hartoonian, *Ontology of Construction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 89.

18 Many nineteenth-century architects and theoreticians expressed confusing views on Gottfried Semper’s discourse. Otto Wagner made a case out of Semper’s discourse on style, criticizing the architect’s preference for symbolic over material factors. And, following Alois Riegl’s idea of *Kunstwollen*, Peter Behrens, among others, chastised Semper for the alleged mechanistic views of the essence of art. I am paraphrasing Harry F. Mallgrave, op. cit., 1996, 355–31. In the debate between Riegl and Semper, most contemporary art historians still side with the former. Benjamin Binstock, for one, argues that in *Der Stil*, Semper “proposed that the style of an artwork was determined by function, material, and technique. Riegl acknowledged the importance of these factors but insisted on something prior and more crucial”, i.e. to finding “a middle ground between the unfolding of Spirit on the one hand and function or technique on the other in the formal elements of the work of art *as art*”. See Binstock’s foreword to A. Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, New York: Zone Books, 2004, 14–16.

19 Walter Benjamin, quoted in Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde*, New York: Verso, 1995. According to Osborne, “As objects of fetishization, commodities destined for everyday consumption display two closely related features: one is an apparent self-sufficiency or independence from their process of production; the other is the appearance of novelty, required to make them attractive in the face of competing products”. Ibid, 184.

20 I am thinking of Henri Lefèbvre, but also a host of other thinkers including Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, Martin Heidegger and, specifically, Walter Benjamin’s reflections on the everyday life. For a comprehensive discussion of these authors’ views on everyday life, see Harry Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

21 Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750–1950*, London: Faber and Faber, 1965, 149.

22 Pananyotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999, 191.

23 Caroline van Eck, *Organicism in Nineteenth-Century Architecture*, Amsterdam: A&N Press, 1994, 19.

24 Joseph Rykwert, “Organic and Mechanic”, *Res* 22, autumn 1992, 11–18, at 13.

25 Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine*, Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995, 46.

26 Adolf Behne for one suggested that a building becomes organic by compromising its function. He also made a distinction between the utilitarian, the rationalist and the functionalist approach to machine. According to Behne, "when a functionalist refers to the machine, he sees it as the moving tool, the perfect approximation to organism". See Behne, *The Modern Functional Building*, trans. M. Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center, 1996, 130.

27 See Harry Harootunian, op. cit., 2000, 104.

28 Here and in what follows I am benefiting from Gottfried Semper's ideas discussed in his text on style. See Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or Practical Aesthetics*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Texts and Documents, 2004, 345.

29 Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, 227.

30 Greg Lynn, *Folds, Bodies and Blobs: Collected Essays*, Amsterdam: ideal books, 1998, 110.

31 Horst Bredekamp, op. cit., 1995, 49.

32 On this subject, see G. Dodds and R. Tavernor (eds), *Body and Architecture: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

33 See "Question of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture", *A+U*, special issue, July 1994.

34 See Kenneth Frampton's introduction to *Steven Holl Architect*, Milan: Ellecta Architecture, 2003, 21.

35 See Harry F. Mallgrave's introduction to *Otto Wagner, Modern Archicture*, Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1988, 1–54.

36 The association is out of context though Otto Wagner's argument that surface embellishment should accentuate construction remains relevant to Steven Holl's project discussed above. For Wagner, see Harry F. Mallgrave (trans.), op. cit., 1988.

37 Steven Holl in a conversation with Juhani Pallasmaa, published in *Elcroquis*, 108, 2001, 12.

38 Roman Hollenstein pushes the envelope of these associations to include Ignazio Gardella's Padiglione d'Arte Contemporaneo, realized in Milan in 1949–53. "Like Piano's Foundation Beyeler, Gardella's art Pavilion opens via a glazed façade onto the park. . . . In short: the spiritual kinship between these two buildings—despite technical differences—is so striking that one might be tempted to regard Piano's new building as a contemporary reinterpretation of Gardella's exhibition pavilion." Hollenstein, "Temple and Pavilion: the Architecture of Foundation Beyeler", in *Renzo Piano, Foundation Beyeler*, Boston: Birkhauser, 2000, 73.

39 The idea of a building's dialogue with landscape is an oriental one and its origins go back to Japanese culture. However, the ur-form of a monumental pavilion standing next to a pond can be traced back to Persian palaces built in the Safavid period, especially the Chihil Sutan in Isfahan. The oriental sense of the tactile and

monumental is also discernible in Le Corbusier's design for the High Court of Chandigarh, India, 1951–65. I am also reminded of the formativeness of the roof in Le Corbusier's later buildings including the Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, 1951–53, and the Heide Weber Pavilion, Zurich, 1961–65.

40 Renzo Piano in an interview with Lutz Windhofel. See The Fondation Beyeler (ed.), *Renzo Piano – Foundation Beyeler*, Boston: Birkhauser, 2000, 33.

41 Quoted by Markus Brudelin in *Domus*, 11, 1997, 60.

42 The full title of Peter Eisenman's presentation is "The Specter of the Spectacle: Ghost of the Real", which alludes in part to the spectacle of Frank Gehry's Bilbao project in Spain. See Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anymore*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, 174–9.

43 These dualities, as part of the field of architectural, are recoded "through a fluidity, immersion of other ideas, other possibilities that come before the formation of knowledge". Here Peter Eisenman presents a view of the discipline of architecture as a non-totalizing system, i.e. "to theorize not the totality of the discipline of but the adequacy of the discipline—in other words, its adequacy to maintain its disciplinary conditions without becoming totalizing or even colonizing". Eisenman, "The Gesamtkunstwerk as an Open System", in *Lotus International*, 123, 2005, 26. The difference between Eisenman's idea of autonomy and the "open system" implied in the tectonic of theatricality discussed throughout this volume has to do with the difference between the discourse of an architect and that of a historian/critic: the latter's task is to historicize architecture within the disciplinary history of architecture, whereas the former should avoid making a closure out of the discipline.

44 I have discussed this difference to associate felt with montage as a technique that encompasses our very contemporary way of seeing and making. See Gevork Hartoonian, op. cit., 1994, 26.

45 Peter Eisenman, op. cit., 2000, 179.

46 Rosalind Krauss, "No More Play", in *Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1985, 54. Krauss's ideas should be read against the background of Clement Greenberg, who saw flatness as a theme working towards a criticism of modernism developed from inside. On this subject, see note 47.

47 Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria", in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, 55–93. In criticizing Clement Greenberg's formalism, Steinberg used the term "the flatbed picture plane" to suggest the transformation of art's subject from nature to culture, and to avoid perceiving the world from an upright position. Discussing a number of American painters of the 1950s, Steinberg concludes that, "the flatbed picture plane lends itself to any content that does not evoke a prior optical event. As criteria of classification it cuts across the terms 'abstract' and 'representational'." Ibid., 90.

48 On this subject, see Gevork Hartoonian, "Mies van der Rohe: the Genealogy of Column and Wall", in op. cit., 1994, 68–80.

49 Gottfried Semper, op. cit., 2004, 123.

50 The phenomenon was not new. According to Rafael Moneo, section is central to understanding the best work of James Sterling. According to Moneo, "in Leicester, [the section] is also the envelope, the skin. Against the neutral, inert wall of traditional building, the modern architect discovered the lure of manipulating surfaces." Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 23.

51 Gottfried Semper, op. cit., 2004, 154.

52 This statement of Greg Lynn's characterizes what he calls the tectonics of topological roof typologies evidence in Shoel Yoh's "sport complex" project, Japan 1992. The project differs from any other roof tectonics, including Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Moussavi, where "construction techniques are developed simultaneously with formal diagram." Lynn, op. cit., 1998, 177.

53 Quoted in a conversation with Neil Leach. See "The Structure of Ornament", in N. Leach, David Turnbull, and Chris Williams (eds), *Digital Tectonics*, London: Wiley-Academy, 2004, 65.

54 Gottfried Semper, op. cit., 2004, 246.

55 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991.

56 Obviously I am recalling J. Habermas's famous essay "Modernity and Incomplete Project", but also Fredric Jameson's observation that the modernism flourishing during the 1920s "[was] abruptly cut short around the same time in the early 1930s". And he continues, "On the aesthetic level, this situation certainly justifies Habermas's well-known slogan of modernism as an unfulfilled project." Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, London: Verso, 2002, 167.

57 Juan José Lahuerta, "Spain – For Sale", *Casabella*, 697, 2002.

58 Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, London: Verso, 2003, 100–3.

INDEX

Aalto, Alvar 93
absorption 32,
abstraction 37, 53, 80; aesthetic of 51, 55, 94–96
Adorno, Theodor 118–9
Alberti, Leon Battista 10
Alexander, Christopher 52
autonomy 8, 13, 19–20, 26, 52–3, 56, 63, 69–70, 102, 155; and semi-autonomy 156; formal 104, 115, 156; of architecture 49; of form 98, 126; of text 99,
avant-garde 21–22, 73, 80–1, 88, 92, 119; historical 20, 29, 45–6, 53, 57, 83, 118, 155; neo 23–25, 27, 41–2, 44, 52, 69–70, 72, 87, 94, 96–7, 98–9, 104–05,
134, 140–2
Arvatov, Boris 20–21
aura, 7, 21 118, loss of 9, 11, 40; see also Benjamin W.

Bachelard, Gaston 67
Barthes, Roland 45, 71
Bataille, Georges 51, 152
Bauen 153; *Neue* 155
Bauhaus school 2, 4, 7, 20–21, 68
Behrens, Peter 16–17
Bekleidung, 135–8; see also Semper G.
Benjamin, Walter 4–5, 7–9, 11, 13, 19, 21, 23, 25, 40–2, 69–70, 92, 139–40; exhibition value 28; wish-images 4, 7, 12–13, 25
Berman Marshall 49
Bernstein, Charles 28, on theatricality 32–3
Bletter, Rosemarie Haag 130
Bois, Yve-Alain 51
Bloch, Ernst 94–5
Botticher, Carl 4, 35, 44, 105
Bredekamp, Horst 141
Breton Andre 2, 4
Brown Denise Scott 118
Burger, Peter 57

Cache, Bernard 5, 135; see also tectonics
Cacciari, Massimo 70, 92
Calatrava, Santiago 31
Caygill, Howard 41
Crawford, Margaret 112
Cezanne, Paul 34, 112
Chernikhov, Iakov 23, 81
Chomsky, Noam 46
Collins, Peter 138
commodity fetishism 5, 169n31; aesthetic of 53, 71, 97, 118, 134, 138, 153
commodification 26, 32–3, 40–1, 98, 102, 119, 156, 159n14; of culture 30, 35, 117, 146

conceptual art 72, 104; see also Tschumi B.
construction 8, 11, 14–15, 17–19, 23, 26, 32, 37, 41–3, 47, 73, 102, 113, 120, 126–7; and appearance 114; and expression 2; and ornament 35; ontology of 72
Constructivism 19, 73; Russian 19–21, 74, 81, 83, 162n48, 163n50
Courbet, Gustave 34, 41, realism 33,
crisis of the object 1–3, 6, 8–9, 21, 31, of architecture 6, 29, 69, 74, 185n29
critical practice 67
Crystal Palace 35
Cubism 34, 46
culture of building 5, 13, 25–30, 44, 67, 98, 102
culture industry 118; see also Adorno T.

Dal Co, Francesco 104, 118, 130
Debord, Guy 40, 120; see also spectacle
defamiliarization 32
Deleuze, Gilles 31, 131, 134
Derrida, Jacque 46, 49, 53, 74, 106, 134
De Stijl 3, 45
Diderot, Denis 33–4
Dom-ino frame 5, 47, 49, 126, 128, 131
dressing 5, 124–7, 138, 152, 154; principle of 36, 39, 44; see also Loos A. and Semper G.
dressed-up 128, 135, 138

Eiffel tower 31
Eisenman, Peter 1, 28–29, 74, 80, 114, 120, 150–3, 155; see also ch. 3; on autonomy 72, on diagram 49; ideology 68, 150; interstitial 51; on interiority 53, 56, on zeitgeist 68, weak-form 49, 51, 120
event 40, 48, 80, 93, 101, 176n12; architecture of 127, see also Tschumi B.
exhibition value 9; see also Benjamin W.
Expressionism 19–20, 23, 118, 141; German 18; new 118

fabrication 9, 32, 75, 126, 138; aesthetic of 127
fetishism 71; of commodities 41, 59, 83, 95; see also commodity fetishism,
Five Architects 45–6, 49, 66, 73–4
Foster, Hal 32, 156
Foucault, Michel 72
Forster, Kurt W. 37, 124
Frampton, Kenneth 14, 17, 51, 102, 144
Fried Michael 28; on theatricality 33–4
Fromonot, Françoise 131

Gan, Aleksei 22
Gassner, Hubertus 20
Gehry, Frank 28, 101, 142, theatricalization 147; also see ch. 5
Gesamtkunstwerk 38
Giedion, Sigfried 23
globalization 25, 57, 69, 141
Gropius Walter 21
Guardini, Romano 1

Haiko, Peter 137
Heidegger, Martin 11, 29, 44, 69–70
historicism 7, 17, 20, 36, 53, 68; postmodern 73
Holl, Steven 142; concept of cut 142–3; surface 143–4

ideology 24, 71, 79, 99; capitalist 98, 140; demise of 68; of postmodernism 6; of technology 69
international style 2, 4, 66

Jameson, Fredric 28, 52, 96
Johnson, Philip 115

Kahn, Louis 65, 87, 127, 132
Klimt, Gustav 131

Kracauer, Siegfried 133
Krauss, Rosalind 51

Labrouste, Henri 13–14
Lahuerta, Juan Jose 155
landform 129, 152
Laugier, Marc-Antoine 15, 76–7, 137, 150
Le Corbusier 2–4, 23, 27, 46, 49, 76–7, 80–1, 102, 105
Leoni, Giovanni 113, 118
Levine, Neil 13
Lodder, Christina 20
Loos, Adolf 2–4, 9, 36, 91–3, 126, 152; the principle of dressing 136
Lynn, Greg 29, 134, 140, 154–5; blob 139–42

Malevich, Kasimir 12
Mallgrave, Harry-Francis 36–8
Marx, Karl 5, 70
Marx, Leo 70
Masheck, Joseph 18
mask 22, 38, 76–8, 81, 83–4, 87–8, 99, 137; see also Bernard T. and Gottfried S.
mechanization 2–3
Melnikov, Konstantin 21–22
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 33
Middleton, Robin 14
Mies van der Rohe 10, 12, 27, 44, 57, 59, 62, 84, 147–8, 153; on technology 68–9
Modernity 1, 3–4, 8, 18, 21, 25, 29, 37, 43, 73, 80, 155; culture of 139; post 57; nihilism of 40; project of 20, 49, 119
modernization 3–4, 8, 13, 20, 31, 38, 73–4, 95, 127
montage 4, 7, 11–13, 22, 39, 43–4, 84, 91, 93, 106–07, 115, 122, 130
monumentality 27, 36, 147, 149; sentiment of 136
Morris, William 18

Neue Sachlichkeit 3, 19–20, 73, 94–6, 99; 157n6; see also New Objectivity
Neumeyer, Fritz 3
New Objectivity 3, 7; see also *Neue Sachlichkeit*
Nietzsche, Friedrich 24, 28, 36, 38–9, 43
Nouvel, Jean 147

objectivity 3–4, 28, 75, 94–6, 100, 102, 136, see also *Sachlichkeit*
Oldenburg, Claes 131
optical unconscious 40
organic 4, 34, 148–9, 154; and mechanic 139; return of138–146, 150, 156
organicism 139
ornamentation 3, 14, 39, 120, 154

Palladio, Andrea 45–6, 84
Paxton, John 34
Perret, August 14
phantasmagoria 5, 40, 95, 106, 120, see also Benajmin W.
Piano, Renzo 29, 147–50, 153, 155
Piranesi, Giovanni Battista 45, 54, 78, 87
play 37–8, 53, 63, 65, 72, formalistic 73
Pollock, Jackson 112
primitivism, 19–20, 161n43
promenade architecturale, 67

Radnoti, Sandra 23
regionalism 28, 104, 106, 112–3, 139; see also Gehry F.
Riegl, Alois 7
Rossi, Aldo 47, 89, 113
Rowe, Colin 46, 48, 72
Rykwert, Joseph 139

Sachlichkeit 1, 4
Schindler, R.M. 112
Scarpa, Carlo 31, 56, 59, 148
Schinkel, K. Friedrich 36–7
Schwitters, Kurt 130

Sedlmayr, Hans 131
Semper, Gottfried 2, 4, 7–9, 11, 15, 18–19, 24–25, 28, 73, 103, 106, 117, 123, 140, 151; definition of tectonic 9, 100; theory of dressing 44, 120, 126, 128, 134, 154, 156; see also *Bekleidung*; theory of theatricaliy 14, 24, 27, 74, 99, 137, 153
Siza, Alvaro 56
Sorkin, Michael 126
spectacle 5, 24–25, 28, 69, 71, 120, 128, 142, 153; architecture of 123, 127; culture of 27, 35, 40–1, 44, 57, 73, 99, 138, 154–6; see also Debord G.
Steinberg, Leo 152
stoffwechsel 24, 36; see also Semper, G.
sublime 37, 141
surface 2, 5, 13, 29, 36, 56, 66, 84, 101, 119–20, 128, 131–2, 152, 154; architecture 140; autonomous 48; cladding 144; return of 135–8, 142, 146; topography 53, 71; see also ch. 6
Surrealism 19, 42

Tafuri, Manfredo 20, 52
Tatlin, Vladimir 20, 22
techne 9–13, 43, 68, 119
technification of architecture 68–9, 118; see also Adorno T.
technique 2, 8, 11–12, 17, 21–24, 26, 29, 31, 36, 43, 46, 71, 99–100, 119, 131, 141; of shock 55
technology 4, 6–7, 10, 17–21, 23, 25–27, 40–1, 43, 56, 78, 94, 102, 120; and architecture 68; digital 44; and ideology 68; electronic 140; impact on art and architecture 2, 8, 118; nihilism of 3, 6, 11, 26, 29, 35, 42
tectonic 4, 10–19, 22, 24–25, 27, 29, 31–2, 37, 42–3, 55, 57, 66, 67–8, 88, 99, 101–03, 105, 107, 114, 126, 131, 135, 141, 144, 149, 154; concept of 9; digital 5; form 35, 137; of blob 29, 134; of enclosure 152; of theatricality 56, 59, 62; thinking 5, 123; topological 150
Terragni, Giuseppe 47, 52
theatricality 2, 8–9, 13, 18–19, 25–26, 28, 31–44, 59, 63, 73, 83, 96, 100–2, 156; architecture of 106; see also Semper G.
Theatricalization 5, 18, 26, 28, 34–5, 38–9, 41–2, 44, 53, 55, 57, 59, 83, 97, 105–06, 115, 118–9, 122, 142–3, 146, 153, 155; aesthetic of 71
Tschumi, Bernard 28, 114; see also ch 4; concept of roof 84; event 73–5, 87–8, 102; mask 77–8, 99; on disjunction 74, 76, 87, 99; on program 75, 99; pleasure 78, 99;

Unhemliche 93
Utzon, Jorn 131

van Doesburg, Theo 59
van Eck, Caroline 139
Venturi, Robert 53, 74, 113, 118, 120
vernacular 4, 21, 75, 102, 111–3
Vidler, Anthony 140
Viollet-le-Duc 13, 93
Vitruvius 133

Wagner, Otto 3, 144; realism 136–7
Wagner, Richard 24, 28, 36, 38, 43
Werkbund school 1–2, 68
Winckelmann, Joachim 137
Wittkower, Rudolf 46
Wolfflin, Heinrich 7
wrapping 25, 28, 120, 125, 127, 131, 152; element of 122, 131–2; roofing and 134–5, 147, 153, 156; see also Gehry F.
Wright, Frank L. 107, 138, 147

Zeitgeist 6, 28–29, 69, 153
Žižek, Slavoj 57, 69

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