The Ohio State University
Knowlton School of Architecture
Exit Review Finalists 2011-2012

FACULTY
Editor: Stephen Turk
Associate Professor and Graduate Chair

STUDENTS
Designer: Cory Frost
MArch Class of 2015
Editor: Richard Martz
MArch Class of 2014
Editor: Dustin Page
MArch Class of 2015
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Introductory Remarks
The Knowlton School has a long tradition of having students engage in critical discourse, whether in the form of scholarly writing, seminar discussions, or public presentations. The School prides itself on its ability to educate culturally aware practitioners with the desire to engage in the lifelong pursuit of disciplinary knowledge. The Master of Architecture Exit Review system is in many ways the most salient and comprehensive manifestation of this institutional focus. Having now run for over a decade and a half, the Exit Review system is unique among schools of architecture both for the way it asks design students to address the larger cultural milieu in which the discipline operates and for its extended commitment to speculative scholarly research.

Compared to a design thesis which typically centers on a student’s ability to synthesize their acquired design and technical abilities into a “comprehensive” design solution, the Exit Review is a public presentation of a scholarly paper given during the last semester of a student’s time in the program. The process of the exit review diverges from the conventions of thesis in that each student is asked to pause from studio design production in order to both situate their work and more importantly their architectural ideas within the context of the larger flows of cultural history. They are asked to critically examine their own design agenda and to position it relative to larger disciplinary transformations occurring due to the evolving position of the Architect in society.

This emphasis on the articulation of a theoretical agenda is predicated on the
pedagogical notion that it is premature for students at this point in their education to put forward a complete “master work” that is the summation of their understanding of historical precedents, their technical abilities, and their awareness of the unfolding themes and directions in architectural discourse. Rather it is the School’s view that students should take the time to develop a reasoned conceptual agenda that lays the foundation for the sustained exploration and production of disciplinary research as they transition to the professional world. The mastery implied by the conventional thesis exercise presupposes a level of disciplinary skill and design ability that for the majority of architects comes only after many years of study and practice, long after they have exited the academy. This is especially true given that most students’ technical apprenticeships continue some years after they graduate from a master’s program and that these practice skills are best learned while gaining direct experience on built projects.

By critically reflecting upon the process of architectural education and situating their own emerging sensibilities within the domains of thought and the competing disciplinary ideologies they have encountered while in the program, each student preparing an Exit Review is asked to formulate a synthesis of these positions to serve as a foundation for theoretical exploration. This necessitates the establishment of a self-reflective perspective on their own educational framework and their place within the larger flows of culture. The Exit Review presentations are therefore intended to foreground disciplinary issues
that allow the student to situate themselves within the interchange of cultural forces, historical antecedents, emerging aesthetic agendas, and the transformations occurring in contemporary practice. In this regard it is a self-conscious situating of identity within the context of a theory of disciplinarity. The best of these talks suggest a self-reflective awareness of the external forces affecting architecture that allows the student to entertain the possibility of becoming an active agent in the evolution of what it means to be an architect today.

By fostering this sense of agency, our graduates can actively participate in the evolution of the discipline by aligning themselves with emerging disciplinary areas and unfolding trajectories. The intention is to graduate critical thinkers aware of these larger cultural forces; thinkers willing to engage in change rather than succumbing to convention. By concentrating on the way in which the discipline can renew itself and challenge the forces of commodification and market expediency, each student can participate in reinforcing the status of the discipline within contemporary culture. Such articulate and informed graduates will contribute to the discipline, remaining relevant in a continually changing and increasingly globalized world.

Having established the goals of the exit review process there are perhaps a few common themes we can put forward relative to our understanding of this collection. The class participates in a parallel preparatory seminar which is modeled less on what a student might expect when beginning a thesis and is more closely aligned with contemporary studio research models which are equal parts graphic, conceptual and theoretical production. Students are asked, for instance: How has the identity of the architectural practitioner changed over the course of the 20th and 21st century and what effects will recent cultural and technological transformations have on the discipline in the future? What constitutes architectural research in the contemporary milieu? What is the critical imperative (if any) in the era of the post-“post-critical?” What characterizes our discipline and are these qualities mutable over time and if so how are they changing? What is the role of media in our profession and how will the rapid transformations in global networked society affect our field? How will such things as network technologies, the advance of global culture, and the diminishment of resources change the idea of the architect practitioner? What is the role of disciplinary tradition and historical knowledge in contemporary debates about the practice? And finally, how does architectural pedagogy relate to each of these issues?

Emphasis, one might say in these talks, is ultimately on the construction of a kind of disciplinary identity as each student has to propose an answer to these questions and locate their own position within the complexity of historical and contemporary trajectories. The Exit Review can be seen as a rhetorical fabrication in which each student assembles out of the cacophony of contemporary debates a contingent yet cogent position to ground their work. The subtext here is that the very issue of an individual architectural disciplinary identity is under question. One could say
that we have moved from an auteur to an ensemble model. The model of Corbusier as a constructed identity (Raven-man) has in this sense been overtaken by FAT, MVRDV, FOA as constructed multiplicities and the structure of the Exit Review preparation course is designed to critically address this phenomenon.

The Exit Reviews you will confront in this collection are raw projections of a variety of possible available avenues for practice and research in our contemporary environment; an environment noted for the way in which our practice has been unmoored from its previous connection to various foundational narratives and critical stances. Though a successful exit review needs to take a rhetorical stand all the while verifying this position by formulating a plausible historical and conceptual context to ground its projective possibilities, ultimately it is an exercise in self-assembly and is as much poetic fabrication as it is conceptual analysis.

The presentations included in this collection are the result of the nominations of the faculty who participated in the master’s examination and to a lesser extent my own editorial selections as Graduate Chair. Though this collection of essays represents many of the finest examples of Exit Review presentations over the 2010/11 and 2011/12 academic years, I should remind readers that these were written to be delivered as verbal presentations rather than polished theoretical papers. To capture the spirit of the exercise we have decided to leave them in a relatively raw state and for the most part have limited editorial revisions to
matters of format and clarity. It should also be noted that as these talks were typically accompanied by numerous images, they often rely on the fact that the audience would have this visual information before them to fill in missing information elements in the text. This obviously presented editorial difficulties relative to the presentation in printed format. To compensate for this the editors have attempted to include enough images to generally fill in these missing references but inevitably many have been left out. Regardless of these format issues, I think the reader will discover a rich set of ideas in these texts; ideas that map out the intellectual terrain and areas of discussion in the graduate program during this period.

I would be remiss in not acknowledging the efforts of the tutors who assisted and helped mold these talks. The faculty advisors for these papers obviously had a major influence on both the style and content and it is through their editorial efforts that this collection of talks is able to be presented at all. So I would like to thank the faculty, who contributed to the development of the specific finalist talks, but also all those who have contributed to the program as a whole. Without their direction, advice and assistance the Exit Review exercise would not be a success.
2011
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Put Out to Pasture
CURRENT STATE:
It is spring time in Detroit, the calm wind blows across the grasses as the sun shines down. The trees are in full bloom, the air is crisp...the feeling of satisfaction. We feel a connection to the land, to its power and its beauty...to its potential, its openness, the opportunity it presents us.

This is the condition of the post-industrial city...the empty condition, the vacant lot, a “terrain vague”, as Sola-Morales calls it. We see the “terrain vague in a series of conditions”, whether it be a desolate landscape, an evolving prairie, a grazing pasture, or a place for an urban hiking experience. The city has become characterized no longer by the built environment, but by the space between, the empty, abandoned space of the city, the space that once was. The relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city’s terrain vagues. Void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation.

In order to understand the future of the city we must situate it within its trajectory. We will begin by looking at a series of relevant city conditions from Central Park to Modernist Utopian visions, all situated within an industrial society. Then we will look to the reaction to these cases and the shift to a post-industrial society through the lens of landscape urbanism. It is only then, after this, that we can begin to understand and situate the current state of the post-industrial city and define its trajectory into the future.
Within the last 50 years, 370 cities with more than 100,000 residents have undergone population losses of more than 10%. More than 25% percent of these depopulating cities are in the United States, and most of those are in the Midwest. The post-industrial rust belt city sits at a pivotal point in time, at a time when foreclosures run rampant and unemployment rates are continually on the rise. While these issues plague society, the city serves as an opportunity, a place of potential. Today, we must begin to understand the strategies and frameworks for dealing with the contemporary city. In order to bring about positive change, the city must embrace a new notion of architecture within the post-industrial landscape’s terrain vague.

**HISTORICAL NOTIONS OF THE CITY:**
For our purposes, we will examine the city through its relationship to the landscape, with these four examples:
- Central Park in New York City
- Le Corbusier’s Radiant City
- Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City
- Ludwig Hilberseimer’s The New City

Let’s first look at New York City through the lens of the landscape. It is a city with the crown jewel of its park system being Central Park. When we begin to analyze Central Park and its relationship to the city, we quickly realize that the city and the park are situated as discreet elements. We see it as the pastoral landscape surrounded by the tower.

The park serves as a break in an otherwise rational organizational pattern. It is clear the desire to create Central Park as an escape from the city, as a refuge from the hustle
and bustle, from the chaos of the everyday. City and landscape become divided.

Further, Central Park is understood to be created much in the same vein of the English garden, a nostalgic representation of a pastoral landscape, a recreation of a natural state, a pristine natural oasis. While this logic of park and city appears to work in the case of Central Park, it is a dated model. It is a model for the 19th and early 20th century, for a developing city, a city characterized by rapid growth. It served as the escape from this growth in the city, a respite in a city built alongside industry, where residents required green space to deal with the everyday life. However, the city of today is no longer defined in these terms. It is changing and requires its notions of building and landscape to also adapt.

**MODERNIST CITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

Next, we look at the relationship existing in Le Corbusier’s Radiant City. Here, the association between architecture and landscape is much in the same vein as Central Park, simply with a reversal of conditions. We understand the condition as a tower condition (in this case a series of towers) surrounded by a sea of landscape. The issue here becomes one of scale and of landscape.

The plan is embedded within the logic of Modernism with its logics of differentiation, repetition, and hierarchical integration applied to the city. The city now becomes Corbusier’s “machine for living”. We understand the architecture and the landscape as two discreet elements, with architecture taking the foreground condition and the landscape becoming a field condition, a vague, expansive grid of wide avenues and green lawns. While there is an attempt to incorporate ideas of landscape, the use and programming of the space is indeterminate. Corbusier defines the city as the vertical garden city…but we don’t yet see the connection between the vertical and the garden.

The third condition to explore is that of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City. We see a different notion of architecture and its relationship to the landscape. We understand the landscape as the base condition, allowing for the intertwining of architecture within it. Wright’s proposal situates the landscape as the dominant feature, a textured matte of one-acre plots combined with the occasional architectural element.

We are presented with a 19th century ideal in the 20th century. He proposes for a society driven by agriculture, a return to the Jeffersonian grid ideal. The city also is clearly embedded with a logic of zoning and repetition, but is organized in a much less dense manner than that of Corbusier. We understand the city as a highly defined organism, but in a much more horizontal manner, defined by its separation of programmatic elements, each embedded in a green space and calling for the introduction of the motorway as the primary means of transportation.

We begin to see the desire to remove ourselves from the overbuilt city, a decentralized idea of the city. However,
this proposal becomes one of extreme horizontality at only 500 persons per square mile and relies on the previous notion of a dominant agrarian society.

The last example is Hilberseimer’s The New City. We are presented with the Fordist model…the assembly line. The city and landscape can be understood as the previously existing landscape, with the ideals of Fordism overlaid. We also find a scheme defined by a sense of horizontality and decentralization. The plan clearly reflects the introduction of the highway system and argues for a dissolving of the dense city center, resulting in low density suburbanization. We are presented with ideas of differentiation and zoning, calling for zones of commercial, occupying the major highway arteries, surrounded by a field of repetition through housing. The project takes on a spinal formation, with zones radiating off the central highway artery, creating the roadway as the dominant feature in the landscape. The decentralized city allows for a greater percentage of landscape within the city, but once again, as seen in Corbusier’s Radiant City, the landscape is treated in vague terms…simply occupying the zones between architecture and infrastructure.

All three of these plans following Central Park become a direct reflection of an industrial society, of the shifting toward a decentralized industrial model and the escape from industry, eventually leading to the decentralization and abandonment of the older, dense city of the 19th and early 20th century.

We now can outline the modernist vision (with the exception of Frank Lloyd Wright) in these terms:
* architecture as object
* landscape as field
* architecture as the mode of operation
* the state being utopian
* and the fate being false…does not come to fruition

Following these visions for the city, we see new directions in society emerge, as we become less reliant on industry. The post-modern attempts to respond to this new direction, this post-Fordist urbanism as Edward Soja calls it. Society is now defined by a series of new conditions, including: diversification, decentralization, mobile capital, globalization, and an automobile culture. Architecture’s response to these conditions, however, quickly becomes one of nostalgia, a kit of parts.

The post-modern seeks to reject notions of homogeneity and coherence, but is somewhat naive to the current changes in the city, as seen in New Urbanist strategies. Their response to the problems of the 20th century is a retreat to the ideals of the 19th century. We see problems quickly emerge in these postmodern ideals, in these organizational strategies resulting in sprawling cities and megamalls. The post-modern fails to understand the new complexities of the post-industrial city, the need for a new strategy of organization and participation.

**CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE:**
At this same point where New Urbanist principles are on the rise, however, we see a
reaction to this condition and the rise of an alternate train of thought beginning with... the Parc de la Villette competition in 1982. The competition begins to provide a new framework in which to operate within the city. This competition becomes the precursor to what would later be coined, “landscape urbanism.”

Landscape Urbanism is, according to Charles Waldheim, “meant to provide an intellectual and practical alternative to the hegemony of the New Urbanism.” While most of the entries continue with the previous notion of the built city and park as two separate entities, the two finalists represented a new vision, an understanding that landscape could become the framework for architecture, the landscape could allow for the development of the project.

Tschumi’s entry is characterized as a ‘prepared ground’, for the city of Paris. James Corner of Field Operations defines these ‘prepared grounds’ as flexible and open, allowing the ‘ad hoc emergence’ of “performative social patterns and group alliances that eventually colonize these surfaces in provisional, yet deeply significant ways.” Tshcumi’s entry challenges the Olmstead notion, found in Central Park in New York, of city and park being separate, of not allowing the ‘city’ to infiltrate the park.

Instead, the park becomes a social and cultural space, allowing for the city to infiltrate the park through the introduction of workshops, exhibitions, concerts, science, and movies. The park challenges the notion of the park in the traditional English garden sense, rendered here as an artificial,
domesticated space.

The Koolhaas entry is characterized by many of the same conditions presented with Tschumi’s entry. The entry is comprised of a series of horizontal landscape strips, embedded with unplanned relationships. The organization evokes a familiarity with the downtown athletic club of *Delirious New York*, simply turned on its side, no longer vertical but now horizontal. The strategy allows for flexibility within the system, a range of uses constantly evolving throughout the life of the park. The project proposed a method combining programmatic instability with architectural specificity, a condition meant to eventually generate a park.

The entry becomes a continuation of Wright’s Broadacre City, in which Wright proposes cultivation of the ground surface through a dispersal of equal land plots, whereas OMA proposes a congestion of this cultivation, occupying the urban condition while Wright occupies the anti-urban.

Both entries begin to allude to an organizational strategy of the horizontal, of flexibility and adaptability, of determinacy and indeterminacy. These ideas continue to carry forward in the work of OMA and others, as evidenced in the more recent Downsview Park entry by OMA and James Corner.

OMA’s entry is defined by a patterning of circular clusters, planted over time, allowing the park to build up over time. It is an idea of evolution, of ‘terra fluxus’. It positions various programmatic elements in direct
relation to one another, occupying the various clusters.

Rather than represent the park in its final stage, the entry is defined by a diagram of emergence over time. The design strategy is to define the framework for the emergence of new elements, from animals to plants. It allows for indeterminacy for its future.

The ideas embedded in the plans for Downsview Park continue into other works presented by Corner and other strong proponents of landscape urbanism ideals. Landscape Urbanism is seen as a means to multiply the lines of thought in the contemporary city, now including concepts of environment and ecology. Landscape Urbanism argues that landscape architecture is more capable of addressing the issues of the 21st century city than architecture and planning strategies.

Landscape Urbanism situates itself within these key terms:

As a process in time: characterizing urbanism by fluidity and non-linearity as opposed to predictability and rationality. Ecological concepts are inherent to the city.

With a focus on surface, not form: horizontality and sprawl in most American cites is considered the new urban reality and traditional notions of program and structure are considered not useful in this diffuse, urban condition.

The issue of form: there has existed a duality between the form of the city and the formlessness of nature. Landscape urbanism argues that this duality is naïve and unproductive.

Understanding these qualities of landscape urbanism, we can begin to understand its shortfalls. We hear that notions of program and structure are “limiting”...that their scope is too small and too constrictive. They argue for addressing ideas of “territories”...a larger scale approach to urbanism.

They speak as though this idea of a large scale, territorial notion of urban development has not previously existed. But, as we have seen in the previous Modernist Utopian visions, there have been many attempts to address the city at the scale of the “territory” and most have either failed or never come to fruition. This notion of attacking the city in the realm of the “territory” leads to an inapproachable scale.

Further, landscape urbanism calls for a conflation of landscape and building, yet most of the work done within the field is concentrated in public spaces...still divided from architecture. Take, for instance, the Eco-Boulevards project by UrbanLab in Chicago. While the landscape strategy defines the project, the project represents a lack of representation of the architectural, relegated to a background condition.

Architecture is rendered here as a translucent white box, disengaged from the proposed landscape. Further, when we begin to see instances of architecture appear in the scheme, they exist as little more than decoration...as follies in the park. The engagement is not authentic...not fulfilling.
We now can outline landscape urbanism in the same terms as Modernism:
* architecture as ornament
* landscape as the dominant feature...
* and the primary mode of operation
* the state is acceptance...of the city’s sprawl
* and the fate is scripted...

**BEYOND THE CONTEMPORARY FUTURE POTENTIALS:**
We are situated in the midst of the post-industrial city, whether it be Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, or Buffalo. The issues in these cities directly impact us here in the Midwest. We must understand architecture’s efficacy within this condition and how we respond to it.

Both the Modernist Utopian visions and the Landscape Urbanist projects help situate the current state of the city and begin to allude to its future direction. However, both fall short and neglect the issue of integration and scale. Neither define the solution at the human scale, how we occupy these environments. Architecture and landscape urbanism are at odds with one another. Both neglect the other...architecture and landscape exist as disparate elements. We must envision architecture at a scale which deals with the broader issues of the city and of society, but at a scale of manageable proportions. If we reimagine the city through the integration of landscape and architecture, we can begin to envision a new future for the city.

The following “characteristics” provide a basis for how architecture can begin to address the issues of the post-industrial city and provide solutions for sustaining the city in a new light. The connective, the productive, the hybridized, the projective, and the feral.

**KEYS TO THE FUTURE OF THE CITY:**

**1. CONNECTIVE**
The first point is the Connective, defined as serving to bring together to form a single unit. Architecture must become a means of linkage, connecting previously disparate conditions. The American city of the 21st century is characterized by sprawl. This sprawl is inevitable, unavoidable. The Rust Belt city is defined by its sprawl, characterized in a concentric plan beginning with a semi-vital urban core, a ring of decline and indeterminacy, following by a periphery of new, suburban sprawl. The principles of development must understand this condition and become a moment of connectivity, allowing for the re-emergence of relationships to exist between these currently disconnected conditions. The configuration calls for moments of sprawl, moments of connections between the dense, inner core and the sprawling, outer suburb.

OMA’s IIT Campus Center defines this opportunity of connectivity at the scale of the architectural. Rather than stacking activities in a multi-story building, each programmatic element of the Campus Center is arranged in a dense single plane, fostering an urban condition.

To achieve this, OMA mapped the “desire lines” of student foot traffic across the campus. These intersecting diagonal paths are maintained inside the Campus Center itself, linking the multiplicity of activities
via a network of interior streets, plazas, and urban islands that form neighborhoods and these points of connection also become spaces within the building.

In my own project proposal for a casino in downtown Columbus at the site of the former City-Center mall, we begin to also experience the connective through the landscape. The project defines itself as a matte-building, occupying the entire site through the introduction of a new ground condition, a patterned landscape.

The patterning device becomes a tool for the organization of the site, continuing from exterior to interior, blurring the boundary between what is open and what is enclosed, allowing the filtration of movement across the site.

2. PRODUCTIVE
The second is the Productive, defined as having the power of generating, especially in abundance. Architecture must become a means of production, a generative tool giving back to its locale.

Ecological issues are prevalent in the rust belt city, from issues of environmental degradation to fossil fuel consumption and food production. The post-industrial city must come to terms with these conditions. No longer can we occupy the city in a moment of passiveness but must now become productive. The city is littered with moments of passive landscape, unoccupied and without maintenance. In order to achieve relevance, it must function, both in the realm of social function and environmental function. It must serve
the greater good of the community in a proactive fashion.

Now, let us examine two architectural projects here to understand the productive, working at two different scales to satisfy this condition.

WORK AC’s PS1 project situates itself at the point between social space and productive space. The project consists of a series of cardboard tubes which form a productive roofscape for urban farming. Here we see the roofscape, defined by the various planting conditions, creating a diverse matte of vegetation atop this tubbed structure.

Further, the structure allows for moments of engagement and social interaction to occupy the underside of the sloped structure, from a solar-powered juicer to a periscope for close up views of the field. The project defines its productive nature, both in its social and agricultural aspirations.

The second project is an entry for the Revision Dallas competition by Atelier Data and MOOV. This project exists at a larger scale, occupying an entire block in a city defined by rapid growth and immense sprawl. The project consists of a series of linear bars, defined by architectural “hillsides”. The program weaves together the natural and the built, allowing for a physical product which is meant for community habitation. The individual bars are organized into a series of valleys, slopes, and hilltops, meeting the programmatic needs of the interior spaces while allowing for the coexistence of productive surfaces.
The hillsides become the primary means of production, containing a series of terraced garden spaces. These spaces activate the rooftscape, allowing for social interaction and community function. We now understand architecture as having more potential, as the framework for cultivation. The project defines a new typology for the city, in a city defined by its sprawl and lack of community space, a place not only for inhabitation but one both socially and ecologically productive.

3. HYBRIDIZED
The third point is the Hybridized, defined as heterogeneous in origin or composition. To engage a new appropriation of the city, landscape and architecture must become a joint act, each reliant on the other.

The building has traditionally been the place-making tool for the city. The city has been defined by the client, the category of building requirement, e.g. hospital, office, housing, etc. The city’s existence relies on the client to develop the project, the private investment. The private project, the built project, has been the driver of the city and will continue to be. While landscape offers a new mode of organization, it cannot operate independently of architecture. The joining of landscape and architecture allows for a new understanding of their co-existence, using each to ultimately create new and widespread relationships.

Here, we set up the condition of the hybridized through Robert Smithson’s earthwork, Spiral Jetty... a project which is physically bound to and contains a specific relationship to its site. Spiral Jetty occupies a portion of the Great Salt Lake, and reflects its relationship both to nature and to the site through its spiral shape, echoing the lake’s spiraling crystalline formations. The project is defined by its relationship to the landscape, becoming submerged shortly after construction and remaining in this state for many years until recently reemerging. The piece occupies the moment between landscape and art... allowing for both to be read simultaneously.

The first architectural example of the hybridized is the most literal, Galije by MVRDV. The project situates itself on a rough and uninterrupted natural condition along the coastline. The goal here was to create a hybrid condition, allowing for the natural condition to exist, but also allow for the introduction of the architectural condition. As a result, the project is designed as an offset from the landscape topography, deeply embedding its form within the logic of the landscape. Further, the building becomes blanketed in the original landscape palette. We understand the project to be one defined by a landscaped surface, punctuated with a series of terraces. These terraces define the architectural condition, but the land-scaped skin allows for the blurring of architecture and landscape, defining the hybrid condition.

The second condition of the hybridized is Neutelings and Riedijk’s Minnaert Building in Utrecht. This building occupies the hybrid in a slightly different manner from MVRDV. Here we understand a connection between the landscape at the broader scale, in terms of the environment in which the building is sited.
Here the form of the building allows for the integration and collection of rainwater. The rainwater flows through the roof into a 150 foot by 30 foot basin, filling the building’s central hall. This environmental condition is not only addressed, but becomes one of celebration, using the conditions of the site to enhance and activate the architecture. Continuing on the notion of hybridization through environmental response, we look at my work, the Expression House, in collaboration with Kevin Minster.

Here we again understand the architecture’s desire to directly respond to the conditions of its environment and use these to shape the project. The form of the house is defined by a series a manipulations, in essence tuning the building to its siting, and simultaneously defining a dynamic space on both interior and exterior. The house becomes a reflection of the surrounding landscape, becoming embedded within it.

4. PROJECTIVE

The fourth point is the Projective. Architecture does not carefully circumscribe a current condition, but projects a future through its understanding of not being overly prescriptive. The future of the city depends on understanding its current state and its future direction. The development of the rust belt city must not only respond to the present conditions but must be projective in nature. It must understand its role in the future and how it might situate itself in this setting. The project must also allow for adaptation and evolution.

Here we frame the Projective in terms of Walter de Maria’s Lightning Field, situated in the New Mexico desert. Not only does the work allow us to project ourselves into the vast field of poles and also serve to project the sunlight at various arrays, it occupies a moment of speculation...of waiting for the moment when a lightning storm will approach and bring the work to life.

In the recent MOMA exhibit, Rising Currents, we are presented with 5 schemes addressing issues of rising waters in New York City. The schemes are far reaching and varied, but begin to present an integrated approach between landscape and architecture. These projects begin to reach a state of equilibrium and, potentially, provide a framework for implementation strategies in the rust belt.

We see this work play out in more detail in other work by one of the five firms involved in the Rising Currents Exhibit, Architecture Research Office. Their proposal for the City of the Future, is predicated on the condition of vanes being to 22nd century what skyscrapers were to the 21st. The proposed strategy is based on conditions of sea level rise, beginning with an overlay of the existing Manhattan street grid and a map of wetlands susceptible to inundation. The resulting proposal consists of a series of “vanes” or pier-like structures, architecture as infrastructure. They act as an ordering device in advance of their demand. They are mutable and habitable, allowing for a matrix on which the city can continue to develop and evolve.

The projective also plays out within my own work, here in collaboration with Jen Dort. Here the Headquarters for the Waterkeeper’s Alliance in Boston further addresses the
issue of rising waters, environmental change. The project seeks to accept the conditions of the floodwaters, as opposed to the traditional response of simply barricading to avoid infiltration. The project becomes an integration of building and unbuilding, of presence and absence, of permanence and impermanence.

The project consists of a series of boardwalks connecting various floating barges of program, allowing for a constantly changing dynamic between circulation and program. Circulation paths are widespread and varied, acting much like the flats that previously occupied the site. The rise and fall of the daily waters defines variation in the circulation, allowing for constantly shifting pathways. No longer does the condition addressed become problematic, but becomes one of opportunity, of potential, a moment of allowance.

5. FERAL
The final point is the feral. Feral is defined as “having reverted to the wild state, as from domestication: a pack of feral dogs roaming in the woods. A fierce relationship must occur between habited and uninhabited, allowing for the feral condition to activate the system.

The post-industrial city is littered with terrain vague. As a result, the development of the city must understand this condition and capitalize on it. Cities will no longer exist in their previous state or redevelop under New Urbanist ideals. The city of the future must embrace these conditions of polarity between the occupied and the unoccupied, and in fact, plan for them. Cities
will continue to have moments of terrain vague and should use these moments as opportunities, to situate the “habited” and the “uninhabited” in direct relation to one another, allowing for the emergence of new relationships, new possibilities of interaction. Here we begin with an image of Circuit Boards by Edward Burtynsky. Burtynsky’s work is characterized by nature’s transformation through industry and then nature’s re-rendering of this industrial process.

Jason Payne’s Raspberry Fields, situates itself at a moment of the feral. The project is defined by its skin, wood shingles, which in essence, become feral over time through their interaction with elements, rendering them curled and warped from weathering. Payne does not simply design the house to defend against future weathering, but uses the future condition to activate the façade.

Francois Roche provides us with another example of this condition. The Lausanne City Museum proposal, taking on a form-making strategy of the weave, intertwining landscape and architecture. Here, we situate the project in terms of its understanding of the weed and its desire to spread and invade.

It exists at the convergence of the “wild” and the “urbanized”. The design calls for the facilitation of landscape into the skin of the building. Here we see a detail of the skin, understanding the condition and its response to the landscape. The skin is designed in a way to encourage the growth of landscape on the surface over time. The building allows for its future condition in
the landscape, defining a framework for the emergence of a future condition.

The project is defined as, “...a place of illusions; it exists where the wild, weeds, urbanized, and artificial nature converge... Interlaced like a rhizome, progressing like a bed of coral and entangled like stick insects. A project that plays with its natures. Weeds that become local woods and are then populated with animals, like an amphibian world that has been emancipated from water, having appeared freely and spontaneously.” It becomes a place for the unscripted, for the wild to occur and to occupy.

**CONCLUSION:**

Following this series of characteristics we can begin to situate these conditions in relation to those set by the Modernist Utopian visions and by Landscape Urbanism. We now understand these as a response to the ideals set forth previously, the framing of a new potential for the city.

These points of the productive, hybridized, connective, projective, and feral are not scientifically proven results to success within the post-industrial urban condition. They can, however, situate a new discussion for the city, one in which architecture and landscape coexist as tools for the city’s future.

The rate of change within society is rapid and unpredictable, characterized by an unpredictable present and future, an indeterminate urbanism. These points portray a sense of optimism, a sense of opportunity, the allowance for an open-ended response to this indeterminate urbanism. They present a framework for an approachable scale to the city. They don’t provide a utopian vision for a future city, but neither do they ignore the conditions in which they are presented.

I would like to close with an installation by Germaine Koh, a Canadian visual artist based in Vancouver. Here, in her work entitled *Fallow*, we see the transplanting of the landscape of a fallow urban lot into the realm of the gallery, completely blanketing the space.

The land sits at a point, suspended between its previous histories and its future potentials. What was once considered as unproductive and void is now positioned in a new setting, providing for an understanding of the land’s rich potential.

This re-envisioning of the post-industrial landscape, along with the architectural characteristics provided, allow for an operational framework with which we can infiltrate the city, envision new realities, and put the notions of architecture and landscape as disparate conditions... “out to pasture.”
Desiring Utopia: A Micro-Critique Of Futures Past
Marty McFly was a typical angst-ridden teenager of Hill Valley in the 1980s film *Back to the Future*. His unambitious family included a father who was constantly bullied by his incompetent boss, an alcoholic mother, and unsuccessful siblings. Although not ideal, Marty did not once think that he might be able to control this, until he went back in time with only a photograph of his family in his pocket, which served as an index of correctness as Marty tried to reclaim his own future. This observable trial and error would be an architect’s dream, as we work within an inherently projective field.

If only we had an image of the future to look at to see if what we were doing was right, but we don’t, so instead, we design our own images. Unfortunately, these have historically come in the form of totalizing designs that negate the existing for an idealized vision. I find that the large scale of these projects does not work. This does not mean that we give up on imagining utopian futures, for if we accept everything as it is, nothing would ever change. We should return to attempts at designing the future, but reconsider the scale. Instead of beginning at the large-scale, which often neglects the small, we should begin at the small-scale, so that it can create the larger emergent future.

In the 1990s, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud introduced this type of project, recognizing that “the role of artworks is...to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real.” As an architectural parallel to this, the proposed micro-utopic practice is not directly critical of everything, but instead operates within the everyday context, causing people to reconsider the
existing. The micro-utopia exists equally between the pragmatic and the fantastical, favoring the design of the micro-scale. The physically small-scale does not automatically engage this micro-utopic project. Although Le Corbusier’s Unite d’Habitation was only one building, it started from ambitions that were too large, attempting to contain the daily lives of its inhabitants, resulting in an unused internal shopping street.

This new focus on the small allows us to negotiate between culture and form, engaging K. Michael Hays’ new concept for the critical project. As elaborated by Hays, an architectural project based solely upon culture is dependent upon, and confirming of, the existing condition. It is not forward-looking but retrospective. In contrast, the autonomous project, or form, is without external references, and disengaged from a concept of time because it lies outside reality. Instead, the discipline should exist in a more complex dialectical position so that architecture has “ascertainable political and intellectual consequences.” This mode of practice can advance our discipline while having efficacy in a larger societal context.

In 1996, Stan Allen continued the exploration of these nuances, exposing the false dialectic of practice and project. Instead, he advocated for the distinction between a hermeneutic practice, devoted to the interpretation and analysis of representations, looking back to the past, and a material practice, which transforms reality by producing new objects or organizations of matter, hence is projective. He advocated for material practices, which allow for a shift from dumb theory and
dumb practice, to pragmatic realism. This viewpoint favors perceivable experiences and sensations based upon practical consequences and effects, which always trump theory. This is the neo-pragmatist's answer to Hays' critical stance, both debating the choice between the pragmatic and the theoretical.

What I seem to be missing is why we have to side with one while attempting to acknowledge the other. Why can’t we have both? My academic career has been driven by an engagement of apparently opposing disciplines. I never expected the reaction to my study of both math and art in my undergraduate education to elicit slight confusion, including responses such as “oh that’s weird”, “I guess you’re using both sides of your brain” and even one instance of “art + math, that’s like architecture.” Perhaps this naive definition of the profession I find myself entering begins to indicate my desire to work both pragmatically and theoretically towards designing a better future.

Although practice can sometimes make it difficult to engage the theoretical, there have been opportunities for testing out ideas. World Expos provided a venue where architects could have Marty’s experience of glancing at his photograph to see how the future might be shaping up. In 1851, the Crystal Palace was unveiled at the Great Exhibition in London as a symbol of the new building type. Although at the time a terrifyingly light structure, this has influenced the trajectory of architecture, correctly projecting the influence of modularity and fast construction processes on design.

In 1929, the Barcelona Pavilion provided an example of architecture that was not about technology, but instead, the space of an event. As explicated by Hays, Mies’ design has no precise relational hierarchy and materials contradicted their own nature. The public thus encountered architecture that was about the physical effects of perception. The subsequent influence of the Barcelona Pavilion within our discipline begins to illustrate the possibilities of sensation and small-scale design.

In 1933 the Great Depression brought forth a need for optimism and at the Chicago World’s Fair futuristic designs for the “Homes of Tomorrow” showed the fantastical potential environment of the future, and these visions were tested encouraging the micro-scale innovation to affect a larger future. In 1939, the project of envisioning the future continued. Large-scale networks of homes and infrastructure defined the cities of the future, but the physical experience was much different. Futurama and Democracity were not immersive prototypes, but instead small-scale models that visitors looked over. Although models have always been a part of architecture and are certainly necessary to the process of envisioning the future, in these cases the model was the final product and distanced the viewer from the real. The large-scale vision, with its accompanying representation, was spectacle and virtual instead of affective and physical, an indication of the limitation of the large-scale

In the 1960s, designers envisioned new worlds, such as Futurama II; a completely functional underwater existence, with
all required amenities. While this sort of exploration is certainly innovative, and possibly more and more relevant as sea level rise threatens the world, this also falls into the category of large-scale visions that design the macro, assume the micro, and avoid the existing, relying on the formation of a completely new world. The outcome of this attitude appears in film only as a product of widespread disaster, when a new world is required.

The proposals for high-density living and flexible growth of architecture at the Expos in the late 1960s did culminate in large-scale megastructures, but they also considered the small-scale human interaction within each pod, redefining the domestic and indicating a new future. Kisho Kurakawa continued the project he began at the World Expo in Osaka, and designed each pod that collectively determined the form of the Nakagin Capsule Tower. This came closer to a micro-utopic vision that begins with the small-scale; the pod, which then generates the large-scale; a new emergent form for the apartment tower. I designed my own project for the Expo 2010 Pavilion with the tradition of experimentation in mind. A flexible scaffold allowed for the expansion and contraction of occupiable space, negotiating virtual media and real space, for a new type of event experience.

Although the World Expos have always been about showcasing national identity and progress, in recent years they have engaged the trend of mass consumerism more and focused on the projective possibilities of the event less. Thus, virtual imagery, which is disposable and temporary, is slowly replacing the physical presence of innovation. So how do architects work within the contemporary moment to combine a desire to advance the discipline, with a desire for societal efficacy?

Previously, architects tackled this projective problem in a totalizing way, attempting to return to the Enlightenment goals of understanding the world through reason. These projects saw little good in the inherited historical city with its ad hoc development and wanted to eradicate it in favor of something new. Ebenezer Howard’s concept for Garden Cities, published in 1898, wanted to move away from the existing industrial city and start over. Howard’s solution to the unhealthy and congested city was 1000-acre towns of no more than 30,000 people with a surrounding greenbelt to curb growth. The uses required in a city were sorted and self-contained, with small-town, low density housing as the only option. Although this idyllic concept was realized, it did not provide a solution to the ills of the city. It abandoned it. This is not an option for the contemporary condition. We no longer have space in which to sprawl, and avoiding the existing is impossible.

Le Corbusier also proposed a plan for the new hygienic modern city, but his did not require new space. He would simply demolish central Paris in favor of his towers in the park scheme. The Plan Voisin was an elevated dense city within a continuous park. This replaced the horizontal density of the historical city with its dangerous and oppressive narrow streets. But this plan didn’t really solve problems either, divorcing itself from the real. It is especially curious
that the representation of such a dense city is entirely empty. The totalizing scale seems to have precluded the design of specific moments of innovation and the resolution of human interaction within the new city.

Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer’s plan for Brasilia from 1956 realized the modernist desire for starting over, due to its completely desolate site. Here, reason overtook reality. The grid of this new city was arranged along a central axis, the only road through the town, possibly in the shape of an airplane to signify the future of the country, with a central government core and housing, separated by classes, extending out on either side. Although formally this organization seemed reasonable, in reality, travel through this city was difficult and inefficient, and the class-based organization resulted in the division of the city into the wealthy bureaucratic center and the working class slums. If the totalizing plans had been accurate projections of the future, we might be living in the worlds depicted in film, where a perceived societal break-down results in a hyper-controlled society.

Although I am advocating against attempts at this sort of large-scale design, it does not mean that we stop approaching the city as a design project. Instead, we must consider it not through an abstract distant lens, but through what is actually happening on the ground. Perhaps, this moment calls attention to a failure in my own mode of representation. The diagram implies that the micro and macro scales of design represent a distinct dialectic, and I am discarding one in favor of the other, which is not the case. I do still desire the large-scale utopia, but
recognize that past techniques that focused on the large-scale, assuming the small-scale was a given, did not work. Instead, I am proposing a focus on the small-scale moments that lead to emergent large-scale utopias. Thus, instead of the traditional notion that the macro subsumes the micro, we should work with the concept that the small subsumes the large. We don’t need a blank canvas, just small-scale opportunities that can drive the desired change.

As Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown pointed out, “Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect. Not the obvious way, which is to tear down Paris and begin again, but another way which is more tolerant: that is to question how we look at things.” They noticed a trend on the Las Vegas strip and chose to reclaim it for the discipline. Recognizing the simultaneous needs of each building on the strip to engage functionality on one side and high-speed traffic on the other, they noticed that the architecture of the strip embraces complex oppositions including continuity and discontinuity, going and stopping, clarity and ambiguity, and cooperation and competition.

These observations culminated in the theory of the duck and decorated shed, the latter consisting of decoration independent from functional program and the former in which the architectural systems of space and program are subsumed by the symbolic form. Venturi and Scott Brown’s observations of the existing conditions of the strip led them to a new theoretical construct around the decorated shed that would result in their notions of the future of
architectural design for a society in which iconography is dominant.

Rem Koolhaas’s observations of the city in *Delirious New York* also engage Venturi and Scott Brown’s version of revolutionary design. Although New York City was planned on a strict rectilinear grid, Koolhaas realized that it was actually a chaotic place. It was much more the model of delirium and spectacle made visible at Coney Island. This kind of observation can lead to much more nuanced moments of utopian emergence than a totalizing design, but this is not clear if you simply look at a disembodied view of the city, instead one must physically enter it. Koolhaas developed this theory towards a new understanding of the skyscraper as a city within a city by recognizing the cultural effect of the elevator.

He understood the 1909 theorem to “postulate the Manhattan skyscraper as a utopian formula for the unlimited creation of virgin sites on a single urban location”. He realized that the elevator did not simply make movement within a skyscraper less exhausting, but it was actually “the great emancipator of all horizontal surfaces above the ground floor.” This small-scale moment within the city transformed notions of urbanism and the possibilities of the emergent future city. Fujita and Soules adapted Koolhaas’s understanding of the skyscraper to include the contemporary issue of sustainability in their proposal for Eco-metropolitanism. This project seeks to engage natural cycles and create a vision for a city that no longer interferes with nature but interfaces with it at precise moments.

Another strand of envisioning the future has been fantastical visions positioned within a highly theoretical project. Bruno Taut’s sketches for Alpine Architecture were a response to conditions during World War I. Taut maintained that the root cause of war was boredom and a new type of world, “extra-political…purely human and cosmic-religious” was required. New urban conditions within the Alps centered around The City Crown, made entirely of glass, would promote a new self-awareness and freshness to the world that would diminish evil. Taut favored a utopian ideal that suggested a transcendental removal from the world. Although this was a theoretical project without the intention of realization, it still favors the negation of contextual problems and projective realities.

In the 1960s, Archigram also rejected the city in favor of a high-tech, science fiction world that was seemingly removed from reality. In 1964, they envisioned Walking City as a nomadic city moving through a dystopic landscape. These projective designs are required of our discipline and we do need to continue designing solutions for the future, but we need to explore new techniques. Currently these visions are often coupled with a reliance on data and technology. Norman Foster explores the optimization of current technologies by allowing them to dictate form.

He describes the Swiss Re Headquarters in London through its environmental performance. The profile reduces wind deflection to the ground and creates external pressure differentials that drive a system of natural ventilation. The diagrid
skin opens up space on the inside that allows for more effective natural ventilation. The design is driven more by measurable performance than the context of the city.

Though other issues are addressed, the fact that Foster describes it through the lens of rationalism signals a strategy that diminishes his expertise, yielding to the prescribed results of technology. If this strategy were the solution for every problem, we would potentially end up in the futures envisioned in these films, where robots take over and mankind's worth is measured by its technological achievement.

This does not mean that technology has no place in projective design, but architects must explore its aesthetic and theoretical implications. As Charles Jencks points out, Foster's Swiss Re building greatly affects London's skyline with its glass-domed top becoming a counterpoint to the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. In discussion with Norman Foster, Jencks attempts to draw out these intentions, but Foster continuously returns to the question of air quality and sustainability, describing the form as the result of a spiraling garden that helps the air quality inside the building and allows for better airflow outside.

Herzog and de Meuron used similar technologies in their design for the Prada Store in Tokyo, specifically the diagrid structure employed by Foster to build his aerodynamic shape. The difference between the two lies in the understanding that Herzog and de Meuron went beyond simple application of technology and mobilized it to capture the desired associated with the boutique shop. They fill in the structural diagrid with flat, concave, and convex panels of glass, understanding that these are decorative and can be freed of pragmatic function. They make the whole building a display case for the merchandise instead of reverting to the traditional storefront.

In addition, Jacques Herzog used the curved glass panes because they seem to move as you walk around them, creating "awareness of both the merchandise and the city establishing an intense dialog between the actors," enhancing self-recognition within the city. This project intentionally creates a micro-utopic moment that engages the world and rethinks the existing.

This self-reflection can be seen as a legacy of Mies van der Rohe's proposal for the Friedrichstrasse skyscraper from 1919. He explored the possibilities for a new type of skyscraper using the glass curtain wall for its transparent, reflective, and refractive possibilities to create a moment in the city in which its images are absorbed, mirrored, and distorted. He recognized the power of architecture as an icon that engages its surroundings without imposing totalizing order, but instead by highlighting its disarray. As Hays explained, the tower cannot be reduced to a formal logic, or product of rote rationalism as in Foster's project. The legacy of this project within Herzog and de Meuron's work in Tokyo indicates the projective possibilities of design that goes beyond formal and technological concepts, placing itself in the position to comment on current conditions.
Bruce Mau exemplifies the trend towards technological determinism, despite his rhetoric surrounding utopian futures. At first, Mau describes the Massive Change Exhibition as one that investigates the emergent possibilities of cultural and technological innovations, implying that this multiplicity of moments would result in “a wildly unexpected view of the future.” This attitude sets up his project as something that might be parallel to my argument for micro-utopias. Unfortunately, the project manifests itself as a series of threats and their technological fixes.

As explained by Robert Levit and Evonne Levy, Mau skips right over politics and the messiness of reality, and leans on the technical as the obvious solution. His charge to enable sustainable mobility states that “new economies of movement are reconfiguring the urban”, but instead of engaging designers in the production of this reconfiguration, he merely studies the means that will inevitably cause it.

Frank Lloyd Wright also recognized inevitable reorganization of the city based upon new forms of mobility, but instead of yielding to inevitability, he consciously designed the decentralized city. Wright defined Broadacre City by the compression of distance due to electrification and communication, modes of mechanical mobilization, and organic architecture. Wright recognized the beginning of a change in urbanization as a result of a small-scale change in transportation, and mobilized it towards a new emergent future.
The counter-examples to the micro-utopian project point to a future that is either totalized and hyper-rational, thus impossible, overly fantastical and theoretical, thus inaccessible to the public, or subservient to technology. It is easy to design the future if you ignore the present, but architects are in the unique position to design a better future, within the context of reality that not only pragmatically responds to the needs of society, but also drives the discipline forward.

The movie Pleasantville begins with a supposedly perfect black and white world where it never rains, the fire department exists only to rescue cats from trees, and the basketball team never misses a shot. This world is shattered and literally colored as people are introduced to passion and change. It clearly illustrates the absurdity of a large-scale homogeneous utopia acknowledging that the messiness of life introduces actual reality into the world, and really, this makes for a better world.

In my own project for mixed income housing in Weinland Park, I studied the existing interests in the neighborhood and with a healthy dose of idealism designed “Library Homes.” The project would be a micro-utopia within the struggling neighborhood that could spawn a better future based upon a new combination of programs, fusing bookstore, library, and housing.

With their Prada store in Los Angeles, OMA created a micro-utopian moment that both commented on, and engaged, the culture of consumerism. The large stair in the showroom brings the public in, while emphatically
exaggerating the process of shopping for high-end merchandise. Those shopping are put on display, their desire manifested through architecture. They made the visit to Prada, something most cannot afford, a public affair, instead of a private privileged event, through architectural means.

The strength of these projects is that by working within the context of the real, they begin to find ways to engage the larger public. As Michael Meredith points out, “the newfound finiteness of design is OK. Pluralism exists, but doesn’t need to be theorized. Utopia isn’t nowhere, where it used to be. In its micro form, it is localized.” But how do we effectively engage the public in our discipline when even the projects that I have identified as successful moments of the projective become reduced to shiny glass towers, strip malls, and homogeneous suburbs?

The projective micro-utopia can’t only be about balancing theoretical construct with the pragmatics of physical manifestation, it must also engage sensation and desire, which inherently reaches a wider public, even a passive public. As Hays explains, the perceptual and the bodily will actively construct space alongside the real world. People understand, and are constantly exposed to, the sensations created by their physical environment, thus we must practice at least a bit in the traditional sense in order to make people think about their world differently. The inherent localization of sensation divorses this project from the dialectic of micro and macro, realizing that efficacy for the public resides in the small-scale that they encounter every day, and that can lead to emergent change.

In the design for a pavilion for artist Dan Flavin, I sought to spatialize the experience of viewing one of his neon light installations, in order to get people to rethink how they view the work. The space contracts as one moves through the pavilion, beginning with an immersive space and ending with a compressed space where the frame created by the walls is physically imposing as an object in space. Although this project does not actually exist, I believe that these sensations would be apparent.

As Sylvia Lavin explains, desire needs to be reintroduced into architecture. This can be accomplished in multiple ways, one of which Lavin described with the example of the white box architecture of MOMA, bearing the image of Pipilotti Rist’s installation. In this case, media introduces sensation into the space activating it for the wider public, but this is only one technique that architects could use. The effectiveness of sensation and desire is illustrated by the superficiality of New Urbanism, which appropriated the modernist project of reconfiguring the city. The small-scale elements of the plans reverted to nostalgic visions of the 1950s, instead of exploring new design opportunities.

This era is exploited as an object of desire, paralleled by its depiction in Back to the Future. In 1985, Hill Valley is suburbanized with graffiti everywhere and movie theaters showing pornographic films. In 1955, Hill Valley is an idealized world of nuclear families and the American Dream. The New Urbanists used this utopic past.
to populate the future city through a prescriptive process with rules governing walking distance, circulation, and tree layout, regardless of the context in which they would place this new city. Seaside, Florida was the first New Urbanist city that took the modernist notion of negation and utopia and appealed to everyday notions of architecture. While this project may be considered a success merely pragmatically because it could be built and people are happy in it, this does not have to preclude a theoretical construct that can benefit our discipline. I believe we should find a way to introduce desire into architecture without reverting to direct copies of the past, allowing room for theory too. But is it really possible to engage the public with the theoretical concepts of our discipline?

This is not the first time I have encountered this question. The autonomy of architecture parallels that of mathematics. During my undergraduate education, I found myself wondering what it all really meant. Was I really doing anything for the world by sitting at my desk working through complex proofs? Then I encountered chaotic dynamical systems. This theory is based upon an understanding that initial conditions can severely impact long-term behavior, and we only have control over the small-scale of the initial condition; it is the origin of the butterfly effect, and parallels my argument for shifting focus to the micro-utopia. The beauty of this theory is its application to something we are all familiar with, weather.

Weather is an unpredictable dynamic system in which widespread global events are indicated, but not easily predicted, by local conditions. The mathematical theory of chaotic dynamical systems drives the discipline of meteorology, which the layman understands through representation. This simple sequence shows that it is possible for theory to have efficacy in the world, in this case through the techniques of representation, which we as architects are very familiar with. Therefore, the history of meteorology can be described through the development of its means of representation. From hand-drawn maps with accompanying descriptions of graphic representation, to the advanced Doppler imaging that we can all look at and understand. Thus, opaque mathematical theory affects everyone’s immediate future. Perhaps in architecture’s struggle for public efficacy and understanding, this model can prove useful.

Although my argument for the micro-utopia does not advocate for representation as the final product of design, it is a step required along the way, and in a pragmatic sense, the client must be convinced of an architect’s theoretical goals through these representations. This is something I have been learning through my involvement with the Solar Decathlon competition. As Stan Allen points out, despite advocating material practice, drawing is always necessary and never neutral, always affecting the final product. The development of representation within architecture reveals a history of making others understand what is in our heads. With the invention of perspective by Brunelleschi in 1425, architects and planners could clarify future spaces so that others could accurately imagine that future. As Rosalind Krauss explained,
perspective delimits bodies standing in specific space and is directly related to matters of architectonics. As early as 1506, Bramante used perspective to realistically depict a future urban condition in his design for the Cortile del Belvedere. Daniel Burnham marketed his 1909 Chicago Plan in schoolbooks and other publications with perspective imagery that was visually accessible outside of his discipline.

Today the advances of technology have heightened the seduction of these images through photorealistic renderings of impossible views. But as Krauss points out, not everything can be reduced to perspective. Contemporary architectural practice similarly understands that perspective realism is not sufficient, thus the diagram has become privileged over the realistic rendering. One opportunity afforded by the diagram is the visual representation of the design process, which can help to elucidate the final product. The diagram also allows architecture to break free of its autonomy and engage an expanded discourse. But how can architecture participate in a wider scope, without resulting in just a lot of bad attempts at economics, politics, or any other discipline it tries to engage?

In *Back to the Future*, Doc Brown cobbled together a time machine from existing pieces of technology; he did not get NASA to make a time machine for him. This model of cobbled together the familiar can inform architecture’s attempts at dealing with interdisciplinarity. Instead of approaching other disciplines as experts, architects should take Robert Somol and
Sarah Whiting’s advice and engage these topics as experts on design and how design can affect things like economics or politics. This allows for strategic engagement between disciplines. Their notion of the Doppler defines the projective as an “adaptive synthesis of architecture’s many contingencies” and values the possibilities of emergent interpretations based upon the exchange of information between the subject and the physical environment.

Similarly, the use of Doppler radar in meteorology is a tool that allows for projection based upon interaction between subject and object. By calculating the shift in wavelength, Doppler radar measures the interaction between the waves and rain droplets in a distant storm in order to project future conditions at a precise location. The same storm might be analyzed from multiple locations, and indicate different future conditions at each of these localized points. The possibilities of this model of practice in architecture would ensure that design is not reduced to a mute backdrop for everyday life because it encourages the emergence of futures based upon public interaction and sensation. The micro-utopic project must therefore exist outside the autonomy of our discipline, engaging other techniques through this sort of interaction and exchange.

Michael Meredith practices an extreme version of this attitude, with an almost promiscuous engagement with all available techniques, past and present. This sort of expansion of architecture beyond its own traditional boundaries allows micro-utopias to project a future condition within the
obvious multiplicity of reality, going beyond representation to spatialization. In *Back to the Future*, Marty explores Hill Valley’s past and future and it is clear that both of these times are tied to a physical place. They are not mere figments of his imagination and he can always spatially understand the effects his actions have on the future. For the micro-utopia to be effective in projecting emergent futures, the final goal should be the spatialization of theoretical construct. Constant did this in the 1960s expanding the Situationist’s psychogeographic reconfiguration of the city into a spatialized derive. Rem Koolhaas’ exploration of program-driven architecture at the Seattle Public Library spatialized the diagram, freeing the library from its classical monumental form in favor of a contemporary monumentalism, which accounts for new modes of disseminating information and the need for what OMA identified as stable programmatic spaces, as well as “unstable” clusters of space. By moving through the abstract diagrammatic representation of a library’s organization, OMA was able to create a new type of library; a micro-utopic moment that addresses the issues of shrinking physical resources and increasing amounts of digitized information.

The strategies of these projects consider architecture not as a fixed set of typologies and rules, nor as a fantastical and unrealizable vision, but instead as an intelligent and designed micro-response to current contexts, with consideration for the projection towards an emergent future. A sort of architectural chaotic dynamical system, the micro-utopic vision understands that it is impossible to predict a long-term future, but very possible to effect that future. Marty’s actions did not change the whole world. They only had an effect on those he was immediately in contact with, his own small-scale world. He realized that if the music didn’t play he would no longer exist. My group’s project for a transit system for Ohio and the Midwest was driven by this concept. The design proposed a looping system based upon localized moments of layered economies. The small-scale moments where the spatial implications of these economies mixed implied a larger emergent landscape of economies throughout Ohio. Curiously reminiscent of the Doppler imaging of meteorology, this signals a developing interest to privilege the small-scale moment, knowing that something bigger will result, even if I can only describe it in abstract modes.

In the end, Marty’s focus on changing only his family’s future, within an existing physical space, through contextual means, results in a better future in which his family is prosperous and Biff gets his comeuppance. The sum of small moments thus changes his future. By focusing on the possibilities of larger emergence based upon micro-utopias, architects can design the future, without reverting to totalizing and negating past proposals. If we look to weather as the new architectural model, we see that the discipline desires an accurate understanding of the global, but does this through the exploration of the local, allowing the small to determine the large. Thus architecture doesn’t have to choose between small and large scale or pragmatics and theory; we just have to consider each in a new way.
I Might Be Wrong

John Simon
Blostein
My title may seem odd; it’s an admission of the intense subjectivity inherent to this kind of pursuit. I used ‘I Might Be Wrong’ not as a disclaimer, but because in looking at timelines like aesthetic theory, art history and architectural development, all of which have become the basis for this discussion, the resultant is both factual and subjective. What I mean when I say this is that to be projective, especially for yourself, you have to engage history with an educatedly skewed perspective.

That said, I’d like to talk about the development of aesthetics in architecture, the field’s motives in representation in recent practice, and where I would like to see those go. My use of the term aesthetics is two-fold. In the context of historical affiliations, its meaning is in reference to standard dictionary readings (“The branch of philosophy that deals with the principles of beauty and artistic taste”). Beginning in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and continuing with increasing intensity to today, the meaning becomes changed; more or less there is a return to the term’s etymological roots (to make feel) and an increasing reliance on affect. More simply, aesthetics can now be considered as a broadly inclusive sensory experience.

In The Case for the Tectonic as Commemorative Form, Kenneth Frampton articulates three distinct aspects of architecture that, as it turns out, can work more or less harmoniously with each other in virtually any proportion; the technological, the scenographic, and the tectonic. “The technological arises out of a pragmatic response to a given condition;
the scenographic represents abstract, mythic or symbolic content as embodied in the surface of the work; and the tectonic which is capable of synthesizing both the technological and the representational into a single form.”

In distinguishing architecture and building, we could say that architecture has a separate agenda outside of function, whatever that may be. Architecture will always have an aesthetic component, whether it is considered or not. My argument centers on the elaboration of an aesthetic agenda that is independent of a structural or functional rationalism. At its most basic level I argue, at the risk of being overly reductive, for a privileging of what Frampton calls the scenographic over the technological and the tectonic. I am concerned about an aesthetic that is happenstance, rote, purely formal, or iconographic, and in tandem with those I am concerned about what the French philosopher Jacques Rancière acknowledges as the gradual de-aesthetization of art and conversely the indiscernability of art.

When Rancière speaks of the deaesthetization of art he is referencing the product of a genealogy that literally began when art did, and which developed hand in hand with what we now call, thanks largely to Immanuel Kant, aesthetic theory. Kantian aesthetics developed in the 18th century and were largely based on Platonic notions of beauty, which were generally specified to form (the Platonic solids). Kant’s formalism, promoting a universal cognizance over subjective experience, is influential still today. In 1819 John Keats wrote “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that
is all ye know on Earth and all ye need to
know” in Ode on a Grecian Urn. The poem
would come to be generally acknowledged
as a literary masterpiece, potentially more
significant though, is the lasting impression
of those final lines. While Keats’ piece has
more connotation and meaning than a strict
formalist reading insinuates, it nevertheless
serves as a potent and eloquent rallying cry
for that aesthetic agenda.

But when Rancière asserts that there is a
looming de-aesthetization of art, it is not
formalism that he is concerned with. In the
1900s an extreme radicalism in art began to
take form more tangibly than ever before.
More than just the casual splintering of the
hegemonic rank, these were organized,
tangible, and most importantly, ubiquitous
trends. The movement can, for the sake of
convenience, be called conceptual art; the
umbrella term however is barely able to
negotiate the explosion of radical, avant-
garde production which characterized much
of the last hundred years. Leading to Dada
in the middle of the 20th century, aesthetics
increasingly became subjugated to concept
and intellectual inquiry, until, with artists like
Duchamp, they are explicitly questioned and
subsequently removed entirely.

So what happened to take us from Kant to
the anti-rational debate of the 20th century
openly questioning the tenacity, logic, and
vigor of formalism? An important turning
point, both historically and also for my own
personal understanding of architectural
development comes in 1877, when the poet
Gerard Manly Hopkins wrote The Windhover,
which introduces performance to Kant’s
stolid formalism, thereby anticipating and
contributing to the expansion of radical
anti-formal art movements that would
characterize much of the 1900s. I don’t
mean to insinuate that The Windhover is the
only connection, or even the most prominent
one, of Kant to Duchamp. It is, however, the
most poignant for me, especially in regards
to architecture, because until I had studied
architecture thoroughly here at the KSA, a
satisfactory understanding of the poem had
eluded me despite years of readings.

The Windhover represents a shift from
aesthetic determinations being made or
based on purely formal considerations. It is
the turning point towards the affective and
the performative. In it, the author encounters
the sight of a falcon caught in mid-air, at
a standstill before it makes a dive to fetch
prey. The poem is not about subtext or
layers of meaning (as compared to someone
like Keats). Its potency is derived from the
explicit image of its content, the evocation
of response to an event by the narrator, and
the technique deployed in its rhythmical
structure. The narrator is in the throes
of witnessing a performative act, and is
struggling to articulate the splendor of it. In
very strict terms it is privileging movement
(or specifically directed action) and hyper-
real description over implied meaning and
dual representation.

I caught this morning morning’s minion,
kingdom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-
dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady
air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a
wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the
mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air,
pride, plume, here
Buckle! And the fire that breaks from thee
then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my
chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough
down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

If you take anything from this section of my talk it should be that with *The Windhover*
we can see a privileging of experience over reading in regards to conceptual art, and
over objectivity in regards to formalism. If we turn to architecture this privileging of experience take its shape in the
performative and in affect. Like artistic and cultural movements though, architecture too has an assorted and ambivalent relationship to aesthetics.

Architectural movements have had a tendency to propagate a totalizing and universal aesthetic. Modernism famously exemplifies this, more worrisome is what Alan Colquhoun would say is a naive denial of vernacular and context. The tabula rasa approach of modern architects affected many as being innocuous once the dust settled from the “new.” In some cases it could be said the movement was even dangerous; the utopic vision of modern architects degenerated with incredible rapidity at the onset of social, economic, and political hardship.

Post-modernism, on cue from the collapse of its predecessor, brought symbolism, subtext, and contextualism back. The aesthetics however, were subjugated to these elements, and consequently suffered. The skeptical, sometimes paranoid nature of the movement often resulted in what one could call a schizophrenic design tendency, as in the leanings of deconstructivist architects.

Following post-modernism, and arguably a part of it, is the Critical period, in which aesthetics are treated as an architectural by-product. The happenstance nature of aesthetics in the period was often the result of a design process rather than an aesthetic agenda. In fact, many of the elements of architecture, including Frampton’s three, were subjugate to process. A prevailing notion, which finds a contemporary home in scripting and algorithmic architecture, was that by following specific rule sets everything would seemingly fall into place.

Crucial to all three of these periods, and arguably all of architectural history, is the idea of iconography. Iconography finds itself more and more being articulated by graphic expediency. This notion finds its apex in Venturi and Brown’s seminal work, *Learning From Las Vegas*, and also in the Pop Art movement of preceding generations. A key development comes in Venturi and Brown’s elaboration of duck and decorated shed. The decorated shed should stand out especially with its inherent notion of a detached
aesthetic from other architectural concerns, be it iconographic or not.

In the post-critical period, the detachment of aesthetic concerns from structural, procedural, and rational constraints has garnered a renewed interest in the work of Venturi and Brown. A host of new practitioners and theorists are working with their ideas, consequently the notion of iconography as well. Some very recent and very high-profile projects take the idea of iconography to extreme, especially in an attempt to sell their project to, what is becoming more and more the de-facto architectural customer, the general public. FOA’s Yokohama International Port Terminal aligns itself with the Japanese public by using the Hokusai Wave as a cultural beacon. More recently, Herzog and de Meuron’s Bird’s Nest Stadium in China used a similar approach. It could be said that both of these projects apply the iconographic meaning after design, primarily in an effort to sell the building; the abstract quality of both in regards to their iconography may attest to this.

Paramount among firms that are dealing more precisely with Learning From Las Vegas is Neutelings and Riedijk, whose portfolio more or less parses through the book, and explores in great depth the notions of the duck and the decorated shed. The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision is an example of the supreme execution of the decorated shed, true to Venturi, iconography is key to the facade. The architectural dexterity with which they handle the interior is of note though. We’ll
come back to this project shortly.

In contrast though, what the firm seems to be more interested in lately is the notion of a decorated duck. Their Shipping and Transport College in Rotterdam couldn’t be a more clear example. The form of the building is a periscope with its top piece turned. Checkerboard blue and white panels wrap the periscope indifferently and reiterate the theme of water. In a culture in desperate need of graphic immediacy this kind of accessible iconography reduces a building to consumption immediately and unapologetically.

I wanted to return to the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision because the project has confounded me for a long time. I enjoy the building, and I’ve found myself coming back to it time after time in doing this review. The facade is covered in panels that are printed with famous Dutch television stars. While embracing a graphic expediency that I like, the building, which I otherwise could have based my entire project on, was fundamentally articulating a principle that I am trying to argue against. What I realized is that while the Media Center is highly iconographic, it isn’t iconic to me in any way. The faces of the facade have no history or meaning to me, they only produce a graphic expediency that allows me immediate access to the project and a distinctly pleasurable appearance.

This revelation got me thinking about something else. I’ve spent a good amount of time living in and touring Japan, both as a child and a young adult. During my undergraduate degree I studied...
the language and culture more or less extensively, and I had the opportunity to stay in traditional Japanese bed and breakfasts, visit ancient villages, and board with host families. My experience of the NRA project got me to wonder about the significance of the outsider in appreciating something from a different culture.

Viewing Japanese architecture as an outsider, with no clues to its iconography or contextual underpinnings, yields the affective and performative in unexpected ways; the surprising and scenographic replace the normative, banal, and consumed. In making this realization, traditional Japanese architecture has offered one of the clearest accounts of the kind of practice that I would call for. In 1955, after visiting the country and studying the architecture Walter Gropius commented on space as being “the only medium of artistic expression” for the Japanese.

While his statement is naive and blatantly untrue it nevertheless concisely illustrates the care and attention the Japanese put to their architecture, and also hints at a privileging of experience over formal concerns. While the Japanese have a traditional aesthetic that is based on iconography, particularly that of having developed from the artistic work of calligraphy, these cultural connections are lost on me, and the aesthetic becomes solely a graphic exercise. When that graphic is coupled with a tendency towards the affective the result is an aesthetic package that would typify an ideality for me to move forward with.

The country is densely populated and has extreme topographical variation (largely mountainous on the interior). These contributed to simplicity of form in Japanese architecture, and consequently, to a fine tuning of detail and a hyper-elaboration of interiority, in which space-making and detailing are done independently of envelope. Because the Japanese architect is limited in overall form “The measure of his ambition is to be clearly read in the large conception and subtle elaboration of the visual order superimposed on the structural fabric of the architectural environment.”(Ramburg, 1960)

Ceilings and floors exist at varying heights, regardless of functional parameters. Detailing is done to highlight or de-emphasize certain effects, such as to give a ceiling a floating quality. Columns and structural members are “occasionally eliminated from or added to the regular symmetrical grid in such a way to relieve the whole of a compulsive constructivism, of a logic born only of technique.” (Ramburg, 1960) Asymmetry plays a crucial role in Japanese architecture. Symmetry is subjugated to the pursuit of balance, and the intonation of movement. A clear relationship is established in terms of the house and garden. The garden is seen as an extension of the house, and a tangible connection to nature. In Japanese homes and gardens, on account of planning, space making, sliding doors, transparency, and shadow, there is always the suggestion of both movement and an elusive something more.

If you’re familiar with Japanese architecture you might have noticed that I didn’t
mention courtyards. The courtyard is one of the basic tenets of the architecture of Japan and constitutes a primary aspect of an entire lineage of typology for the country. Last spring I worked with Christine Yankel on a studio project for the Solar Decathlon competition. We based our house on ancient Japanese architecture, focusing the design around a multivalent courtyard that could inflect to changing needs and desires. We called our house Inscape, which is actually a term coined by Gerard Manly Hopkins, who wrote the poem I read earlier. We tried to bring the same sensitivities of Japanese architecture that I just mentioned into a contemporary model that could be accessible to everyday people. We were paying particular attention to the development of a sincere relationship between interior and exterior, and ultimately suggesting a blurring of those boundaries, which the best Japanese architecture handily accomplishes.

Last quarter I was in a studio with Jason Payne who was the visiting professor here. Our studio was centered on furriery and taxidermy. The main principle of the studio was to redevelop an actual animal hide into a novel form. Throughout the studio though he was concerned about students falling into the trap of the project just being about form or just being about surface, which can be an alluring tendency when working with fur. He was constantly reiterating that the studio was as much about one as it was about the other. I think one of the main inspirations for the studio was the armadillo shoe by Alexander McQueen. I know Jason was well aware of the iconic fashion piece, but I’m not sure that it was explicitly on his mind when creating the studio, at the very least it was working in his subconscious. For me the armadillo shoe was always paramount during the studio, and it has been during the preparation for this talk as well. The form of the shoe is barely reducible to a conventional shoe, and the varied materiality on different pairs is verifiable proof of its capacity to produce different effects with different surface treatments. This is a part of my project for the studio. The form was derived via various processes, a combination of analytical and esoteric. More importantly for me is the subsequent treatment of the form. Like McQueen’s shoe the form evokes different effects based on its surface treatment, which can work with the form or in ignorance to it.

If these notions sound familiar it might be through their likeness to two contemporary writers and thinkers in the architectural community. Robert Somol and Sylvia Lavin’s work is both discerning and sensitive to current trends. If Somol is essentially arguing for a decorated duck (or a saturated shape in his terms) and a renewed awareness of architecture as an autonomous discipline, and Lavin for the scenographic, ephemeral, and “super-disciplinary,” how is the two coming to terms with each other articulated? While their ideas are distinct from each other, the synthesis of the two yields a dynamic aesthetic sensibility that incorporates the visual surface complexity of Somol (vis a vis Venturi) and the experiential and fleeting nature of Lavin’s recent espousal in Kissing Architecture.

Lavin’s argument for ephemerality and consilience is attractive on paper, but her
example of Pipilotti Rist is not universally applicable, as can be seen in its reduced affectability as an installation in the Wexner Center versus in the MOMA, which is likely on account of the non-neutrality of the space inside the Wexner. The question of viability is prescient for her argument, especially in its provisional aspects. The efficacy of the argument as part of a more general proposition seems strong though, and it might find its second leg in the work of Somol.

In *Green Dots 101* Somol represents JL Austin’s elaborations of two key terms in regards to this talk, that of the constantive and the performative. It is in his use and understanding of the performative that we can begin to see in him an intimate ally to Sylvia Lavin. In Somol’s words “Transformative or promissory, performatives are not descriptions or representations of this world, but establish the construction of another.” For perspective, he describes constantive as describing “some aspect of the world and therefore able to be judged in terms of its truth or falsity.” Somol’s argument in *Green Dots*, close to mine here, is probably slightly more constantive than he gives it credit for, or at the very least less performative than Lavin. To make the leap to the performative, which he seems to want to do, Lavin’s more recent writing is a solid complement.

Moving to contemporary professional examples of the aesthetic system I bias we can look at Herzog and de Meuron’s Dominus Winery in Napa, CA. The facade is comprised of a light permeable rock wall. It is independent of the program and
free of iconography, although it could be argued that since construction the wall has become iconographic on its own, a result that is rare and deserving of considerable reverence. On the interior light pours through the interstitial spaces of the rocks in a constantly changing array, and at night the light from inside the building seeps out, giving it a glowing appearance.

Another example that demonstrates the qualities characteristic of Japanese architecture, and reiterates the affective of *The Windhover*, Is HdM’s Laban Center for Movement and Dance. The building’s autonomous aesthetics are encouraged and accomplished by the firm working with an artist to develop the exterior wall system, which takes advantage of what Jeff Kipnis calls a use of ‘cunning cosmetics’. Laban’s facade is multivalent; sometimes a rainbow, sometimes translucent, sometimes reflective, sometimes absorbing. The interior continues the use of color and transparency and with planning maneuvers asserts itself as an affective and performative space. Laban in its most poignant moment, is a keen lesson to architecture’s potential; that being its dual role in having the capacity to carry art and in its necessity to the burden of function.

I’d like to return to my title for a moment. I mentioned that “I Might Be Wrong” was an admission of the intense subjectivity of the exit review, both mine and everyone’s, but I don’t think that explanation really gives it fair shake. To be clear, “I Might Be Wrong” is not a preemptive caveat to any statements that I have made. While I argue for a certain kind of product (not necessarily a methodology), I absolutely do not make
that argument in any way to dismiss the distinction and worth of other approaches or styles. In fact, the capacity of success of the style that I push for (or any style) can only be appreciated in the presence of other styles. This multi-valence necessarily denies ubiquity and the dangerous hegemony of a singular approach. Given that I truly enjoy that we have ducks, and decorated sheds, and decorated ducks, and pragmatists, and intellectuals, and post-intellectuals, and avant-gardists, and technical rationalists, and of course, the category I probably fall into myself, good for nothing thrill-seekers. My point is that it’s only through this heterogeneity that we define the value of and the potential to practice with a level of personal significance.

Now of course I was being facetious when I said good for nothing. To that end I’ll leave you with a quote from Bernard Tschumi, said in 1978 in *The Pleasure of Architecture*; “The necessity of architecture may well be its non-necessity.”
I want to begin with two assumptions.

First, I assume we have all experienced countless coincidences, déjà vu, or uncanny situations. No one really knows how these things happen or why we feel certain phenomena. These events seem to happen nearly at random and leave us unsure or confused, but also evoke some sort of familiarity and awareness. We can sense that once unrelated things are now connected in a strange way.

Also, I assume that we all have watched an episode of Seinfeld and been amused by the coincidental overlap in the lives of Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer. Our enjoyment of Seinfeld comes from more than just funny misfortunes, but feeling that in the end, the events of their lives are collectively connected, and connected in unexpected ways. The show constructs and accentuates chance occurrence.

Our field can also achieve such effects. As designers, as people that constantly produce fictional schemes, we can construct coincidence and accentuate the similarities between previously unrelated parts of life. These surprising associations and expanded resonances are the results of what I call “A Rhyme.”

“History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” Twain’s clever aphorism speaks to the patterns of many occurrences, where various national revolutions have overthrown totalitarian regimes and replaced them with weaker, provisional governments. The provisional is then replaced by a government of stronger authority after varying
Rhyming throughout architecture’s history can be paraphrased by the use of the ribbon window since Villa Savoye: what begins as an ideality is brought into a conversation of pseudo-domesticism by Venturi, turned into a facial expression by Hejduk, split apart by Koolhaas, and made minimal by Sejima.

Rhymes are more than simple Mannerism however, as architecture can compose a series of rhymes in a single manifestation. Rhyming relates contexts, where new interventions have similar qualities to their surroundings, such as the roof of Rem Koolhaas’s Casa Da Musica being similar to neighboring rooftops of the residential neighborhood, and the southeast façade being similar to the neighboring storefronts. Internal to one work, looped trusses of Greg Lynn’s Slavin House are unique from one another but each distinctly similar, and together create a set of rhymes. The trusses work harmoniously with the rest of the house to achieve a synthesis of structure, façade, history, figure, and domestic life. Similarly, the paintings of Jonathan Lasker use abstract figuration and color to cause one element in a painting to echo every other element, while simultaneously referencing the history of painting. Essentially, rhymes can associate instances through time, relate various contexts, and create internal correlations.

Rhyming is an alternative to the Post-Modern project, as the discourse that emerged from the latter half of the 20th century was invested in the discipline as a linguistic effort. What can now emerge is a return to an art model of practice, where
architecture can pursue figuration and abstraction to produce new effects. Rather than a dialectic project of oppositions, rhymes are associative, and project new coherences.

The Linguistic project of Post-Modernism emerged in order to resist; to resist authoritative regimes that allow architecture to be manifested, to resist the discipline turning to taste and Zeitgeist as qualitative measures of success, and to resist a reliance on the rhetoric that early Modernism aspired to but could not achieve. After Colin Rowe returns to historical precedent for a consistent language, the Post-Modern Neo-Avant Garde established a discourse of signs, processes, indices, and information. K. Michael Hays describes this discourse as a “reification of forms” that become “self-enclosed and structured.” In the spirit of resistance, Hays states “Autonomy of form allows architecture to stand against the social order that it is complicit with.” This avocation for an architecture that is “a reflection on the foundations and limits of architecture itself,” portrays his interest in a Degree Zero architecture, an investigation of “What is architecture?” as a Critical Project.

The 40 or so year period of this autonomous and linguistic project has been scrutinized in the seminal essay Notes Around the Doppler Effect, where Bob Somol and Sarah Whiting portray an alternative to the project of Criticality. Somol and Whiting claim that Criticality has exhausted a disciplinary project to a point of preoccupation and obtuseness, and that there can be an alternate approach to speculative architecture based upon projection rather than reification. Where the Critical Project is invested in representations of the real, or the indexical trace, Somol and Whiting call for the Projective to use the diagram to virtualize, or suggest future conditions.

Most importantly, Somol and Whiting describe a saliency in low resolution, where ‘cool’ performance of a medium (as relaxed or informal, not trendy or stylish) can be capable of mixing or open-endedness, where as something ‘hot’ is highly articulated and definitively prescribed. The comparison of Robert DeNiro as hot to Robert Mitchum as cool describes Somol and Whiting’s alignment with performance capable of surprising plausibility, where chance event can combine with expanded realism as a projective effect.

The aversion of the indexical trace in favor of the diagrammatic in Doppler Effect is analogous to the productivity rhymes in architecture. Somol and Whiting describe the trace as notational of its production, highly articulated, representational of some past or current state, and ultimately tragic. Somol and Whiting’s diagram then performs in a graphic manner, expediently recognizable, and projects some future condition that is intrinsically optimistic. The rhyme, as a corollary to the diagrammatic, relies on figural abstraction as a means of producing new associations, which project new sensibilities, a visual, affective, and optimistic condition.

A number of trajectories have emerged from Somol and Whiting’s rhetoric over the past decade, and have now become characterized as Post-Critical. Various
camps of current architectural practitioners have all been grouped under the umbrella of Post-Criticality, which include those vested in environmental responsibility and action, graphic application of accommodative form, and contingency that achieves greatest good for the somehow underprivileged. Whereas Somol and Whiting called for an architecture of the virtual and projective, the catchphrase “Post-Critical” seems to apply to an architecture of the rationalized and practical. The escape of criticality has been interpreted as an investigation into the issue of “What can architecture do?” and has resulted in a lack of disciplinary impact from those championing agency. Additionally, the result of the investigation into “what can architecture do?” always seems to reduce architecture to a container, leaving the architecture undercooked and the external ambition dependent on factors uncontrollable by our field.

Rather than devote an investigation into “What is architecture?” described by Hayes or “What can architecture do?” that emerged from Somol and Whiting, an architecture of Rhyming will explore the issue “What can architecture do with the stuff of architecture?”. Furthermore, an investigation into the question, “What can architecture do with the stuff of architecture that no other discipline can do as well?”, seeks to describe architecture’s most salient efficacies.

Given the problematic situation which architecture currently finds itself in, Michael Meredith provides a framework on how to operate within our discipline without returning to the exhausted project of linguistics. Meredith describes his practice as “neither hardcore realism nor critical dialectic” and past architectural endeavors as “no longer related to any specific architectural avatar that they’re all available for use, all the time...” He submits that “institutionalized and dialectical readings of art and life, real and fake, fact and fiction (can) become intentionally exacerbated, frustrated, and problematized” as a means for efficacy. This approach is not focused upon overcoming anxieties of influence or comprehending the intentions of a predecessor’s authorship, but as a means of elaboration, or extreme revisionism. Rather than a rationalized or prescribed design basis (reason), this approach can embrace ambiguity to achieve open-ended relationships and new coherences (rhymes).

Rhymes make associations through time, as portrayed by Philip Johnson’s self description of his Glass House. His essay describes an eclectic array of influences that range from Mies and Corbusier, to Ledoux and Schinkel, to Malevich and Van Doesburg, and even the Acropolis. The essay overtly presents his house as being derivative of multiple influences through time and across disciplines, before the project of Post-modernism became mainstream.

Another practitioner that predates the Post-Modern project in their investment in a historical revisionism is James Stirling. Amanda Resser Lawrence describes Stirling’s earliest projects as “a correction or completion of a predecessor’s work.” Reeser Lawrence points out how Stirling’s first realized work, his Flats at Ham Common is a clear refrain of Corb’s Maison Jaoul.
Stirling’s seminal work, the Staatsgalerie, is again invested in revisiting architecture’s past in a manner that relates to Twain’s “history” aphorism, but Staatsgalerie also gains salience via the rhymes it is able to create contextually. There is an overt deployment of Schinkel’s Altes Museum as a driver for the Staatsgalerie’s organization, however the classical form also resonates with the surroundings, to unify the adjacent buildings into a new condition. The three buildings now rhyme with each other, through the similarities of their bracketed forms and circular or semicircular plan motifs.

Moreover, Stirling’s use of the classical is innately recognizable, which Robert Maxwell proposes is an attempt to reach “identification with the human condition.” While the classical form that Stirling deploys has a strong institutional legacy, he is able to negate those notions by turning the central rotunda into a public space, leaving the space open to the sky, and by edging half of the rotunda with an asymmetrical path. The Staatsgalerie is not organized in the pastiche nature of collage, but is a reinterpretation of
form, displaced from its original meaning, to create a new coherence.

Rhymes are distinguishable from collage, the composition by free assembly of diverse elements, and also are separate from intricacy, a mass gradient of infinite variation on a generic unit. Reiser and Umemoto characterize collage as the “accumulation of the merely different,” but their alternative condition of the generic continues an oppositional and dialectic legacy, an indexing of digital geometry. Rhymes create a blending of elements, or an alchemy. This ancient practice of transmutation, the defunct discipline of alchemy sought to blend common metals together to produce gold, and is analogous to the ambitions of rhyming. Where Collage brought diverse elements together, Rhymes can work alchemically to transmute diversity into a new coherence.

Where the Post-Modern period was able to uncover techniques for contextual reference, its descendent architectural trajectory, the Weak Form Project, had increased ambitions for creating new coherences within context. An early example of this desire is demonstrated in Eisenman’s Columbus Convention Center. Through the placement of a specific yet spaghetti-like form onto the project site, the building simultaneously associates to the winding pattern of the surrounding interstates, achieves a banding similar to adjacent commercial buildings, re-renders the eclecticism of High Street storefronts, evokes an absent presence of the railroad cars that previously occupied the site, and even may portray fiber optics at an enlarged scale. Through the weak and
abstract nature of its form, the Convention Center no longer becomes a representation of context, but instead grabs numerous scales and organizations of urbanism and rhymes with them.

The shift from the Post-Modern project to the Weak Form project allowed for the effects of associations to move past semiotic techniques and into the realm of greater abstraction. Include Somol and Whiting’s idea of ‘cool performance’ sensibility and rhyming can define associations with surprisingly plausibility or abstractions of expanded realism. Revisionism can associate through time and Weak Form can associate within contexts. To analogously portray the ambitions of rhymes to create internal correlations, we can examine two paintings: Jonathan Lasker’s *A Domestic Setting With Post-Partum Anxiety* and Robert Rauschenberg’s *Tracer*.

Lasker’s painting is composed of three closely similar figures, a seemingly foreign black bracket, and a multi-colored ground. The painting resonates with De Stijl, through the use of primary colors accompanied by black and white. The task of associating one element to another is not a simple one, as rhymes exist between every element of the painting, all at the same time, creating complex conceptual effects.

The overt similarities and differences between elements begs the audience to contemplate the relationships between parts of the painting. The multi-colored figure that exists on the left-hand third of the canvas appears to have been removed from the square ground that corresponds in pattern, but it is unclear which of the remaining figures is the negative of the left. The yellow strokes of the left hand figure extend past the repeated boundary of the reverse “C” shape. The remaining two maintain their precinct; no trace exists to tie the central or right figure to the left. Perhaps the figure on the left has not been removed from the square background at all.

Furthermore, now we can understand the multi-colored square as a ground or a different figure, a pseudo ground or a pseudo figure, a counterpart to the left-hand figure rather than its source. The center and right-hand figure seem to appropriately be a pair, yet the linear black strokes of the central figure also associate to the black bracket. In fact, the bracket is a transformation upon the reverse “C” shaped figure, but is still unmistakably unique due to its overlapping on the multicolored square and its extension off the page. Throughout the entire painting there is a cognitive dissonance, where each element has some level of correspondence to another element and to every other element, while an individuality of each element persists. Low resolution qualities of the painting allow for clear formal and conceptual ambitions, but the ambiguity that develops from those formal and conceptual notions leave the analyzer and subject in an intellectual haze.

The painting achieves saliency without a dependence on its title, but its consideration adds yet another level of association. Simply the words “A Domestic Setting with Post-Partum Anxiety” are loaded themselves, and when referencing the painting, the title adds to the intellectual haze that Lasker
has created. Considering the cultural implications of the title, we can further imagine the figures as anthropomorphized beings, as if they are in a ‘domestic setting,’ at a table, eating dinner as a family.

The second half of the title, the specific condition of ‘Post-Partum Anxiety,’ of course resonates with our original suspicion of removal. As we associate the figures to have qualities of people and a family, it is unclear which one are the mother, child, and father. The left-hand figure either owns the ground as the mother or has been removed from it as the child. The stripes of the central figure either associate ownership to the table suggesting a traditional father or propose a combination of the adjacent figures in color and pattern as a child.

Finalizing these roles are not important, as the title achieves further associations to be drawn between the formal qualities of the painting and our cultural affiliations to a phrase of familiarity. The affect that unfolds from the haziness of such relationships is exacerbated by the title. The formal resonances in the painting are a result of an economy of gesture, but through the ambiguities of the abstract figures and our own subjectivities, the painting exists in a new projected realm of uncertainty.

Whereas Lasker rhymes using abstract figure, Rauschenberg’s “Tracer” rhymes through doublings. Jeff Kipnis describes how the painting “gathers its miscellany into a holistic world staged on a new kind of ground and unified by a new kind of coherence.” His analysis describes the relationships between two helicopters over Vietnam, two axonometric boxes, Peter Paul Ruben’s Venus Before a Mirror, two caged birds, two men on the street, two Coca Cola signs, and a bald eagle with its own latent image on its shoulders as sets of doublings. These doublings (and thus rhymes) should not be confused with duplication, as they work like fraternal twins rather than identical twins. Closer inspection reveals that the pure doublings have been problematized by smaller details, and through their composition, join initially incongruous items into new relationships via the rhymes between elements.

These frustrations of the doublings cause the images to exist between pairs and definitive tripling’s. A negative image of a helicopter occurs in the bottom right corner of the painting, and now helicopters exist flying in the sky and in some vague condition in relation to the street. A belly button appears on Venus’s back, constructing a front and a back at the same time. The broken nature of the left-hand axonometric box relates to the dotted line under Venus, cutting her from a chair and leaving her to sit on a city block. Next to the man under the cafeteria sign, a translucent third man on the street can barely be seen, and he is cut into by the negative helicopter and blends into the redness of the automobiles. The blue paint that fills the negative space of the mirror also surrounds the back of Venus’s head, and blends together with her hair, fusing figure and background. Lastly, Venus is inspecting herself in the mirror, looking at the helicopters to her left and gazing at the observer at the same time, associating foreign images and projecting the audience into the space of the painting. The implied
lines of the painting create a suggested room, further causing the subject to feel absorbed into the scene, and adds to the multiple spatial realms of sky, streetscape, and axonometric.

The alchemic blending of the painting moves the collection of images past collage and into a spatial realm, immersive and affective. The relationships between elements are open-ended and multiple, surprisingly relating helicopters of the Vietnam War to a 17th century painting. Tracer projects its observers into a new existential condition, where seemingly anything in the world can be related to another, but none of these relationships are truly able to be completely comprehended. The rhymes and resonances of the painting do more than create a meaning or reasoning about love, war, patriotism, and so on, but produces immersion and mood, offering a new way of understanding our world.

Lasker and Rauschenberg produce powerful effects in painting, specific effects of painting that can only be paraphrased by other fields. To investigate the effects of rhyming in our discipline that are irreproducible by any other endeavor, a Project of Rhyming will privilege three architectural properties: A Sustained Temporality, Materiality, and Varying Scale.

An extreme result from Post-Modern architecture was referential satire, where form represented an ironic image. Maybe architects were looking to escape the inwardly focused project of dialects and autonomy, or maybe they wanted to achieve a set of inside jokes for architects.
by architects. Regardless, the outcomes of these literal representations were the development of the architectural joke – ironic form that became one-liners. Bofill’s Abraxis Housing exemplifies this problematic condition, where the architectural joke exists ad nauseum as ironic use of classicism, as literal reference. The joke and the building are diametrically opposed in terms of their temporality. A joke can last 5 seconds, 5 minutes, or even 55 minutes, but eventually it ends in a defined way after short duration, and can be easily altered over a longer period. The building subsists in a clearly longer period of time, its beginning is strong and its ending is weak, and is essentially static for its existence. The architectural joke day after day after day creates a Groundhog’s Day situation. To oppose the literal, singular, definitive joke that creates the effect of “Ha,” or even worse, “I get it,” the rhyme achieves an abstract, multiple, open-ended organization that causes a feeling of “Aahh” or that of uncertainty. Florencia Pita’s Alice installation abstracts known identities, the suits of playing cards, into a figuration that echoes a heart, diamond, club, and spade all at once, without favor-ing one over the other.

Another problematic aspect of the Post-Modern joke is its reliance upon surface application, which robs architecture of its materiality. This is not a call for rationalized material logic or a return to pure phenomology, but to realize the potential immersive effects of architecture’s worldliness. The Villa, by FAT, flirts with becoming an architecture of graphic applique and imagery. While it achieves a low resolution sensibility, the figuration is
achieved only through a 2-D graphic cut out, sometimes layered on top of one another. The applied graphics begin to blend the distinctions to no longer singularly represent a tree, flower, or cloud, but bring about the notion of all three at once.

Additionally, the timber cladding works to echo with the distant industrial skyline, the silhouette of Villa Savoye, and even creates a kind of equivalence to the banal utility poles scattered across the site. These conditions are desirable, and work as rhymes. However, the reduction of these figures to a flat cut-out moves the elements of the façade into a realm of flatness and compresses potential depth into a surface. This flattened condition turns facade into the Bill-Ding board of Venturi, thus the signs of linguistics. To achieve a separation of linguistic discourse, architecture’s depth and materiality must be upheld. Oubrerie’s Miller House deploys identifiable figure on its facades, but combines surface and depth to blur the distinctions of containment.

The project of Collage hampered the ability of buildings to possess effects in relation to scale. Michael Graves’s Portland Public Service Building uses the imagery of a column to turn the architectural element into a graphic, recognizably out of context. No new coherence can emerge from this painterly use of scale. Goya’s Colossus uses an outstanding exaggeration of scale to create a scene that is dramatic and evocative. Certainly this painting projects a virtual future, and complex formal resonances are elaborated throughout the composition. Yet the painting, and painting as a discipline, cannot achieve the effects of scale that architecture is capable of.

The worldliness of architecture permits a greater salience in its associations to varying scales. Similar to Eisenman’s Convention Center, Gehry’s Bilbao Guggenheim is able to associate with the infrastructure of the city, suggest a group of clustered buildings, rhyme with the distant mountains, and echo its collection of artwork all at once. Architecture’s rhymes can associate with multiple ontologies, a property and efficacy of architecture’s scale.

My proposal for a Museum in The Future seeks a prolonged temporality, depth of material, and a potency of scale, in concert with a synthesis of precedence and figural abstractions. Analogously to Johnson’s use of precedent for the Glass House, overt influences ranged from Hejduk’s Wall House II, Lynn’s Slavin House, Oubrerie’s Miller House, Lasker’s A Domestic Setting With Post-Partum Anxiety, Mies’s Barcelon Pavilion and Sejima’s Glass Pavilion. The echoing of facial expressions aims to remove figurality from notions of jokes or satire into a different realm of subjective resonance. Each façade achieves varying conditions of depth, where elements are sometimes, but never exclusively flat, derived mainly from the disposition of the Miller House. The plan presents the images of a low resolution face at different sizes, so the museum’s displays rhyme with the fenestration of the exterior, associating multiple ontologies.

Potent associations and new coherences are formed in Casa Da Musica by Rem Koolhaas and OMA, and challenge the institutional legacy of the concert hall. Through the weak nature of the massing, the Casa Da
Musica relates to the small scale residential fabric to the northeast with its sloped roof and material finish, yet it also presents an inverse of a gable roof to simultaneously contrast the foregrounded homes. From the south-east, the elevation that fronts the civic circle echoes a storefront condition in the manner of the small commercial buildings that neighbor it.

The southwestern side of the building presents a new understanding, an object as an icon, alone on the site. The dynamic nature of the massing blends distinctions of front and side; the building either has no front or is all front. The travertine plaza rhymes with both a city block and a landscape, although it cannot be accurately described as either singularly (similar to the pseudo-ground of Lasker’s painting). The malleable surface tells us that the ground is not always connected to earth or The Earth a priori. Accordingly, the entry stair seems deployed, temporarily touching the ground as a retractable stair of some foreign vehicle. These rhymes attack the problem of entry, and the specific architectural effect it achieves changes entry to a collective procedure, malleable and informal.

The Casa Da Musica’s main auditorium is a synthesis in itself, alchemically blending the urbane setting of the concert hall and an urban environment of the city street. This is achieved literally, by opening the hall at both ends, and metaphorically, via an interior fenestration. The material treatment deploys crude plywood panels and pixelated gold patterning, and the panels combine to create a pattern similar to the grains of plywood, now enlarged in scale. The finish rhymes with the elaborate baroque organ, and moreover echoes the butterfly marble patterns of the Barcelona pavilion in its local symmetries. Perhaps informed by his pavilion for 1985 Milan Triennial, where Koolhaas proposes a literal bending of Mies’s pavilion, Casa Da Musica’s auditorium exacerbates refractions, reflections, and transparency with its curved glass, and creates new types of visceral symmetry.

The smaller rooms and performance areas that surround the main hall become a set of rhymes amongst each other. First, in a revisionist manner, the series of rooms is a riff on Loos’s “Raumplan.” These ever-changing rooms are also directly related to Koolhaas’s analysis of the Downtown Athletic Club, where the diagram of independently operating worlds has now been wrapped around the main auditorium. The first room of the sequence has green acoustical pyramid foam covering its walls, in an expected manner. The second room of the sequence, however, rhymes with the first, as the tile portrays repeated cubes. Conventional acoustic material is now a part of a sequence of architectural primitives. The material finish of the next room is a flat, orange carpet, a single wash of color. The fourth room uses both a mono-coloration and repeated three-dimensional object, which resonates with the previous three rooms. A secondary theater uses a similar technique, this time in red, but also allowing the applied material to leave the confines of the wall.

The sixth room returns to tile as an application and still achieves a monochrome condition. The use of the vernacular
Portuguese Azulejo in this room presents a complex condition, similar to Venus’s gaze in *Tracer*. The subject is exposed to three urban conditions at one time: first, to typically look out of a window and see the city, second, to look back through the bent glass into the now urbanized auditorium, and third to be surrounded by a microcosm of the city, that of the Azulejo. As Venus gazed at herself, the helicopters, and the painting’s audience, the room presents a triad of urban conditions, each a different ontology. The final room is not a room at all, and presents a fourth urban condition, a terrace tiled like a black and white checkerboard. The patterning removes any reference to the scale of the space, and as we are placed eye-to-eye with a civic monument, the experience is sublime.

These seven rooms, perhaps fraternal septuplets, each have their own affective qualities. Moreover, the constant shifting of color and volume has a dramatic affect all its own. The projected change of mood, as chaos or quasi-intoxication, alters the existential being of the building’s visitors. Koolhaas is offering not only a change in how we perceive a concert hall building, but a change to the range of emotions we can experience in our lives. What first appeared to be a challenging of the institutional is now a changing of the existential, achieved through projection and synthesis, through rhymes and resonances.

Greg Lynn’s Slavin House embodies the potential of an architecture of rhymes, as the project is able to bring precedence, figuration, and conceptual effects into a new coherence. The continuous tubed structure
of its trusses work both as columns and beams, an immediate blending of Mies’s trabeation and Corb’s pilotis. A quality of fraternalness exists between the trusses, as they are composed of a specific type of looped figure, but the variations in the loops sets one truss apart from the other. The distinct figuration of the trusses sets up the rhymes of the house.

The trusses are capable of impacting the interior spatially, as deep recesses of the exterior partition the space of the interior. These recesses push back and frame two loops of the truss, as if to showcase their similarities but also make their difference more apparent. This side of the house is overtly opaque and deep, while the opposite façade, where the truss indifferently exists behind glazing, is flat and transparent. This contrast between elevations immediately establishes a strong duality that the trusses cannot do. The windows negotiate this duality, as the transparent façade first deploys windows that are conventional in form, but also evoke a riff of a ribbon window in their proportion. The apertures of the opaque façade are more figural, and while one is not identical to another, they are closely similar, as a member of a family, in the manner of the Lasker painting. The vertical bisection of all windows is the uniting feature between sides, and furthermore the figure and multiplicity of the three apertures rhyme with the figure and multiplicity of the structure and to the ornamental blobs that boolean the opaque wall. The blob booleans move from the façade to the roof, describing a latent coherence between wall and roof, another synthesis of the house.
Returning to the trusses, we can assume they have ambitions of innovative manufacturing and inventive structural engineering, and have most likely been conceptualized within digital modeling software. However, the true salience of the Slavin House is its achievement of decoration and figure in its structural system without becoming overtly referential to external influences or describing the building as a uniter of heavens and the earth. The trusses create a cycle or describe a linear flow that is only tangential to the ground and roof, and furthermore de-affiliates the house from the idea that a building is rooted to the earth as a given. This becomes an incredibly powerful effect that is specifically architectural, where a building conceptually resists being tied to the land that it once belonged to. The effects are manifested not via the datum of Corb’s piloti or via the stage of Mies’s platform, but through the tangential nature of the structure in relation to the ground. This synthesis of architectural stuff cannot be equalized by other disciplines, and any attempt to do so would only produce a paraphrase of this effect. The Slavin House achieves resistance through abstract figuration, rather than erasing figure or relying on referential symbolism.

The house becomes a new coherence; synthesizing beam and column, Mies and Corb, part and whole, façade and façade, surface and depth, aperture and structure, figure and the conceptual. This coherence is made through multiple and recognizable figures, sets of rhymes and echoes, capable of resonance with one another and deploy effects that are irreproducible outside of architecture.

An Architecture of Rhymes seeks the projection of new ways of being in the world, where new coherences can unfold through an expanded sense of reality. Such relationships are capable of critique without falling into total criticality, and will not be pursued through dialectic opposition or by a gradient field of illegibility, but through figure, abstraction, and similarity. The results of such an endeavor can perhaps materialize uncertainty, manifest open-endedness, or transmute familiarity. An Architecture of Rhyming will achieve its efficacy through exacerbation of readings, an alignment with cool performance, and an investment in the irreproducible effects of architecture.
Mark Oswanki
Graf

Learning From
Las Cruces
On the current slide you see a set of dots and a short description of a mental exercise that I would like for you to complete over the course of the presentation. The directions are to connect the dots using four straight lines without lifting your pen or pencil from the paper. You may sketch the dots quickly on a sheet of paper if you would like. Otherwise, hold this image in your mind’s eye. We will return to it at the end of the presentation when a solution to the exercise will be presented.

In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf.

So begins the classic tale of The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. First published by the World Publishing Company in 1969, the story relates the journey of a small caterpillar from its birth one Sunday morning through its metamorphosis into a beautiful butterfly.

Acclaimed as much for its graphic design as for its verbal narrative, the book will serve here as a primary point from which to begin an analysis of the importance of visual perception to human cognition and, subsequently, the relationship between perception and architectural design.

The little egg that was alluded to moments ago is introduced in the story’s first spread. It is paralleled both in terms of form and color by the rendering of the moon in the night sky above. In fact, the image is composed in such a way that the two circular figures lay slightly off-center on
opposite sides of the axis that splits the page in half horizontally. Their centers are located an identical distance from the crease of the book that divides the spread vertically into two pages.

Taking this very precise arrangement of the pieces on the page into account, it is difficult to deny the direct comparison between biology and cosmology that is being suggested. In “Powers-of-10”-fashion, we are left to wonder – is the moon actually another egg sitting in the distance on some celestial leaf? Or, on the contrary, is the egg really a small moon, resting as it proceeds toward the distant vanishing point? The relationship becomes ambiguous.

On the following page, something very strange has happened. The egg is no longer and the moon has gone. In their places, we find a wriggly worm, squirming across the ground, and a large sun, smiling as it ascends above the horizon. The landscape is barren and the caterpillar (we have come to know his true identity through the verbal description) looks surprised. The only written explanation that we are given for the presentation of this radically different situation is...POP!

Yet the graphics of the story tell us something more. In this composition, the head of the caterpillar is located on axis with the center of the sun. But the head of the bug is now a shorter distance from the vertical axis of the page than is the center of the sun. There can only be one explanation. The caterpillar, mobilized by his newly acquired legs, must have moved. And indeed he has! - precisely the distance of one body
length from the point at which he started toward his figural counterpart on the facing page.

This “mobility” theory is confirmed through a comparison of the first two spreads. Let’s place the egg and the moon above the caterpillar and the sun for a moment. We mark the center points of the figures at each of their respective locations, draw the vertical axis, connect the center points of our cosmological features – the sun and the moon – with a diagonal line, and connect those center points to the vertical axis with a horizontal line. We then mirror the horizontal lines across the vertical axis, connect the two endpoints by mirroring the diagonal line, and voila! – the theory is proved!

The sun is as much an exploded version of the moon, complete with radiating blast, as the caterpillar is the linear expansion of the egg. It just so happens that the caterpillar, catalyzed by his fall from the leaf, has jumped up and started to move! Another written detail is added to describe the subsequent steps that the plot takes. The caterpillar is very hungry.

In the next spread, the search for food begins.

The sun has now risen well above the horizon and is beginning to move out of the frame. Its center aligns vertically with the caterpillar’s head and tugs him gently off the ground as if the two were tethered by a thin string. The caterpillar peers across the page to a strange world where fruit floats weightlessly, waiting to be eaten.

It is here in the bizarre floating fruit world that the story introduces a variety of spatial concepts.

Each page has been scaled back a level of one fruit from the page which follows it. The effect of which is to offer the reader an overview of the entire feast in waiting, as well as to pique his interest into what lies beyond. Additionally, holes have been physically punched through the pages of the book tangent to a line which bifurcates the page horizontally. Each hole hits a piece of fruit right at its heart. What are they doing there?

The answer is revealed as we flip the page.

The caterpillar has actually eaten through the page and emerged on the opposite side! He proceeds to munch his way through two pears, three plums, four strawberries, and five oranges before we reach the farthest point that our eye could see. We are left to wonder once again – what comes next?

A smorgasbord!!! Chocolate cake, ice cream cones, pickles, and on and on and on... The caterpillar eats it all and, not surprisingly, ends the day with a stomachache and a grimace. Things have gone awry! Thankfully, on the following page, order is restored. Like the prodigal son in the gospel of Luke, the caterpillar returns to the place of his birth, consumes the leaf from whence he emerged, and is redeemed.

As we turn the page, we are shocked once again! The scale has changed dramatically! The caterpillar is humongous! And we have returned to the world of pure figure. The
enormous caterpillar sits suspended on the surface of the page in juxtaposition to an equally enormous chunk of brown stuff. Due to their similar scale and configuration, we perceive that the two have something to do with each other.

And indeed they do. The text tells us that the brown stuff is a cocoon and that the caterpillar has begun his pupation. The final transformation is equally as jarring as the first. Whereas previously we had been surprised by the abrupt transmogrification of a tiny egg into a wiggly worm, we are now faced with a beautiful butterfly that must have emerged from that chunky cocoon. What seems to be missing from this part of the story is the – POP! – that let us know originally that something wild had occurred. What is fascinating about the butterfly, however, is the story that is told through its representation. Bespeckled by brilliant spots, the body of the butterfly begins to suggest the path that the caterpillar has traveled to get to this point.

The circles of fruit, cake, and salami that the caterpillar consumed as he proceeded toward his metamorphosis are indexed in the red, green, and yellow dots which now pattern his wings – giving credence to the adage that one is what they eat.

I relate this story in such detail for three reasons. First, because children’s books, designed for an audience that has yet to grasp the structures, intricacies, and signs of written and spoken language, rely on graphics and visual perception to convey meaning and relationships; second, to show that references and allusions, whether latent or intentional, will be made whenever anything is created and placed into the world of things in which we live and to which we are constantly responding; and third, to introduce the idea that architecture, which also employs graphic techniques and visual stimuli to communicate meaning, has the capacity to relate stories, knowledge, relationships, and emotions.

To illustrate this point, I would like to turn to the plan of the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III.

Our analysis begins in the sanctuary. Like the circular egg that marked the beginning of Eric Carle’s story, the narrative of this Egyptian temple also begins with an ideal, formal organization – a paradise garden. Marked by a column in each of its quadrants and split into four, equivalent spaces by two cross axes, the room is in a state of complete balance and stasis... at least for the time being. To reference The Very Hungry Caterpillar, something goes “POP!” in the sanctuary that sets the tranquility of its ideal world in motion. The POP! in this case, however, is easier to identify. At the Temple of Ramesses III, a sided cult figure is inserted into the sanctuary at the point where the two axes intersect. This disturbance, which begins to define the space in terms of a front, a back, and two sides, induces a transformation that unfolds into the rest of the temple in a systematic manner.

The first step in the transformation occurs in the sanctuary itself, where a primary axis emerges along the path of procession.
In the hypostyle hall, the columns that marked the quadrants of the original paradise garden have dissolved into four sets of four columns each. The original cross-axis has been demarcated by a thick wall, which is then split by the path of procession.

The fact that this wall is oriented vertically is important as it is meant to reiterate the sidedness of the cult figure. We will see in subsequent spaces that the destabilization of the original condition will continue to manifest itself as an oscillation of this recurring piece between the vertical and the horizontal.

In an alternate reading of this space, the hypostyle hall could be seen as the remains of two stamps of the sanctuary whose sidewalls have undergone dematerialization.

In either case, what was formerly a balanced and symmetrical space has taken on valences which appear to be increasing in momentum toward the temple front.

In the columned portico, the outward expansion which began with the insertion of the cult figure proceeds to spread space ever thinner. The gravitational forces between the columns appear too weak to hold them together. In fact, the entire space of the portico appears to be only tenuously contained by the ends of wing walls to the northwest side and the remnants of the cult figure, now represented by the rows of larger columns that line the primary axis, have rotated to the horizontal.
Once we reach the peristyle, the expansive force has pushed all of the architectural elements to the periphery of the space and the roof has popped off. The pressure has reached such a height that the columns, which up until this point had existed in the temple in only cylindrical form, have transmogrified into rectangular prisms. Additionally, the peristyle is the first place in the story where we find that the thick, exterior walls of the temple proper have been punctured by the expanding force to reveal a strange new world beyond the barrier.

The anomalous rectangular columns which bracket this space have taken the place of the over-scaled columns in the portico. They have rotated back to a vertical orientation. Ultimately we reach the first court. All of the columns have been expelled from the space save for two rows, which are oriented horizontally along the outer edges of the court. The number of perforations in the exterior walls has increased and the monumental pylons that mark the threshold between the sacred space of the temple and the profane world beyond loom overhead. The oscillation of the anomalies throughout the sequence and the final configuration of the temple are shown here.

There are multiple parallels between the narratives of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and The Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III and some have already been mentioned. The most salient similarity is that both stories involve the disturbance of an ideal organization and the subsequent unfolding of a more complex form from a potent beginning. The primary difference is that the
language of the former is written English and graphic illustration and the language of the latter is architectural form, spatial composition, and visual order. In both cases, visual perception is paramount to understanding the story and, as such, merits further investigation.

Perhaps no other group has had as much influence on the way in which we understand the relationship between visual perception and cognition than the Gestalt psychologists. In an article published in the December 1990 issue of Scientific American titled *The Legacy of Gestalt Psychology*, Irvin Rock and Stephen Palmer trace the launch of the Gestalts to a paper published by Max Wertheimer in 1912 on a visual illusion called apparent motion. According to Rock and Palmer: “Apparent motion is the perception of movement that results from viewing a rapid sequence of stationary images, as in the movies. This phenomenon indicated to Wertheimer that the perception of the whole (the movement) was radically different from the perception of its components (the still images).” This sequence of shots from a Charlie Chaplin film illustrates that idea, which was to become the central tenet of Gestalt psychology.

Rock and Palmer continue their article with the following statement concerning Gestalt theories of object recognition: “To explain how perceptions of individual objects are formed, Wertheimer proposed that the visual system organizes parts into wholes based on laws of grouping. Elements tend to be grouped perceptually if they are close together, similar to one another, form a closed contour or move in the same direction. Most often these laws lead to an accurate representation of the objects in a scene, but they can also lead to inaccurate ones, as in the case of camouflage.”

Since Wertheimer’s publishing of the four original Gestalt laws of grouping, two new laws have been added. The law of enclosure, or common region, attempts to explain the phenomenon that observers attempt to group elements that are located within the same perceived region and connectedness, which refers to the powerful tendency of the visual system to perceive any uniform, connected region – such as a spot, line, or more extended area – as a single unit. These concepts are depicted graphically in a book by Moritz Zwimpfer titled *2D Visual Perception*. In this image, a group of three dots is distinguished from the others because it is separated from the larger group by a greater distance than is standard for the system.

This effect can be seen in the plan for a Boarding School in Southwest England that was produced by a Greg Lynn led studio at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. The amorphous forms of the school fuse together to create four, distinguishable groups and a number of smaller, independent pieces.

In the following two images a short, graphic story is perceived due to the similar angle on one side of each of the figures on the page. Although the viewer is never presented with the image of a complete rectangle, she imagines that one existed because of the congruent angles and fabricates the idea that the original rectangle has been
chopped in half. The top part now lies on a ground plane next to the upright piece. How does the story change if a third image is added that looks like this?

This law of grouping is applicable to a reading of the Sanctuary of Aesklepios at Pergamum, where it is possible to group the forms which cap the space in a number of ways. One set of groups might be divided between rectilinear figures and circular ones, another set would split the forms between those with temple fronts and those without, while a third would couple those with thick walls against those with thin. A final group places all of the pieces together as a sequence that evolves from a simple, square beginning, held tightly within the bounds of the larger space, to a floral finale, which has broken free from the boundaries of the sanctuary and is beginning to float off into the world.

In this image, which represents the law of closure, we associate the “brackets” that enclose an area with one another, despite the fact that the vertical elements of those brackets are actually closer in proximity to the vertical lines on the next bracket over. In this instance, a sense of enclosure trumps proximity in terms of grouping and is at least partially responsible for why we associate this set of lines with one another more readily in Archigram’s plan for the Monte Carlo Entertainment Center than we do this set of lines.

The next example displays a series of lines – some of which are curvilinear and others rectilinear. According to the concept of good continuation, we perceive the existence of two intersecting lines – one which is curvilinear and the other rectilinear – because that is the simplest solution that we can come up with from the retinal image being processed. The application of color to the image makes other solutions more reasonable.

In the plan of Chartres Cathedral, the directionalities of the nave and the transept are so strong that each are read as independent bars. This occurs despite the fact that the apse half of the nave contains a second side aisle, which distinguishes it formally from the rest of the plan. Also, three arms terminate in rectilinear forms, which might encourage us to group the elements like this.

The law of enclosure, or common region, is represented here. In an architectural example of this law, the plan of SANAA’s 21st Century Museum corrals a population of seemingly disconnected forms with a circular perimeter.

This represents the law of connectedness in its most basic manifestation, as shown here. Robert Venturi’s use of the lintel above the entryway at his mother’s house in Chestnut Hill serves this purpose in the design of the front façade.

The theory of good continuation is closely related to another Gestalt concept of organization that is pertinent to a complete understanding of the way in which we perceive form.

The principle of Pragnanz states, that when stimuli are ambiguous, the perception will
be as “good” (meaning simple, regular, and symmetric) as the “prevailing conditions” allow. In cases where the information is ambiguous, such as a partly hidden figure, the viewer tends to perceive the simplest shape consistent with the information available.

This diagram shows what appears to be an uninterrupted segment of a circle passing behind a rectangular surface, whereas here we perceive an interruption in the hidden segment due to the additional information that is provided by the three equidistant breaks along the circumference of the circle. We correct for the missing information by applying the simplest solution possible.

In a final example, it is feasible to conclude that nothing is hidden beneath the rectangle due to the break in the circle directly opposite the segment in question that is exactly the same width.

In the north elevation of the Gehry House in Santa Monica, CA, we find an excellent example of how a number of these ideas perform simultaneously.

The similarity between the dimensions of the “kitchen window” and those of the “window frame” has us perceive that the window was previously set into the frame and has since fallen to its current position. The line established by the top part of the fence on the right side of the image sets up a datum that is confirmed by its relationship to the vertex of the two sloping lines of the fence on the opposite side of the opening. The three rectangular windows in this view are grouped together by the eye due to the
similarity of their shapes, independent of the fact that they all exist on different materials and, in some cases, on different planes. And finally, the effect of Pragnanz can be seen. Although this is all of the information that we are given about the form of the window, we impose a much more regular and complete form on the composition. As can be seen from these interior photographs, the kitchen window is never actually constructed in that manner. The complete form is simply a figment of our imaginations.

At this point, it will be beneficial to introduce an individual who intellectually bridged the gap between the psychological interests of the Gestalts and the application of their theories of visual perception to an understanding of the arts and aesthetics. That person is Rudolf Arnheim.

Born in Berlin in 1904, Arnheim enrolled in the University of Berlin in 1923 to study psychology and philosophy with minor areas of study in the histories of art and music. There, at the University of Berlin, he studied with Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and the other founding members of Gestalt psychology. These relationships greatly influenced Arnheim’s ideas about the inherent connections between art and visual perception that were to form the basis of his thought and writing throughout his career.

In his seminal work, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, Arnheim applies the principles of the Gestalts to an understanding of art through a discussion of those ideas in terms of balance, shape, form, growth, space, light, color, movement, dynamics, and expression.
Here, I present two of Arnheim’s examples, along with his expert criticism, to elucidate the aforementioned connections.

In reference to this work by Picasso, Arnheim says the following:

“The similarity and difference of parts contribute conspicuously to the composition of Picasso’s small gouache Seated Woman. The similarity of the geometric shapes throughout the picture emphasizes the unity of the whole and understates, in the cubist manner, the distinction between the woman and the screen-like background. The distinction, however, is made clear by other means. Essentially a left slant is used for the figure, a right slant for the ground; the factor of orientation, that is, serves to subdivide the picture into its two main subjects. As to shape, the circular units are limited to the figure of the woman, and are distributed in such a way that they emphasize the figure’s pyramidal structure. The one curved form outside the woman’s body is the elbow rest of the green chair – an intermediary between the angular setting and the organic body.”

Color supports the subdivision produced by orientation and shape, but at the same time adds variety to the composition by counteracting these structural tendencies to some extent. With the exception of the dark brown shades, used outside as well as inside the figure, every color belongs either to the figure or to the background.

The vertical chain of the yellows gives unity and distinction to the woman. The step-like head-shoulder-body progression at the left is unified by the light browns, while orange holds the right side together and connects with the egg-shaped patch at the bottom. The continuity of the background, interrupted by the figure, is re-established by similarity of color. The greens “mend” the split-up chair, and on the right side a darkish brown connects two parts of the background that are separated by the woman’s protruding arm. The interplay of similarities and corresponding dissimilarities in this picture creates a tight-knit relational network.

Two general points are well illustrated by the Picasso example. First, similarity and difference are relative judgments. Whether objects look alike depends on how different they are from their environment. Thus the round shapes resemble each other compellingly despite their differences because they are surrounded by angular, straight-lined shapes. Second, in the complexity of artistic composition the factors of grouping are often set against one another. Broken shapes are mended across spatial distance by similarity of color. Difference of color is counteracted by similarity of shape. This counterpoint of connection and segregation enhances the richness of the artist’s conception.”

Arnheim then offers the following critique of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres’ La Source:

“La Source, painted by Ingres at the age of seventy-six in the year 1856, represents a girl standing upright in a frontal position and holding a water jug. At first sight it shows such qualities as lifelikeness, sensuousness, simplicity. Richard Muther notes that Ingres’
nudes make the observer almost forget that he is looking at works of art. “An artist who was a god seems to have created naked human beings.” We may well share this experience and at the same time ask: how lifelike is, for example, the posture of the figure? If we judge the girl as a person of flesh and blood, we find that she is holding the jug in a painfully artificial way. This discovery comes as a surprise because to the eye her attitude was and is rather natural and simple. Within the two-dimensional world of the picture plane it presents a clear and logical solution. The girl, the jug, and the act of pouring are shown completely. They are lined up side-by-side in the plane with a thoroughly “Egyptian” passion for clarity and neglect of realistic posture.

Thus, the basic arrangement of the figure turns out to be anything but an obvious solution. To make the right arm take such a detour around the head and “get away with it” required imagination and mastery. Moreover, the location, shape, and function of the jug evoke significant associations. The body of the jug can be seen as an inverted likeness of its neighbor, the head of the girl. Not only are they similar in shape, but both have one free, unobstructed flank, which carries an ear (or a handle), and one flank that is slightly overlapped. Both are tilted to the left, and there is a correspondence between the flowing water and the flowing hair...

The overall shape (of the body) indicates a straight vertical axis of symmetry; but the symmetry is nowhere strictly fulfilled, except in the face, which is a small model of completed perfection. The arms, the breasts, the hips, the knees, and the feet are merely swinging variations on a potential symmetry. Similarly, the vertical is not actually realized anywhere; it merely results from the obliquities of smaller axes, which compensate one another. The direction changes at least five times in the axes of the head, the chest, the pelvis, the calves, and the feet. The straightness of the whole is made up of oscillating parts.”

It was in the publication of a subsequent text, however, that Arnheim began to apply these insights more directly to an interpretation of architecture. In that book, The Dynamics of Architectural Form, he describes the sectional qualities of Nervi’s Municipal Stadium in Florence:

“In Nervi’s design, the visible stability of the vertical-horizontal framework is explicitly stated. Even the relation between the roof and the vertical supports of the back is close to a right angle – close enough to make the slight curvature of the rooftop surface appear as a deviation from the horizontal. This reference to the flat horizontal increases the expressive strength of the rise. Within the basically rectangular framework the inclined plane of the seats acts as a sturdy diagonal. The openness of the box toward the front answers the need of the spectators to have their view unimpeded by columns. But this openness would leave the roof looking precariously unsupported were it not for the cantilevered beams, which transform the roof into a gracefully bent wedge. The weight of this wedge is centered in the well-supported back of the building, and the wedge diminishes in bulk as it swings toward the opening. Like the steel...
bars of Mies’ Barcelona chair, the profile of Nervi’s roof translates the combined theme of rising and supporting into visible dynamics by an elastic combination of curvature and straightness.”

Of course the way in which we perceive three-dimensional space and the emergent, phenomenal qualities of and between architectural elements is more complex than can be accounted for in a discussion that focuses solely on the phenomena of visual perception as they relate to two-dimensional stimuli. The risk of such an approach to the design of architecture would be that it is reduced to nothing more than a manipulation of surface aesthetics or the preparation of drawings.

This is what has happened with the abuse of Robert Venturi’s writings on the duck and the decorated shed in the hands of ill-informed individuals. And so, with these thoughts in mind, I would like to present a project from the very early years of my architectural education.

The project was for a group called the Amateur Keyboard Institute and the program consisted of an auditorium, administrative offices, and private practice rooms. Interested in the dynamics of the relationship between spectator and performer, I embarked on a study of Charles Garnier’s Paris Opera House. What fascinated me about this project was the inversion of the roles of spectator and performer that each theater-goer presumably passed through as they arrived at the opera house. On display upon entry, the patrons proceed up the Grand Stairs
to the mezzanine where they socialize and gaze down upon the new arrivals below. The show is as much about seeing and being seen as it is about the actual play. The Grand Stair is vital to the function of this scheme.

In composing the design for the Amateur Keyboard Institute, I borrowed the idea of the stair-as-stage, but rearranged the other pieces of program to enhance its effect. The grand entry stair was retained, but rather than separate the space of the theater from the act of procession, the circulation was allowed to continue into the theater through a spiraling staircase in the middle of the space. The stage was situated directly inside of the stair-case and the seating was located to either side. This arrangement had the spectators enter adjacent to the performance space, as opposed to at the rear of the seating, to amplify the feeling that everyone is “on stage.” The spiral stair continued from the auditorium to the rooftop where bleachers provided a space for after-show socializing and a view back to the entrance of the building.

In an attempt to experiment with spatial perception, the ceiling of the entry sloped down at the same pitch at which the stairs rose. The walls canted in on either side. The intended effect was to exaggerate the depth of the space in the same manner that Bernini did at the Scala Regia or, more recently, in the project for Dash Dogs by Lewis, Tsurumaki, Lewis.

The hyperbolic frames of the windows on the façade are meant to express the argument on a more detailed level. The work of Smiljan Radic, a Chilean architect,
has dealt with related ideas. In his design for El Mestizo Restaurant in Santiago, Chile, Radic employs a non-standard architectural element, rather than formal manipulation, to alter the perception of the space.

In using chunks of granite to support the concrete beams which form the structure of the roof, Radic creates an atmosphere in which the estrangement of the rough boulders from their pertinent place on the mountainside is sensible. One source of inspiration for the design can be found in the early pavilions of the Norwegian architect Sverre Fehn, while another precedent is a bit more obscure, but far more intriguing.

Berthold Lubetkin’s design for Highpoint II in North London employs a familiar architectural form in an innovative way to evoke an interesting perceptual effect. Josep Quetglas describes the project in this way:

“In Highpoint II, the daring, thin slab of a concrete canopy was supported by two statues – reproductions of the caryatids from the Erechtheion. Lubetkin explained this by recognizing that any kind of support for the concrete slab was considered a loss compared to the formal capability of the slab to suggest a tense cantilever without supports. One way to render the support invisible was to dissolve it optically among the garden elements, seen through the canopy and next to it. In gardens, one can find statues. The caryatids are part of the garden, like the bushes or the flowerbeds, and only by chance coincide with the canopy and fit under it. Their politeness doesn’t let them be aware of the contact, and our gaze knows how to distinguish the different pieces: some of these face the garden, and others face the building.”

One of Radic’s earlier projects – a private residence in Los Lirios, Chile – provides another interesting study. Using a device familiar to the Mannerist painters, Radic crams the interior program of the project into one half of the plan. A retractable wall which sits slightly outside of a row of slender, white columns forms an ephemeral divide between interior space and exterior space. The living, dining, and sitting rooms are tied to the exterior space through the material treatment of the floor, and related to the interior space of the home through their position on the same side of the central axis.

Almost the entire plan of the home is bifurcated horizontally into exterior and interior spaces, but is fused through the continuity of an additional exterior space to the southeast. The exterior spaces are divided by a Miesian beam, a change in floor material to the northwest, and by a brick wall to the southeast. But the most intriguing aspect of the plan is the group of vertical, cylindrical elements that is formed by the two existing walnut trees and the chimney.

As in the arrangement of the stone clusters at Ryoan-Ji, a balance seems to have been struck in the positioning of the vertical elements at the Chilean House, and the activity between the pieces is equally tenable. If the stones at the Japanese temple can be perceived as a mother tiger crossing a stream with her cubs, then the relationship between the trees at the Chilean
House is one of beckoning and withdrawal. The branch of the exterior tree reaches below the beam to summon his partner who recedes to the corner.

In another residential project located in Chile (this one designed by Pezo von Ellrichshausen Architects), the affect of the design is produced using different devices. The Pael House evolved as a series of sketches that explored form, aperture, and materiality.

In this sketch, we see a caption written in Spanish which says, “La casa que llora,” which can be translated as, “The house that weeps,” below a quick drawing of the project’s silhouette. The sketch and caption seem odd until we get a closer look at the pattern that covers the house. What we learn from the photographs and a short study of the project’s history is that the exterior shell of the home is made of a pigmented concrete wall that was built in layers such that each new layer spilled itself over the previous one. The result of this construction process gives the impression that tears are streaming down the sides of the house and the architects respond by developing a composition for the fenestration which further reinforces this interpretation. His brothers appear to be wailing on the opposite side as well.

Despite the superficial nature of this example, I mention it because it brings us back to the basic elements of 2D visual perception from which this exploration departed. It also reinforces the idea that architectural design has the capacity to communicate narratives, meanings, and
emotions. In fact, the existence of Weepy at the Pael House places this project in a long line of architecture that has played off of the human tendency to anthropomorphize even the most simple of compositional elements. Other characters that make up that prestigious family include: Sparky at John Hejduk’s Kreuzberg Tower in Berlin, Dopey at Gunnar Asplund’s Snellman House, Sneaky at the Rudin House by Herzog and de Meuron, and Wacky at Le Corbusier’s church in Ronchamp, to name a few.

To conclude, I would like to quickly return to the mental puzzle with which we began the presentation.

For those of you who have yet to figure out the solution, one possibility is presented in this image. The lines must be extended beyond the dots in order to connect them within the four line limit. Most people assume incorrectly that they may not do this. This type of problem solving was essential to the Gestalt theorists’ interest in the creative process through which a person achieves original insight in everyday life. They proposed that problems have certain demands that are readily grasped, which lead people to attempt non-random solutions. Becoming fixated on one hypothesis or one function of an object – often without realizing it – is the chief obstacle to insight. When people let go of implicit assumptions, their understanding of a problem is sometimes dramatically reorganized, enabling them suddenly to “see” the solution, complete with the accompanying “aha!” experience.
2012
Oculi
Sam Ludwig | Advisor: Jacqueline Gargus

Where Have All The Dreamers Gone
Norman Ai | Advisor: Stephen Turk

Kissing Cousins
Joe Twelmeyer | Advisor: Beth Blostein

Small Gestures, Big Payoff
Ryan Docken | Advisor: Jacqueline Gargus

Miniature Architecture
Carrie Moradi | Advisor: Karen Lewis
Oculi
This lecture stems from a particular interest of mine with regards to photography. It is also stems from a particular frustration that I have with contemporary modes of representation, and the readiness with which architects valorize certain techniques. The worst of which, is the totalizing perspective, which is endemic in both photography and computer rendering. The God’s-eye helicopter views of Iwan Baan are exemplary in how they reduce architectural qualities in the most simplistic of ways. The interiors are even more contrived, wide-angle lenses warp human figures beyond the point of recognition and, if the figures are not warped, they occupy spaces in a manner that can only be described as a cliché.

The New York Times states that his aim is to “portray buildings as backdrops for his photographs of people”. Stan Allen describes them as “images that narrate the life and interactions that occur within architecture.” Why then, if human figures are of the greatest importance, his primary modes of depicting buildings either erase or distort figures with reckless abandon? Computer renderings from offices such as BIG, Reiser-Umemoto, Eric Owen Moss and Morphosis are equally as offensive as all aim towards a comprehensive and totalizing view of their architecture. The aim is somewhere between photo-realism and fantasy. A 21st century equivalent to the self-indulgent, twenty-foot-long, Beaux-Arts water-colored elevations.

Recently, when asked whether he preferred axonometric or perspective, Stan Allen responded; “I belong to the axonometric generation, schooled at Cooper Union

Ludwig
when John Hejduk drilled it into us that perspectives lie. Of course all drawings lie, but I still carry that burden from the Cooper days. I like the precision, measurability, and instrumentality of the axonometric -- a perspective is just a picture.” In Practice: Architecture, Technique & Representation, Allen is much more nuanced with regards to the nature of drawing, observing “the represented object does not exist prior to its depiction in drawing: not something that once was and is no longer present, but something not yet present.”

A critical difference then, between drawings and photographs, is that drawings are forward-looking and projective, whereas photographs are backwards-looking and reflexive. Perhaps then, if one treats photography as both a reflexive and projective endeavor, and by analyzing photographs as one would drawings, new organizational and spatial conditions could emerge. If leagues of architectural historians have constructed their arguments based on the nature of drawings, the nature of materials and details, and the nature of socio-political circumstances, to name a few, why is it that the nature of the photograph of a built work is so comprehensively ignored.

Very rarely though are architects criticized for the nature of the photographs of their work, as photos are commonly treated as an equivalent substitute for first-hand experience. We all know that they cannot substitute experience, however, it still remains that most photography is intent on portraying space as the eye sees, rather than utilizing photography as a tool and
exploiting the ways in which cameras see. Images, in the traditional sense, are merely windows unto buildings, to be understood as representative of building qualities alone, not photographic qualities. To quote Roland Barthes, “reality, is that of a having-been-there, because in all photographs there is the constantly amazing evidence: this took place, in this way.”

To this, one must ask, what exactly “took place” and who is to say, “in what way?” The architect? The photographer? It is unclear; but as a consequence of this ambiguity, an opportunity exists. An opportunity that allows one to undermine the foundation upon which photography’s documentary status has been established. An opportunity to utilize photography towards investigative means, rather than descriptive ends. And an opportunity to supplant painting with photography, with the aim of revealing new spatial investigations in architecture.

PART I. THE OBJECT
At the Casa da Musica, one could begin to read the material as a means to deny an exact comprehension of scale when viewed through photographs. In a way, the isomorphic pattern of the Interactive Computer Room and the comically over-scaled gold leaf of the concert hall are veneered signifiers to the building’s forbearer, the miniscule Y2K house. One way of reading the rooms then, is not variations on a theme of being different colors, but variations on a theme of how to destabilize a photograph’s ability to depict space due to a material palate that refuses to stay still. On top of that, the highly differentiated secondary rooms are linked by a sequence of passages that all force perspective. This is especially true in the Computer Room, where a three-dimensional space has been clad in a two-dimensional space, and, within the picture is an illustration of another three-dimensional space whose orthographic nature is unstable with regards to depth and volume.

However, much of the spatial indeterminateness one experiences through the photographs is not present in its representation. Oddly enough, the spatial and material implications of 16th c. Persian Miniatures have much more to do with Casa da Musica than the building’s own representation, where the only attempt to deny ones perception of built scale is a bare foam model whose very existence is an index of a scalar shift that has yet to occur. With Persian Miniatures however, material articulation, volumetric implication, and human depiction all work together in implying a space whose scale is constantly in flux. The relationships around and distances between elements are consistently called into question, materials operate to undermine whether or not volumes recede back into space, and people are placed in such a way that they are depicted as both occupying a shared field and floating as individuals at the same time.

A contemporary practice interested with the material codification of individuality is, of course, MVRDV. A prototypical gesture by the office is to afford entities their own unit and signify that ownership through varying colors and materials. What’s curious though is that while their material strategies become increasingly commonplace; the office also
investigates much more powerful modes of articulating individuality. Their three porters lodges are transformed according to vision, where one is denied a totalizing view of any of the objects unless presented with multiple images. While each lodge is afforded a nearly identical entry façade, as one looks further, it becomes increasingly clear that the perspectival transformation of one lodge is replaced with another transformation at the next. For example, a photograph of the brick lodge produces effects more synonymous with axonometric projection, the wood lodge appears to bend around the tree but is in fact straight, and the metal lodge stretches its prototypical house façade beyond the point of recognition on the other end.

My own investigation with regards to material confusing spatiality and formal transformations that require multiple images occurred in the design for a prototypical Duplex and Triplex. In plan, the disparate collection of orthogonal rooms is at once recognizable with a project such as Gehry’s Winton House, where each piece is articulated as a piece. However, in the Camoplex, the articulation of each room contradicts its status as an individual, owing to boundaries that slip and overlap; rooms that are encroached upon by some then break away from others; where subsequently space is denied claim by any single entity.

Seen this way, the plan could be compared to the photographs of Etienne Maréy (Mar-Ay) where objects (a man pole-vaulting over a nun), are pulled apart, and multiple exposures coalesce into an image where the superimposition of different moments of an entity critically attacks the stasis and knowability of a body.

On the exterior, the houses are clad in a camouflage pattern, where part-to-whole relationships and the objective status of each piece are called into question. What is important to bear in mind is that photography is predisposed towards flattening space, and here, operates sympathetically with the nature of the building’s articulation and further challenges the comprehension of any element as a self-contained entity. Cindy Sherman exploits the flattening nature of photography in her Rear Screen Projection series. Where she photographs herself in a studio, then by standing in front of a screen that is being projected upon by the image of a city, conveys the sense of “having been there” because the spatial reality, of her standing in front of a screen, is flattened in the final photographic.

Much like any single view of the Camoplex, Sherman requires the presence of another text or drawing for a more thorough understanding. To quote Michael Meredith: “It is not the architectural rhetoric, nor the drawings, nor the house itself that makes Eisenman’s Houses ultimately interesting or relevant, but the relationship between them.” What Meredith leaves out though is that the nature of the photographs matter just as much as the other modes of representation. And, whether its Casa da Musica, the porters lodges, or the Camoplex, it is necessary to make a distinction between architectural and photographic arguments, and that once a distinction is made, it becomes possible to extract qualities of each.
PART II. THE SURFACE

To elaborate, frontal photographs of Mies’ Post Office in Chicago depict a collection of worlds onto its forward-most plane, this flatness means that it becomes incredibly difficult to extract those spaces from the photograph, as they are different from the spaces a body experiences. It is the frontal nature of the photograph that allows one to extrapolate specific spatial qualities that have little bearing on the ways one actually experiences the space, either in person, or through other photographs.

The appearance of compressed space of the frontal photograph can be compared to the Phenomenal Transparency of Rowe and Slutsky, where, in order to get a more complex space, Leger deploys figures upon figures, rather than fields. This can be compared to the Literal Transparency of Moholy-Nagy, where the layering of abstract forms depicts a traditionally expected spatial order and fails to bring about any of the ambiguity that was true with Leger. What Rowe and Slutsky addressed with regards to painting is, to some degree, a reverie on the compressive nature of orthographic projection.

The consequences of those specific paintings, or rather paintings-in-general, have been to act as provocations for architects to then spatialize. In the Renaissance, Masaccio’s Holy Trinity tests out the barrel vault as a framing device; Alberti realized the space with San Andrea in Mantua. Tintoretto removes St. Mark’s body; Borromini designs a hallway. Claude Lorrain populates fantastical landscapes with little buildings; Hoare and Flitcroft do
just that. Picasso dissolves a clarinet player; Le Corbusier inserts a slot o’ space behind his façade at Garches.

With Picasso though and others at the beginning of the 20th century, the traditional notion of monocular perspective and the static eye viewing the static object was shattered by the explosive reformulation of pictorial space effected by painters in the early twentieth century. For example, El Lissitzky’s self-portrait in axonometric depicts volumes and surfaces that share the same space, in theory. Two years later he aims to construct this axonometric space as the Abstract Cabinet, a room to display works by Mondrian, Leger, Moholy-Nagy, Gabo, etc. The room though, once realized, is unfortunately just that, a room. And so while Lissitzky’s drawing is ambitious with regards to an unstable ground plane, and a space that can unfold temporally thus revealing different dimensions and ways of habitation, when constructed, it is simply a cubic volume of space.

One can see then that techniques of representation are not merely drawings, but they can act as a provocation that architects begin to spatialize. And representation is not merely about delineating architecture, it’s also about delineating a spatial aspiration. For five hundred years, architects have moved from painterly space to architectural space. Now though, by separating the architecture seen from the architecture pictured, and by exploiting spatial effects revealed through photography, one is afforded a similar relationship to that of painting and architecture. However, this new relationship is more tightly woven than of
painting to architecture. Because the images are of architecture, the effects are derived from architecture, and the ambiguities that exist between architecture and photography can be more tightly linked to the subsequent production of architecture.

**PART III. THE FRAME**

Hans Werlemann’s canonical photograph of OMA’s Patio Villas engenders an unequivocal ambiguity. By photographing the work in such a way that the inner courtyard appears to be a free-standing object, it puts forth a radically different photographic space that differs from the space as a human body would experience it. To clarify, the photographer is standing outside and looking in. The reason why one sees the interior void as an exterior free-standing object is that when looking at glass, dark surfaces reflect more than light ones. So, the light filled void is seen as a light filled object because the dark ceiling is (reflecting back, or) replaced by the sky outside. Oddly enough, the aesthetic of the photographic space has actually more to do with 17th c. Dutch painting, where the Villa’s courtyard is depicted as a folly in a landscape.

Coincidentally, a background on 17th century Dutch Painting provides one with an interesting lens upon which to study additional OMA schemes. Svetlana Alpers argues that the nature of framing and the ways the eye is isolated are critical towards understanding the differences between Northern (or Dutch) art and Southern (or Italian) art. In the north, the world appears to exist as if it has projected an image of itself on a canvas before the viewer, with no prior frame existing. In the south, frames are critical, as well as the laying out of a perspectival order. Alpers attributes this difference to the North’s allegiance with Kelper and his analysis of the eye, where in 1604 he reveals that “vision is brought about by a picture of the thing seen being formed on the concave surface of the retina.” In other words, vision itself is an act of representation.

Samuel van Hoogstraten’s peep-box (specific to this time and place, a box with two little holes that one looks through) aims to control vision by isolating the eye and constructing two perspectively corrected scenes, where each aims to draw the viewer’s gaze into a fragmented and many-layered world. At the same time, Hoogstraten leaves one end of the box open to, on the one hand, allow light to enter, and, on the other hand, reveal the artifice that a single point of view entails.

At OMA’s Campus Center for IIT, an identical condition emerges, where wide, revealing views are paired next to single-loaded, forced-perspective corridors. Again and again at IIT, forced perspective is paired with more expansive views, and it is this pairing that binds the project to another Dutch Painter, Pieter de Hooch, who often depicts multiple spaces simultaneously with a high degree of perspectival compression and expansion. What is interesting at IIT though are the ways in which Rem subverts expectations towards the most blasé spatial configurations, the one-point corridor.

This is done in a multitude of ways, views out, reflections of views out, ceiling grids that align and misalign, and lighting that
is defined more by chiaroscuro than the sun. Most interesting though are the corridors that are bounded by glass, where a kaleidoscopic transparency breaks up any direct gaze. In this way, Rem exploits glass’s intrinsic ability as a collector of worlds upon its surface to destroy any notion of perspectival clarity, in other words, an exaggeration of the Miesian plane. Adjacent to this ramp is a space whose perspectival existence is defined by reflected surfaces. Most surprisingly, the slot of space at the end of the room that Rem names The Reflecting Pool, a sly nod to the Barcelona Pavilion. Yet, where Mies deploys a horizontal pool of water, Rem recontextualizes this mirrored surface, and makes the back wall a literal mirror.

The connections between the two buildings grow to be even weirder when one looks at the nature of the spaces before their respective reflecting pools. It turns out that Rem literally drops all the formal and material characteristics of the Barcelona Pavilion into the Campus Center. The location of the column, curtained wall, consistent mullion, all match perfectly. Seen this way, one might begin to read the material conditions at IIT as a reverie on the Miesian panorama, where Mies’ clarifying collages are exaggerated to the point of no return.

Rem not only introduces notions of the panorama through the deft arrangement of surfaces, he literally drops another self-contained world into the project, and presents it as if it were a panorama. Stan Allen describes the effects of the National Gallery in Berlin as “flattening the city into a representation of itself.” In a way, one might begin to read all of Rem’s effects as an exaggeration of the ones intrinsic to Mies’ work.

To further illustrate the point, a frontal photograph of the Barcelona Pavilion is of great use; for it makes self-evident that the intrinsic nature of the material facilitates the simultaneous, co-planar existence of completely different scenes. Two figures inside the building walk in front of a curtain, a deep window exists through the entire building, the immediate landscape is reflected back, and a landscape continues on, somewhere. To some degree all of these photographic elevation effects are present in the plan of the IIT Campus Center, where both the ground and roof planes are deformed to produce the effects laid out by the elevation of the Barcelona Pavilion. (Expansion, dissolved expansion, compartmentalization, expansion…)

To come full circle, and back to Dutch painting, one might look to Hoogstraten, who is keenly aware that the world itself is fragmented and impossible to grasp in a single view. Hoogstraten then constructs a peep-box as an exposé unto the nature of vision, as Kepler set out to solve and subsequently revealed. And Pieter de Hooch, who pairs two radically different spatial configurations adjacent to one another, one near, another far (and unclear) in order to say that nothing is ever completely knowable.

For both the painters in the 17th century and Rem at IIT, no space can be made comprehensible in a single view, multiple
views are critical, and even when presented with multiple views, those spaces are further called into question owing to the transformational awareness of the nature of representation. Facilitating Rem to utilize the strategies of de Hooch, who depicts two separate worlds simultaneously, Hoogstraten, who with his peep-box isolates the eye then reveals the artifice of its construction and Mies, whose views and material palate are open to questioning. To construct these arguments, an understanding of the nature of the photography in dialogue with the building is critical, rather than the nature of the building seen through an ocular vacuum. Or, as Reinhold Martin puts it, “one must look at a mirror, rather than in it.”

**PART IV. THE MIRROR**

Mirrors get us to Anish Kapoor’s *Cloud Gate*. A way to understand The Bean is as either one of two things, a self-contained object in a landscape that is indifferent to its context, or, a mirror who by its very nature of being reflective, is unavoidably tied to the city of Chicago. Photographs taken at a distance from The Bean exaggerate the object-status of the sculpture, by capturing on its surface a world that has been highly compressed, if taken at face value, one would understand the city as being miles away. Owing to its convex curvature, the city is again called into question as it is warped and thrown towards the periphery.

This condition is radically different from the underbelly of the piece, which, when over-exposed to erase the background, the city is erased as well (remember, the over-exposure is critical). To address some
painterly qualities, Raphael’s *School of Athens* comes to mind. Both the photograph and painting utilize an arch to frame the upper reaches depicted. In the Raphael, a wall of people are inserted in a way to deny the perspectival rush of the unbuilt church, while at the Kapoor, people punctuate space as indexes of a less clear perspectival order. In fact, the conditions underneath The Bean are not all that dissimilar to Superstudio’s *Journey from A to B*, where the world is presented as an idealized, uniform stage. The photograph also depicts a world where Superstudio’s desire for the elimination of formal structures has been realized. And while on the exterior the city has been warped and miniaturized, underneath, it has been completely erased owing to some proto-black hole, where all that is left are people wandering aimlessly and basking in their own narcissism on a sterilized plinth completely divorced from Chicago.

If one looks to film, the photograph depicts a space that is a dead ringer for the climax of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001*, where the reflective upper limits of the sculpture produce effects much like those that occur when the lone surviving astronaut is “hurled on a journey through inner and outer space.” The bottom half of the photograph depicts the space immediately after that kaleidoscopic passage, in which the astronaut is placed in a “human zoo approximating a terrestrial hospital environment” (to quote Kubrick). Or, it exists more precisely as Superstudio’s plinth, this time compartmentalized, alien, and with Louis XV furniture.

Upon further viewing of the sculpture as a device for producing photographic effects
that are tied to architectural theory, one must inevitably talk about Corbusian city planning; where enormous public spaces are punctuated by objects that operate as self-contained worlds. The objects collect the functions that exist within the world, hover over a landscape, and from afar assert an object-like dominance, while on the inside are much more nuanced and complex. Much like... the effects produced through a specific photograph of The Bean, where actually, what’s true for Corbusier is truer for Kapoor.

Another photograph of a space that exists between two worlds is the entry corridor of Herzog & de Meuron’s Elsässertor. In constructing the image, two photographs are stitched together; where one corresponds to the shattered upper domain, the other, an unfolded panorama at eye level. The photograph seamlessly depicts not only a six-fold window into the space, with one explicitly framed and five reflected, but also a two-fold moment in time, which calls into question the entire structure that validates photography’s documentary status. As a consequence of the spatial and temporal ambiguities, the indexical status of photography defined by Rosalind Krauss is replaced by principles more like analytical cubism.

In both the Elsässertor image and The Portuguese, perspective is called into question in order to combine several views within a single image. What is critically different is that the photograph throws objects all across the frame, rather than dissolving them as Braque does. That movement of objects is actually more like the Futurist endeavor to reject centralized and static compositions in favor of simultaneity and movement. For example, in the sculptures of Boccioni, all entities are construed to be dynamic, not only the object, but the visual apprehension of that object from a moving eye.

With the Elsässertor, a better comparison might be Duchamp’s sculpture The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, which is explicit about ways of seeing. Three-dimensional space is paired with four-dimensional space; image unfolding in time paired with image seen from a static vantage point. And the impossibility of reconciling the bride above and the bachelors below is constantly in play. This difficulty of reconciling differences within the sculpture can be compared to the ease with which they can be reconciled in the space within a photograph. With large glass, much of its power is derived from the nature of the world around the piece, when one moves around it, the room it exists within is reframed, and the presence and reflection of bodies on its surface all operate simultaneously in a disorienting manner that more or less destroys ones fixed understanding of the piece.

While the photograph is just that, a photograph and not a sculpture, the temporal duality, the photograph on the top and bottom were created at different moments in time, depicts a space that is insistent on reflecting moments in time, rather than sculpture, which reflects space. At one point in time this destabilizes completely any totalizing reading as to the nature of both the photograph and the space being photographed.
A contemporary photographer active in the pursuit of destabilizing photography’s truth status is Jeff Wall. In his photograph *The Flooded Grave*, Wall seamlessly puts together three separate photographs that call into question “the ontological consistency of things being depicted.” One image is of an existing graveyard, the second is of a flock of birds taken at a nondescript shipyard, and the third image is the grave itself, which was constructed entirely in Wall’s studio. With Wall, each constituent piece entails its own point of view, in a manner similar to the objects depicted in Braque’s analytical cubist period. And, much like any photograph of Large Glass, Wall “reveals to us that we can no longer treat a photograph as evidence of what the world is really like,” in that it is ever-changing and apt to misrepresentation.

**PART V. THE SPLIT**

If one of the aims of futurism was to literally set into motion the figures within the frame, it also sought to throw perspective into motion as well. In Boccioni’s *La Strada Entra Nella Casa*, or, *The Street Enters the Room*, one struggles to ascertain where spaces are resolved perspectively, a condition distinct from the frontal dissolution of perspective by Braque and Picasso. Photography, unlike Cubism or Futurism, cannot escape the ever-present reality of perspective. Laszlo-Moholy Nagy attempted to call into question perspectival resolution, through his photograms (technically, not perspectives) and exaggerated points of view. However, these attempts only confirmed perspectives existence, rather than destabilize and call it into question.

Many devices that allow for such destabilization have already been addressed; the transformational patterning at Casa Da Musica, the kaleidoscopic perspectives at IIT, the erased world of The Bean, and the fragmented space of the Elsasserator. Two further modes of destabilization are those that occur when architectural devices throw vanishing points across the picture plane, in this case, the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, and the Wexner Center.

At the CAC, the graphic power of the ramp system and adjacent fragmentary galleries deny a clear understanding as to where spaces originate. A similar strategy is used at the Wexner Center, where, rather than black gestures, Eisenman deploys multiple grids and planes at different scales that coexist simultaneously in a way that denies any perspectively resolute moment.

The irreconcilable collision of grids and scales occurs again at the DAAP, but in a much more elaborate way. At DAAP, if one is to align the camera with the boundaries established on the floor and ceiling, one can produce a separatrix whose spatial consequences transcend Eisenman’s rotations, slips, and arrays. What is revealed in the photograph is that DAAP articulates not just an index of its formal genesis, but incongruent worlds. On the right wood, glass, and steel coalesce into a clarified and reconciled domain. However, on the left the ceiling drops, the floor pattern breaks, and the space beyond the columns is tilted, broken and fragmented in a way where different orders fail to bring about a coherent world. So, while the right half confirms ones notions of perspective and
spatial boundaries, the left half confounds those signifiers of perspectival validity. Put another way, each half corresponds to one view from Hoogstraten’s peep-box, where each environment is stylistically similar, but calls the nature of vision into question in different ways.

In the design of the Helsinki Central Library, my aim was to hold in suspension as many different spatial, structural, and formal strategies as possible. This resulted in three discrete worlds that are juxtaposed next to one another, and then subsequently entwine into a unified, albeit discrete, entity. At the same time these multiple worlds, as they appear on the outside, birth new worlds within, where the objective status of each is called into question through doubly thick structures, bodies that pull away from one another, and figured spaces figuring new space again and again, to name but a few strategies. On top of that, figures are embedded within figures that in themselves are doubly thick. To generalize the scheme, formally self-indulgent, yes, but impossible to grasp with a single image, yes again.

The impossibility of conveying Knowlton in a single photograph is one of its key attributes. However, when one traverses the catwalk overlooking the main space, it is the juxtaposition of what appears to be the most relentlessly banal corridor imaginable against the layered Piranesian space that generates tension between the two sides. On the left the vanishing point is affirmed in a relentless fashion, mullions make clear what the destination is. On the right, the spaces float freely in a manner similar to, but opposite of de Hooch paintings, where
rather than terminating the scene with a wall or people, it expands indefinitely. The implications of such a condition are similar to that of DAAP, two disparately articulated worlds next to one another, but, what gives Knowlton its particular strength is how the building juxtaposes the isolated eye and revealed scene of Hoogstraten’s peep-box simultaneously in order to relieve the monotony of the single loaded corridor to the left, and stabilize the vastness to the right. It should be noted that the position of the photographer is critical, and that if one moves out of position, the separatrix argument falls apart.

Peruzzi utilizes this ‘locked-in-position’ technique at the Villa Farnesina in a much more explicit way, where two paintings appear to extend space off into the distance. What occurs is in fact a perspectival trick, and whose effectiveness is directly tied to the location of the viewer, if one moves off the privileged spot, the trick vanishes. And, on the subject of tricks, one should always be mindful of architects bearing photographs, for the power with which one is able to manipulate expectations is enormous. Obviously these two corridors do not exist at either Knowlton or DAAP, but the degree to which one buys into their spatial reality is a direct byproduct of photography’s status as a verifiable document. For Krauss; “It is the order of the natural world that imprints itself on the photographic emulsion and subsequently on the photographic print. This quality of transfer or trace gives to the photograph its documentary status, its undeniable veracity.” In the case of the photographs just seen, it is the ease with which viewer is fooled that
photography its documentary status. That if it looks like a photo, walks like a photo, sounds like a photo...

**CONCLUSION**

At this point, it would be wise to go back to the 17th century and to *Las Meninas*. What’s interesting is that for centuries, up until Foucault’s essay in 1966, the characteristic art historical perspective on the painting dealt with its plot. What Foucault does though, and it is intrinsically linked to his status as an outsider from the art historical realm, is introduce the nature of the representation into the discussion. Alpers works along these lines twenty years later by articulating that “it was Velazquez’s ambition in painting *Las Meninas* to embrace two conflicting modes of representation in a single painting... (that) confounds a stable reading, not because of the absence of the viewer-subject, but because the painting holds in suspension two contradictory modes of picturing the relationship of view, and picture, to world.” Those two ways are first, an unframed world that projects itself onto the canvas, and second, a framed view where the painting is treated as a window unto another world. Three hundred years after Velazquez, Picasso reads and makes explicit the modes of representation already apparent in the original.

In architecture, it is my aim to work within such a framework. To produce architecture that compromises an immediate grasp of reality in a straight-forward way; and to hold in suspension multiple modes of vision and space. To conclude, I’ll include a reminder of the spatial arguments set forth by Iwan Baan, which is to say, “Space exists! Look at how great it is from this helicopter and look at how great it is when dancers run around with reckless abandon.” Unfortunately the images leave little room to the imagination, the totalizing view aims to show everything, all the time. To this my goal is to design architecture that is literally impossible to comprehend in a single image. Architecture that breaks Iwan Baans birds-eye renderings, and, much like Breugel’s monkeys do, reveal that those who attempt to totalize and compartmentalize space in images, are chained to them.
Where Have All The Dreamers Gone

Norman Ai
Turk
Imagine, if you will, a vast expanse of space; as far as the eye can see and as infinite as our minds can comprehend. A blank canvas. You enter the space with no particular orientation. There is no north, no south, no east, no west. Just directions in relationship to yourself. As you peer into the horizon, ideas populate your vision, creations from the very depths and recesses of the mind. As the laws of time and physics seem to have no effect in this dimension, you start to design. To create. Cities, towers, houses, streets, boulevards, monuments start to pop up at your beck and call. The power of an architecture that is ungrounded and truly pure. Next thing you know, six days have passed and a world is born. You call it a day and say “it is good”.

And then, the kick, and you are awoken...

In Architecture, dreaming is a lost art. The point of difference begs to revive the ability to write absurdist fictions or evoke baroque fantasies in the education of the architect. Rather than presenting an image of the architect-hero, the architect needs to become the anti-hero to culture and thrive in the realm of outlawed imagination, transcending the need for physical structures; invisible, yet omnipresent. Architecture needs not only to produce the pragmatic and expected, but also the speculative and extraterrestrial. The intent is not prediction, but a provocation or re-imagination, a graphic form of architectural criticism. So, why is dreaming so powerful in design?

CONCEPTION
Introduce the audience into the dream.
Cobb: You remember. It’s the chance to build cathedrals, entire cities, things that never existed, things that could never exist in the real world.
Cobb: It’s genuine inspiration. You create the world of the dream. We bring the subject into the dream and they fill it with their subconscious.
Ariadne: It’s just pure creation.

The purpose of exploring the speculative and otherworldly visions of tomorrow is not for the purpose of making predictions, but rather for the critical engagement that they offer with the present. Borrowing from the techniques of these absurd fictions, architects can create narratives and illustrations of fictional scenarios or cartoons and use them as imaginative tools to further explore the implications and consequences of the dream. The avant garde.

So, what is the avant garde? The term “avant garde” finds its origins in the army. The avant garde or vanguard was the first line of an army advancing into battle. This guard led the army with the purposes of seeking out the enemy and securing ground in advance for the main force. In a cultural sense, the avant garde represents the thinkers who are experimental and innovative, ones who push the boundaries of the status quo.

The French thinker Olinde Rodrigues evoked the cultural meaning of the avant garde when he called for artists to serve as the advanced guard of the masses, insisting that the power of the arts was the quickest and most effective way to social, economical, and political reform. Needless
to say, architects answering the call of the avant guard have had the ideas of reform in mind. However, the resounding charge has also covered the need for expansion in the frontiers of aesthetic experience.

The works of avant garde architects and thinkers, such as Archigram and Superstudio are largely unbuilt, if not unbuildable, even with the advanced technology we have today. However, their ideas find themselves surprisingly adapted into our present day environment, a wonderland filled with “extreme suburbs”, drive through – everythings, robotic bank tellers, and huge HVAC machines plugged into our rooftops. But the avant garde, as provocateurs of the imagination and the dream, have influence reaching further than the blandness of everyday architecture. Herein lies their power and ability for conception. Very much like Leonardo DiCaprio and his crew of dream snatchers, Archigram and Superstudio used the very basic concepts to incept an idea into the minds of the public.

Take, for example, Archigram’s Walking City. The desaturation and highly contrasted look of the photographs used in their collages start to give way to an idea that society as we know it has digressed and become polluted; a simple trick to make an image seem post-apocalyptic and emptied of human life. Packaged with the nomadic entities that dominate the image, one can begin to imply that these machines have become architecture and the architecture has become landscape. The viewer can then paint a picture of the projected future in his head.

A world where the surface has been so desecrated by the footprint of mankind that it is too volatile to walk upon. A world where the populations of each country have reached its point of critical mass and the earth can no longer organically support her inhabitants. A world where...

Ok, you get the point.

The power to imagine, to create an image or idea so compelling that the viewer, the public, can instantaneously immerse and adapt into that image as if it were reality. That is the true power of the dream. However, like Joseph and his amazing technicolor coat, his dreams and the dreams of architects can bring with them a sense of scorn from their viewers and critics.

“Architecture and war are not incompatible. Architecture is war. War is architecture. I am at war with my time, with history, with all authority that resides in fixed and frightened forms. I am one of millions who do not fit in, who have no home, no family, no doctrine, no firm place to call my own, no known beginning or end, no “sacred and primordial site”. I declare war on all icons and finalities, on all histories that would chain me with my own falseness, my own pitiful fears. I know only moments, and lifetimes that are as moments, and forms that appear with infinite strength, then “melt into air”. I am an architect, a constructor of worlds, a sensualist who worships the flesh, the melody, a silhouette against the darkening sky. I cannot know your name. Nor can you know mine. Tomorrow, we begin together the construction of a city.” - Lebbeus Woods.

In the architectural world, Mr. Woods has always been revered as visionary. Although
the permanence of his realized works have stood for no longer than a few months, his work expressed in hand drawings and sketches have made a more lasting impact in the minds of the viewer. Considered even to be the avant garde of the avant garde, Woods’ works tend to always end with an exclamation point rather than a mere, bland, period. His architectural discourse is described as a proclamation of architectural imagination, freed from the constraints of finance and buildability, and as always, uncompromised.

Lebbeus Woods portrays his architectural dreams as the reconstructions of urban warzones. He paints architectural fantasies over bombed marred lands as a place of refuge, the end to a hellish journey. His hand renderings often depict a mere solo or duet of figures giving the impression that this post-apocalyptic projection is just a dream constructed, waiting for the viewer or subject to fill it with the ideas of his/her sub-conscience.

The avant garde, as a unit in the army, led the charge into battle and in turn, took the most damage. Very much like Matthew Broderick and his portrayal of Colonel Robert Shaw of the 54th Massachusetts and his “glorious” charge during the assault on Fort Wagner, the avant garde are tasked with leading the charge in taking new stances and new opportunities in the field of design. Though many of their works may be skewed as too forward thinking or unbuildable, the ideas that they implant and the futures they conjure are written into history as precedent.

Cobb: What is the most resilient parasite? An Idea. A single idea from the human mind can build cities. An idea can transform the world and rewrite all the rules.

The power of conception. An idea, a seed that can grow and alter the course of the future. For the future of architecture, one needs to be able to imagine entirely new structures, spaces without walls, radically reconstructing the utmost possibilities of our current built environment. However, the radical imagination is exactly what is missing from our practice.

**TRANSLATION**

Create a fabricated environment in which the audience can believe the dream. Ariadne: I thought the dream space would be more about the visual, but it’s more about the feel of it. Cobb: Well, dreams, they feel real while we’re in them, right? It’s only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange.

Hollywood has been called a “dream factory” and, as such, enters and penetrates our thoughts with evermore sophisticated technology and imagery. Dreams, ideas, attitudes, and values are implanted in our brains in ways that really aren’t too dissimilar from what Cobb and his associates perpetrate.

The role of the dreamer has transcended from the realm of architecture, reappearing in the world of mass media. Concentrations such as photography and cinema, prompted by the advances in technology, have taken
up the call of the avant garde in the last few decades. Technology has brought about the ability for designers to translate dreams into a fabricated environment. Dreams and reality seem to have no segregation in the space of film. And with a strong narrative and convincing computer generated imagery, the film industry has the artistic arsenal needed to push the limits of human literacy of the dream.

So, what is the importance of the literacy of the dream? Enter science fiction.

Scott Bukatman writes...
"[Science fiction] has served as a vehicle for satire, social criticism and aesthetic estrangement. In its most radical aspect, science fiction narrates the dissolution of the most fundamental structures of human existence. By boosting a world that behaves differently - whether physically or socially - from this one, our world is denaturalized. Science fiction even denaturalizes language by emphasizing processes of making meaning. The distance between the language of the text and the reader’s lived experience represents the genre’s ultimate subject. What science fiction offers is the estrangement and renewal of our own reading of the present."

Ultimately dreams do not answer questions, but instead pose questions or demand that inferences are made by the audience. The translation of the dream and the literacy of that translation comes down to the narrative, the story that the dreamer tells. The works of Belgian photographer Filip Durjardin translate and reiterate the dream perfectly. He makes images of unexpected buildings,
collaging and grafting parts of different buildings into a new fictional architectural structure.

Some of the most intriguing buildings seem perfectly ordinary at first glance, revealing their fictional nature as the viewer registers missing or incongruent details. This series of photographs, titled Fictions, are actual photos of buildings in Ghent, Belgium taken by Durjardin and then manipulated to create fantastic designs. Utilizing twenty first century techniques, Durjardin creates enchanting and thought provoking images that show us the world in new ways.

Science fictions and fictions altogether have the ability to blend the impossible with reality. In setting a mood, a set, a narrative, a feeling, dreamers can act within this fabricated environment to portray the ideas of the dream. So, what is the nature of the relationship that links architecture and the dream, when architecture itself consistently seeks precise and rigorous organizational processes in the delivery of its ideas?

Today, the unforeseen impetus of the dream seems out of the place. Modern technology increasingly blurs the threshold on making fantastic scenarios. Interactivity comes as an effect of a society based on the instant. Technology is the medium in which the dream becomes translated from the mind to the media. Attempts to mate technology and architecture tend to create a utopian state, although ultimately failing every time. Ergo, a study of architecture, technology, and the dystopic is called into experimentation.
Utopia versus dystopia?
Failed utopias are easy prey for tabloids, cynics, and pragmatists. In a world where the dream of utopia fails or is marked by totalitarianism, where does the architect find hope? Is it in the confession of our guilty pleasure in the dystopic? Dystopia gives us imagery that is often more powerful and more compelling. The images of dystopia, such as the world portrayed in *Bladerunner* or *The Matrix*, are always more potent than that of utopia or the picturesque.

The difference between utopia and dystopia in cinematography is usually marked by one individual flaw, one Achilles heel. *The Island*, where people live blissfully until they are harvested for their organs. *The Truman Show*, a world that has been totally fabricated for prime-time television. *The Stepford Wives*, a perfect suburbia populated by perfect, submissive women... who turn out to be robots.

So, how then does the architecture avant garde fair with utopia?

Le Corbusier’s Radiant City was an unrealized project, proposing ideas as a blueprint for social reform. His utopian ideas formed the basis of a number of urban plans resulting in the design and construction of the first Unite d’Habitation in Marseilles in 1952. The Radiant City represented a utopian dream to reunite man within a well ordered environment. He envisioned cities patterned with large blocks of green space that housed many buildings within each parcel. Each housing project would be extremely tall and even be entirely self-sustainable in terms of amenities. The design maintained the idea of high rise housing blocks, free circulation, and abundant green spaces as proposed in his earlier work.

The problem with utopia is when one projects his own utopia past his own personal bubble, forcing the utopia into the personal space of another. And in the eyes of the invaded, the forced utopia becomes totalitarianism. These mass housing units and master plans are in no way meant to be visions of an ideal city, but concentrations and exaggerations of “simple” solutions to current problems in society.

Such is Ai’s student housing units in OSU’s projected future. With the school intent on keeping even sophomores within the confines of school dormitories, this housing plan seeks to supply the extra space required, due to the necessity of new residencies and amenities, by creating a new ground that incorporates stores, eateries, dorms, green space, and a new light rail station. A new campus... 400 feet above grade. However, standardization proved inhuman and disorientating. Open green spaces were deemed inhospitable. The bureaucratically imposed plan was condemned as socially destructive. Many of these super housing blocks have been reduced to down and out neighborhoods and become known for their criminal activities. Popular culture would say these designs themselves produce and encourage deviant behaviors.

Metabolists have often been credited as the group coming closest to translating the imaginations of the avant garde into architecture. This group of Japanese
architects had a vision for a city of the future, inhabited by a mass society and characterized by large scale structures. In their views, the traditional laws of form and function were obsolete. They believed that the laws of space and functional transformation held the future for society and culture. The movement was developed in a post-war Japan, with their projects primarily dealing with housing for the masses, a concentration very similar to Le Corbusier’s.

The group’s work is often called technocratic and their designs are described as avant garde with a rhetorical character. Their architecture is closely compared to the unbuilt designs of Archigram, both relying heavily on technological advancements that often consisted of adaptable plugin megastructures. The Metabolists’ design philosophy involved utilizing biological processes and technological advancements to erect gigantic buildings, of a size that Le Corbusier had envisioned in past decades. Their creations would go on to become the nodes or monuments in the urban fabric of a rapidly reconstructing city. Fumihiko Maki, a member of the Metabolist movement is credited with coining the term “megastructure” as a “large frame in which all the functions of a city, or part of a city, are housed.”

Kisho Kurokawa’s Nakagin Capsule Tower might arguably be the most famous building to come from the Metabolist movement. The tower was designed with sustainability and growth in mind. Kisho had the intention that the capsules would be able to be exchanged when new models were developed, moved when the owner moved, or combined to form a larger capsule for larger families. Unfortunately, the owners, through neglect and complacency, have never replaced any of the capsules, leaving this building to deteriorate and finally, to be condemned.

Similarly, Ai’s fascination with housing projects and technological advancements has led to the design proposal of his own capsule hotel in Tokyo, Japan. Under the tutelage of Jr-Gang Chi, Ai explored a dynamic architecture hosting three unique programs: a bookstore, a hotel, and a martial arts arena. The capsule units slide along tracks to create an ever changing landscape in order that the interior arena would be able to house the most intense of manga-esque battles. However, like many dreamers, the project was written off for its extravagant dependence on an advanced technology and finally scrubbed off as unrealistic and impractical.

Ultimately, the attempt of past architects to ground their dreams in the utopic has been met, as we all know, with failure. The fact that we use the masses as the subjects of an architectural utopia may play a role in architectural utopia’s demise.

**REALIZATION**

The dream becomes their reality.

Realization is the realization that the realization of the dreams in architecture should be realized within the architect’s life before the realization in the public.

Cobb: How long do they dream for? Yusef: Three, four hours a day. Eames: In dream time?
Yusef: With this compound? About forty hours each and every day.
Saito: Why do they do it?
Yusef: Tell him, Mr. Cobb.
Cobb: After a while, it becomes the only way you can dream.
Eames: They come here every day to sleep?
Yusef: No, they come to be woken up. The dream has become their reality. Who are you to say otherwise, sir?

Within this field, the dream is still the interface between the architects and the public, which strives to materialize itself in reality as an outcome. In these interactions, the narrative that architecture can produce is still central and, therefore, the poetic characteristic of the dream becomes the tool to convey ideas. Technology, especially in the last few decades, plays a pivotal role in making this dream a reality. Architects can push their fictions into realization by passing through the digital world, but the problem would be not stopping in it. As architects, we need to be capable of reinventing realities.

Dreams are increasingly present in our everyday life, more so than before. To some extent, dreams and fantasies are becoming the way we experience our alter realities which are a reflection of our actual realities. Implausible dreams have turned out to be the everyday habit to cope with dwelling in our cities. In other words, we are designing realities according to the reflection arising from our own fantasies, from our own dreams.

When we read our news feeds, our RSS, or our blogger subscriptions, it is odd how
reality appears foreign and difficult to relate to, initiating the question of whether or not the realm of the dream, for us, is more comfortable than reality. Social networks challenge this world of individual dreams since they provide the public with a full spectrum of tools to create it. Reality, as it may be, is no longer a desirable aspect of our life, it is the aspect of life we want to bury, since we have no control over its course. We desire the dream world where we can create by means of our fantasies. In a sense, the ideals of *The Matrix* have already been realized and achieved. Our physical bodies have been replaced by profile pages. Our architectural gathering spots such as the marketplace, theatre, park, and library have been replaced by Amazon, Youtube, Facebook, and Google. However, Architecture is a slow art. The costs for a computer programmer to dabble in the dream are far less than those of an architect’s.

This might lead one to ask:
So, what is the point of architects if dreaming is only confined to images and mass media? Would not one be better off as a cinematographer, photographer, or even worse... a software architect?

The calling of the avant garde in architecture is to have your dreams become your reality. And when one thinks of the imaginative and the fictional, one is led to the works of Jimenez Lai and Bureau Spectacular.

“I imagine alternate worlds and engage with the design of architecture through the act of story telling. It offers narratives about character development, through which the
reader can explore relationships, curiosities, and attitudes, as well as absurd stories about fake realities that invite new futures to become possibilities.” – Jimenez Lai

It is with a conscious thought Jimenez tells stories of his architecture. The idea of the narrative, the fictional, or the cartoon telling stories in lieu of say, an oral defense, is necessary in explaining a dream. Since projects start up as fictions in themselves, with imaginary programs on existing sites, architects should be able to draw and storyboard cartoons about architecture. Students have always been asked to create layouts and boards in a way that supplements or complements their presentation at a critique and at every review. They offer that fiction to the jury. Jimenez Lai proposes that one takes that fiction to another level, the cartoon, the comic.

Reminiscent of Jimenez’s story boards and comics are Ai’s stop motion animations and cartoons for Kipnis’s Captain Dust Studio. The use of the storyboard, cartoon, and animation to tell the story of the architecture combined to create a compelling narrative. Here the architecture itself is the character, anthropomorphized to be given emotions and desires. The cartooning of the architecture and its character greatly contributed to whatever success was merited to the project.

“Cartoon is an enticing way to convey complexity; it is more than just a rendering technique. [Bureau Spectacular, I] pursue the ongoing tradition of paper architecture - best exemplied in the work of Hejduk, Libeskind, Tschumi, among others – that was practiced during difficult times (when a troubled economy limited job availability or in order to explore ideas too fantastical to be realized). Dancing between the line of narrative and representation, cartooning is a medium that facilitates experimentations in proportion, composition, scale, sensibility, character plasticity, and the part to whole relationship as the page becomes an object. More importantly, this medium affords the possibility of conflating representation, theory, criticism, storytelling, and design.” - Jimenez Lai

Take Jimenez’s Super Furniture Series for example. The Briefcase House, White Elephant, and the Hefner/Beuys(boys) House. Lai defines the term Super Furniture as “a building that is kinda too small or a couch that is kinda too big.” These projects all start off as ideas in his head, the imaginative, then become a story in his cartoons, the fictional, and finally become realized in a scale that is spectacular through the narrative. Through these fictions and cartoons, Lai begins to give life to the cliche shadows we love to use in our project renderings, in order to bring the dream into the realization through a relationship with the viewer. The architectural representation is not only a story of its making, but a story of its operation.

As Maki coined the term “megastructures”, the works of Lai [and Fujimoto] could be seen as “microstructures”, where the personal utopia is set within a contained space and no longer projected to an area or scale larger than its own dimensions. Here, in this scenario, the utopic can exist.
As mentioned before, the calling of the avant garde in architecture is to indeed have your dreams become your reality. And Lai will once again be taking on this call this summer with his Hefner/Beuys House, an installation for the Architecture Foundation in London.

This project transforms architecture and the architect into a performance and a performer. There is again a literacy in the realization that needs to come through the work and its representation. And for Lai, the literacy is quite, well... literal. The Hefner/Beuys House is a 1:1 scale mock up of a comic book that people can “read” as they walk by or become a character in as they walk through. The architecture becomes a stage, and the dream becomes the show, the spectacular. There is a need for experimental architecture to facilitate the crossing of genres. Fiction becomes reflective. Archeology and history becomes an unpredictable source of projective form. The surface of the earth and the interaction with its structures becomes dreamlike.

CONCLUSION

“Architecture needs the freedom to have unexplainable lines, process-less production, aesthetic intuition, and unexplainable decisions.” - Mark Gage

Science and fiction seem in opposition to one another as separate entities, however, with science on board, fiction jetpacks to a whole new level. In the same way, architecture and dreams combined are able to transcend the limitations of architecture and enhance the realm of the dream, a
practice should not be built with buildings as endpoints, but on speculations and futures as the end products in themselves. Architecture should be interested in the role of the architect and the dream to define new questions, not just finding solutions to problems posed to us, but identifying new arenas for operation.

The question of “the end” is not so much a formal closing of a chapter, but more so a question of transition. As architects, we use different modes of representations: drawings, cartoons, collages, and models to portray our concept, our dreams. The translation of those dreams into various mediums such as photography or stop motion animation gives us and our audience a meta-critical view of the world through another lens. And finally, the realization. The manifestation of the dream is twofold: the realization in terms of materialization and the realization that the realization is indeed another dream.

“Dreams are ever so important in the practice of architecture because it fuels imagination, it inspires fictions, and it dares to be spectacular.” – Norman Ai
Kissing Cousins

Joe Twelmeyer

Blostein
So what does Elvis Presley have to do with Architecture? Plenty as it turns out. In fact, did you know that the first edition of Venturi and Scott-Brown’s seminal work was titled, *Learning from Viva Las Vegas*? It’s true! The keen Elvis-fan may even recognize the title of this review as one of the King’s own films from 1964, *Kissin’ Cousins*. For those of you that missed it, Elvis is a soldier trying to convince his hillbilly relatives to allow the construction of an Inter-Continental Missile Base on their land. Hilarity ensues amidst moonshine, shotguns and hound-dogs as Elvis contends with his doppelganger cousin and fights off the advances of more than a few young ladies. Of the many quality pictures produced for Elvis, why highlight this one?

The film is useful as a critical framework of Architecture provided we first equate Elvis, the “King of Rock and Roll”, with Architecture, the “mother of the arts”. Next, we must realize that Elvis experiences the very same identity “criseeze” and relationship foibles that Architecture is currently having with itself and its fellow representational disciplines, arts, and practices. Should it stand on its own or incorporate influences from other sources? Is this a temporary or a permanent situation? Is it in danger of losing its identity during the process? Lastly, we must not miss the obvious tie to Sylvia Lavin’s *Kissing Architecture* wherein we will take Kissing a little further, examining Architecture that is also Breeding, Cloning, and Zooing.

The extent to which Architecture is successful in the negotiation of these interactions will determine its fate as a
viable discipline and contributor to Culture. To be successful, Architecture must first understand and define itself. The most popular kid at the party is often the one who simply is the most self-assured, and is sure to impress. Like you or I, Architecture composes its identity from a constellation of generic or widely-held characteristics, making a unique whole. This part-to-whole identity allows Architecture to recombine it’s otherwise generic traits or experiences relative to any given situation to either fit in or stand out, get the job or entertain, as “unique” as it chooses to be.

In *Green Dots 101*, Somol generalizes Architecture’s traits into four “vectors”. From a combination of articulation, notation, decoration and figuration he composes post-modern Architecture’s identity. He goes on to affix an architect to each of these directions - Frampton, Eisenman, Venturi and Hejduk. Because Architecture is composed of these common traits, other disciplines easily overlap and share portions of its identity. Painting as notated decoration, Industrial Design as articulated figuration, Sculpture as notated figuration, Graphic Design as articulated decoration, and so on, until we have potentially accounted for all of Architecture’s close relatives. The composition could be potentially extended to include other non-artistic influences such as the Genetics, Information Design, Social Media, Engineering, but I will leave that math for another day. What we are left with diagrams the sometimes complex relationships and interactions between the disciplines, entailing an Ecology of Culture.
Now, “Because of architecture’s traditional role as what was called (the) ‘mother of the arts’, architecture has generally been more able than most mediums to understand itself in relational terms.” Previous ages approached this idea of a unified field of equals differently; “…from the baroque idea of the unity of the arts to the 19th century theory of Gesamtkunstwerk, to the modern idea of total design”. To me, it is a family and the relationships between these Cousins can be rather complex.

In order to clarify these relationships and best navigate them, I have constructed the framework that fully advantages The Ecology of Culture. In it, each artistic discipline or representational medium is placed in the role of a creature trying to succeed in a survival of the fittest. Interactions result in communication, hybridization, extinction, isolation, and evolution, among other possibilities. Groups of traits, concepts and characteristics are freely exchanged, held in seclusion, combined, or reduced into obscurity during the resulting negotiation. As with any ecology, diversity is an important factor in retaining a vivid and healthy culture. Should any “species” go extinct, so do any of it’s unique traits and the culture at large suffers for its loss in terms of reduced methods of exploration and intrigue. Fewer playmates = Less fun.

Let me be clear, Architecture’s status within the Ecology is not endangered, but it is uncertain. Its relationship with the Others has followed a trajectory of diminishing responsibilities and influence, from Architecture’s early role as “mother of the arts” to the present condition of an institutionalized role, struggling to be heard amidst irrelevancy, redundancy, BIM, and the like. As a consequence, the influence of the other disciplines has grown in comparison. A simple observation of the influence Architecture once had in conjunction with governing powers and their propaganda illustrates the point. Rome used Triumphal arches as propaganda, Mussolini utilized Casa del Fascio in support of it, yet contemporary political posters live and die on their own. What were once mother-and-daughter arts are now more co-equals, Cousins. This lack of hierarchy creates an anarchy which in turn creates powerful opportunities to relate on a whole new level, more intimately than ever with the Others. An incorrect step could doom it to further degradation of influence and its eventual irrelevance. It’s success as a viable discipline is hinged on these delicate interactions.

Sylvia Lavin’s _Kissing Architecture_ discusses one of the possible Interactions - The Kiss. She defines the Kiss as a temporary interaction that retains the specificity of each individual participant, but this definition opens the door for other possible configurations. If we look again at our vectors matrix. This is Architecture. This is the Kiss, in the overlap. Another overlapping Interaction is Breeding, or when Kissing doesn’t stop. Conversely, the non-overlap is a place of seclusion, where Architecture can sit and study by itself. This is the Zoo. In all there are four Interactions, which are briefly: Kissing, a temporary collaboration (or interaction maintaining a specific identity), Zooring, a process wrought in sequestration (or non-interaction maintaining a specific
identity), Cloning, a product of formulaic repetition (or non-interaction not maintaining a specific identity), and finally, Breeding, which results in semi-architectural hybridization (or interaction not maintaining a specific identity).

Zooing entails the separation of one individual from the group, where it is meticulously studied, classified, and refined, potentially developing apart from its natural environment. Hence, the term “interaction” is used loosely. We see Architecture taking the approach to sequester itself especially in times of economic or political distress, just as any creature that is threatened with extinction can be protected within a zoo from influences that may otherwise cause its demise. Zooing can be taken a bit too far, particularly during a self-critical or autonomous period, as Architecture turns exclusively within itself to reflect and study, producing refined, yet abstract concepts and theories that may or may not be relevant to the outside world. Eisenman produced some of the most influential concepts of his generation during such a time, invaluable to his fellow incarcerated Architects. The priority is the survival of the architectural species. The tendency is to create a highly specialized taxonomy, facilitating an understanding of its own issues, but in turn forcing the alienation of the uninitiated. Thus, further entrenching itself as elitist and inaccessible, thereby disabling it for healthy re-introduction into the wild, like the transmorphed human Morlocks of H.G. Wells’ *Time Machine*. Once off the boards, faulty roofs, foggy windows, and inconveniently placed elements overshadow the significance the architecture otherwise has to offer, and the effort is likely to go unnoticed. Anyone who has a relative living at a long-distance may relate the experience upon meeting that person and finding them familiar on one hand and utterly foreign on the other. Such was the case with city-raised Elvis returning to the hill-country of his forbearers. Although sharing common ancestors, the two cousins share few interests and characteristics. Communication is difficult and the simplest of assumptions can make for the most awkward of moments. “what do you mean you don’t like moonshine?” The fuel for awkward family reunions.

Architectural practice that is thus “born in captivity” may lack certain skills otherwise learned through experience and interaction with culture. Architects may lose practical knowledge of simply how to build such as Frank here, or draw by hand. A bear hand-fed (what is that - lettuce?) instead of hunting seal on pack-ice, its teeth lose their potential. Zooed Architecture has been nearsighted in the attempt to create a fully functional theory, creating instead a precious being unsuited to the wilderness of reality. In time, the products will either become more a part of this Ecology as they are repaired and adapt themselves in order to survive, or they will be consumed in a cloud of debris.

Still, not all Zooing is so extremely sequestered. Contemporary zoos incorporate elements of the natural habitat into the exhibits, a big improvement on the iron bars of yesteryear. Architecture within these confines is free to roam and mimic its previous life building and creating and represents the majority of Architectural
practice. Breeds have been developed within these confines that would have taken eons to arrive without selective help; a Great Dane and a Chihuahua from the same primitive wolf. As a consequence, Architecture has more breeds than a Westminster dog show. Slowly, small differences and characteristics have been refined and exaggerated, one project building on the next.

The Charleston train station I designed during the Autumn of 2010 utilized this common Zoing technique of identifying a precedent, reinterpreting and repurposing it. The studio was in fact my first attempt at an architectural project with a strict program and non-abstracted site. I used a precedent I could easily relate to, approximately the same size and with a few features that would eventually be interesting if repurposed for a transit hub. Knowlton became the obvious choice for me. The over-hangs became waiting platforms, the large center-cut/void, a grand entrance hall.

There are parts of the Zoo that are as unique as any exotic savannah - where concepts, techniques and functions have been refined to the point of a Circus. The architecture here has learned tricks impossible to learn without seclusion and training; a tiger jumping through a ring of fire, a levitating cantilever delicately balanced (jumping through flames). The KSA is quite like a Circus, a constantly moving Zoo, with a fresh set of minds in which to set up tents every term. During my inaugural quarter here I found myself immediately thrust into this current of developing constructs, concepts, and theories. One of those first projects, A House for X, had been done by previous
generations of students; the same rules, readings, and source material as before. This notwithstanding, the results were anything but rote and I was able to focus on the architectural effects, affects, and methods of the project, rather than the usability or ergonomics I was used to focusing on in my previous career as an Industrial Designer. My previous skills as a model maker came in handy, as I was able to approach this model as an artifact, adding to the arguments I had established instead of mere representation. I suggested the site-less and abstract nature of the project, as well as the embodied love-triangle in which X is entangled by situating the skin in between the ground and the sky, wooden sections floating in between the two. All this abstraction is well suited to the nomadic nature of the Circus.

And just like the real “Barnum and Bailey”, our Architectural Circus is only a temporary solution to the monotony of the Zoo. Soon it must fold its tents and move on to the next town. If left too long in one place, or on one concept, the adverse effects of inbreeding become exaggerated as well. Soon what is produced is invalid, disabled, freak-ish and unable to perform its intended function. An interesting sideshow at best.

This prolonged Zooing eventually spawns a new interaction altogether, that of Cloning. Like Zooing, it does not interact with the other mediums and additionally does not retain its specificity either. When Elvis meets his doppelganger in the film, conflict is inevitable as jealousy and identity confusion sets in. The two become consumed with each other, to the exclusion of the others and the story cannot move on until the
situation is resolved and their identities are re-established. Architecture that has been Cloned is likewise stuck in arrested development. Even a once vibrant concept can fall into disrepair if the process becomes too formulaic. The International Style was set up as the perfect Clone generator, no native context, no parentage, no bellybutton. Was it ever in doubt that it would eventually be mass-produced into mid-rise office parks everywhere? I’m pretty sure I know the Architect of Record here on this tragic project. It indeed seems to be composed by Bob Ross in a windowless studio creating from memory a grand mountain meadow; a happy little door here, a happy little window there, it’s Architecture by numbers. This efficiency comes at the price of creativity, context, the decreased role of the Architect and the ultimate demise of meaning.

While full of promise and potential, the technologies of generative software and parametric plug-ins like Grasshopper, as well as the use of digital fabrication pose the significant risk of pushing even well-considered projects into a Clone-like state. They are today’s International Style waiting-to-happen. Made popular through a genuine interest in genetics and generative processes, they are so accessible that “anyone” can achieve complexity and a semblance of design, accomplished through formulas and lines of code. Unlike most other tools of design, such as the pencil or even Rhino by itself, these technologies are pre-programmed with a powerful mechanism for Cloning. Simply sit inside the booth and press the right buttons, out pops what could in any other context be considered a well-formed project. Intent is easily hidden or ignored, passion and romance non-existent, resulting in a test-tube Architecture.

Whereas previous iterations of digital fabrication were best suited for small scale, it has begun to cross over into Architecture. Once its capabilities are sufficient, it could be only a matter of time before these technologies become more than tools, beginning to drive design process and even fracture the discipline into something else. These technologies are part of a lineage of mass-production techniques of the Industrial Revolution that eventually caused a fracture resulting in the novel practice of Industrial Design. Previous to that, furnishings were handled exclusively by crafts and tradesmen. Architects in their current configuration could suffer the same fate as the fine plaster worker or buggy-whip provider.

With that in mind, we come to the overlapping group of Interactions. These regions of The Ecology require Architecture to accommodate The Others through both Kissing and Breeding. Our Cousins... Ewww... Wait a second, I just realized how that sounds. But listen, cousin-on-cousin love is not so bad, in fact it makes for some pretty awesome if awkward comedy. Hey, even Darwin married his first cousin! It’s also how Royalty consolidated power and acquired huge tracts of land. The resource within the Ecology is influence, and we could use all that we can get. Historically, Architecture has had a strong tradition of borrowing from other fields of study. Previous incarnations of our practice would have gone as far to have included these disciplines as our own, to the inclusion of the catapult. Today the field of Architecture
is enhanced by each of us, a collection of individuals with specific interests, experiences and particular knowledge that we bring to the field, be it Painting, Journalism, or even Physics.

The KSA has a way of defining the extent to which incoming graduate students have accumulated this Other-ness. I came to Architecture from a Cousin discipline, Industrial Design, and was subsequently defined a G1. From my first project at the KSA it was clear that a suppression of these interests and tendencies would be difficult, yet I learned to embrace these tendencies, adapting them for Architectural use. As a consequence, my Architecture has always had a strong material sensibility, sculptural formalism, an embrace of technology and an individualized approach to theory as process. Any knowledge from my previous training allows me to synthesize elements from outside the discipline, and the more I know...the more I grow. It is important to have a little trivial knowledge or at least the desire to learn at a wide perspective, otherwise The Kiss or any other blending will be quite awkward.

Back in the hill country, once Original-recipe Elvis gets things sorted out between himself and Blonde Elvis, the real story can begin - that of flirting and hooking up rated-G style. Elvis being Elvis, he gets to do this quite often. He’s a respected Kisser the others are more than anxious to hook up with him for the moment. Architecture has been afforded the same luxury, as it too is suited to Kissing due to its strong specificity and a history of hooking up. Kissing details the process by which Architecture temporarily couples with another discipline for a mutual gain and deformation, forming something Lavin terms “two-ness”. Kissing needs two, otherwise it’s called “sucking your thumb”. Meanwhile, each party maintains its specificity both during and after the Kiss has ended, allowing the parties to separate and regain their independence. The Kiss is able to take short runs with a multitude of source materials, inspirations, and complexities, allowing the architect to wear many hats and become the Vitruvian ideal, if but for a moment.

Because it is an event, The Kiss becomes significantly tied to the documentation of itself through video and photographs. It may be impossible to revisit or recreate, just as the first kiss is always special and cannot be re-performed. Cristo celebrated the reunification of Germany by wrapping the parliament in his signature style. Visiting the site today would obviously result in an entirely different affect. The resulting coupling is fleeting and reversible, making further study nearly impossible. Conversely, this characteristic makes it nearly impossible to Clone a Kiss, thus increasing its potential for retaining intrigue and original meaning for an extended period.

Most Kissing occurs as part of a larger process and is rarely the end product. Its main purpose is to provide an opportunity to test a pairing for any potential Breeding that could follow. The pairing; should it be with just any discipline, any Cousin? There are ugly cousins too you know, and some are better suited for Kissing than others. Architecture + Basket Weaving? Not so much. So, how to choose? This is where an architect’s Other-ness becomes most useful.
as the interaction will likely combine two heavily laden conceptual frames. It is best not to ignorantly Kiss in the dark, else the consequence may be fully regrettable. Still, this is a question that I find highly intriguing, the combinations are endless.

Elvis would be the first to tell you that as fun as Kissing is, “rolling in the hay” is even better. Breeding offers the best of all the previous methods in this regard. Multiple sources + time to refine the results. This type of interaction comes at a price however, for such a permanent arrangement leads to a degradation of specificity, a reduction in the stance of any individual identity. By definition Breeding produces something that is neither of the parents, rather it is part of one and part of the other. The math looks like this: Architecture + Non-Architecture Cousin = Semi-Architectural Hybrid. It does not have to be half and half however. No, the calculus of the Ecology is more complex than that, a gradient.

Considering an example of the many industrialized products by Hadid the question may be asked, “Is this Architecture, product, or is it something else altogether?” This end of the spectrum is clearly more beholden to the production of consumable, mass-produced items, and less so with that of Architecture. In a time without Industrial Designers though, architects were some of the only ones capable of producing such refined designs. In fact, one of Breeding’s most powerful aspects is the potential it has of spawning not only hybrid projects, but hybrid practices and professions as well. If a new field of study is to emerge from Architecture, Breeding is the primary
method by which it happens. Practices such as Gramatzio & Kohler, Aranda Lasch, and Greg Lynn may have this in mind.

On the other end of the gradient is the product of Architecture Breeding with painting. Famously, Corbusier utilized elements of cubism to infuse his buildings with sensibilities Architecture had been unable to develop on its own and is a stronger discipline for it. Such Hybrids gain strength within the Ecology of Culture and survive to produce strong lines of influence. Architectural concepts today draw upon ideas of similar worth from such varied fields as psychology, genetics, social media, and animation.

Then there is the example of the Hefner/Beuys House by Jimenez Lai. Again the question may be asked, “Is this Architecture, furniture, or is it something else altogether?” only now it is not so clear. It is precisely the question to be asked of a semi-architectural hybrid, and not necessarily answered. The ambiguous result is unique amongst the methods of interaction. The Hybrids have the potential to be the best of both contributors, selected for desirable qualities to be determined. Not until they are combined are the results fully understood, yet unlike the Kiss, Breeding cousins can be repeated with subsequent generations to refine the result. Unexpected results may provide additional source material, or like Jeff Goldblum in The Fly, wish they had never been combined. A cautionary tale as something that is Bred cannot be undone. New identities result, and old specificities are left to the past generations.
Too many iterations of this process will eventually result in a diluted Architecture, its identity too far removed from the original concept or intent. We are faced with a choice then, risk the current downward trajectory of reduced cultural influence on our own, or have a guiding hand in curating Architecture’s influence through selective Hybridization with the Other members of the Ecology. The balance must be cautiously metered in order to maintain a strong influence of Architecture within the Ecology or risk Breeding itself out of existence.

Another consequence of Breeding is that Architecture now has the advantage of entering into previously unheard of contexts in the form of these Hybrids. The set designed for Amon Tobin during his ISAM tour puts Architectural elements at center stage. It is important to note that a Kiss here would have likely been a super-mediated projection onto a local wall or screen found at each venue. This set has been purpose-built for the interaction and becomes as much of a draw as the artist himself. By entering these new contexts, Architecture affects its partners, increasing its influence and thereby regaining a position of Master-cousin. Spreading its seed amongst as many Others as possible is a surefire way of ensuring an heir for the next generation. The result of selective Breeding is an Architecture that will evolve, suited to quickly change with the needs of the Ecology.

The most intriguing portion of the cycle for me is Breeding, of which I am a product, having originated from a heavily overlapped portion of the Ecology. Breeding by definition creates something every time, whereas Zooing is curation of what exists, Kissing is temporary and Cloning is repetition. They can be used together in a sort of “circle of Life”, feeding into each other and modifying as a continuous design process.

My current status is searching for ways of working out Architectural problems through the smaller-scale lens of furniture, incorporating refined sensibilities previously unheard of in my product designs. Digital Fabrication presents me with a challenge as this technology overlaps into both of my areas of expertise, raising the issue of mass-production while maintaining meaning and identity and avoiding the Clone. Materiality, performative structure, embodiment, handcraft, and digital fabrication techniques all came together to create the CNTRL bench that was designed and made with the help of my teammates last autumn. It is an example of what can happen by taking architectural concepts and applying them to a small scale inclusive project, such as furniture. It is hoped by utilizing the Ecology of Culture I may produce both products and architecture that benefit from such a close relationship as this.

I encourage all to find a good pairing with one of Our Cousins and settle down. It is the key to immortality.

Just ask The King.
In an age “of anything” goes architecture, less is still more. Less is more requires a focus and mastery of technique that produces an architecture capable of transcending fetishism and the period from which it came. The visionaries comprising Superstudio once claimed that, “One small gesture is enough to inspire a cultural movement.” This response has particular relevance today as we live in a society where our ambitions are surpassed by the technologies that had once grounded our dreams. When asked what is at stake, I respond, architecture. It is my belief that both the foundations and imaginations of architecture rely and thrive on an efficient use of acutely orchestrated architectural techniques and the affects they produce, and for that I propose:

A work of architecture is the culmination of an expression of an idea. This expression may be viewed as the object’s gesture, which is comprised of various techniques to produce affects similar to the way a magician devises magic tricks. A slight deviation from an expected condition or set of causal relationships can stupefy and amaze the audience, while something wholly outside of conventional experience might merely seem odd, since there is no norm or datum against which to register the marvel. In architecture, the following architectural manipulations can be used as variables to demonstrate how tactics work to produce strong affect; scale, perspective, ground condition, inversion, figuration, and distortion to name but a few. When a formal and spatial construction is reduced to a few simple parts, isolated gestures can be controlled and used with precision, as opposed to masking a weak command of affect with spectacle. Like Houdini’s sleight of hand, the small gesture can produce a big payoff.

In architecture, payoff can be understood as the overall quality of response to the affects produced by the techniques of the gesture. Magicians induce emotions ranging from laughter to horror; sometimes within seconds of each other. A big payoff is one in which there are high degrees of emotions or engagement aroused in the subject by the affects of the object’s gesture and their relationship to other aspects of its field. Small gesture, big payoff, is concerned with achieving an efficiency of architectural affects.

By definition, efficiency is most often successful when executed modestly. One simple sleight of hand can be enough to cause the audience to experience many different responses. Restraint goes hand in hand with the rigorous development of the magician’s technique that amplifies the power of the affects experienced by the audience. A simple, modest gesture can be anything but modest in its construction and influence. To best demonstrate this, a close analysis of selected works of art and architecture will ensue where variations on the theme of the platonic cube are expanded upon.

The structure of this exit review will progress in circuitous, Hegelian moments. Think of a spring. If one’s perception of the object is unchanged, the diagram would then be a complete circle - one point eventually returning to the exact same location.
Instead, the circle is offset and continuous along one axis as variables are applied and its meaning changed.

These moments first originate from the constant in its primitive form and then return to another, perceptually evolved form of the cube. Perception is the key term here because it is both the object and the subject that are being transformed. Perceptual transformations will be illustrated by examining works of painting and sculpture which deliberately isolate the variable and allow the impact of the small transformation to come to the foreground.

A useful way to help explain the power of small gesture is to situate it in terms of “hot” and “cool” mediums. Marshall McLuhan first defined them as a method to index differences in media, which he argues are an extension of a particular human faculty. He writes, “A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in “high definition”...the state of being well filled with data.” versus “Cold media (that) are high in participation or completion by the audience...because so little (information) is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener.”

Robert Somol’s contemporary adaptations of the terms are used as premises towards his argument that architecture is shifting from the critical to the post-critical/projective. He defines the critical as hot; work that is autonomous and process-based, visually complicated and belabored. Think of Robert De Niro, that is big gestures whose payoff is unknown until fragmented into cooler states that are only then opened to possibilities of assimilation. The cool is
conversely the post-critical/projective. They are simple gestures that appear relaxed and easy in a performance that requires the subject’s imagination to complete the object. Think of Robert Mitchum.

The laissez-faire of the cool lends itself to a close analysis, but is not initially interesting to the passer-by, like a box. Most miss the payoff due to the simplicity of the gesture. Hot architecture is highly receptive to stimuli, but when it comes into focus, our senses become easily overloaded by the gesture and thus the payoff is never truly reached, think of Peter Eisenman.

Small gesture, big payoff is a hybrid of both advantages. It acts like a scientific phenomenon called “paradoxical heat.” This bodily phenomenon is medically defined as the arousal of a hot sensation by application of a cool point to a hot spot. For example, both hot and cool skin receptors are touched when cool water from a faucet runs over a hand and normally, the correct signal is sent to the brain. But, when cool water is concentrated on areas of the hand where heat receptors are highly sensitive, we perceive the cool water to be hot. This is temporary, but may last up to two-to-three minutes until the cool receptors send their signal.

It also conversely works like paradoxical cool. Small gesture, big payoff utilizes atypical, strategically intellectual tactics that spark our curiosity as opposed to naturally responding to spectacle or what Somol describes as “performing with a vengeance”, or on the other hand, losing interest in the banal. Successful strategies and tactics are not simply hot or cool because our stimuli evolve. As McLuhan points out, too much of one or the other will induce hypnosis or hallucination respectively, which, he adds, runs rampant in times of intense technological innovation. That is, times such as this.

In *Art and Objecthood*, Michael Fried argued that literalist art, or early minimalism, was the antithesis of modernism. For him, it was a peculiar paradox to regress from the hot nature of the experimental zeitgeist of the 60s and 70s to the frigid cold. It was a performance of hollow shapes that, “amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theater”. Fried did not consider the work of the key literalist figures Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Tony Smith to be of art. However, in his critique, Fried unknowingly and convincingly laid the theoretical foundations of minimalism which would later be debated. For example, Ohio State’s own, Stephen Mellville argued that the theatricality of these pieces was actually a necessary condition of art.

Minimalism sought to achieve a mastery of affect by starting from square one, the platonic cube. Minimalist works found clarity through an acute focus. By using the cube as constant and bracketing away complexity, powerful payoffs became accessible from an elemental form. The subtle and strategic manipulation of a few aesthetic variables provoked stronger, more insightful readings. Moreover, the object ceased to be apprehensible purely in a visual sense and they began to redefine the space they occupied, hence implicating the observer’s body and engaging all the sensory faculties.
Thus the performance between object and subject aroused more affectual energy, all without the rise in temperature. The minimalists had pushed forward the territory claimed by the avant-garde by a modesty that modernism had yet to apprehend. Enter small gesture, big payoff.

The origin point for this exit review is Tony Smith’s canonical work *Die*; it is a black box in space, a small gesture indeed. Yet it begins to become apparent that this is no ordinary box. Within its objecthood, the “state of being an object, its properties and relations, situation, and stage presence”, transform the object’s meaning. It is a six foot, volumetric cube solely being exhibited in the core of a standard gallery space... But now, it has a strangely cool, stage presence. It feels like it is beginning to transcend what once was initially perceived. It is on the cusp of becoming a cube.

Scale is the first and most important gestural technique in the piece. Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man gives new meaning to the square. He proves that its geometry has a direct relationship to the human figure. By maintaining the scale of the Vitruvian Man, Smith’s *Die* confronts you in your own space; it looms over you. Yet, it is not as hot as da Vinci’s diagram because it is volumetric; you do not see yourself or someone else inside it like you do with one of Donald Judd’s Concrete Boxes. Instead, the latent anthropomorphism of the cube resonates with the stimuli due to its cool, relational presence to the human being. Judd’s is a frame for seeing people, Smith’s *Die*, might just be a person. He writes, “I didn’t think of them as sculptures but as presences of a sort...Like a surrogate person – that is, a kind of statue... I was not making a monument (and) I was not making an object. “

*Balloon* is a monument and it is in your face and in your space. Junya Ishigami challenges Fried’s hypothesis that, “literalist works of art must somehow confront the beholder – they must, one might almost say, be placed not just in his space but in his way.”

I doubt Fried envisioned a giant helium filled, aluminum-clad cube, floating in the atrium of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo when he wrote those words. Initially, the subject’s impulse is to touch this hot cube, but shortly thereafter coolness sets in and it becomes less about the cube, which, needless to say, seems ludicrous. Whereas *Die* commanded your focus on the presence of the cube within the gallery space, *Balloon* dissipates it. By using reflection, the cube surrenders its immensity to the distorted leftovers between the walls of the atrium and the volume of the cube. The interstitial spaces become supercharged due to the sluggish, drifting nature of the cube. The resulting payoff is that the subject and the gallery spaces share camaraderie, like the peasants and the land that was not fortunate enough to be included within the privileged walls of the castle. They hug the castle for any residue of warmth and protection, yet despite this, the space outside the cube becomes elevated.

Correlated to scale, perspective is another effective strategy that pertains to gesture, which involves the entire situation including the beholder’s body. Perspective relies on both the subject and object; or the distance...
between the two. Fried expands: 
“The experience of being distanced by the work in question seems crucial...In fact, being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest, entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another person; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly – for example, in somewhat darkened rooms”

Die is momentarily disquieting as you first perceive the black cube alone in space, like turning into an alley and seeing a dark figure standing alone, staring right back at you from a distance away. After squinting your eyes, the figure seems less hostile and safe to approach. Much like Jean Nouvel’s Monolith. By being isolated in the open space of water and seen from ashore, the subject yearns to touch and play with it along the ships in the cool waters of the bathtub, but Monolith is not a rubber ducky. In fact, we might drown in the displaced water as Balloon implies or at least be minorly inconvenienced by the time it takes the hot bath-water to cool.

The ground condition is often times, the first step in any close analysis. Die appears to float off the ground. It is not on a pedestal and not on the wall, it is not meant to be studied but rather approached and engaged. Die’s modest, levitating gesture results in a payoff that further transfigures the box as an banal object that both enhances the everyday and creates a new situation within the formal art gallery.

Balloon creates a completely different situation. The subject is thrust into a confrontation like the stranger that refuses
to step aside on a narrow sidewalk or the obese fellow partially spilling over onto your seat, shoulder, and lap on a flight to South Dakota.

Instead of hiding or nullifying the tool used to disestablish the cube from the ground, Richard Serra accentuates it. *Corner Prop* explicitly reveals the tool used to achieve this new ground condition. Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye revolutionized architecture by critically re-examining the ground as datum. Elevating the box and claiming roof as ground plane, preserved the continuity of landscape. Moreover, le Corbusier’s tactic situated man and architecture between land and sky, thus in harmony with the horizon. Serra amplifies the significance of disengaging the ground plane by propping the cube into the corner of the gallery. Serra’s prop is not a pedestal, indifferent to the piece it displays, nor does it impose its will upon the cube by gripping its neck and forcefully pinning it up and against the wall; they rely upon each other; they are delicately held in tension. Fractions of a degree off in any way and the cube and the pipe succumb to gravity.

Will Alsop’s Sharp Centre for Design is also in tension. The contrast between the large rectilinear volume and the spindly, crayon-like piloti seems irreconcilable, and its precarious perch over the two vernacular houses further enhances the drama that at any moment, the cube will either tilt over or buckle the columns, both crushing the adjacent buildings and subjects.

Up until now, the cube has been seen as volumetric, that is, as a space-displacing
object, which refuses to display any sense of interiority. The object might be completely solid or hollow, as its primary task is to activate the space around it. Picasso began to challenge the notion that interior and exterior are discrete, mutually exclusive domains. In Picasso’s painting, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, the artist is equivocal about the nature of his object and the stability of the subjective viewpoint. Instead of accepting the object as a knowable, bounded form, Picasso’s object provokes questions about the very nature of the object and the field against which it is seen. It could be a painting or a sculpture; it might be viewed as an elevation, section, or plan or maybe it is a hybrid of the three.

If *Die* “is almost blatantly anthropomorphic” as Fried states, Mona Hatoum’s *Scoule de Monde* is grossly anthropomorphic. Hatoum implies the interiority of the cube by flipping the cube inside-out. This affect is achieved by coating the cube in magnetized iron-fillings which unquestionably suggest innards. The implication that the insides or organs of the box are revealed becomes more explicit after viewing her foundational painting, *Untitled*, which depicts a clear inside to her gestural sketches.

Whereas Hatoum utilizes material properties, Herzog & de Meuron rely upon detail. In Koechlin House, the windows have been displaced from their usual relationship to the wall and pulled to the exterior of the building. By exposing an interior condition to the exterior, the architects are simultaneously displaying two opposed spatial conditions, and expanding to architecture a theme explored in Picasso’s cubist paintings. The subject’s perspective shifts to a different viewpoint of the object and its context. Herzog & de Meuron illustrate this, “as if we could see the house from outside, through the window, which in turn separates us from the interior”.

However, the integrity of the house as a clearly delimited object is even more unstable: when the windows slide over the surface of the cladding the interior is opened and displayed as a slot of space extracted through the building. The cube now has been subdivided into positive and negative volumes that the subject can then view either from the inside or the outside.

Similar to transfiguration, the juxtaposition of two categorically different conditions create a new affect that works like paradoxical hot and cool. Scoule’s material condition contaminates the once primitive, idealized cube. Uneasiness sets in as one draws nearer and nearer to each intestinal tract and tissue, successfully engaging our stimuli at multiple distances and layers.

In Eva Hesse’s *Accession II*, the cube is rendered self-contradictory by means of material contamination. The exterior is flat and graphic while the interior is a wholly aggregation of hair, polarizing the world of the inside to the world of the outside. Herzog & de Meuron’s BTU Library plays a similar game of juxtaposing properties of the polychromatic and spatially complex interior with the monochromatic, monolithic exterior. During the day, the library maintains this segregation, but towards dusk, the library’s interior light shines through and transforms the exterior by affording
Anne Louise’s *Bandaged* series plays upon multiple inversions, from inside, to wrapper, to overall gesture. Strips of cloth bind the skin in a suffocating gesture that contrasts with the organic, sinuous forms normally associated to the female body. The bandages pronounce the deformed body while the tactile skin is gasping for air in its contortion. The Wing Back Chair, a project from a seminar this fall, reverses the meaning of the volumetrically expressive gesture. Where Bandaged distorts the body, the Wing Back Chair casts the body in place. The armor plating bends to its limits to encase the chair, but cannot completely conform to the undersides of the body, where hair seeps through like weeds spreading out of the seams of concrete. The payoff for both pieces is that these inversions magnify the latent theatricality within form.

Man Ray’s photograph, *Anatomy*, also plays upon the latent theatricality of distorted forms, but in a much cooler state. The throat is an area of vulnerability; it is not naturally exposed to this extent resulting in a new form derived from a recognizable body. It shifts between the figural to the non-representational.

While many traditional architectural projects have used the ideality and centeredness of the Vitruvian Man as a point of departure, I used two awkward postures to generate the form of Dopplex, which was a project for a studio situated between exploring the figural and the non-representational. The two gestures filter through various levels of abstraction, such as re-organization and fragmentation. Like clouds, the gesture is recognizable but not to the extent that the object does not require imagination to complete it. The site plan, featuring all of the studio’s projects mimics the dynamic situation John Hejduk’s highly expressive, yet minimalist “monsters” create when grouped next to each other, which allows the situation to be easily be manipulated, like salt and pepper shakers positioned on a table. Once again, the subject’s imagination cannot help but to fill in the story boards each time the figures take stage.

Atmosphere arouses feelings that transcend the mere registration of stimuli by the senses; rather, it is a culmination of many sensory stimuli, resulting in an ominous sensation. In Jean Dupuy’s *Heatbeats Dust*, the body is implicated within the space of the cube in a way that is neither purely visual nor tactile, but which goes beyond our usual relationship with object. Within a dark cube, an exposed light bulb shines downwards; it’s conical shape illuminating particles of Lithol Rubine, a fine red dust known for its ability to stay suspended in air for long periods of time. Underneath the box is a speaker playing a continuous-loop tape recording of heartbeats, which suspend the dust and reverberate through the box and into the subject’s fingertips and body. A pulsating aura is thus created, once again manifesting the latent theatricality of the cube. Atmosphere is unavoidably present while remaining in the realm of the cool or paradoxical heat.

Likewise, Peter Zumthor’s Therme in Vals involves the sensations of touch, smell,
taste, and sound in addition to the visual. Take for instance the Olhms bath. The only distinguishing feature of this secluded, smaller bath is its extreme height. Because of its unusual proportion and material, the slightest registration of sound reverberates throughout the cube. Once one bather unintentionally hums, soon, the other bathers follow suit as a harmony of olhms naturally ensue within the tranquility of the cube. Its waters warm, but payoff, deeply cool.

Giorgio de Chircio’s Melancholy & Mystery of a Street conveys a completely different sensation. Spatial ambiguity and sheer bewilderment are provoked by using an uncanny, dramatic, and apparently irrational manipulation of light and shadow in addition to two powerful architectural techniques that also subvert visual conventions, the first being distortion.

Herzog’s & de Meuron’s Signal Box would normally be just a box, however, Signal Box is transfigured from the commonplace by distortion, specifically, a twist in its alignment, akin to Contrapposto in figural sculpture. This hot technique activates the object in space and the subjects in its presence, while a statically disposed box or static figure, like the Vitruvian Man, coldly humanizes a frame. By distorting the cube and creating its own perspective, Signal Box catches the periphery of passer-by and maintains it by its unexpected presence and blurring affects, produced by Contrapposto at the micro scale of the copper strips that wrap around the cube and create a simultaneous veiling and revealing of the interior.
Although it is five-sided, Villa Farnese-Caprola’s pentagonal form is hidden and often perceived as a cube. When approaching up the axial path uphill towards the front façade, the distortion is impossible to register and unexpected by the subject. It is only when one arrives at the extreme edge of the terrace, that the magic trick is subtly revealed as a simple gesture creating an extra, or secret garden.

Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum features two specific moments where the viewer is in distortion, or rather, the viewer’s stance is put in disequilibrium. Upon stepping onto the rugged stones of the Garden of Exile, I stumbled backwards. Off-balanced and bewildered, my shoe plunged into a puddle, soaking it inside and out while my camera flew out of my grip and crashed to the ground and misfired, taking this photo. Small gesture, great story.

My most recent studio project for the Helsinki Library Competition is a paper model held together in a tension of distorted portions of paper cut, bended, and twisted yet still connected to a datum of five square pieces of paper. The payoff is a progression of sinuous spaces from a bottom of less distortion to the light, convoluting strips at the top. Within the original boundaries of the cube, the paper maintains a self-governing equilibrium that directly dictates the geometry of each curve. It is a rigorous pursuit of sensuality governed by the nature of the material and gravity that cannot be generated on the computer.

The final technique used by de Chirico is deliberate incompleteness. Because
fragmentary actions are set on an incomplete trajectory, the subject is compelled to actively and imaginatively complete the performance as a cast member in the play. The little girl, blindingly running alongside her hoola-hoop, is about to run into the shadowy figure hiding behind the dark building, spurring the subject to almost uncontrollably shriek, “Watch out!” It is this incompleteness that culminates in the piece’s unsettling atmospheric quality within the subjects. The initially hot reading of the painting is misregistered and transformed to cool by requiring the viewer to complete the work.

Incompleteness requires an outside force to complete it, but the task does not necessarily fall to the subject. Hans Haacke’s Condensation Cube requires natural phenomena to complete the gesture. The self-contained water continually runs through its evaporation cycles producing a symbiotic relationship between base, middle, and top that progress in density. The gaseous water particles rise and collect on the surface. As the water droplet gains mass, it leaves a trail of itself streaking down the side of the cube until it is recollected in the bottom pool. HdM’s Ricola Factory intentionally amplifies the weathering of the building to enliven its material qualities and to match the translucency of the adjacent wall in a strategic way.

Serra’s House of Cards transforms the cube from volume, to a space enclosing container. Held up by each other, the massive planes exist in a two-thousand pound tension. It feels as if at any moment, the flimsy assembly will come crashing down, crushing anything or anyone unfortunate to enough to be within harm’s reach. Yet, curiosity urges the subject to peek into the cracks of the planes to see the space within.

Serra explores the boundary between interior and exterior by inverting his House of Cards to both claim interiority and frame outside space. This small gesture has a huge payoff. The cube is thus presented as pure interiority, or rather, it implies an extensible and fragmented cubic field.

In Mies’s project for the Brick Country House, the planes of the cube have been dissembled, pulled apart, and reassembled. The centrality of the cube dissolves into an arrangement of partially defined, implied spaces. The large, vertical planes are thrust out and into space, coddling it as opposed to grasping it, so that space may be continuous and fluid yet still controlled.

Mies continues his exploration of a new dynamic and spatialized plasticity in the Barcelona Pavilion. There, he minimally restricts himself to the organization all but a few horizontal and vertical planes, and then architecturalizes them through the application of materiality and connection. The prominence of each vertical plane is stressed and emphasized by the richness of the marble and the reflections of its surroundings onto the marble’s surface. Within the Barcelona Pavilion, space flows freely as the interior is seamlessly intertwined with the exterior by both claiming and framing space.

After designing the Unity Temple, Frank Lloyd Wright had an epiphany. He

Docken
realized the heart of architecture was not in the composition of walls but the relationships between them, that is, the creation and arrangement of space. He argues, architecture is comprised of three dimensions; surface, mass, and depth: depth being, “the architecture of within” that gave life or theatricality to the first two dimensions. What were once simple architectural manipulations of cubes and planes, space now completes the architect’s repertoire. Wright’s ambition was to “to let the room inside be the architecture outside”.

In Wright’s terms, Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute could be called an exterior expression of exterior space. Framed between two laboratory buildings, the subject stands at the entrance of an open-air nave, gazing out at a serene and sublime perspective. The eye follows a tray of water trickling down, through the middle of the nave, eventually dissolving into the infinitely open space of ocean and horizon.

Serra’s Intersection II proposes a solution at the scale of the plaza. Four sinuous planes partially conceal interiority, but then reveal it to the sky. Like stage props, the four planes are maximally efficient at creating multiple distinct spaces around and between each other by their undulating and tilting profiles. On one side, one might feel claustrophobia, on the other, relief.

Wang Shu’s Ningbo Museum also makes use of simple, elemental volumes and a spatial field capture when they are pulled apart. Because the volumes are slightly distorted and misaligned, it is almost impossible to reach a level of comfort and orientation. Conventional, normative ways of seeing space are subverted and confounded by the odd geometry. One’s sense of awareness is heightened through distortion, not only in terms of the geometric frame and resultant perspective tricks, but also in terms of materiality. Moreover, the slots of perceptively distorted space have the uncanny ability to gather up and collect distant fragments of the city beyond. The object’s presence is unyielding. As one draws the subject to itself, another eagerly awaits the moment to tease the subject’s periphery into a full and abrupt re-emergence, like the creepy fellow peering over one’s shoulder, like Die.

The slippage between hot and cool modes of engagement can also re-emerge by way of transfiguration and recontextualization. In Die, the subject confronts a form of the platonic cube in the space of the world. Wang Shu pairs the rough, vernacular material of the surfaces with abstract boxes to doubly suggest the timelessness of the vernacular and to abruptly juxtapose the tactile and the visual. Herzog & de Meuron perform a similar operation where they clad a pristine modernist apartment block in vernacular sewer grates and tree guards found in the neighborhood. Indeed, the radical juxtaposition of elements from two different worlds is a favorite strategy of HdM.

They do it again at the House in Leymen against a background of architectural convention when they superimpose the innocuous symbol for the house on the incongruous and oppositional Maison Domino diagram to form both a house and
Transfiguration recontextualizes our perception of the world by assigning new meanings to both the common and the enduring. This tactic can very well be considered an architectural remedy for the subject’s overexposure to the hot and cool of the city and suburbs form and images.

If HdM make a multi-front attack on the culture of the dwelling in the Leymen House, then MVRDV perform a similar critique on the culture of the suburb. Much as Donald Judd has recontextualized and transformed the meaning of the minimalist object by expanding the spatial field, MVRDV’s Hagen Island architecturally alters the image of the dwelling and residential development as a critique of the everyday box. The insistent repetition of the same form and the same highly saturated color palette bring to the foreground the latent sameness and monotony of the suburban grid and at the same time, subverts that very banality through the thematization of the values which are usually suppressed.

Through subtle inflections of the grid and variations in the length of the typologically normative bar, these minimalist houses critique the annoyingly hindering demands of housing, that is; budget, function and the adherence to the neighborhood design standard. Hagen Island’s ironically simple, architectural gestures surpass the shockingly low ambitions of suburbia by using minimalism and seriality to heighten privatized community living in a fashion that developers and contractors lack the imagination or design prowess to achieve. Reciprocally, the ordinary also has the faculty to elevate art and architecture.
Once again, Herzog & de Meuron expand the range of meaning and connections of their works by juxtaposing conditions that seem impossible to combine in a single work. At Vitrahaus, they transfigure and abstract the archetypal house. Stripped-down, gabled volumes are piled together and pulled through each other to create opportunistically hot relationships between the volumes in section and cold, singular moments familiar to the archetypal dwelling. The use of radical juxtaposition permits the silhouettes to freely frame the surrounding landscape as needed, without the limitations of the axial, two-story house. Simple gesture, extreme spatial complexity, and variation.

The protests of 1968 demanded social change, a revolution of policy and city building. There was a common ground for something to happen. Both big gestures and small gestures were proposed in an effort to radicalize and reinvent the nature of society, the city and the dwelling. During this period of fantastical architecture, simple, futuristic, occupiable bubbles were of particular interest to many visionaries including Laudris Ortner and Wolf Prix.

For both architects, transparent Bubbles were developed as stages which concealed nothing and unleashed latent, societally suppressed impulses: impulses such as getting naked and having all sorts of fun with stimuli besides just the visual, which might explain their and the literalists impulse for stripping down, it was not about the visual aesthetics of the object it was about experience. These pneumatic structures were malleable and invisible, like dreams. Their forms could be anything as long as life
was breathed into them.

Fast forward to the present day, where Ortner and Prix lead two highly successful and influential practices in an age where their childhood dreams of extravagant form and bizarre material could be realized by technology. The site of the courtyard of Fischer von Erlach’s Imperial Stables, Ortner & Ortner’s design for the Leopold and Ludwig Museums was to insert two materially differentiated, canted cubes into the space. While the objects are mute, they activate the surrounding space of the courtyard in a deliberate way. Indeed the architect’s deploy a highly effective tactic of transfiguration by cutting windows into the museum that frame the courtyard as on par with artworks in the gallery. The high culture of the museum and the popular culture of the street are recontextualized in an architectural act intermixing art and hippies playing hackey-sack to produce a very hot situation from a scene from the everyday. The modest forms of the Leopold and the Ludwig Museum allow room for a symbiosis of architecture and public space. by being deliberately self-effacing to serve as a background and a provocateur to promote social activity in the public sphere. Fried stood in opposition to the literalists partly because he believed in upholding art’s resistance to the public realm; however, by transfiguring the commonplace, the literalists and Ortner & Ortner brought a new dynamic into the art gallery and into the public realm.

While spectacular and dazzling as an achievement of form and engineering, Coop Himmelb(l)au’s contemporary museum for BMW Welt designs a big gesture whose payoff is too hot. This image is easily consumed and there is little provocation for the viewer to take imaginative possession of the building. The visitor’s strongest impulse is to snap pictures, check it off the list of sights to see, and commence the frantic search for free t-shirts.

As architects, our buildings not only reflect but influence society and the subjects that comprise it. Therefore, a call for criticality and a mastery of technique is needed in architecture so that we make sure our gestures do not surpass their payoffs, which is much more difficult to achieve. In a society under constant visual bombardment and technological temptation, one small gesture is enough to continue a cultural movement.
Carrie Moradi
Lewis

Miniature Architecture
On a recent trip to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, I visited an exhibit titled *California Design, 1930–1965: Living in a Modern Way*. The exhibition examined Californian mid-century modern design through the curation of over three hundred objects ranging from furniture, ceramics, and architectural drawings, to fashion, textiles, and industrial and graphic design. A massive serpentine platform structure—reminiscent of Richard Serra’s sculpture merely steps away in an adjacent building—winds through the center of the large, stark white pavilion, dividing the space roughly in half and creating smaller intimate spaces while also delineating a distinct path through the exhibition.

For me, the highlight was discovering a replica of the Eames House living room at the far end of the pavilion, with all of their possessions transplanted from the house, preserved as if Charles or Ray could enter at any moment. Although patrons are not allowed to enter the room, I stood transfixed by a special glimpse into their world of carefully composed collections, furniture, and textiles, within the context of a museum exhibition; an exhibition featuring scads of notable and lesser known objects and designers in the same era in the state of California—a miniature museum within a museum.

The curatorial act of replicating a portion of the Eames house afforded a large audience not only the unique opportunity to view a pristine time capsule, but a pristine time capsule within the architectural context that is otherwise inaccessible to the public. Assembling their possessions within
the full-scale architectural framework injected life into their trappings of domesticity. Experiencing the double height living room space, albeit within a large gallery, effectively conveyed the duality of a modernist home constructed of prefabricated materials and the richness of their designs and collections.

I left the California Design exhibition fully satisfied, not only as a result of seeing the exhaustively composed Eames living room, but through absorbing the wide spectrum of mid-century modern design, in a place where design reflected and grew out of the casual culture and utopian environment, where a temperate climate facilitated living outside and inviting the outside inside. A Los Angeles Times reviewer referred to the exhibition as “a dose of design-world Prozac.” I was effectively cured.

In her article titled Showing Work for the Curating Architecture issue of Log, Sylvia Lavin refers to the “...almost countless ways of exhibiting architectural ideas today” as “spreads in magazines, installations in courtyards, buildings in museums, furniture artfully arranged in a living room, archival specimens painstakingly dusted off and displayed, and demographic data illustrated in Illustrator.” Spreads in magazines, buildings in museums and archival specimens are the techniques traditionally utilized to exhibit architecture. Building models and drawings convey architectural concepts of scale and space, yet they actually depict an imperceptible experience—an artful panoptic view of an entire building. The display of small scale representations reveals a totalizing view, unlike the physical embodiment of a built
environment. Exhibiting architecture through these traditional approaches exposes the rigors of the design process, yet leaves the embodiment of space up to the imagination.

Recently, competitions such as MoMA’s PS1 Young Architects Program, furniture, installations, and illustrations of demographic information, have become conduits for architectural expression. Installations and furniture provide an ephemeral opportunity to explore and work through spatial concepts at a small scale as well as afford direct interaction and actualization of an environment. Shrinking built projects to the small scale to display in a museum is not the same as working through architectural ideas at a small scale.

Exhibitions often yield catalogs as a way to document the ideas with essays, interviews and photographs. But they’re not necessarily tied directly to the embodiment or sequence of the actual installations in museums. Bruce Mau’s Massive Change exhibition was so overwhelmingly dense with details that it warranted a different kind of catalog. Massive Change, the exhibition, is described on the exhibition website as being “dramatic, engaging and critical, immersing visitors in a series of powerful encounters with the latest innovations in the fields of urban design, transportation, information design, revolutionary material and more.”

The exhibition was distilled into a book that replicated the “objects, images, ideas and people reshaping the role of design in the world,” initially introduced within a series of galleries. The type is large, just like the supergraphics filling the galleries, and large full-bleed images engage the accompanying text. It’s the kind of book you can easily jump in and out of, culling information at will. Massive Change, the book, marked a shift in terms of the role of the exhibition catalog and it’s connection to the physical experience of the museum exhibition.

Books are the manifestations of ideas, information, and space through the curation of images and text within the page grid structure—they’re miniature architecture. Prior to graduate school, I worked for many years designing books, many of which were educational books for children from kindergarten to the sixth grade. The syncopation of information and the structure of a page were crucial elements to successfully guide students through lessons and activities.

I chose to focus on the work of Charles and Ray Eames, Diller + Scofidio, and Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample—three practices of three different generations—who work in a multidisciplinary capacity yet interrogate the variety of projects through an architectural lens. The first two practices emerged during periods of economic crisis in the United States and the last practice has endured the recent crises as a young firm. I’ve categorized the work as: ambition, envelopment, and sequencing. Speaking about all of this work as miniature is not meant to be diminutive within the larger context of the field, but an opportunity to discuss and frame the work with qualities typically reserved for discussions of the built environment. Elizabeth Diller refers to their “interest lying in interrogating spatial conventions of the everyday. The choice of
medium is a matter of the right tool for the particular job.”

MINIATURE: AMBITION
Charles and Ray Eames practiced during a turbulent period, coming out of the depression and entering World War II, yet they were able to sustain their design philosophy of “the most of the best to the greatest number of people for the least,” through a broad range of work including toys, films, furniture, exhibitions, and architecture. They artfully mobilized humble means to infect large cultural ambitions. Although they were practicing in utopian California, they weren’t mining ideas based on utopian ideals, they mobilized their tireless efforts to aid wounded sailors, to mass produce well-designed and relatively inexpensive molded furniture with compound curves, to educate through film work, and to create a lifestyle where design principles were prioritized through everyday objects. The Eameses designed the world around them, curating a public image full of playful and artful quirkiness. The numerous collections and assemblage of objects in their home were structured with a distinct purpose and symbolize the vast breadth of their work and interests in miniature. They were curating a lifestyle. Another turbulent period in American history—the 1970s oil and energy crisis—yielded another influential duo—

The recession slowed the construction industry and Diller + Scofidio focused their architectural ambitions on art installations, exhibitions, and multimedia collaborations. One of their early works was a theater set design project titled The American Mysteries. Their set apparatus institutes a framework for the unfolding narrative while poetically delineating time and space. The play “weaves together two unrelated theatrical genres, the American detective thriller and the ancient Greek mystery,” composed of nine acts in nine different sites. Responding to the play’s structure, they designed a nine-square grid set apparatus with counter-weighted panels hinged at all sides. “The set is transformed into discrete configurations by the performers in seamless transitions between acts.” Diller explained, “Rather than a traditional” frontal relationship with the audience, we divided the stage into a nine-square grid [of separate spaces] which all collapsed into a box. The center of the box was the site of pure fiction, the outer eight squares semi-fiction, and the last was non-fiction.”

She added that the “indexical nature of their approach was storytelling through a mathematical, even clinical breakdown of a tale into thematic bits, rather than a traditional narrative arc.” When asked about the range of their work and their refusal to hierarchize their activity, Diller responds “We have always asserted ourselves as architects even though building buildings is just one strand of our production. Architecture is often a target of our critique and our most effective weapon.” The architecture they infused with their set apparatus establishes a process to manipulate the spatial conventions of a narrative. Structuring the play into distinct spatial zones clarifies the nine different sites, and the performance of negotiating the position of stage set results in the apparatus embodying another role alongside the actors.
The ambitions of the contemporary duo of Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample—who founded their practice, MOS, in 2003—are not dissimilar to those of Diller + Scofidio. When describing their work, they refer to their “continuing interest in ‘serious play, as well as playing within both of the current architectural discourse domains of the pragmatists and the computational crowd. Over the course of their practice, they have designed projects at many scales. Their sprawling *IVY Coat Hook System* “uses a single plastic ‘Y’ unit and a few connectors,” “designed to cluster structurally so that it only requires a few points of support, the system adds texture and utility to the wall with minimal intrusion.” This small scale project allowed them to “examine scripting in a simple way” and experiment while developing research for future projects. Meredith and Sample further utilized scripting to design a temporary puppet theater within the Carpenter Center’s courtyard, fostering the creation of 500 unique diamond-shaped polycarbonate panels, that when interlocked become a rigid structure.

**MINIATURE: ENVELOPMENT**

Charles and Ray Eames arduously worked to create complex compound curves. Dating back to the 1850s, Henry Belter, a German immigrant to the United States, was known for the successful commercial production of eighteenth century rococo-style molded-plywood furniture by “using heat to bend plywood in three dimensions.” Not quite the same curves the Eames were interested in. Nearly a century later, Charles and Ray’s interests in molding a one-piece
compound-curve chair came to fruition with their homemade “Kazam” machine that also utilized heat. When their efforts were shifted to develop molded-plywood leg splints, the goal was to envelop sailor’s legs in order to minimize injury. After honing their skills creating leg splints, the Eames returned to creating modern molded-plywood furniture. The concept of enveloping the human form continued into their chair designs and resulted in the successful development of sleek and comfortable chairs with a minimal amount of material.

Diller + Scofidio’s Blur Building, affectionately referred to as the “making of nothing,” envelops its patrons in a dense mist of discombobulation rather than comfort. Approaching the foggy mass along long catwalk structures terminates in an experience “unlike entering a building,” rather Diller and Scofidio describe “the experience of entering a massless and elastic medium in which time is suspended and orientation is lost, like an immersion into ether.” This embodiment of nothing yields an ephemeral exploration where the sudden onset of low-fidelity vision shifts an individual’s ability to navigate the exhibit, primarily through audible cues.

Although the platform structure is quite large, once you enter the foggy atmosphere, the experience shifts in scale and becomes highly individualized, masterfully enveloping patrons in a fine mist. The exhibition’s ability to render its inhabitants nearly sightless immediately puts them in character, focusing on their sudden lack of clear vision for the duration of their visit until they traverse the long platform back to the land, assessing
what just happened. Diller + Scofidio’s Blur Building sets up the framework for an individual event without the promise of any certain outcome.

A similar phenomenon occurs in biology at the nano-scale in regards to healing skin wounds. It’s called the extracellular matrix. Extracellular matrix consists of a “complex group of structural and functional components that organize and direct the healing process.” “It provides tissues with structural support and modulates important processes such as: development, migration, attachment, differentiation and repair.” Comparably, the Blur Building’s “smart weather system” creates the cloud by “responding to shifting humidity, wind direction and speed,” “an interplay of both natural and man-made forces.” Both the smart weather system and extracellular matrix set up this complex framework and rely on the materialization of various components and processes in order to respectively yield fog or facilitate proper wound healing.

While the Blur Building envelops it patrons in mist, MoMA’s PS1 Young Architects competition challenges emerging architects to design an urban landscape to envelop its guests as an urban refuge with a tight budget. MOS’s winning entry, titled Afterparty: Cool Down, serves as a “temporary urban shelter and passive cooling station for PS1’s summer events.” Throughout the summer, the installation must accommodate more than 5,000 people every Saturday night and approximately 100 people per day during the week.

Meredith and Sample stated that they wanted to “make a social space with both large domes and small cones, or chimneys, for more intimate groupings.” The core of their design was to provide cool spots accommodating social leisure within a courtyard that can experience temperatures of up to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. “The chimneys were sited in the shadiest spot on the site to enhance the cooling effect. Cool air from the thermal mass of existing shaded concrete walls and the ground was drawn up by the pressure differential of the cooling chimneys, creating a breeze and a ‘cool down’ atmosphere for informal gathering.” The dark and hairy thatched skin was designed to perform like a Bedouin tent, providing a breathing membrane as well as shade by diffusing sunlight. All of their efforts distill architectural ideas pertaining to “the primitive essentials of space, structure and environment,” while curating social interaction and naturally conditioned spaces within a large courtyard. By providing intimacy at varying scales, their spaces accommodate the fluctuations in crowds, from the individual to the collective.

During my inaugural quarter in the three year Master of Architecture program, I developed a small, minimally programmed space of occupation with a highly prescribed arraying process—a process encompassing the spatial enveloping of the human form, while transforming into contact, action, and atmospheric hybrid surfaces. One wall surface composed of gill-like slits guided inhabitants through the space via a curated progression of light.
MINIATURE: SEQUENCE

Over the course of their careers, the Eameses produced various films. One was about the circus, one was about tops, and many others involved unfolding spatial sequences of images. Their Glimpses of the USA film for the 1959 Moscow World Fair employs seven enormous screens containing images of similar subject matter at the same scale, presenting the audience with the ability to absorb all of them at once while being exposed to a range of images. Beatriz Colomina likens their multimedia display to NASA mission control and refers to it as a powerful weapon. She states that “the huge array of suspended screens defined a space, a space within a space. The Eameses were self-consciously architects of a new kind of space.” Colomina is referring to the nesting of images captured from vastly different scales and point of views with technology such as telescopes, zoom lenses and aerial photography.

Although the exhibition space was gigantic, and the screens were enormous, the images and representations of space, rather than walls, effectuates this phenomenon of a space within a space. The careful timing and sequencing of images skillfully immersed the Russian audience into a typical work day in the United States. Charles precisely diagrammed the image display sequence. Similarly, their film Powers of Ten facilely sequenced images depicting space through distance and time. Colomina states that “Intimate domesticity is suspended within an entirely new spatial system—a system that was the product of esoteric scientific/military research but that had entered the everyday public imagination with the launching of Sputnik in 1957....The Eameses’ innovative technique did not simply present the audience with a new way of seeing things. Rather, it gave form to a new mode of perception that was already in everybody’s mind.”

Diller + Scofidio’s High Line project artfully sequences numerous unique spaces of repose within the long park. Their collaboration with James Corner Field Operations yields the negotiation of the elevated landscape and discrete structures, such as stairs and benches, which inconspicuously provide places for congregation and social intimacy along the path, while maintaining the continuous flow of people walking. While providing different spatial qualities, the paving and planting pinches and expands and modulates the path width, curating the speed of the pedestrian traffic.

Last Spring, my project for an arts boutique hotel and hostel utilized a similar pinching and expanding technique of sequencing program found in the High Line park surfaces. I investigated the layers of typical hotel and hostel rooms and proceeded to push and pull spaces to create a variety of room types offering guests with differing preferences distinctive experiences. For instance, hotel guests could stay in rooms with extra large balconies and minimal bathrooms, or conversely rooms with extra large bathrooms would have minimal balconies. Economy-sized rooms were also an option. The hostel towers also formally pinched and expanded vertically to provide spaces for gathering as well as privacy.
Another sequencing project involves MOS’s design for a series of thick storage walls for Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art National Design Triennial. “All the objects are categorized and stored within the dense thickness of the wall” rather than on podiums and platforms within an open space. “The walls themselves shift in size to register the physical size of the objects they house.” The exhibition, titled *Design Life Now*, presents the best work from the prior three years in product design, architecture, furniture, film, graphics, new technologies, animation, science, and fashion. MOS’s walls syncopate both the exhibition circulation and the display of objects. They also create smaller galleries within the larger context, similar to their *Afterparty* installation and the serpentine structure at LACMA.

**CONCLUSION**

Over the past two years, I have held a graduate associate position in the Wexner Center’s design department. The opportunity has broadened and deepened my interest in contemporary art and multidisciplinary art programs, while influencing my approach to the curation of space, the curation of ideas, and the curation of images and type on a page. Clearly the experience has also elevated my interest in the potency of the exhibition. The LACMA exhibition prohibits entry into the reproduced Eames House living room, forcing people to stand as voyeurs outside of the open walls. But the restriction actually adds to the preciousness of their possessions, succinctly encasing all of their eclectic collections within the confines of the replication of architecture.
Whereas the experience of the Blur Building is something completely different. Entering into the atmosphere and becoming enveloped by mist forces people to focus inward—meditatively—fostering a moment where all of life’s distractions fall away. Offering nothing to read, no didactic experience to embrace, only the complete immersion into a unique environment invoking an intense focus on surrounding sensory signs, without the luxury of sight. Both exhibitions offer viewers unique, ephemeral experiences; unconventionally exposing the architectural ideas of two notable design teams.

Times of economic disparity have provided unique opportunities to work through conceptual ideas at a smaller scale. Hopefully the ingenuity that arises out of constraint will carry through to a more prosperous period. In an interview following their retrospective exhibition Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Diller spoke about the curators strongly identifying them as “border crossers between art and architecture,” yet she identifies the work as always being “processed through an architectural filter.” Similarly, during an interview within the last year of Charles Eames’ life, when asked about the office’s collective work, he stated “...we consider this all architecture: the chairs are architecture—the films, they have structure just as the front page of a newspaper has structure. The chairs are literally like architecture in miniature.”