SALVATORE DELLARIA

2013
Design Criticism

UIC SOA

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Table of Contents

Cover//Controlled Demolition of Hainan Airlines Headquarters (2012)

ENDURANCE

ARCH520: Designing Criticism
Fall 2012
Sam Jacob

Taking a cue from the manner in which film constructs a fictional architecture, the Villa Simulacrum is a fabricated object of criticism that undresses myths of architectural endurance.

Above//Eugene Kodani, Villa Savoye in Disrepair (1951)
Reverse//Max Semakov, Narkomfin Building

The Villa Simulacrum

The myth of reuse implies a drift from perfection to compromise. It invokes an imaginary original which overwhelms all subsequent functions. In fact, there is no reuse, only use. The myth of ruination invents inevitability. It draws a false trajectory of decline, pointing forward toward entropy and backward toward a fiction of unspoiled beginnings. Ruins are constructs no less than the buildings from which they are derived. The myth of conservation contrives an ending. It collapses possibility in favor of half-remembered and elusive truths. There are no endings to be written and no beginnings to be preserved. The Villa Simulacrum is an armature for mythology, a meta-fiction that rehearses and debunks privileged narratives of architectural endurance.

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A hornless brown and white Hereford calf is at pasture in front of a clean-lined, but weathering gray, stuccoed concrete villa, a rough rectangular box with horizontal ribbons of windows raised on slender pilotis above tidy rows of artichokes, asparagus, peas, fennel, and leeks. A vegetable delivery truck idles in the gravel as its driver loads crates of produce onto a trailer. The villa's upper floor is a hayloft. Bales of drying ryegrass bulge through open win-

dows. Bundled straw is stacked chest-high on the terrace. A table saw on horses kicks sawdust under the bedroom door. Below, the entrance foyer stocks hand tools: trowels, shovels, mowers, rakes, and pitchforks.

The villa is empty of domestic comforts. Its cupboards store no dishes; its closets store no linens. No beds, no sofas, no settees, it articulates a household in relief, an outline of an absence. The livestock, the garden, the sawdust, and the hay, the trailer slowly filling with vegetables, they are all overpowered by this false memory of domesticity. The villa was never a home. It was a model for efficient modern living, a manufacturer's showroom. It was a manifesto for mechanization. Citroen in the garage and Olivetti in the den. Yet, the vacancy of what it never was defines the terms of endurance and obsolescence. The villa-as-farm is ranked always in relation to its fictional origin, and the degradation of each successive copy of a copy—it will be in turn a school, a church, a barracks, a bomb shelter—elevates in contrast and perfects the mythic villa-as-home.

At the Villa Simulacrum, a chronology of use is mistaken for a hierarchy of identity. Difference falsely measures distance from a procreative fiction. There is no prototype from which to deviate. Still, the imaginary home insists that eccentricities of use and adaptation are interference patterns lessening the clarity of its broadcast, but noise without a signal is a transmission of its own.

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Windows are painted shut, and dusty yellowed glass blanches the landscape past the villa's empty sitting room. The fireplace vent is plugged with concrete. The air doesn't move, and the room is choked with dirt and ashy dust. Walls of peach and blue paint blister and peel. Plaster separates from concrete blocks and falls in pieces to the floor where the feet of vagrants and curious trespass-

ers grind it, over time, to a coarse powder. Decay verifies the villa's substance, gives it texture and vulnerability. The nearer it draws to collapse, the more endearing it becomes. Persistence wins it affection.

Deterioration draws notice from rubberneckers charmed by stains and scars, keen to join in on the villa's demise. For them, the villa is its age; it is a fetish object that substantiates an inescapable mortality. They come with clippings torn from magazines, photographs taken at the building's completion against which to measure the degree of its decline, black and white proofs of an origin away from which the villa necessarily slides. A pair of students hop the fence and push quickly past loose sheets of plywood hammered across the front door. Shaking cans of spray paint, they write love letters to the villa on its crumbling walls.

Despite this romance, the Villa Simulacrum's ruins are not anticipated at conception, and it owes no debt to inexorable vectors of decline. Decay is not the inevitable cost of endurance; it is an architecture of its own. Trespassers come to witness the villa's anonymous failure instead author these ruins with vandalism. Owners ghostwrite an unsigned text of entropic loss with deferred maintenance and neglect. The arc of decline upon which the ruined villa follows naturally from its origins is a forgery. Neither state implies the other. Origin and ruin share a shadowy resemblance but are of discrete and independent provenance.

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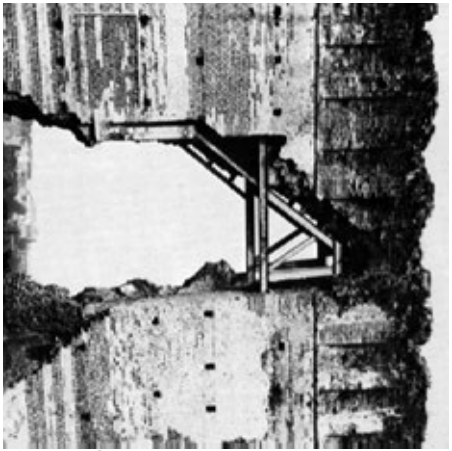
Patchy stucco is rubbed with soot, charred black in gestural streaks below the building's roofline. Fire has emptied much of the second floor and weakened its structure to near failure. Now, an armature of support turns the villa inside out. What the building can no longer manage from within is instead imposed from without. A



Myth of Conservation

Myth of Ruination

Myth of Reuse

latticework of canted steel beams digs into the earth and pushes back against the walls.

The props are deliberately unassuming. They do their job plainly. The villa's plaster has blackened, but the steel support is blacker by a shade. Too dark or too light and it would strike a note of contrast; too similar and it would veer toward mockery. Instead, the props defer to the villa as best they can, striving for neutrality, neither imitating its pilotis nor competing with them for attention.

Even in modesty, the steel can't help but spill some false rhetoric. It gestures toward weakness and disrepair. It retells episodes of injury and it fastens the villa to these narratives that it favors. The steel is the conclusion to the villa's speculations. All possibilities other than the one that it supports are forbidden. The props counter structural collapse with a metaphysical collapse of potential. The villa's desire to become something other than what it was vanishes. Its end is pinned to its beginning, and both extremities are knotted to these steel reinforcements.

The completion of the Villa Simulacrum is a fiction disguised as truth by the neutral candor of conservation's exoskeleton. There is no ending but that imagined by the props. The villa is not at its finale because there is no narrative that demands resolution. The steel and the villa together are a new composition, as incomplete as those that came before and undiluted in potential for those that may come after.

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The villa groans under the weight of a heavy snow. Its pilotis labor to carry the load. Windows and doors long missing, unheated,

Top//Michigan Theater, Detroit; Middle//Villa Savoye, Poissy; Bottom//Bridge on the Mincio River

snow is pushed in drifts across the living room floor, piled into corners of the bedrooms.

Outside, the villa is prepared for renovation. Every addition of lumber and wallboard is eliminated, every alteration erased. Its structure is reinforced; it stands again on its own. Walls are scraped clean of plaster and wood, stripped back to its barest substructure of steel and concrete block. The stuccoed surface is gone without a trace, save for neat mounds of rubble buried in the snow, waiting for a springtime excavation and removal by backhoe and dump truck.

In this state, the Villa Simulacrum is less than a ruin. It has forgotten everything—use and reuse, ruination and conservation—except how it was made. It explains itself now only in modest terms of concrete reinforced with steel, of infill bricks stacked one on another. Keeping no memory of its history and anticipating no particular future, it is released from the mythologies that enclosed it. The villa hibernates in limbo. A concrete framework for fictions written and revised, it has seen them come and go, and it waits, now, for the next.

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No state in architecture is gathered from the remains of what preceded it. No origin echoes inescapably across its lifespan. No model conditions a degradation of copies, one following another, losing legibility, and fading eventually toward dissolution. Even when a linear, if waning, resemblance seems to bind architecture to an absent and prior model, or when the narratives it supports seem to corroborate that link, similarity speaks only toward deception. Likeness between a building and its ruins or between restored and original work is a superficial illusion, produced and reproduced anew at every turn.

Likeness is a superficial illusion.

Arm Architecture//National Museum of Australia, Canberra (2001)

ARCH589: Writing Tutorial I
Fall 2012
Alexander Eisenschmidt/Robert Somol

Jill Stoner's resistance to architectural stability misses an opportunity to wrest the discipline of architectural intervention from archeological control.

Above//Orson Welles, Still from The Trial (1962)
Reverse//Falcons at the Nebraska State Capitol, Webcam Still (2012)

Major Minority

Book Review: Jill Stoner's *Toward a Minor Architecture*

Jill Stoner's *Toward a Minor Architecture*, a short volume published in 2012 by the MIT Press, would support a profound reformulation of current preservation, conservation, and restoration practices, a new discipline of architectural alteration, were it not so hostile to the idea of architectural disciplinarity. She writes from an oppositional stance, positioning minor architecture as a refuge for a resistive, counter-disciplinary practice and, in doing so, severely limits the relevance of her insights, which may have otherwise informed a decisive regrounding of intervention within architecture.

Stoner starts from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work on Franz Kafka, *Toward a Minor Literature*. Deleuze and Guattari identify in Kafka a minor text in operation within a major language, an impoverished voice at the very base of structures of power, able, nevertheless, to muster substantial power of its own. Minor literature inspires a similarly coordinated minor architecture: activated from below, sited in existing buildings, dismantling or escaping the hierarchies that major-language architecture is seen to represent. For Stoner, architecture is poisoned by complicity with the regimes that produce it; minor architecture is its disruptive antidote.

Convinced as she is that major architecture's complicity prevents it from challenging its own origins, Stoner's examples of minor architecture come almost exclusively from outside the architectural discipline, mostly from works of twentieth-century fiction. Mr. Kabe, the protagonist in Peter Schneider's *The Wall Jumper*, makes counterintuitive leaps over the Berlin Wall from Allied controlled west to Soviet controlled east, despite being able to pass legally through border checkpoints. Kabe is a minor architect subverting the wall's major-architectural claims of interiority. His is an escape *into* rather than *out of*; he turns East Berlin inside out. Neddy Merrill in John Cheever's "The Swimmer" denies the discrete objecthood of suburban backyards. Swimming home through a sequence of private neighboring pools, he is the architect of their transformation into an unbroken river. In Lawrence Thorton's *Imagining Argentina*, Cecilia Rueda visualizes the swirls of plaster on her cell walls as a text describing her incarceration. The prison's architect is no longer the subject of design, Cecilia has pulled a minor architecture from its walls long after major architectural work had finished.

Above all, in every example, Stoner problematizes architecture's material stability and durability. Work that is assumed to be closed and complete becomes something open and new. Stoner pushes against the heavy value that architecture accrues as a function of its material persistence through time, and this challenge to architectural endurance ought to give minor architecture a weight in challenging also prevailing theories of intervention—theories that elevate values of age and history above values of alteration and transformation. Unfortunately, Stoner's aim is off. She is right to unmask the "myth of architectural permanence" but mistaken in

TOP//PETER LEIBING, HANS CONRAD SCHUMANN DEFECTS TO WEST BERLIN (1961); MIDDLE//FRANK PERRY, STILL FROM *THE SWIMMER* (1968); BOTTOM// CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON, STILL FROM *IMAGINING ARGENTINA* (2003)

her attribution of the source of that myth. Age is the currency of archeology, not architecture, and if minor architecture strips age-value from the architectural commodity, it devalues buildings archeologically while liberating them architecturally.

It is archeology that proposes an intransience of monuments and bars architecture from overcoming its origins, and had Stoner set her minor architecture against archeology rather than against major architecture, she might have unwittingly authorized an overlooked mode of alteration, in which architects—when approaching the built environment as restorers, renovators, conservators, and so on—would not be bound to reproduce the past, but would instead gain license to mobilize a building's latent desire for *becoming* as means for exit or diversion into unpredictable futures and alternate presents. She might have, in short, reclaimed the practice of intervention—from archeologists—for architects.

Escape from archeological hegemony is precisely what is missing from the present discourse of architectural intervention. The most recent sustained theorization of alteration is found in Fred Scott's book, *On Altering Architecture*, published in 2008 by Routledge. Scott catalogs and classifies interventionist attitudes and convincingly demonstrates that even seemingly incompatible approaches ought to be considered as branches of a single sub-discipline of design. Dissolving the differences between restoration and conservation, Scott releases the prohibition of modern alteration against copying; the *falsification* of history can't be dismissed as deceitful when the *conservation* of history is illuminated as equally illusory. While this redemption of the materially inauthentic certainly loosens archeology's grip on the discipline, Scott still sets alteration in service of archeological principles before architectural ones.

Whether or not alteration defers to the *material* of the past, Scott remains insistent that it defer to the *narratives* of the past.

He endorses practices, like Caro Scarpa's un-completing of the Castelvecchio in Verona, that propel architecture on trajectories of transformation from history to future, but submission to archeologically defined historical truth, even here, ensures that all futures amount to reproductions or elaborations of past mythologies. He seems determined to prove Stoner's faulty thesis, that major architecture cannot escape the contingencies of its creation. It can only replicate the powers—archeological or otherwise—that it serves to embody.

This is where minor architecture should step in, as support for an interventionist practice that obligates architects to the fictions of no discipline but their own. Unfortunately, Stoner's stance, in

Carlo Scarpa, Castelvecchio Museum (1975)

fact, *forbids* such a practice. In positioning minor-mode architecture as resistive opposition to a complicit major-mode discipline, she requires her destabilizing approach to operate toward a loss of the disciplinarity that could otherwise generate such speculative intervention. Her fear of an enduring weight of influence is well founded, but it would serve architecture better in advance of a major appropriation of minor techniques than of a minor opposition to major authority.

If minor architecture's only function is to dissipate major architecture's power, its endgame is mutual annihilation. To destroy an object of opposition destroys opposition itself. In fact, complicity is a construct of Stoner's resistance; it has little definition outside of minor architecture's antagonism, and in misapprehending the source of architecture's "excessive force"—that is, in architecture rather than archeology—Stoner prevents a productive symbiosis of major and minor modes. Resistance erects as foil a major architecture whose future is predicted by its history, where remembrance is reproduction, but resistance also strips architecture, by definition, of its ability to become otherwise. It hides minor innovations—the keys to supplant archeological values—from what it has misdiagnosed as an infected discipline, and it quarantines minor architecture from the arena in which it might operate materially.

Stoner recounts the fate of Peregrine Falcons east of the Mississippi River. Chemical pollution introduced into their natural habitats decimated the population; by the early 1970s, they were facing extinction. Wildlife biologists transplanted pairs of the birds onto skyscrapers in urban centers—New York, Toronto, Detroit, and more than 50 other cities—where their food supply would be free of lethal pesticides. These reterritorialized falcons thrived in their new urban habitats and are no longer under threat of extinction.

The falcons, for Stoner, demonstrate how minor architecture

Falcon at the Nebraska State Capitol, Webcam Still (2012)

works. The birds are unconcerned with the symbolism, significance, or history of their new homes. Their skyscrapers are emptied of values of "provenance and preservation." They flourish without that knowledge. Minor architecture, too, is a reterritorialization, a superimposition of subversive inhabitation over buildings thereby revealed as rigid and dictatorial. These would be useful lessons for operationalization within a discipline of material intervention; conservators and restorers might do well to consider themselves reterritorializers as well, similarly unconcerned with provenance.

However, minor architecture's re-inhabitation *alone*—that is, without a disciplined deployment—is mere disobedience. Falcons and minor architects can act *within* existing architecture, but they can't act *on* it. They are barred from lending their insights to a discipline of material alteration because to support such methods is to become complicit themselves, to abandon their faulty oppositional justification. Such abandonment, however, is precisely what is required if minor architecture is to move from literary to literal.

Stoner likens prevailing responses to existing buildings as either photographic—concerned, like Scott, with reproducing an exist-

ing truth—or journalistic—like, minor architects, divulging of relationships that undercut the power of that truth. She omits a third response, the most obvious but the most overlooked: neither photographic nor journalistic, but *architectural*—where truths might be neither inherited nor subverted, but actively constructed. Buildings can escape archeological myths of permanence, not by dismantling architectural authority from without, but by strengthening it from within.

Stoner, Jill. *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT, 2012.
Scott, Fred. *On Altering Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Escape from archeology.

Orson Welles//Anthony Perkins in a still from *The Trial* (1962)

ARCH520: Designing Criticism
Fall 2012
Sam Jacob

Aging Brutalist monuments are at a crossroad, facing—in decay—either demolition or renovation. While sympathetic restoration neuters their architectural intransigence, clumsier efforts test and intensify their rigidity.

Above//Ezra Stoller, Rudolph's Art & Architecture Building (1963)
Reverse//Stuart Franklin, Weese's Metropolitan Correctional Center (2003)

Brutally Restoring Brutalism

If there is a fate worse than death for Brutalism, surely it is preservation, or even ghastlier, sympathetic and considerate restoration. These are, as Reyner Banham put it, bloody-minded buildings, not gentle in manner and ineloquent in detail.[1] A shove in the back, not a tap on the shoulder. Knock them around; they can take it. If crumbling in decline and not allowed to prove their mettle against the abuse of some ham-fisted renovation, better to pull them down than to prop up their shame.

Paul Rudolph's bush-hammered concrete Art and Architecture building at Yale was the victim of a thorough restoration in 2008. At the hands of Charles Gwathmey, years of neglect were erased, its facade rebuilt, its interiors reopened, elements lost to time revived. All rehabilitations were performed with respectful diligence and with great care and deference to Rudolph's original intention. What an insult to think the building needed such tenderness.

Gutted by arson in 1969 and subsequently chopped and reconfigured during aggressively insensitive renovations, the building persisted in obdurate indifference. Worse for the wear, certainly, but such abuse was a necessary foil against which the architecture could articulate its intransigence. It heard all the complaints; it just

didn't care. It welcomed neglect, and it was better for it. Gwathmey would have served Rudolph better by adding reasons for protest, compounding abuse rather than atoning for it.

Look at Harry Weese's triangular Metropolitan Correctional Center—a Brutalist skyscraper-jail in downtown Chicago. By 2006, its exposed concrete exterior had been blemished by cracks and splits, its steel reinforcements rusted, and its surface gnarled by thirty-one unforgiving mid-western winters.

Restoration was in order, but rather than pursuing a costly replacement of the original material, renovators opted to simply cover the building in a protective varnish. Its brawny and textured concrete is now sealed behind a wimpy coat of tan paint. This criminally indecent affront to Weese's design is, in truth, just what the building needed. The restoration may be thoughtless and arrogant, but at least it isn't groveling. Here's to hoping that in another thirty-one years, when this bland tan paint itself is chipped and peeling, restorers administer some other disgraceful cruelty that the jail can bear with the same self-possessed force of will.

In their advancing age, Brutalist monuments offer opportunities to test the limits of their bloody-mindedness. Conscientious restoration is a cloying kindness, an unsolicited and patronizing compassion. They'd prefer antipathy. Better to match them blow for blow. They are a sturdy lot. Let them prove just how much they can take.

Notes:

1. Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," *Architectural Review* 118, (December 1955): 354-361.

Top//Paul Rudolph, Yale Art & Architecture Building, New Haven (1964); Bottom//Harry Weese, Metropolitan Correctional Center, Chicago (1975)

ARCH532: Architectural Theory + History II
Spring 2012
Alexander Eisenschmidt

Urban plans of Le Corbusier and the Futurists remove, through demolition, history's accumulated weight, but while Corbusier concludes historical progress, the Futurists predict a new beginning.

Above//Le Corbusier, Plan Voisin (1925)
Reverse//Antonio Sant'Elia, Power Plant (1914)

How to Defeat History

Le Corbusier, the Futurists, and the City of the Past

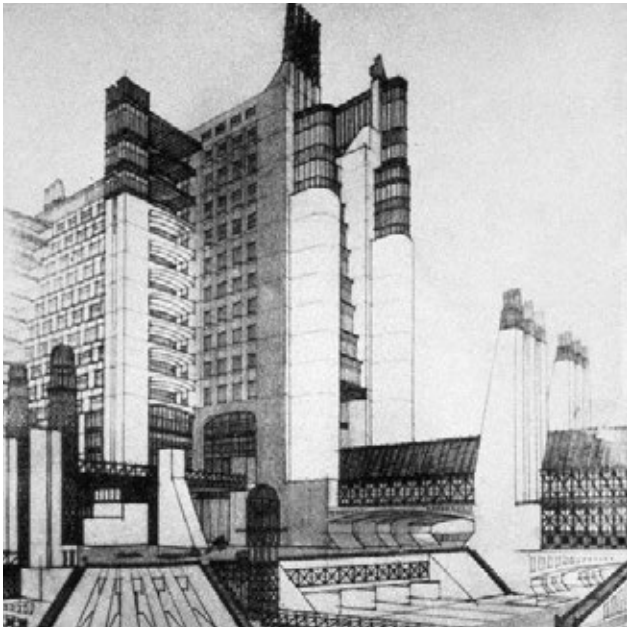
History accumulates in cities. It is written in layers of building and infrastructure. The city is a transcription of historical contingency, accreted and concretized. Each urban form persists as an index of decisions made—perhaps—centuries ago, or of a happenstance, or of a whim. Each form persists, in fact, even after its particular generative conditions have expired. The city remembers, even after we forget. For the Futurist urban vision, articulated by Antonio Sant'Elia and Filippo Marinetti in 1914, as well as for Le Corbusier's "Plan Voisin" for Paris from 1925, this remarkable memory of the city is deeply problematic, and both visions are thus preoccupied with compelling the city to forget. If, however, the Futurist's amnesia is a loss necessary to project a future, both an end and a beginning, Corbusier's is simply an end. His is to be the last memory of the city.

The materialization of history, deposited successively in the built strata of a city, is what David Harvey calls the urban palimpsest,[1] the city as a manuscript, written and rewritten, erasures incomplete, the old words still legible beneath the new. For Harvey, the city gives to history its most direct operative power; the fixed urban form left over from lapsed *historical* processes influences powerfully the modern *social* process undertaken therein.[2] Here, history

demands to be accounted for, contended with, whether ultimately accommodated or frustrated; navigating an *urban* environment becomes indistinguishable from negotiating an *historical* one. For some, however, the power that history amasses as it accumulates in cities quickly becomes an irrelevancy, an intractable burden. In these cases, when fixed urban forms are seen as arbitrary historical contingencies, and when the presence of these forms is seen as offering only an obstinately oppressive influence, the problem is, not how to navigate or negotiate an historical environment, but how to dispense with it.

Dispassionate and categorical demolition of the as-built city, as proposed by the urban visions of Sant'Elia, Marinetti, and the Futurists on the one hand and Le Corbusier on the other, appears as the preferred method—thorough and systematic—of defeating history's influence. Both recommend the comprehensive destruction of the historical city as the *sine qua non* of an authentically modern civilization, that is, unencumbered by the accrued weight of the past. If, however, they both begin from the axiom of demolition, and if both view the rejection of history's influence as a moral imperative, they view in very different lights the value that history might still hold in its neutered form, and the value that their own proposals might continue to hold as they pass from modern visions to historical artifacts.

Sant'Elia and Marinetti's indignation at the presumed authority of the past is unmistakable: "As though we—the accumulators and generators of movement, with our mechanical extensions, with the noise and speed of our life—could live in the same streets built for their own needs by the men of four, five, six centuries ago."[3] The prescription is to "begin again from the beginning,"[4] to "destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind."[5] However, to refuse the past's authority in the present precludes also the present's



Antonio Sant'Elia, La Città Nuova Sketch (1914)

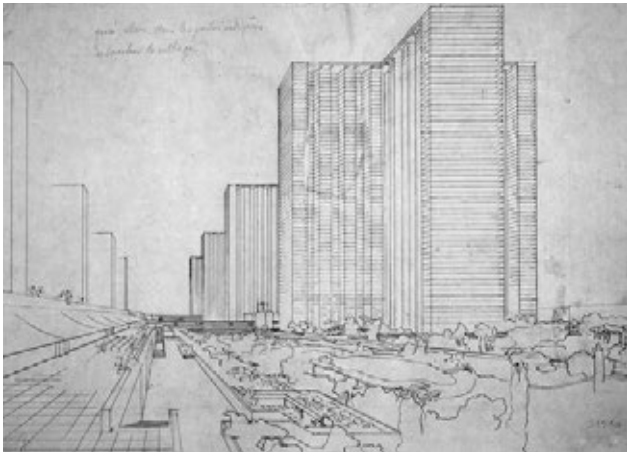
authority in the future. If the forms fixed by history can have neither relevance for, nor dominion over, modern man, neither can today's forms be assumed to hold any value for tomorrow. Thus, Futurist architecture is ephemeral by design. "Houses will have to last less long than we. Each generation will have to build its own city."[6] The Futurist refusal of the past, then, is less a transcendence of history than a streamlining of its mechanisms. It is an understanding of history's tendency to exert, through its fixed forms, an influence beyond its appropriate temporal scope, and a realization, expressed in planned obsolescence, that Futurism itself is not immune from that tendency.

Like the Futurists, Le Corbusier finds the historical city—

"flattened-out and jumbled … terrifying in its confusion"[7]—incompatible with the needs of modern civilization. But where, the Futurists traced this discordancy to the fact that its streets were designed by "men of four, five, six centuries ago," Corbusier places the blame on the pack donkey, whose meandering path was the germ around which the city developed.[8] The donkey's senselessness is genetically implanted in the historical city. To unpack his metaphor, urban form is a persisting manifestation of the irrational caprice of history. Corbusier too wants to "begin again at the beginning," and demolition is a necessary prerequisite for the imposition of a system of order where only the donkey's mindless wanderings would otherwise reign.

Corbusier's "Plan Voisin" for Paris thus rests on the assertion: "The districts of the Marais, the Archives, the Temple, etc., would be demolished."[9] Significantly, however, Corbusier sees this not as the destruction of the past, but as an opportunity for its rescue: "Still standing among the masses of foliage of the new parks, certain his-

Le Corbusier, Plan Voisin, Paris (1925)



torical monuments, arcades, doorways [are] carefully preserved."[10] It is only in concert, it seems, that the forms of the past find their operative power. When isolated in a garden, "surrounded by verdure,"[11] history is rendered impotent. Paradoxically, preservation in Corbusier's scheme marks the end of history's agency. He accomplishes this feat, not through erasure, but through sterilization—through quarantine.

The Futurists would undoubtedly bristle at Corbusier's plan. Their aversion to the past is not an aversion to history itself. Rather, it is an aversion to the manner in which fixed historical form, in fact, impedes historical progress. When form persists anachronistically, demolition must be employed as a means of decalcifying the city so that advancement may continue unabated. Corbusier's prescription—demolition and rebuilding—is the same, but his diagnosis is different. The "Voisin Plan" does not mark a point on the historical continuum, it marks that continuum's fulfillment.

Unlike Le Corbusier, the Futurists anticipate that their project will have no lasting relevance. It is a pivot point in history, but still, like all others, to be consumed by the points that follow. If the Futurist moment has lasting value, it is in a recognition of its own insignificance. Its historical legacy is not expressed in persisting built form, but in this lesson for future generations of builders and architects: destroy what came before; allow yourself to be destroyed by what comes next. With the "Voisin Plan," Corbusier, instead, removes Paris from the historical continuum. He responds in kind to the first of the Futurist directives, but ignores the second. Nothing comes after his scheme; it is the end of history. Both cities have forgotten the past, but only Sant'Elia and Marinetti allow for a future.

Notes:

1. David Harvey, "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Forms," *Transforming Cities: Contested Governance and New Spatial Divisions*, eds. Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor (London: Routledge, 1997), 19.
2. Harvey.
3. Filippo T. Marinetti and Antonio Sant'Elia, "Futurist Architecture," *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge: MIT, 1970), 34.
4. Marinetti and Sant'Elia, 35.
5. Filippo T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism," *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 22.
6. Marinetti and Sant'Elia, 38.
7. Le Corbusier, *City of Tomorrow* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 280.
8. Le Corbusier, 6-7.
9. Le Corbusier, 287.
10. Le Corbusier.
11. Le Corbusier.

Compel the city to forget.

OMA//Mission Grand Axe, La Defense/
Paris (year)

PARALLELISM

ARCH520: Designing Criticism
Fall 2012
Sam Jacob

A look at *Top Hat*'s fictionalized Venice implies a reading of the real-world Venice as a stage-set too.

Above//Mark Sandrich, Still from *Top Hat* (1935)
Reverse//*Top Hat*'s Venice Set (1935)

Bakelite Venice

Once all misunderstandings have been resolved, once all confusions have been explained, once all antagonists have been bested, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers find one another in Venice and dance in tuxedo and gown along the Lido canal until the film fades to black. This happy ending to Mark Sandrich's 1935 musical, *Top Hat*, is inevitable. Every obstacle inserted between the pair serves only to heighten anticipation for a resolution predetermined from the start. This is Fred and Ginger, after all. If they don't end up together, why are we watching?

The pleasure at seeing the two dance in celebration, at knowing all along of their happy fate, certainly, is escapist pleasure. Fred and Ginger's Venice is not ours. Theirs is a city on a sound stage, an extravagantly confident fib where arches, scrolls, and balconies are high-gloss appliqué to façades of streamlined Art Deco, every surface whiter than the next. What is not white is chrome or glass. It all gleams. This is not a Venice delivered through history. This Venice is brand new; it has always been brand new, it will always be brand new.

Shrugging off, in their parallel world, any promises of verisimilitude to our own, Fred and Ginger have gained license to conjure for themselves a speculative fantasy, a city in which they alone can

operate. With obligation to neither past nor future, their city is able to fit them like a glove. Their fantasy romance could only be pulled off in in this fantasy Venice. Ours wouldn't do. Their dancing relies as much on the unreality of these sets as it does on the Irving Berlin score or the Hermes Pan choreography.

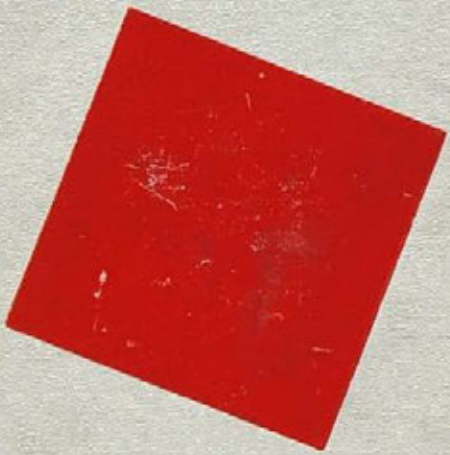
Yet even as a fabricated backdrop—even in the absence of historical provenance—Fred and Ginger's Venice is no more a fiction than ours. Actual cities are stage sets too. We construct, as do Fred and Ginger, our own from fantasies and mythologies, but ours don't fit as theirs do. Ours are convinced of their own deceit. We misread the fiction of the past as inviolate fact and so we deprive ourselves of Fred and Ginger's powers of speculative alteration. For us the past defines our cities—it is to be preserved, monumentalized, it demands our deference and forgives no transgression. For Fred and Ginger, the city defines its past. So, while we obsess over a vain and fruitless recuperation of history or rehearse endlessly for beyond-our-reach utopias, Fred and Ginger dance instead in an eternal and vividly imagined present.

We need our own Venice, not history's Venice, not the future's Venice, but one that suits us as Fred and Ginger's suits them. One that dismisses—as they do—a suspect and inaccessible truth in favor of unbelievable conjecture. Rather than containing present cities within past fictions, we need to rewrite past fictions to fit a present and imaginary urbanism.

Our Venice, not Fred and Ginger's, is the abstraction. Both are invented, but ours is the one derived conceptually from what it was—in fact, from what it never was. Their Venice, instead, is a projection of what it could be, perhaps of what it ought to be, unquestionably of what would flatter them best, and they are giddy with the possibilities. Imagine a perpetually modern Venice. Imagine its smooth and clean Bakelite floors with plenty of room to dance.

Sound stage urbanism.

KlingStubbins//The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, Las Vegas (1999)



ARCH532: Architectural Theory + History II
Spring 2012
Alexander Eisenschmidt

Whether typologies are imposed on the city or excavated from it, as ruptures or as threads in urban continuity, when re-dispatched they might neither confirm nor resist but rather productively transform the city's operations.

Above//Aldo Rossi, Ossuary Cube at Cemetery of San Cataldo (1984)
Reverse//El Lissitzky, Suprematist story of two squares (1922)

(Dis)continuity

Typology, Aldo Rossi, and the Constructivists

Typology and social structure are mutually supportive. Not only does the prevailing mode of social organization generate a system of building types, but that typology, in turn, enables and endorses the prevailing social order. Typology and social structure are each active agents in the maintenance of the other. To reconfigure a collective requires the reconfiguring of its types. The reverse, however, is also true. To generate new types is to generate a new collective. In their interconnectedness, in their functional and symbolic equivalencies, revolution carried out at either end of the equation carries over naturally to the other side. For the Constructivists in post-revolution Russia, it was this typological mathematics that demanded the replacement of a capitalist building typology alongside the replacement of a capitalist social order. When Aldo Rossi, fifty years later, reinvigorated typological thinking, associating it in this case with urban and architectural autonomy, it seemed at odds with the Constructivist embrace of type as a mode of social practice. The conceptualizations of Rossi and the Constructivists, however, while divergent are not irreconcilable, and an examination of type as both an operator in and a reflection of the city suggests how their oppositions might ultimately be resolved.

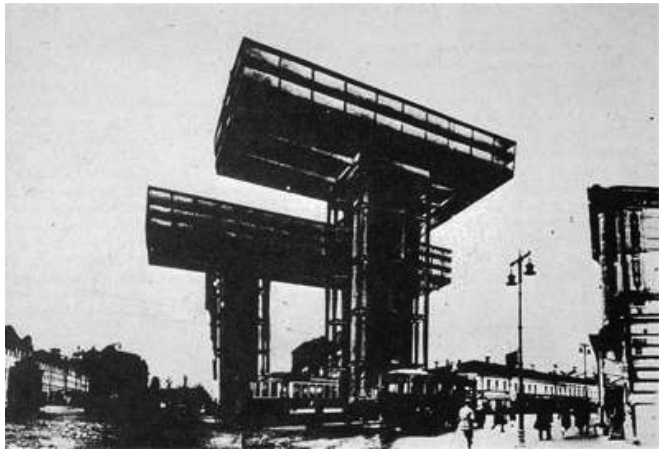
The gulf that Constructivist architects found between what was al-

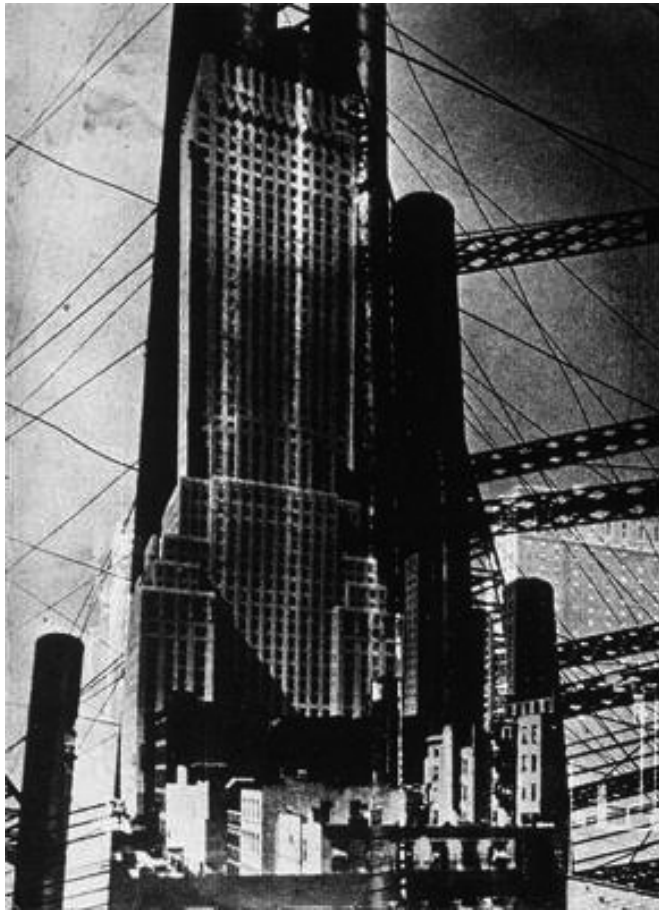
lowed or endorsed by the types established by pre-revolution Moscow and the requirements of a new social order was un-traversable, and it was this tension between what existed and what was needed that motivated the development of a more appropriate typology. For El Lissitzky, "The conditions out of which old cities developed have long since disappeared, but we continue to live in their petrified shells."[1] These shells have not petrified due to a depreciation with age. They are obsolete insofar as they are instantiations of no longer relevant types.

The American office skyscraper communicates capitalism in its very geometry. Its strict verticality both reflects and produces the organizational hierarchy that it contains. In denying the validity of this type, El Lissitzky also denied its social and economic referent. In proposing an alternate type, he also proposed an alternate mode of organization. Lissitzky's Sky Hook project for Moscow inverts the character of the office skyscraper. Where the American tower is a stacked vertical volume, the Sky Hook is horizontally distributive. No laddering of tiered value among components or occupants is implied in its form. Its leveled arrangement, in fact, prohibits the imposition of a capitalist pecking order. Similarly, the center/periphery relationship of the American skyscraper, each floor organized around a supportive core, is dismantled. Lissitzky abandons the core. There is no center, and thus no positioning of worth relative to center. The Sky Hook instead separates useful horizontality from supportive verticality.[2] Lissitzky neuters the ranked hierarchy implied in the vertical by employing it only in service of a non-hierarchical horizontal.

Lissitzky writes, "Current discussion is not about details but about the fundamental attitude toward the total character of building."[3]

Top//El Lissitzky, Unrealized Design for Skyhook in Nikitsky Square, Moscow (1925); Bottom//El Lissitzky, Study for Richard Neutra's 'Amerika' (1929-30)



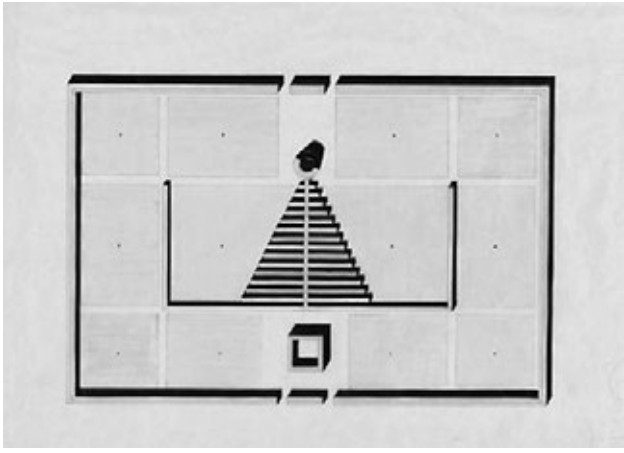


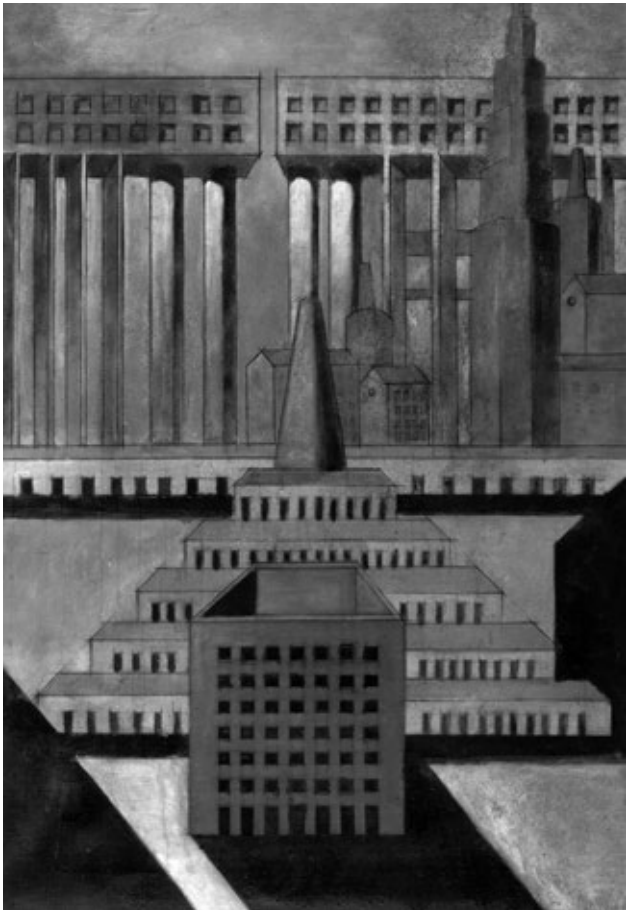
Lissitzky's proposal resonates with the new social order, but not—or not merely—as an isolated project. What is at stake is a shift in typological character. The concern is in how "[t]he introduction of new building types into the old fabric of the city affects the whole by transforming it."[4] The Sky Hook is such a type, repeatable and adaptable, to be deployed at strategic intersections, renovating Moscow's character through its interventions in the existing city.

If, for the Constructivists, type was an operational concept, a tool handled deliberately to affect a transformation, for Rossi, type was to be discovered in the existing forms of the city. Type, here, is valuable in its permanence—in that it persists in an embodiment of the underlying character of a city despite transformations of use or significance. The Constructivists endorsed the development of new types for a new social order, to affect a rupture in character. Rossi instead endorsed a typological archeology, to find and redeploy those urban forms through which might be maintained a continuity of character. He contends that "[e]very generation … adds new elements to the patrimony received from the past; but behind this changing reality, there is a permanent reality that in some way manages to elude the action of time."[5] Succeeding generations each make impressions on the city's typology, they might appropriate it for functionally diverse ends or adapt it to suit changing needs. Type records the memory of these actions, but it is not not deformed by them. They are, in a sense, immune to historical contingencies.

Michael Hays discusses Rossi's Modena Cemetery in these terms, a composition of irreducible fragments—types, autonomous in their self sufficiency.[6] Here, the individual spaces and volumes of the cemetery don't merely reference tombs or homes, but rather

TOP//ALDO ROSSI, CEMETERY OF SAN CATALDO (1978); BOTTOM//ALDO ROSSI, CONSTRUCTING THE CITY (1978)



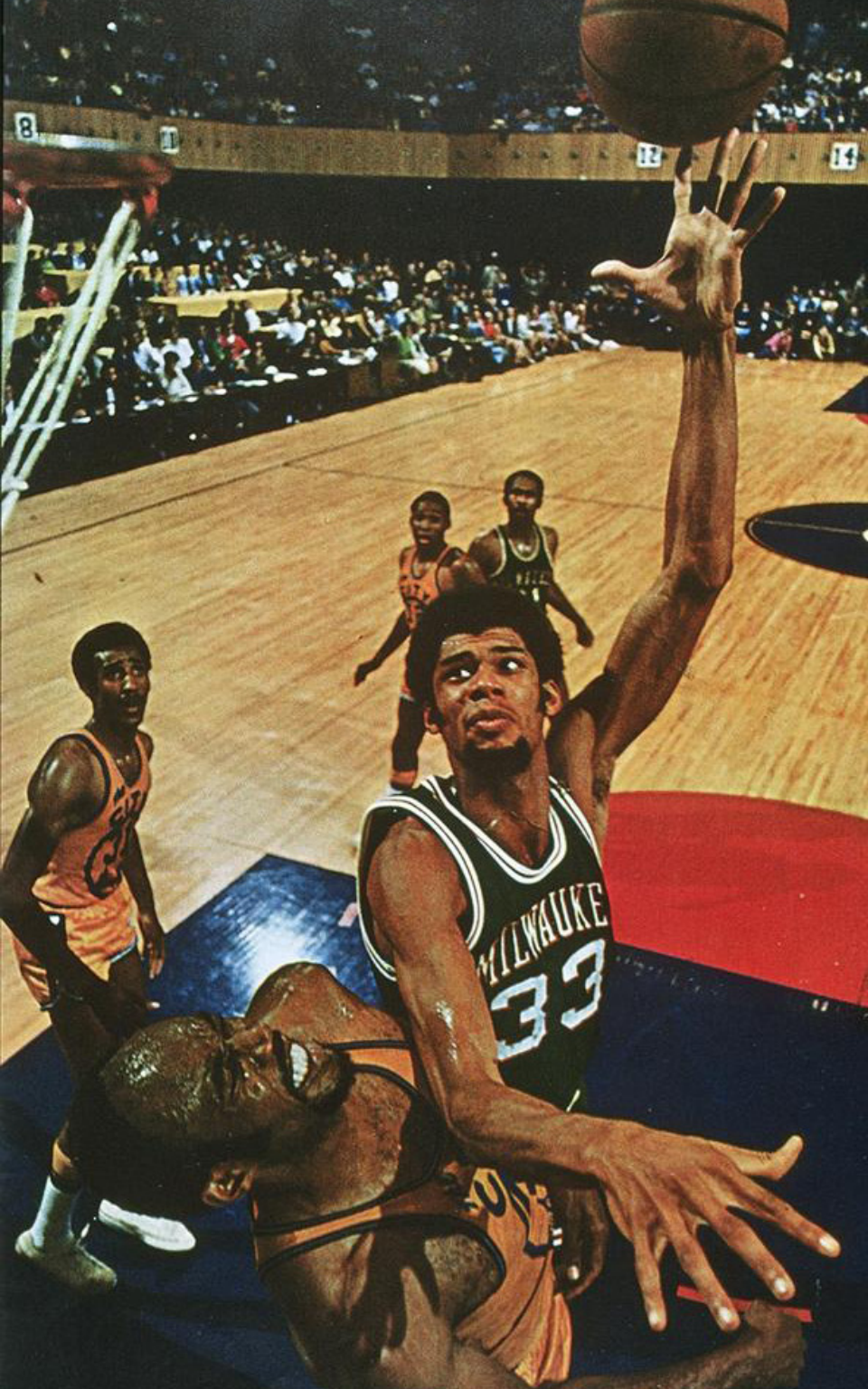


they are iterations of these primary types. Hays writes, "the city … extends its logic uniformly over every patch of the cultural fabric, so that in each isolated type the entire genetic code of the city … can be found."[7] The types in collage at Modena repercuss the character of the city because each has absorbed that character. If type is genetically encoded with a specifically urban epistemology, it is this that motivates typological iterability. Type conveys the city. It produces the city's continuity, and it is thus resonant equally at Modena as it might be elsewhere.

Autonomy seems to distance Rossi's typological thinking from that of the Constructivists, but it is in fact the mechanism that might bring the two into an alignment, as it is in the very self-sufficiency of Rossi's types that they are able to perform in the city. Hays suggests that autonomy provides the critical distance from which a reflection of the city, or a resistance to its degradation, is possible. The Sky Hook, however, demonstrates how this distance might be more performative than critical. In raising the office structure above the old city the Sky Hook achieves Hays' critical distance; it comments on Moscow in its elevation above it. Distance heightens the contrast between old systems and new types, but this communicative dimension is subordinate to its effective influence. It may comment, but it also transforms. In this same way, the focused disciplinarity of Rossi's work may be redirected. Autonomy might give his types the authority to reflect the city, but it also gives them power to operate within it. His typological reading of the past might be, in a surrealist montage of misremembered artifacts, a forecast of possible futures. Free from the Constructivist ideological baggage, Rossi's projections might, in fact, be even more potent, more ambiguous, less prescriptive and dogmatic, more unforeseen and startling in their results.

Notes:

1. El Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World-Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 59.
2. El Lissitzky, 56.
3. El Lissitzky, 62.
4. El Lissitzky, 52.
5. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 24.
6. K. Michael Hays, "Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture of the Present to the of the 1970s through Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification" *Perspecta* 32 (2001): 100.
7. Hays.


MILWAUKE
33

ARCH532: Architectural Theory + History IV
Spring 2012
David Brown

NL Architects deploy the basketball hoop as a performative sign, one that invites play and participation. Work is incomplete without this collaborative dimension between buildings and the collectives that they license.

Above//Robert Keller, Boys Playing Basketball (c. 1935-1955)
Reverse//John Zimmerman, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Scoring (1969)

The Semiotics of Play

NL Architects, the Basketball Hoop, and Performativity

Kamiel Klaasse, on behalf of his partners at NL Architects, speaks simply enough when he describes the aim of their firm: "We hope that our projects will bring out the hidden potential of the world we live in."[1] NL are, then, optimists rather than ideologues. They see latent—unexplored, uncultivated—possibilities in the world as it exists. They are not interested in an architecture that imposes a vision of what the world should be, but instead in an architecture that opens up possibilities—what the world could be—and NL has discovered that play is often a powerful means of realizing that potential. When married unconventionally to form, when mixed with similar and dissimilar programs, play unlocks alternate modes of inhabiting architecture and authorizes novel realignments and reconfigurations of collectives. An architecture that prioritizes play empowers its audience to collaborate in the discovery of the world's hidden potential, and it does so without abdicating its own authority as an agent of that discovery. Play becomes a theme for NL. It activates, seemingly, every surface. Be it climbing, sliding, skateboarding, skiing—the list goes on—wherever there is an opportunity for amusement, NL takes it. Basketball, however, as a game of improvisation and flexibility—a game of possibility—is NL's sport of choice, and in their work, the basketball hoop per-

NL Architects, Silos Zeeburg Project (2009)

forms doubly. The provision of opportunities marks only unrealized possibilities if those opportunities aren't also communicated to an audience, and so, the hoop is not only a *site* of play, but also a *symbol* of play and its potential.

Basketball speaks for NL, but theirs is a semiotics of "*saying* that is also *doing*."[2] R.E. Somol articulates this performative dimension of architectural linguistics where action and statement are coextensive, where saying something makes it so. Called a "speech act" when verbalized ("I apologize," and "I accept your apology" are performances of actions, not descriptions of them), performativity becomes a "graphic act " or a logo in architecture. A performative design does not recreate the world through description, representation, and interpretation, but it transforms the world by acting within it.[3] Moreover, Somol notes that the architectural logo can operate at multiple scales. It performs at the level of building—as in the fast imagability, memorable and without reference, of

Neutelings Riedijk's Concert Hall in Bruges—but it often can be scaled up to perform in much larger contexts—as in the landscape and urban design projects of OMA and West 8.[4] NL demonstrates that performativity might also be scaled down, at least to the 21 square feet (72 inches wide by 42 inches high) of a regulation basketball backboard and hoop.

If the "graphic act" of the logo is in its performance "as nomination, as promise, as bequest, as sentence … as wager,"[5] the performativity of the hoop is "as invitation." Unlike Somol's logo, however, the hoop does stand iconographically for an external referent—that is, to basketball and to the relationships that basketball permits, with a legibility that at least approaches the "graphic expedience" of the logo—but it transcends the icon's limitation in that the hoop is not merely an image of the game, but is also an enticement to play it. This invitation is not constative. It cannot be judged true or false; it can only be accepted or declined.

If the hoop invites an audience, the game suggests how that audience might operate. Its performative value is found not only in its supplying of a site for play but also in its reference to basketball as a model for non-hierarchical, flexible, and informal social interaction. Sport, adopted generically as a referent would be inadequate to NL's agenda. Basketball's greater efficacy as a sign is a function of the game's specific social implications, which can be excavated from its methods of organizing play.

Anthropologist Michael Mandelbaum describes two significant structural differences between basketball and other team sports. First, basketball is collective where others are individual. Basketball players take the court at the same time; they play simultaneously, functioning always as a group. Baseball, in contrast, allows only one batter to swing at pitches. Each player takes his turn alone at the plate. Second, basketball is continuous where others are se-

quential. Action is rarely interrupted. Plays are run, points scored, directions reversed, without disruption. In football, by contrast, the clock stops for every change of possession, often after every play.[6] Basketball, obviously, isn't rare in either regard. Many other games are played collectively, just as many others are continuous. Only a few, however, are both collective and continuous, and it is in combination that these traits produce a social structure relevant to the work of NL.

For Mandelbaum, what is at stake in these comparisons between games is coordination: where it is necessary, and how it is implemented. In individual play, coordination is hardly needed. Skills are matched one on one and little account needs to be taken of the actions of other players. In games played collectively, however, coordination is paramount. Teams must function as a unit; a system of organization must be implemented. The frequent clock stoppages of sequential games allow coordination, when necessary, to be exercised from the sidelines. Control is consolidated; the responsibility for coordination lies with the coach. Games both collective and continuous, however, while requiring a high degree of coordination between teammates, preclude centralized authority.[7] There is little opportunity in the uninterrupted flow of a fast paced basketball game for intervention from the sidelines. Control, here, is diffused. Players must organize themselves without a mediating authority—spontaneously, adaptably, and provisionally.

The basketball coach thus occupies ambiguous territory. His attempts at in-game coordination are antithetical to the non-hierarchical genetics of the game. Mandelbaum quotes former Boston Celtics coach, "Red" Auerbach, who accuses those coaches that shout instructions from the sidelines of "killing the creativity of their players, taking away the free-spiritedness which makes basketball such a fun game to play and such a fun game to watch."[8]

Dave Hickey formulates a similar criticism, that coaches slow the game, that they inhibit the improvisational beauty of its play, that even the game's creator, James Naismith, insisted they were unnecessary.[9] Moreover, if basketball doesn't require coaches, neither does it requires much specialized equipment nor much theoretical expertise. Its rules are few and easy to understand and it is this simplicity that allows informal adaptation of the game to a variety of contexts. A ball and a basket are all that is required of an ad hoc game.

NL's hoop thus invokes not just the game of basketball, but also the particular qualities of its play. If basketball requires spontaneity of its players, so too does NL invite unscripted inhabitation of its buildings. If basketball players are adaptable, so too is NL flexible in its accommodation of a multiplicity of collectives. If any organizational system in place during a basketball game is provisional, so too is NL's work an opportunistic account of present conditions. Moreover, the hoop as a sign does not communicate or reflect these as qualities inherent in NL's form but rather it projects them onto its surface, transforming its readings, activating it semiotically—not as code to be deciphered, but as encouragement, incitement.

The iconic clarity of NL's hoop is accentuated in the spatial relationships of their designs. At WOS 8—a largely unmanned heat transfer station that supplies hot water to a Utrecht neighborhood—a single hoop, centered on an otherwise featureless façade, seems suspended in the structure's seamless black polyurethane membrane. At BasketBar—NL's extension of the University of Utrecht's bookstore—a full sized basketball court sits on the roof of a sunken café. Two hoops hover at opposite ends behind a netting that wraps the court. At Beetsplein—a small public playground in Dordrecht—a pair of hoops are elevated above a deformed con-

crete ring that defines an interior of concentrated play, and above the small grassy hills beyond the ring, an exterior of low density leisure. In each case the hoop is positioned as a visual invitation to the project's hidden interactive programs. WOS 8's surface features a climbing wall, but only the hoop is legible from afar. Play on the court at BasketBar is largely concealed in its elevation above street level. Similarly, at Beetsplein, play is obscured by the surrounding hills. In their height, however, the hoops of both projects remain visible and unmistakable markers of activity, extending their enticement either down to the street, or across the hills. The sign thus finds its audience; it invites participation with form. The hoop, however, speaks not only of the form, but also to the form. Each inflects readings of the other. Play describes architecture, and architecture describes play.

This mutual exchange between sign and form is most explicit at WOS 8 where the hoop is literally continuous with the skin of the structure. The glass backboard, flush with the building's otherwise mute envelope—the only window onto the building's interior—alone affords the work a degree of legibility. In the manner of surrealist collage, the novelty of the form, its monolithic profile with unexpected dips and detours, and the instant recognizability of the hoop collaborate toward productive ends, each lending to and borrowing from the other. With the backboard embedded in it, the strange form is instead strangely familiar. The opportunity for play offered by the hoop extends across and activates the surface. The form is renovated in its entirety. It becomes, at every opportunity, a potential site of interaction. In turn, the form suggests an ad hoc restructuring of play. Contours on the roof return overthrown balls at surprising locations, perhaps channeled along the

Top, Middle, and Bottom//NL Architects, WOS 8 (1997)

hole punctured through the roof and passing out of the opposite façade. New games seem to assemble themselves, informed equally by the idiosyncrasies of WOS 8's form and the improvisational genetics of basketball. The building is a reminder that basketball is fundamentally transfigurable, that the hoop, the ball, and the wall can be recombined into endless configurations, that play at WOS 8 need not be scripted by nor localized at the backboard.

Basketball becomes, in NL's hands, a multivalent sign. At first blush, it solicits occupation of a specific variety—that is, play with ball and hoop, whether according to predetermined rules or not—but the nature of that play leaks to all other levels of use. When employed as a single element among disparate others in a programmatically intensive project, the hoop not only invites play, but it projects playfulness onto adjacent programs. Patterns of use and interaction in the café at BasketBar are thus informed by their proximity to the games played above. The point of mediation between these two programs is a circular window cut through center court through which café patrons and basketball players can each look onto adjacent activities. The window bridges functionally unrelated spaces. Through its conciliation, court and café may both submit to a single model of casual inhabitation. Basketball gives permission for the same type of self-organizing and temporary alliances implicitly in the café that it grants explicitly in the court. The hoop signifies informality above, and so too, then, is informality prioritized below.

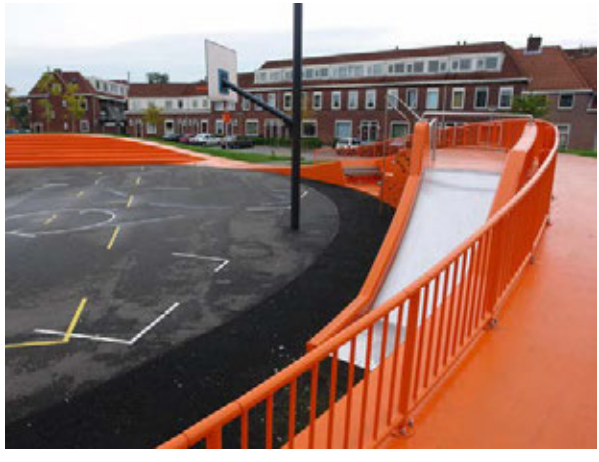
If the hoop communicates a standard of social organization in these projects, it does so through a paradoxically ambiguous legibility. It is permissive. It demands no singular reading or universal interpretation. The hoop is an invitation to play basketball, certainly, but in

Top, Middle, and Bottom//NL Architects, BasketBar (2000)

these contexts it also invites non-specific inhabitation informed by the flexibility of the game. Basketball's rule set is not emphasized, at least not at the expense of other—looser—forms of participation. What reverberates, instead, is a productive ambivalence, a refusal to impose organizational hierarchy. Nevertheless, what it invokes, it invokes candidly—it requires no specialized expertise to decode. The hoop is unequivocal. It is immediate, an expedient shorthand. WOS 8 depends on this familiarity. Were it absent or abstracted, if its legibility required unpacking, the project would stumble. In BasketBar, likewise, no dots need to be connected. At Beetsplein, the hoops attached like billboards to light poles are effortlessly decipherable signs. The park is crowded with intersecting programs: a running track that surrounds the hills; slides, ramps, and a climbing wall embedded in the concrete ring; a circular court in the middle with overlapping patterns of play painted on the asphalt. Each, however, can only echo the earnest insistence of the raised backboards' solicitation. Even if, upon arrival, basketball's specificity is undermined by the project's programmatic complexity—that is, as one option among many, implying, as at WOS 8, inventive realignments of play—it is basketball alone that is communicated unequivocally to the street. Beetsplein rewards its audience with an overabundance of options, but the hoops speak most clearly above the din: bring a ball, come play.

Basketball offers architects an instantly deliverable symbology: not just the hoop and the backboard, but the ball—its recessed ribs, black against orange—and the court itself—the game diagramed plainly in nested semicircles. Like NL, Gwathmey Siegel Associates leverage the clarity of this symbolic system at their Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Top, Middle, and Bottom//NL Architects, Beetsplein (2003)



Siegel wanted a building that would be "instantly recognizable," "whether it was being seen at high speed from Amtrak or Interstate 91, or on television screens across the planet."[10] A basketball iconography is thus not only appropriate to the building's function, but it supplies the design with the same immediate legibility that WOS 8, BasketBar, and Beetsplein benefit from. A 100-foot high hemisphere clad in reflective ceramic panels intersects the building's front façade. The allusion is obvious: a monstrously oversized basketball has been embedded into the slab of the building. A glowing orange orb at the top of a neighboring spire is, in fact, almost redundant. Charles Linn notes that "[the architects] relied on forms that anyone who has ever watched the game can understand."[11]

As in NL's work, the Hall of Fame uses references to basketball as an expedient in the assembly of an audience. The nature of that audience, however, and its relationship to the architecture in question are fundamentally different. Basketball iconography as used in

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame (2002)

the Hall of Fame serves to reaffirm an existing constituency—that is, fans and devotees of professional basketball, or according to Linn, anyone who has ever watched a game. NL uses that same iconography to remix and realign audiences into new—often unexpected, indeed, unforeseeable—combinations. The Hall of Fame communicates clearly and legibly, but it doesn't perform. It signifies basketball to an audience speeding past on the interstate or watching induction ceremonies on television, but it never transcends the speed and distance separating it from its audience. Its reference to basketball stops where it starts. It never becomes, as NL's work does, an invitation to participate. Basketball is a valuable referent to the Hall of Fame insofar as it comes preloaded with a public in whose lives the building may confirm the importance of the game. The building is about the game, nothing else. Basketball is valuable to NL, by contrast, only insofar as it might be leveraged as a means of attracting and modeling participation—between the building and the multiplicity of audiences that programmatic diversity licenses. Basketball offers NL a chance to organize new collectives. Beyond that ability, the game itself is irrelevant.

The twist is that in NL's ambivalence their work is more in line with the spirit of the game—coachless, self-organizing—as endorsed by the Hall of Fame's namesake. Gwathmey and Siegel are "Red" Auerbach's creativity-killing coach, shouting instructions at visitors from the sidelines. Progression through the building is highly scripted. Visitors proceed between levels in sequence from top to bottom, starting at a display of Hall of Fame members on the third floor, then to exhibits recounting the history of basketball on the second floor, and finally arriving at a ground floor court.[12] It is only at this final stop, where visitors might attempt a few shots, that any interactivity is present in the building's programs. This strict ordering opposes what Hickey calls "the profound insight"[13] of the man that the building memorializes: "Naismith thought his

game would teach itself, which it does, and that the players, trying to win, would teach one another, which they do."[14] While this insight is absent from the Hall of Fame, it is found in abundance at WOS 8, BasketBar, and Beetsplein. NL's work imposes no logic of inhabitation. Visitors are not bound to the will of the architect/coach, rather they collaborate in discovering for themselves what the building might offer.

This cooperative dimension is the payoff to the hoop's performativity. The architecture is completed only in collaboration with the collectives that it motivates. An invitation, after all, is simply an offer, a proposal of openness, a gesture of hospitality. It is not a guarantee. A more precise formulation of the performativity of NL's hoop might be that the hoop—as invitation—furnishes the architecture with a capacity to perform, and it is this capacity that characterizes such performative signs. If the hoop falls short of the immediacy and novelty of the graphic act, that is, if it depends still on references to some dimension of the world as it exists rather than on the normative assertion of a new world, its capacity to uncover hidden potentials renders its effects comparable nevertheless. It is neither a logo for an alternate reality, nor does it reproduce perfunctorily this reality. It doesn't project a new world as much as it maximizes the potential of this world.

Iconographic or symbolic representation ends often with surrender, or mere resistance, to the world as is: at the Hall of Fame where basketball symbology is used to ingratiate itself to fans of the game, or at Robert Venturi's Vanna Venturi House, where a pitched roof and a centralized hearth and chimney borrow conventionalized symbols of home in order to set these elements against each other in critical contradiction. Both are single direction modes of communication—architecture to audience—and thus neither is a productive strategy. Venturi speaks to an audience, but doesn't in-

vite a response. A performative sign, in contrast, speaks but also listens. Its representations of the world are activated in conversation with its audience. The audience fulfills the architecture's potential. They conclude the architectural act. The work plays because the audience plays. Without this productive collaboration—if the invitation is met with no reply—the architecture is a party with no guests, or, perhaps more appropriately, a court with no players.

Notes:

1. Kamiel Klaasse, interview by Jeanette Kunsmann, *Crystal Talk 33: NL Architects*.
2. Robert E. Somol, "Green Dots 101," *Hunch* 11 (2007): 29.
3. Somol.
4. Somol, 33.
5. Somol, 36.
6. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Meaning of Sports* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 203-204.
7. Mandelbaum, 204-206.
8. Mandelbaum, 199.
9. Dave Hickey, "The Heresy of Zone Defense," *Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy* (Los Angeles: Art issues, 1997), 159.
10. Robert Siegel, quoted in Charles Linn, "Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, Springfield, Massachusetts," *Architectural Record* 191.1 (2003).
11. Charles Linn, "Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, Springfield, Massachusetts," *Architectural Record* 191.1 (2003).
12. Linn.
13. Hickey, 159.
14. Hickey.

REPRESENTATION

ARCH520: Designing Criticism
Fall 2012
Sam Jacob

A botched fresco restoration opens the discipline to reevaluation and points the way toward a practice less concerned with the retrieval of a past authenticity than with the instantiation of alternate presents and hypothetical futures.

Above//Cimabue, Restored Crucifix (1265)
Reverse//Elías García Martínez, Damaged *Ecce Homo* Freso (1910)

Gone for Good

Botched Restoration at Santuario de la Misericordia

In the summer of 2012, Cecilia Giménez, an elderly resident of Borja, Spain, claimed responsibility for an unauthorized restoration at the Roman-Catholic church, Santuario de la Misericordia, of a 1910 *Ecce Homo* fresco of Jesus. Her well-intentioned but amateurish work there was discovered when descendants of the original artist, Elías García Martínez, sent photographers to the church in advance of their own restoration proposal. Little did they suspect that an 80-year-old parishioner, lacking any evident skills with a paintbrush, let alone any experience in restoring century-old frescos, had beaten them to the punch. Giménez, disturbed that the aging painting was marred by chipped and flaking plaster, scrubbed the wall clean before covering Martínez's delicate brushwork with her own awkward smears. Still, botched restoration is restoration nonetheless, and from the outer fringes of the discipline Giménez's spectacular failure reveals the very notion as flawed from the gate, an absurdist nonstarter. She illuminates this disciplinary scam that a more savvy restorer would have kept in darkness.

John Ruskin, the practice's earliest and most passionate naysayer, called restoration an impossibility. He argued that the past cannot be reestablished in the present, and that, instead, what restoration

Elías García Martínez, *Ecce Homo* Fresco (1910)

amounts to is "a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed."[1] The obvious inaccuracy of Giménez's effort at Santuario de la Misericordia proves this impossibility. She has endowed her church with the clumsiest and most egregiously incorrect of false descriptions. The Martínez original is lost; the messy approximation that has replaced it removes all doubt. But suppose that Giménez had been a more gifted artist, that she had reproduced Martínez's strokes with great precision. Even in this case, restoration would provide no more than a detailed account of past work. It cannot engineer the return of a lost painting. What is gone, is gone for good, and the only difference between restorative work executed with skill or with ineptitude is the degree to which a viewer might be misled into believing that he looks at an original.

Cecilia Giménez, Restored *Ecce Homo* Fresco (2012)

Restoration is a euphemism for deception. It is new work disguised as old, and success lies in the effective passing of a counterfeit. Putting aside the aesthetic shortcomings of Giménez's new fresco—of which, certainly, there are many—if it fails as restoration, this is a failure to forge its pedigree. Chalk up the result to her inexperience or naiveté, chalk it up even to a healthy dose of self-deception, but the work attempts no misrepresentation of its provenance. Giménez's work is candid about its relationship to the past. And if her fresco betrays its recent origin at a glance, it also betrays the heretofore undisclosed truth of restoration, the practice's dirty little secret: this is a discipline engaged not in a resuscitation of the past, but, counter-intuitively, in the production of novelty.

Even the most expert of craftsmen could recover no more of the past than Giménez. Yet restoration—in its pursuit of an ever retreating authenticity—seems convinced of its own pretext, convinced that a lost original can be retrieved through careful reproduction, convinced even that retrieval is worthwhile and productive project. Giménez's fresco, as a transparently inauthentic outlier, undresses these pretentions. All restorative work is inauthentic, and to affirm this offense activates the discipline's latent potential. In confessing his status as a liar, a restorer gains licenses to conjure, like Giménez, more and more outlandish lies. The static reproduction of the past becomes instead a vector of creative re-interpretation careening on unpredictable tangents. Yes, restoration is destruction. Yes, it is false description, but maybe the world needs more false descriptions, maybe the falser the better.

Notes:

1. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Sunnyside: George Allen, 1880), 194.

Botched restoration is restoration.

Grimshaw Architects//Cutty Sark Restoration, London (2012)

ARCH520: ReWrites
Fall 2011
Sam Jacob/Robert Somol

Architectural guidebooks operate better outside of urban specificity as catalogs of adaptable and placeless types.

Above//Yvonne Jacquette, Flatiron Intersection (1979)
Reverse//Edward Steichen, The Flatiron (1904)

The Canonization of the Flatiron

Guidebooks and the Production of Types

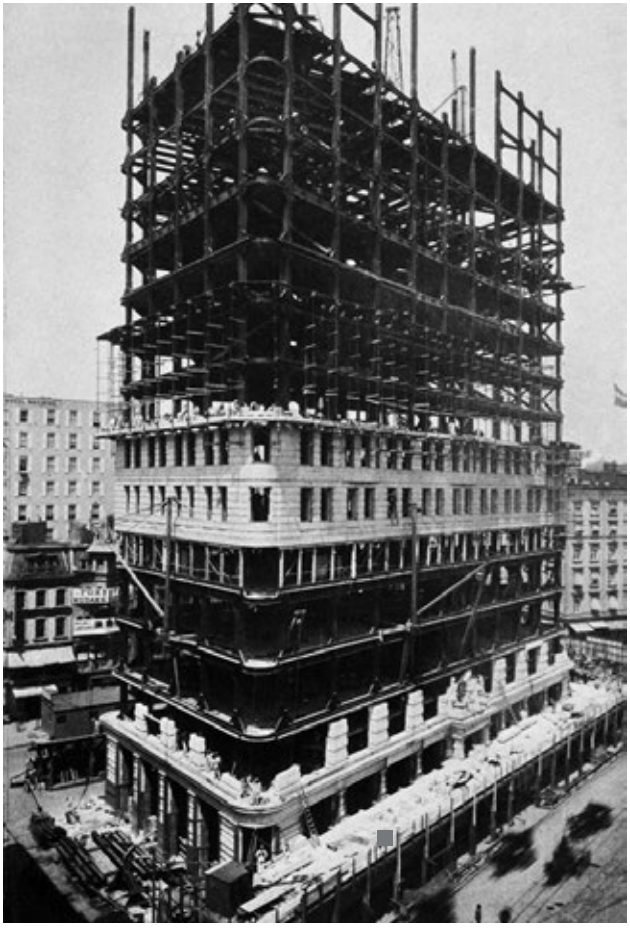
The architectural guidebook is an agent of canonization. It documents urban landmarks, but it also manufactures them. Identification in a guide is not a passive response to an a priori significance. Rather, it is an act of attribution. Identification confers significance. The guide elevates a building from an historic contingency, to both an icon embedded in a civic identity and, paradoxically, a repeatable type with near universal applicability, dislodged from any particular historic or architectural narrative.

The guide does not operate alone. Rather, it depends on a consensus, reinforced in future volumes and in dialogue with its audience. Its effects are not instantaneous, they are cumulative. The advancement from building to landmark to icon and type can only be accomplished though time. Early guides argue for the canonization of specific buildings. They identify landmarks, attribute meaning, and construct urban mythologies from moments of significance. Later volumes reiterate and elaborate those arguments, and when internalized by audiences, civic identities coalesce around guidebook narratives. Standardized benchmarks of significance are produced and reproduced, and this process of accumulation formalizes the guidebook typology.

Once the guide has marshaled consensus on an architectural canon, its arguments of signification are abandoned. The icon becomes its own justification, and having achieved this status, its architectural or cultural lineage may be severed. The guide is thus also a catalog of placeless types, free of localized reference that may be reapplied elsewhere without hesitation. In the post-guidebook city, the architect is a curator who selects his forms from this catalog of self-justifying icons.

Norval White and Elliot Willensky compiled for the 1967 AIA convention a list of architecturally significant buildings in New York. The survey was expanded and revised for reception by a wider audience and published the following year as the *AIA Guide to New York City*. White and Willensky were unambiguous in their selection criteria: "places and spaces were qualified for inclusion on the basis of two standards. First, as an example of architectural, technical, social or historical significance. Second, in terms of its importance to the City in its function as a place to be."[1] Explicitly, buildings of significance were to be included, but implicitly, the reverse was also true—the significance of a building was to be argued for by its inclusion. The AIA guide was not a document of preexisting consensus, but an active attempt to cultivate unanimity—to develop for New York a formal canon of significant buildings. This represents, however, only the first step toward establishing accord, and the success of this book in particular can only be illustrated by how well its set of inclusions and its associated arguments of signification were reproduced in the guides that followed.

One such inclusion in the 1968 edition of White and Willensky's guide was Daniel Burnham's Flatiron Building in midtown Manhattan. The book proposes three points of significance for the Flatiron: first, its triangular shape; second, the stature of its architect; and third, the treatment of its façade. The guide refers first to



Flatiron Building Construction (c. 1901)

Burnham as the "master of architectural ceremonies at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, which changed the course of civic architecture for a generation," and then describes the Flatiron as a building of "rusticated limestone uniformly detailed from ground to sky in the manner of an Italian Palace. The acute-angled corners

give it a dramatic perspective."[2]

That same year, Alan Burnham, in a guide titled *New York Landmarks*, echoed the evaluation of his AIA contemporaries. "[The Flatiron] amazed New Yorkers with its dizzy, slender height as seen from the north. Actually it was almost as sturdy as a rectangular building, though triangular in plan. The exterior treatment, overly rich to our modern eyes, was considered quite conservative in 1902 when it was designed by D.H. Burnham & Company."[3] The language is different—the AIA guide supplies a more sober and concise description—but the justification for inclusion is the same. For both guides, the Flatiron's significance lies in the visual effect of its triangular shape on viewers, in the reputation of its architect, and in the detailing of the façade, and both entries argue that these three features qualify the Flatiron for inclusion in the architectural canon of New York.

Every subsequent New York guidebook that includes an entry for the Flatiron building reproduces these arguments first postulated by the AIA guide and *New York Landmarks* with varying degrees of elaboration. Paul Goldberger describes the Flatiron, in a 1979 guide, as a building whose "shape creates interesting effects from certain angles. When viewed from certain positions, for example, it appears more as a thick wall, not as a volume."[4] Both earlier guides note the experiential effect of the building's shape, and this is Goldberger's point of departure when he elaborates on the visual impact of the building. Goldberger refines what is by now the standardized argument for locating the significance of the Flatiron's triangular plan: in its dramatic, illusionistic effect on viewers.

Goldberger goes on to write that "the Flatiron is good enough that it deserves to be remembered for more than its shape. The façade is a richly detailed tapestry of rusticated limestone, with gently undulating bays in the midsection that break the sense of sheer

Berenice Abbott (Photographer), Flatiron Building, Manhattan

wall, yet still keep balance with the overall shape of the tower."[5] Here again, Goldberger embellishes the previous descriptions of the Flatiron façade. He does not deviate from the standard understanding of the building's value, nor locate its significance in any feature other than what has already been defined by the AIA guide and *New York Landmarks*.

In 2003, Amanda Johnson again reiterates, in *New York Architec-*

ture: A History, the same points of significance: "Given the limits of the wedge-shaped site … the architect had little choice as to the shape of his tower. And it is this incidental shape that has made the structure such an enduring favorite of New Yorkers and visitors alike," and after a discussion of Burnham's reputation as an architect, she continues, "It would not be fair to say, however, that the designer played no role in the formation of this persistent icon. The repetition of floors virtually identical to the cornice provides a dizzying unity to the façade that streamlines the building and accentuates its height."[6] All of the now familiar features are presented here once again: the shape, the architect, the façade.

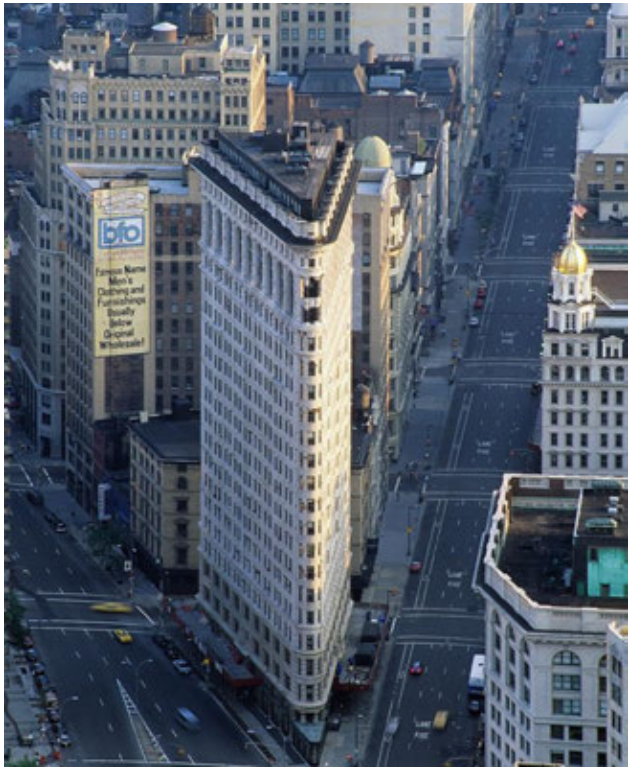
What Johnson adds to this discussion is a reference to the building as an icon, as "an image that has been trapped by the shutters of countless cameras since the flatiron's completion."[7] For Johnson, the Flatiron's canonization has already been successfully argued by previous guides. It has been an "enduring favorite" for New Yorkers because it was installed in their collective understanding of the civic narrative by books like the AIA guide, and its position there reinforced in every guide published during the ensuing 35 years. Johnson no longer has to defend the building's conservative ornament with historic contextualization or explain Burnham's significance in architectural history. New Yorkers know the Flatiron as a landmark because they have internalized that status—conferred by guidebooks—even if they are ignorant to its justifications.

More recent guides are even more liberal in their shorthand. The 2008, *New York: A Historical Atlas of Architecture,* includes an appropriately brief entry on the Flatiron building: "The walls of this iconic Beaux Arts building in the form of a flatiron, suspended from the steel structure, follow the pattern of base (dressed stone), shaft (a brick and terra-cotta volume with a reiterated alternation of windows and galleries), and capital (columns, prominent cor-

nice, and flat roof)."[8] Gone is any discussion of cultural, architectural, or historical value. The building's significance is no longer in question. Rather, its status as an icon qualifies it axiomatically for inclusion in the guide. A reference to this status and an abbreviated physical description are all that is required.

In effect, the word "icon" as used in these most recent entries may be read as a reference to the operation of the guidebook itself. When the Flatiron was first presented for canonization in 1968, describing the building as "iconic" would have been presumptu-

Larry Qualls, Engagement (1998)



Scott Gilchrist, Aerial view, depicting the Flatiron Building's location on the corner of 5th Ave. and Broadway

ous. It is only after the guide's arguments of signification had been firmly established—so much so that they no longer needed restating—that the term became applicable, inevitable even. The guide turns the Flatiron into a landmark by embedding it in New York's civic identity, but in becoming an icon, the Flatiron sheds its attachments. The Flatiron is now revered because it is an icon. It is an icon because it is revered. The status is self-sustaining. The source of its original significance is irrelevant. The source of its new significance is significance itself.

Thus divorced from cultural and historical justifications, the Flatiron enters the guidebook typology. As a landmark, the Flatiron maintains a relevance specific to New York, but as a type, the Flatiron is indifferent to place specificity. It is a reproducible, adaptable form, agnostic both to its own historical contingency and to that of the new contexts into which it will be imported.

In 1988, Matsui Baer Vanstone Architects adopted the Flatiron type for a 33-floor condo tower on a triangular plot in Toronto. The form is embraced, but none of the original's New-York-specific reference points remain intact. More recently, two residential towers in the Netherlands again take up the Flatiron type: Jo Coenen's Vesteda Toren in Eindhoven, finished in 2006; and Paul Bontenbal's Het Strijkijzer in The Hague, finished in 2007. In both, as in the Matsui Baer Vanstone building, triangular plans and distinctive curved corners at the buildings' leading edges are specific enough to recall the original's form, but abstract enough to leave behind the cultural and historical baggage of the original. These buildings borrow against the Flatiron's icon status, but not against its history. They are not copies of a landmark, but iterations of a type, this type having been entered into the architectural canon though the operation of guidebooks.

The Flatiron case study is not unique. What the guide did for the Flatiron in New York—an elevation from historical contingency, through landmark, to icon and type—could be accomplished for any building in any city. When the guide is successful, that is, when its arguments are internalized by an audience, when they are repeated, refined, and elaborated in other guides, when they are standardized and multiplied, the authority of the guide over significance and value is absolute. However, if the city-specific operative power of the guidebook is retrospective, if it manufactures civic identities and architectural narratives post hoc from an exist-

ing built environment, then, for the architectural discipline, its operative power is projective. It supplies designers with a preloaded iconic typology: proven, practicable and adaptable. Moreover, in this, the guide is inerrant, as it does not merely catalog a typology of icons, but it, in fact, produces it.

Notes:

1. Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 1.
2. White & Willensky, 95.
3. Alan Burnham, *New York Landmarks* (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 200.
4. Paul Goldberger, *The City Observed: New York* (New York: Random House, 1979), 97.
5. Goldberger.
6. Amanda Johnson, *New York Architecture: A History* (New York: Universe Publlishing, 2003), 30.
7. Johnson.
8. Alejandro Bahamon and Àgata Losantos, *New York: A Historical Atlas of Architecture* (New York: Black Dog & Levanthal Publishers, 2008), 22.

The source of significance is significance itself.

Rosenbergs Arkitekter//Flat Iron Building, Stockholm (2009)

ARCH520: Magazine Cultures
Spring 2012
Penelope Dean

Architectural Digest's preoccupation with celebrity proposes a solution to photography's difficulty in representing participatory design.

Above//"Architectural Digest Visits: John Wayne," (October 1977)
Reverse//Andy Warhol, Elvis (1964)

Rich and Famous

Identification and Celebrity Portraiture in *Architectural Digest*

Indexicality is both what attracts photography to architecture and what leaves that relationship suspect. If photography exists as a transcription of reality, and thus architectural photography as a trace left by the fact of a building's existence, then, at least in cases where architecture's immobility or remoteness might preclude unmediated access, it is perhaps justifiably recruited as a proxy for a first-hand architectural experience. The forensic authority of the photograph, however, is ill-suited to an architecture ambivalent toward any offer of evidence. The paradoxical inaccuracy of photographic clarity is in that the photograph resolves the ambiguity of architecture's rough draft. It promises truth despite architecture's equivocation. It renders its subject autonomous and complete, a problem for an architecture completed only – and only ever provisionally – through participation and identification.

If architecture's performance in social, political, and domestic narratives evaporates in a photograph, then the dilemma of representation becomes the reinsertion of this biographical dimension. *Architectural Digest*, a magazine—despite its title—of interior design, demonstrates that the problem of representing fundamentally participatory design is amplified when photographing interiors. *Digest*, however, also proposes a solution: celebrity. During

a thirty-five year tenure—1975 through 2010—*Digest*'s editor-in-chief, Paige Rense, oversaw a marked shift in the magazine's editorial emphasis. Devoted initially to photographic documentation of depopulated domestic interiors, *Digest* under Rense would rely increasingly on celebrity as a framing mechanism for the presentation of its features; the celebrity portrait would become the fulcrum that balances indexical representation with—if only vicarious or second-hand—identification.

If exterior photography is essentially centripetal, that is if it looks

"Contemporary Hillside Home with a View," *Architectural Digest* (November/December 1970)

always toward the center of its subject, its deceit—the devaluation of narrative—is perhaps more convincing. A unity of representation seems possible; even in detail, the exterior photograph alludes to the whole. Interior photography, centrifugal by contrast, can represent the whole only in mosaic. There is no vantage point from which to contain in a single frame a subject that holds the photographer within itself. There is no lens wide enough to cover, or even to suggest, an interior as autonomous and complete. Indexicality fragments. Photography reduces interior design to mere fact, as it does with architecture—that is, what it filters from architecture, it filters also from interiors—but if the conferred unity of architectural photography might obscure the absence of those forgone dimensions, the fragmentation of interior photography lays bare what is missing.

Digest's interiors—though, superficially, real homes of real people—are nonetheless unmistakable contrivances, enactments of domestic spaces arranged meticulously for the camera. Even as unapologetic fakes, however, there lingers in these stage-sets a reminder of—or at least an allusion to—inhabitation, participation, identification. In earlier issues, prior to Rense's discovery of the celebrity or the portrait, domesticity seemed more a memory than a promise. *Digest*'s manicured interiors, uninhabited, described in precise detail by carefully composed and affectless photography, are decoupled from the social or familial interactions they professedly support. These interior landscapes are desolate, and the absence of any credible domestic narrative clarifies their falsity. Celebrity, however, would deliver *Digest* from its own speciousness.

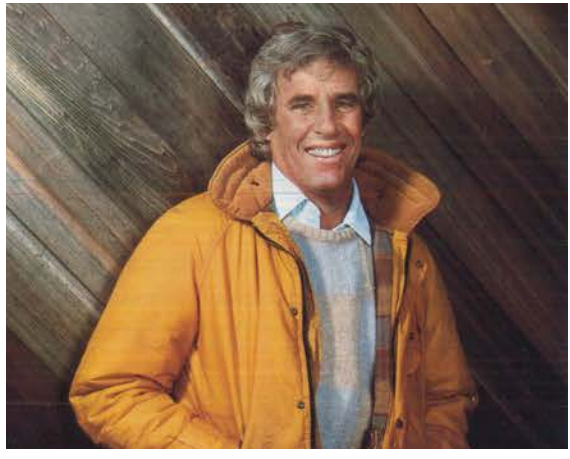
Whatever else may have motivated *Digest*'s shift in emphasis, its systematic deployment of the celebrity portrait argues also for a resolution of this difficulty in representation. Photographed interiors alone leave little opportunity for identification with what

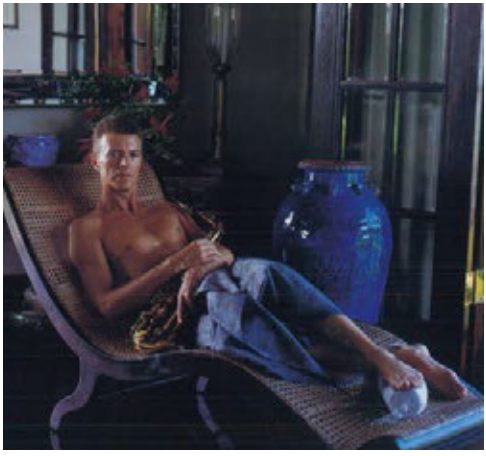
is essentially a relational art. The portrait in *Digest* becomes that point of identification, the insertion point for narrative, the bridge between identity and design. Through the portrait, and through the biographical narrative that it crystalizes, the reader experiences design as social and participatory rather than inert and objectified. Photographic clarity is tempered, obscured constructively behind the aura of celebrity.

Portraits of celebrities would appear first in a semi-regular special feature, "*Architectural Digest* Visits," and are, in fact, all that visually differentiates these early examples from *Digest*'s other spreads. The subject is typically photographed seated, from the waist up, often against a neutral background. The portrait is small, positioned at the top of the first page of the feature, and opposite much larger often full bleed photographs of the celebrity's home. The strength of the portrait, here, is illustrated in its size relative to the rest of the feature's photographs. In a thumbnail shorthand it transforms, at a glance, the reading of all interiors that follow. This is not *a* Second Empire mansion in Paris, this is Yves Saint Laurent's Second Empire mansion. This is not *an* ocean front home in California, this is Burt Bacharach's ocean front home. The portrait overcomes photographic indexicality by referencing iconographically the persona of celebrity. Personality—or at least the commonly held public personality, if manufactured and scripted—is preloaded in the image of celebrity. To reproduce the image is to conjure the persona. The portrait does not need to elaborate on John Wayne. It is enough that an image of Wayne, seated at his desk, might borrow his celebrity and might then superimpose his biography over the images that follow.

The thumbnail would eventually be supplanted—at least comple-

Top//"*Architectural Digest* Visits: Yves Saint Laurent," *Architectural Digest* (September/October 1976); Bottom//"*Architectural Digest* Visits: Burt Bacharach" *Architectural Digest* (April 1982)





mented—by larger and more elaborate compositions. Full-bleed and full-figure portraits would provide an expanded canvas on which to draw explicit psychological equivalencies between the celebrity subject and setting. David Hockney's blue sweater vest and pink collared shirt match precisely the color his west coast home's décor. Rudolf Nureyev wraps himself in a pattern that could have been pulled from the walls of his Paris apartment. Though more prominent in both position and size, more careful in construction, the portrait's function in these spreads is the same. It remains both a point of reference—externally, to celebrity persona—and a point of identification—internally, in the association made between celebrity and home.

From here, portraits—celebrity and otherwise—in *Digest* would only grow in significance, appearing with such frequency that their absence would be more noteworthy than their presence. The celebrity would no longer be confined to the "Visits" feature, but would migrate to other sections of the magazine. "Visits," in fact, would become near obsolete; the celebrity would be just as likely to appear in the magazine's standard spreads. Themed issues, like "Hollywood at Home," would appear, seemingly contrived to fit as many celebrities into an issue as possible. Eventually, the celebrity portrait would become a fixture of the magazine's cover, here its dominance reaches its peak. Interiors are no longer *Digest*'s identity. It is to whom those interiors belong that is communicated at the newsstand.

Celebrity sells magazines. *Digest*'s use of the celebrity portrait might correctly be read in those terms, as a financially motivated accommodation of a readership increasingly apathetic to design

Top//"*Architectural Digest* Visits: David Hockney," *Architectural Digest* (April 1983); Middle//"*Architectural Digest* Visits: Rudolf Nureyev," *Architectural Digest* (September 1985); Bottom//"*Architectural Digest* Visits: David Bowie," *Architectural Digest* (September 1992)

and increasingly preoccupied with the rich and the famous. Celebrity is a solution to the predicament: how to sell design to a public that doesn't care about design. *Digest*, however, might also be opportunistically misread as a model for rethinking the representation of architecture. It is simultaneously a recognition of the limitations of photography, and a proposal for transcending those limits. The portrait works for *Digest*, but even if a similar reference to celebrity might be inappropriate in other contexts, the lesson still applies. The photograph hides the participatory—the biographical—dimension that activates architecture. In fact, the more beautiful the photograph, the more successfully it evades identification. It is at this level, insofar as it may be construed to addresses this dilemma, that *Digest*, a magazine otherwise devoid of critical comment, proves instrumental.

Activate architecture with narratives.

Buzz Kulik//Still from *The Hunter* (1980)