Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture of the Present to That of the 1970s through Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification

K. Michael Hays

Stable URL:

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0079-0958%282001%2932%3C100%3APFASLT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-4

Perspecta is currently published by Yale School of Architecture.

Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture of the Present to that of the 1970s through Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification

K. MICHAEL HAYS

The most theoretically aware of contemporary architects have rejected what was the most important operative concept of architecture theory at the moment of its re-foundation in the 1970s: namely, the aspiration toward autonomous forms and techniques to create and measure the distance between a resistant, critical practice and the degraded languages and ideologies of consumer culture that surround it. Over and against resistance and autonomy—or better, resistance *through* autonomy—recent design theories of various stripes have tended to affirm their cultural sponsors and accept a certain determination by cultural forces outside architecture (information and entertainment technologies, in particular), over which, it is assumed, architecture has no control, and about which it has no reason to fret. While I am not yet able to give a full account for this recent shift in attitude, I wish to briefly reflect on both it and the ideologies it has replaced. I shall proceed historically, sketching in abbreviations of the major markers of what is a still faint and incomplete narrative.


While the ideology of autonomy is properly part of the legacy of modernism, dating from as early as the Enlightenment, the concept gained a renewed resonance in the formation of architecture theory after 1968 (especially, perhaps, in the United States and Italy). This was a time when architecture as traditionally practiced saw itself threatened by technological optimization and utilitarianism, by the demands placed on it as a service industry, as well as by the positivist inquiries of the behavioral sciences, sociology, and operations research, all of which threatened to undermine the specificity of architecture. Architecture theory drew on various models in an effort to think architecture back into its own as a discipline, a cultural practice, and an irreducible mode of knowledge and experience (an epistemology). In particular, architects developed a theory of typology, which allowed the resolution of the contradictory desires for autonomy on the one hand and an architectural representation of the city on the other. Autonomy provided a way for architecture to intervene in culture negatively, through resisting a collapse into some other discourse, to be a medium related to yet different from all others. To give an example, Massimo Scolari speaks for the architecture of the Fifteenth Triennale in Milan in 1973, the so-called *Tendenza*:

"The new architecture's 'renunciation' is actually a full historical awareness. ... For the *Tendenza*, architecture is a cognitive process that in and of itself, in the acknowledgment of its own autonomy, is today necessitating a refounding of the discipline; that refuses interdisciplinary solutions to its own crisis; that does not pursue and immerse itself in political, economic, social, and technological events ... but rather desires to understand them so as to be able to intervene in them with lucidity."[1]

There are two theoretical sources I detect in the autonomy-typology thesis that are worth pointing out. First, the notion of typology entails a realist discourse based on a reading of György Lukács that seeks an architecture whose very "authenticity" paradoxically depends on its reiterability—that is, an architecture whose success at evoking and recollecting solid, concrete memories depends on its repetition of an already iterable code. What is more, the interactive subject of any type is just the city itself, understood as a whole, whose nature is induced from its architectural elements (what Anthony Vidler called the "ontology of the city").[2] The city is responsible for the isolation and fragmentation of architecture into constitutive parts (hence the importance of Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* for an architect like Aldo Rossi or a historian like Manfredo Tafuri), but the city also simultaneously extends its logic uniformly over every patch of the cultural fabric, so that in each isolated type the entire genetic code of the city, as it were, can be found.

Rossi's **MODENA CEMETERY**, for example, seizes on this idea and derives its poignancy from the constructed interaction of the fragments tomb, house, cemetery, and city. Within each of these primary types are insinuated obliquely, anamorphically, all the others, producing a kind of overprinting of types and a conceptual pass through different registers of analogous moments.[3] In typological thinking, the relentless fragmenting and atomization of all things, what Lukács called reification (*Verdinglichung*), continues to be felt. And yet typology involves the power to think generally, to take up the fragments and organize them in groups, to recognize processes, tendencies, and qualities where reification yields only lifeless quantities.
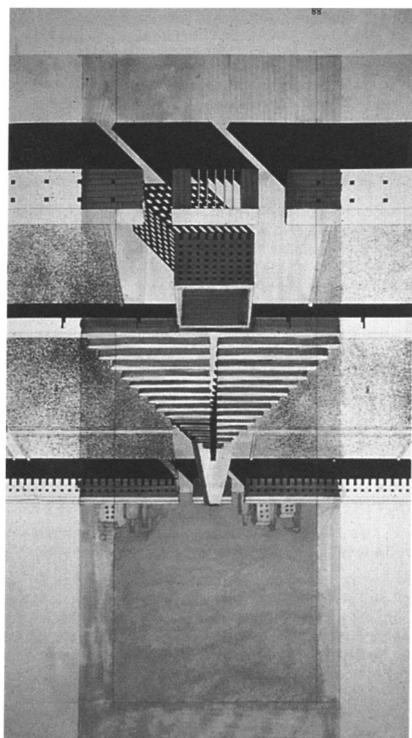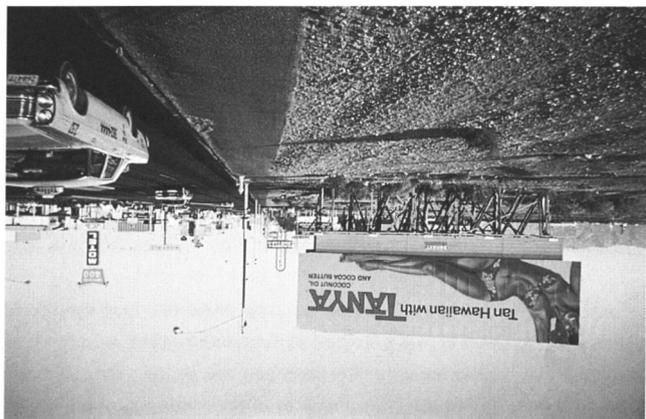
At a different level of the autonomy thesis there appears a key concept from Louis Althusser, that of the "semi-autonomy" of "levels" or "instances"
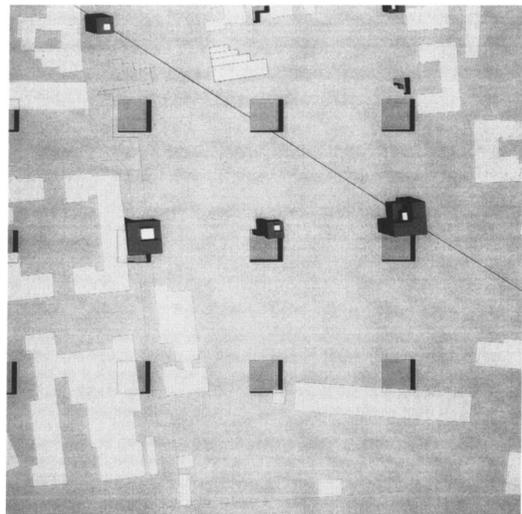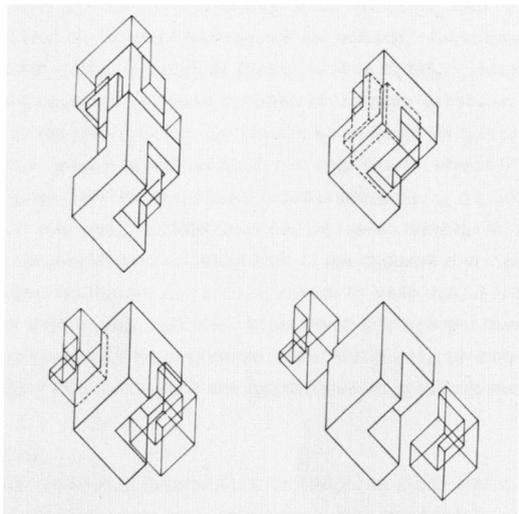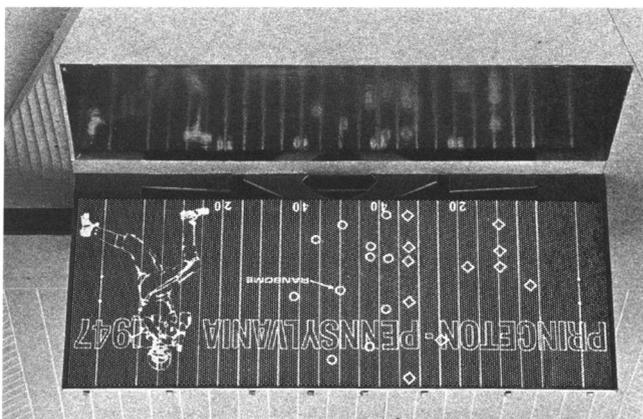
within an ideological field—the economic, political, juridical, cultural, aesthetic realms (and so on). The autonomy of each disciplinary level allows the development and advance of that discipline's particular techniques. But each level also feels pressure from all the others and exerts influence on all the others. What results is a set of insides and outsides that are reciprocally constituted and related by way of their ultimate structural difference and distance from one another rather than their identity, all held together by the "structural totality" of a social formation. Some version of this Althusserian model is necessary, I think, to explain Scolari's otherwise contradictory assertion of autonomy and lucid intervention: architecture's autonomy must be understood as a relational concept, not as an isolationist position. The terms of its relation to consumer culture—which involve nonidentity and negation as well as autonomy—is tantamount to a clearing of space for alternate conceptions of social relations and subject formations. If architecture loses its autonomy, it loses the specificity of its cultural intervention.

While the Tendenza's model of autonomy seems powerful and, in its basic contours, not incorrect, what was missed by its arguments is that the very conditions on which its "ontology" depends—namely the traditional European city as documented in Rossi's *L'architettura della città* (1966)—had, by the time of this theorization, already disappeared as a contemporaneous object of experience. For by the mid-1960s the city in *this* sense was no longer primarily operative but rather the suburbs, edge city, and exurbia were each clamoring for their own architectural representation.

Or perhaps this wasn't missed. For, while Rossi's typological obsessions seem to be a way of constantly confirming the determinate presence of the traditional European city—refracting its historical logic of form through a neo-Enlightenment lens in contingent, contradictory, and quasi-surreal ways—their peculiar mnemonic function also makes it possible to see in them a new beauty in precisely that which is vanishing. The originality of Rossi's work may well be its capacity to convey, alternately with melancholy or unblinking disenchantment, that the traditional European city—which in some sense means architecture itself—is forever lost. Manfredo Tafuri, for one, insisted as much in a direct response to what Scolari called a refounding of the discipline: "The thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his typological research does not lead to the 'reestablishment of the discipline,' but rather to its dissolution, thereby confirming *in extremis* the tragic recognition of Georg Simmel and György Lukács."[4]

What is more, this revelation of loss follows, I believe, from the Lukacsian moment in Rossi's thesis, for the one form of experience that concretely represents the force of reification is *crisis*—that point when, as in the present case, the mnemonic function is just about to fail, when the memory banks have become so compartmentalized and arid that

they will hold nothing other than the most bleached out of material: then, the cognitive vocation of architecture is to reflect (or to cause reflection) on the processes behind such crisis. Crisis is modulated into critique; the autonomy of architecture becomes a mode of resistance to the status quo. Thus Rossi's architecture historicizes itself to a certain extent, placing itself in a situation and reflecting on its own plight; thus, also, emerges the palpable sense in his work of a historically determined melancholy, a "renunciation," to use Scolari's words, that is "a full historical awareness."

By 1971 Denise Scott Brown had proposed that the communication across space of the social values of groups had superseded a building's more conventional programmatics—and, one might add, formal typologies and even space itself—as the primary substance of architecture. "Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Levittown, the swinging singles on the Westheimer Strip, golf resorts, boating communities, Co-op City, the residential backgrounds to soap operas, TV commercials and mass mag ads, billboards, and Route 66 are sources for a changing architectural sensibility," writes Scott Brown. "In fact, space is not the most important constituent of suburban form. Communication across space is more important, and it requires a symbolic and a time element in its descriptive systems."[5]

Pondering now how we might indeed describe the terms on which the traditional city was disappearing and a new communicative suburbanism was emerging, one remembers Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, when the protagonist Oedipa Maas looks out from her Chevy Impala across California's private property developments (which Pynchon called San Narcisco) and sees them as a printed circuit communicating to her—not communicating directly but in textural patterns or, as Pynchon says, in "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. There seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her. … So in her first minute of San Narcisco, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding."[6] What is striking here is not only that this veil of hieroglyphs is the suburban form itself, but also that the opposing terms of this new system are, first, the development of electronic technology—represented here by the printed circuit—and, second, communication, the intent to communicate, which must be understood as contradictory vis-à-vis the new technology, since new technologies tend to be illegible, lying "just past the threshold of [our] understanding." But this contradiction is resolved by the third term we now know as media, that is, by the technology of communication itself.

We need not rehearse the ways in which mass media changed the very nature of the experience of public space during this time, except to recall that advertising media joined with the extensive development

of buildings on the outskirts of the city and the new distribution of services to suburban commercial zones, making the control of the quality of urban space through traditional tectonic and typological means more difficult. Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi, and others seized on the new perceptual conventions adequate for comprehension within this new system. Visual reception challenged the tactility of objects. The perception of architectural surfaces began to overtake the experience of urban space in the traditional sense. Image consumption began to replace object production, and the sheer heterogeneity of images exploded any single, stable typology of the city. Public meaning was now to be found in the signs and perceptual habits forged in a pluralist, consumerist, suburban culture. Consequently a split was felt to open up between the European typological tradition and the everyday world of the American popular environment, a split that was fundamental to theoretical debates of the 1970s.

What was further suggested by this event (understood no less completely by Scott Brown and Venturi) is that the collaged, semiotic surface of architecture, understood as a displacement of the older, volumetric "type" form, is entirely commensurate with—entirely conforms to—the new terms of media. Henceforth the social system will be inconceivable without a concept of media and its two constituents: electronic, consumer technology and heterogeneous communication. Media becomes, on up to our own time, *the* spontaneous solution to architecture's representational problem.

In an early study of film, Fredric Jameson suggested that in our present social system, a media term is always present, functioning as what Sartre called an *analogon* (a term of *external* mediation) for one or another more directly representational form (a term of *internal* mediation).[7] In our present case, it is helpful to think of this collaged, semiotic surface of architecture (or more clearly, the flattened-out surface of Scott Brown and Venturi's decorated shed, with its bits and pieces of referential material) as the internal, architectural mediation. To conceptualize how the semiotic surface can represent the (ultimately unrepresentable) "real" of suburban consumer culture (or provide a "cognitive map," as Jameson would later formulate it), we must interpose the external term of *media* (in the historically specific sense of electronic circuitry, advertising images, appliances, and suburban services) as an interpretant of the content of that culture itself, as Pynchon does in the passage quoted above. What must be further noted is that the very possibility of this mechanism of indirect representation is projected *out* of the total system (suburban consumer culture and electronic communication) as an effect, one which it can then, in turn, claim to represent.

––––––––––––

While I have presented the work of Rossi and the Tendenza, and that of Scott Brown and Venturi, as constituting two more or less divergent problematics, the fact that they are similar even in their differences was recognized in the theoretical literature of the mid- to late-1970s. Mario Gandelsonas's dialectical resolution of the differences between the "neorationalism" of Rossi and the "neorealism" of Scott Brown and Venturi with his category of "neofunctionalism" is only the most obvious example of a widespread theoretical attempt to resolve the contradictory aspirations toward architectural autonomy and an architectural representation of the cultural city.[8] What has not been sufficiently theorized is the fact that Peter Eisenman's "Postfunctionalism"—formulated in the 1976 editorial response to Gandelsonas and developed in the decade after in his so-called "cities of artificial excavation"—is a simultaneous absorption and displacement of the same two problematics (neorationalism and neorealism)—a double negation or neutralization of Gandelsonas' neofunctionalism. But the counter-dialectic that Eisenman twists out of this scheme is the position that the autonomy project must be extended, not because the tentative stability of the traditional city can be recovered after the explosion of the mediatic city, but because the heterogeneity of the mediatic city itself has now imploded. Architecture does not so much aspire to autonomy, as with Rossi, as it is *forced* into autonomy by the very system it seeks to represent, the price of which is a reduction and a specialization of form that is cut off from other social concerns yet, in its very isolation and aridness, becomes perfectly adequate to, perfectly homologous with, the society that sponsors it.

I have suggested elsewhere that Eisenman's "cities of artificial excavation" are a meditation on the journey of the architectural sign as it transforms into a visual commodity, an allegorical tracing of the very process of reification.[9] In this sense, the city "represented" in this work (though that is no longer quite the right word) is the same city as that of Scott Brown and Venturi—the city of consumerism, mass media, and multiple publics—except that now, that city has advanced *past* a threshold where heterogeneity becomes utter sameness and communication becomes henceforth impossible. For Eisenman, the logic of the simulacrum—which of course involves the incorporation and institutionalization of multiplicity in consumer capitalism along with its cognate desires manifest in Scott Brown and Venturi's postmodernism—in fact precludes representation in any direct way and makes it anachronistic. Speaking of Venturi's decorated shed, Eisenman writes, "A sign begins to replicate or, in Jean Baudrillard's term, 'simulate,' once the reality it represents is dead. When there is no longer a distinction between representation and reality, when reality is only simulation, then representation loses its a priori source of significance, and it, too, becomes a simulation."[10] What is more, the spinning sameness of the simulation is accompanied by a particular historical (or posthistorical) impossibility of imagining a future that is any different. He continues: "The modern crisis of closure marked the end of the process of moving toward the end. Such crises (or ruptures) in our perception of the continuity of history arise not so much out of a change in our idea of origins

or ends than out of the failure of the present (and its objects) to sustain our expectations about the future."[11]

As a result of this loss of referent and loss of future, the various semiotics of Scott Brown and Venturi's surface are, for Eisenman, bits and pieces of difference that make no difference. All that is left is to jettison their populist ballast so that in effect *nothing is left* but its architectural surface hovering in midair, seared hard and brittle. Eisenman's planimetric collages are peeled off and away from any "real." While the grid as a graphic structure is the underpinning of those systems of organization with which Scott Brown and Venturi coordinate their semiotic appropriations (think of the matrices in *Learning from Las Vegas*) as well as the residue of systems of projection like perspective and isometric through which Rossi's laconic types are constructed, Eisenman's relentless repetitions of countervailing grids pressed into laminated surfaces, along with the operations like "grafting" and "scaling" that modulate them, condemn his grids, in contrast, to float as self-referential, self-repeating architectural systems. But the very isolation is itself historically specific, historically produced—Eisenman formulates it as a necessary transitional negation of humanism and anthropomorphism—and, as such, is still mediated through a larger cause: the City, I suggest, if not History itself. The "cities of artificial excavation," if not representations, are a form of non-representational mimesis. In their tenacious pursuit of an architectural system is found a palpable sense of being locked into the larger structure of a social and historical system, perhaps even more so than through Scott Brown and Venturi's direct appropriations. Indeed Eisenman's pursuit of such an architectural system is in some ways indistinguishable from the requirements of the System itself: the relentless, suffocating sameness, the "end of the beginning, the end of the end" that must now be recorded.

Writing in 1979 on the work of Rossi (but perhaps, as always, thinking about his own new problematic), Eisenman asserted the exigent program for present-day architecture to be how to reckon with this utter leveling, which he described as a condition of post-signification:

"The problem [we face now is] choosing between an anachronistic continuance of hope and an acceptance of the bare conditions of survival. ... Incapable of believing in reason, uncertain of the significance of his objects, man [has lost] his capacity for signifying. ...The context which gave ideas and objects their previous significance is gone. ...The [modernist proposal of the] 'death of art' no longer offers a polemical possibility, because the former meaning of art no longer obtains. There is now merely a landscape of objects; new and old are the same; they appear to have meaning but they speak into a void of history. The realization of this void, at once cataclysmic and claustrophobic, demands that past, present, and future be reconfigured. To have meaning, both objects and life must acknowledge and symbolize this new reality."[12]

We must signify the fact that we can no longer signify; we must represent through architecture the impossibility of architectural representation, and an autonomous architecture does just that. Like a neutron star whose immense gravity pulls in and distorts matter from surrounding stars, Eisenman's problematic sucks the contradictory system of autonomy and representation away from Rossi, compresses it while amplifying the heterogeneity-turned-sameness of Scott Brown and Venturi, and then generalizes the historical condition of reification, producing process-objects that are traits and traces of a transitional moment in the perception and understanding of the cultural city. Eisenman's objects might be thought of as architectural versions of the X-rays emitted from that neutron star, web-like swirls and folds of space whose acoustical approximation would be a dull, slowly pulsating hum, and which are understandable only as marks of the forces of reification itself. It is when those swirls and folds again become architectural images, when the complex surface is hypostatized as an available figure, that they can be dislodged from Eisenman's negativity and pressed into the service of an altogether differently motivated architectural practice.

And so it is a mutation of our second and third paradigms (the two versions of the mediatic city) and the architectural production adequate to it that must concern us now. The examples I could draw from are growing almost daily, but I have in mind recent theoretical and architectural projects of Greg Lynn, Lars Spuybroek, Ocean, and Objectile, among others (among whom distinctions can and should be made, but which I will for now fail to do).[13] In general, I have in mind the attempts to shift our thinking about architectural forms and functions from either a model of disciplinary autonomy and typology *or* of communication and heterogeneity of the semiotic surface toward one that both re-works and volatilizes Eisenman's non-representational laminate, affirming the smooth fusion of relations among digitally synthesized images and information of diverse origins. For its internal mediatic term, this new architecture employs the metaphor not of a semiotic surface but of computer software itself, which coordinates multiple datascapes in a smooth, frictionless flow. As a corollary, this position also affirms a unity of techniques from different disciplines and cultural regions—architecture, physics, chemical engineering, computation, biology, and the flows of capital itself. One might characterize this shift as one away from the autonomy of the object, through the heterogeneity of the collaged, semiotic surface—both of which dramatize formal disjunction—toward the production of new wholes, using Eisenman's surface as a sort of neutralized membrane, but linking it conceptually with a liquification of disciplinary boundaries and a radical mixing of not only forms but materials and concepts culled from different disciplines.[14]

This is architecture's full entry into the new communications and entertainment technologies and, with this, a breakdown of the once fiercely defended autonomy of the architectural object and irreducibility of the architectural experience has occurred. Feeling increasing pressure from other forms of contemporary image culture that would displace architecture's collective communicative-symbolic function, it seems that architecture has reacted by trying to *become* just those things—a multimedia fusion of graphic devices collected on an animated, alloyed surface of texture and pattern that can be scanned for information, that seems to send out references, at one scale, to the molecular, biological, informational system of DNA and, at another scale, to the global urbanization of the planet, joining those two poles with an image, a look, that I have previously referred to as an architectural (and ideological) "smoothness."[15]

But the slackening of specificity and the de-differentiation of practices seem also to have produced an architecture whose function and visage can drift and expand in culture in unprecedented ways, spreading laterally in a stretched-out mixed-media experience. The production of this architecture explicitly refuses any craven professionalism or disciplinary partitioning; its techniques are the generic ones of *design,* which can be applied to Audi TTs and iMacs as much as to buildings. The perception of the architecture thus produced is woven into the same fabric as the latest high-tech gadgets, video games, and televisual leisure. Architecture is now just part of the smooth media mix, and yet, in all this, architecture strives to maintain its cultural role. What I want to suggest is that the precise nature of its cultural vocation relates this recent stance back to the previous three paradigms mentioned at two levels: one, an internal movement wherein the reified object (or better, the architectural object that traces the forces of reification) becomes a neutralized surface that can then be reappropriated and recoded with different sorts of information; two, an external level wherein shifts in the conceptualization of the city—from a perceived loss of tradition to a triumphantly emergent posturban condition—demand different architectural representations.

The architectural surface is still important in this fourth category, and this is evidence that it builds on the accumulated techniques and effects of the second and third.[16] But notice, for one thing, that this new surface no longer corresponds to a particular social public or locale—the street, the strip, Las Vegas, or Levittown—with quite the same immediacy as, say, the populism of Scott Brown and Venturi.[17] This seeming lack of a locale is, I think, partly what gives these projects their faint air of unreality, but it is also what attests to the global ambitions of this new architecture. Second, the disjunctive heterogeneity of the earlier surface is now collapsed into the singularity of a complex whole; this follows directly from Eisenman's artificial excavations or process-objects. This new surface is not made up of semiotic material that has been sampled, as it were, from popular culture, but,

nevertheless, the surface is modulated through procedures that trace certain external sociological or technological facts (datascapes) more directly, perhaps even more literally, than in the first two paradigms. These traces appear in our reading of the architecture as doing the triple duty of articulating the surface, implying differentiated possibilities for occupation, and encoding phenomena outside the object that cannot, in their very nature, be represented directly. These potentials effectively expand the space of the project to include a range of institutional, legal, technical, and cultural arrangements that precede, determine, and extend beyond the architectural object.

A new kind of reception is suggested here in which the sensory, the aesthetic, is somehow mingled with the theoretical (on the model of, for example, the cinematic apparatus), as the surface asks to be read *simultaneously* as a registration of the discursive practices that shape the object and make possible what can become visible and functional within it, *and* as a diagram of potentials for occupation, as a *dispositif* or distribution apparatus for other practices that it in turn enables. As an explanation of this latter diagrammatic function, Greg Lynn gives the example of a boat hull: "Although the form of a boat hull is designed to anticipate motion, there is no expectation that its shape will change. ... The particular form of a hull stores multiple vectors of motion and flow from the space in which it was designed."[18]

As for the discourse of type, we can see a development: Out of the vertical imitation or repetition of presumedly timeless precedents emerges a different kind of repetition, that of a complex, metonymic series of parts that exist in a continual process of differentiation. Lynn, for one, is explicit about the fact that his reiterative, interconnective "blobs" are themselves deviations that emanate from typology's formal logic. Lynn writes "Typological fixity ... depends on a closed static order to underlie a family of continuous variations. This concept of discreet, ideal, and fixed prototypes can be subsumed by the model of the numerically controlled multi-type that is flexible, mutable, and differential."[19] From the present perspective, what seems to have occurred is a de-differentiation at the level of typological technique as well, such that now a single, generic, emulsion supercedes the already limited field of object-types. To use Lukácsian language: where reification had already hollowed out Rossi's typological shells, fragmenting them into disenchanted objects, now reification extends its power so absolutely that an object as such is no longer possible. But this should not be understood as entirely negative, for where the disjunctive object once stood, there is now a new whole, a surface or a field, that describes the space of propagation, the space of effects.

Though one would not think to associate this new architecture with the realist, narrative ambitions of the Tendenza, there is still a historically aware, totalizing impulse in its practice, evident in the attempt to give form to the effective elements of a new post-urban condition and a

globalized media technology—or in other words, as with Eisenman, to make the *system* of city and media the subject and the problem of the work of design. Even in its diagrammatic version, the most obvious manifestation of the sort of distribution apparatus that this architecture seeks to both represent and become is *post-urbanism* itself—edge cities, suburbs, the "thick two-dimensions" of Asian cities, and the whole docket of emergent post-urban life that have heretofore seemed unmappable and unmanageable.

Thus, if the globalized post-urbanism and information technology that have replaced both the traditional city and the suburbs (along with their earlier technologies) are the "real" of this emergent paradigm, and if the architectural representation or term of internal mediation—the digitized, energized, emulsified surface—seems to be given by the media itself, our problem is then to determine what is the *external* term of mediation, the *analogon*, that might allow us to complete the theorization of this paradigm in relation to the previous three. What is the structural nexus in our viewing and aesthetic decoding apparatus that would allow us to conceptualize the experience of the unrepresentable real of post-urbanism and mediatic technology in the way that advertising media allowed us to conceptualize the semiotic surface of architecture in relation to the earlier consumerist suburb?

One formal or structural interpretant that immediately suggests itself is ecology or, more particularly—as Stan Allen has suggested—a matrix or field condition capable of interconnecting elements into a single tissue while respecting their identity. But another interpretant, I think, is going to turn out to be something like what 1970s video theorists called "total flow": that is, the constant emission of generic but changing bits of information that we move in and out of in a kind of ultimate suture between time and space.[20] Interestingly enough, total flow has its roots in the pop culture and media experience of our second paradigm, but, as in our third paradigm, its time-space is ratcheted up (or is it closed down?) far beyond anything that the term "heterogeneity" previously described. In fact, the emissions from the television screen (and the computer terminal with which it will eventually merge) neutralize psychic energy and homogenize experience into a kind of all-pervasive liquid force in such a way as to make it a logical candidate with which to theorize the newer work in question. What is more, the deregulation of television or, at least, the possibility of "surfing" across hundreds of channels whose broadcasts never stop, is a suitable analogue for the sort of spontaneous occupation desired by this recent architecture, as well as its complex economic ties to multinational capital and entertainment technologies.

A further advantage of the notion of total flow is that it has as its distant relative nothing less than distraction itself, which, of course, Walter Benjamin saw as the architectural mode of perception *par*

excellence. And surely the random succession of serialized images presented by the new architecture—which one attends to in varying degrees, pulling in and out of the frame of one's conscious attention—is very like the experience of television and video. And, too, total flow helps to model the way in which this new architectural practice is able to debit a wide range of sources to obtain its cultural credit, as well as make use of a variety of modes of dissemination, from journals and exhibitions to web sites and CD-ROMs. By weakening disciplinary autonomy, by de-differentiating procedures of design and dissemination, by dissolving the very distinction between the architectural representation and the larger world of image-spectacles, this architecture paradoxically (or dialectically) produces a link between the spatial experiences it enables and the abstract global system of late capitalism; but even more, the link is made in terms of social space, the architecture that locates subject positions in that space, and the actual experience of that space.

I would like to insist upon this last point and return here to Jameson's sketch of the Sartrean *analogon*, for Jameson suggests that this sort of triangulation (that is, the triangle of the unrepresentable real, the internal mediation, and the external mediation) is historically specific to what he calls postmodernism and that its terms are themselves "unconscious structures and so many afterimages and secondary effects of some properly postmodern cognitive mapping [an instance of what I am here calling representation], whose indispensable media term now passes itself off as this or that philosophical reflection on language, communication, and the media, rather than the manipulation of its figure."[21]

The development of this work should be seen according to a double movement of, first, internal transformations out of 1970s typology, the semiotic surface and then the post-semiotic surface, and second, a shifting and transitory mapping of those external determinations of urban or post-urban life under capitalism. The vestiges of the raw material of media remain visible within these projects, inevitably, and this work finds its representational endeavor severely constrained. At the same time, however, the transmutation of the datascape of capital can be understood to continue architecture's vocation to represent (or aspire to represent) totalities, to provide maps of the social systems that sponsored it. Perhaps, then, we have here a rather extraordinary condition in which a mutant form of reification continues its work of flattening out disciplinary techniques, de-differentiating across previously distinct practices, erasing the specific traces of production, and homogenizing particular experiences into one generic experiential flow and yet *at the same time* does not eradicate the architectural impulse but rather is paradoxically pressed into service of altogether new ones more adequate (just maybe) for our present.

Notes

Thanks to Jeffrey Kipnis and Robert McAnulty for discussions of this material. Special thanks to Lauren Kogod for helpful suggestions and support.

[1] Massimo Scolari, "The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde," *Architettura razionale* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1973), English translation in *Architecture ITheoryI since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998) ed. K. Michael Hays 131-132.

[2] Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1977); in Hays 288-294.

[3] Rossi writes: "Together, all of the buildings read as a city in which the private relationship with death happens to be the civil relationship with the institution. Thus the cemetery is also a public building with an inherent clarity in its circulation and its land use. Externally, it is closed by a fenestrated wall. The elegiac theme does not separate it much from other public buildings. Its order and its location also contain the bureaucratic aspect of death. ... Faced with this relationship, architecture can only use its given elements, refusing any suggestion not born out of its own making; therefore, the references to the cemetery are also found in the architecture of the cemetery, the house, and the city." Aldo Rossi, "Cemetery of San Cataldo, Modena," *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976); in Hays 68-69.

[4] Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans la Boudoir: the Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," *Oppositions* 3 (1974); in Hays 155.

[5] Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Pop," *Casabella* 359-360 (December 1971); in Hays 62-64.

[6] Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1966) 24.

[7] Fredric Jameson, "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture" (1977), in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 35-54.

[8] For a sampling of the realist discourse, see Mario Gandelsonas, "Neo-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976); Jorge Silvetti, "On Realism in Architecture," *Harvard Architecture Review* 1 (Spring 1980); Martin Steinmann, "Reality as History: Notes for a Discussion of Realism in Architecture" (1976); and Bernard Huet, "Formalism—Realism" (1977); last two appear in Hays 248-253 and 256-260 respectively.

[9] K. Michael Hays, "Allegory Unto Death: An Etiology of Eisenman's Repetition," *Cities of Artificial Excavation: the Work of Peter Eisenman 1978-1988* (Montreal: CCA, 1994) 104-117.

[10] Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," *Perspecta* 21 (1984); in Hays 526.

[11] Eisenman, "End" 532.

[12] Peter Eisenman, "Introduction," *Aldo Rossi in America, 1976 to 1979*, ed. Kenneth Frampton (New York: IAUS, 1979) 3 (emphasis added).

[13] See, for example, *Folding in Architecture*, ed. Greg Lynn (London: Academy Editions, 1993); *Hypersurface Architecture*, ed. Stephen Perrella (London: Academy Editions, 1998); and *ArchiLab* (Orléans: Blanchard, 1999).

[14] It should be pointed out that a fuller account of the narrative I am sketching here would have to include a passage through the "event-structure" work of Bernard Tschumi and, as Robert McAnulty has pointed out in conversation, of Diller and Scofidio as well, with their use of television as both appliance and surface or screen. The present emphasis, however, is on the paradigmatic changes due to altered conceptualizations of the city, which, it seems to me, yields a slightly different story.

[15] See K. Michael Hays, "Architecture Theory, Media, and the Question of Audience," *Assemblage* 27 (August 1995).

[16] It is interesting in this regard to note that Greg Lynn's thesis project at Princeton University was a shopping mall, not quite a-la Venturi but close in its inspiration. In Eisenman's office Lynn seemed to have found gridded forms and transformational procedures more adequate for his needs.

[17] In the aforementioned *Assemblage* article, I suggested that the "proper" audience for this architecture is the generation of baby boomers and their just younger siblings who, through historical circumstance and class alliance, have developed a highly paradoxical mode of perception that one might call specific generalization, in which the distinctions between previously distinct modes of cultural expression are liquidated into the new generic smoothness.

[18] Gregg Lynn, *Animate Form* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999) 10.

[19] Lynn, *Form* 13.

[20] See, above all, Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974).

[21] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) 417.
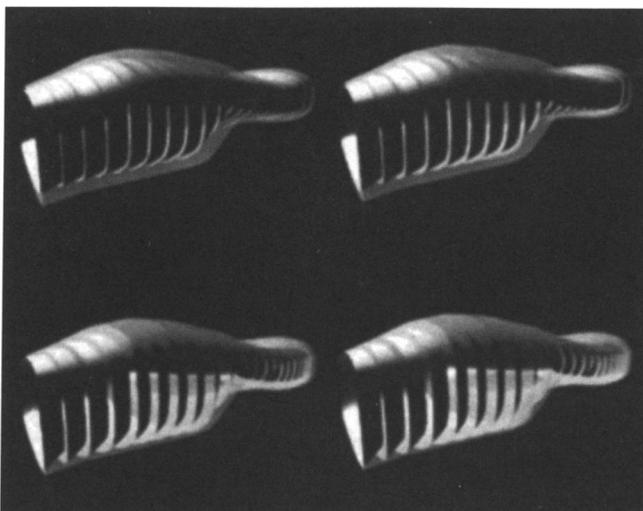
∧ **Korean Presbyterian Church**
Long Island City, New York. Douglas Garofalo + Greg Lynn, 1999.

∧ **Bruce Mau**
page from *Incorporations* (Zone 6).