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No. 7/8
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Published six times a year by
Anyone Corporation, a not-for-profit
corporation in the State of New York
with editorial and business offices at
40 West 25th Street, 10th Floor,
New York, NY 10010.
Telephone: 212-989-2221
Fax: 212-645-0726

Subscription rate: \$45 (U.S.) per
year USA and Canada. \$65 per year
international. Single copies, \$10.
For change of address, write:
Circulation Department, ANY
Magazine, 40 West 25th Street,
10th Floor, New York, NY 10010.

ANY is distributed in the USA by
B. DeBoer, 113 East Centre Street,
Nutley, New Jersey 07110; and in
Great Britain by the Architectural
Association, 36 Bedford Square,
London WC1B 3ES, U.K.

ISSN: 1068-4220
Printed in the USA.

Cover: Detail of a manuscript page from
Colin Rowe's typewriter. Page 6-7:
detail from David Griffin and Hans
Kollhoff, "City of Composite Presence,"
Collage City (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT
Press, 1978). Beginning on page 17: Floor
plan, Rowe's Ithaca, NY residence.
Courtesy: John O'Brien.

ANY
Number 7/8

Form Work: Colin Rowe
Guest Editor: R.E. Somol

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Exploration of Place



THE TEXAS RANGERS Notes from the Architectural Underground Alexander Caragonne

"Centered around the charismatic figure of Colin Rowe, *The Texas Rangers* reconstructs the peculiar conjuncture of high formalism, modernism, revived historicism and regionalism that informed this group, and pieces together the original curriculum they forged. It is a history of critical interest to the subsequent development of architectural teaching, theory, and practice in England and the United States."

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On July 31, the lead essay in *The New York Times Book Review* was "Letters are Acts of Faith: Telephone Calls are a Reflex." The author seemed to lament the cultural shift that has eroded the art of letter writing, eaten away at the time and space and quiet in which one can compose a thought or "shape a sentence." While this lament can be seen as merely a nostalgia for a lost way of communication, the nature of this so-called cultural shift may be of some significance, may lie at the center of this issue: Form Work. Colin Rowe.

Whenever I telephone Colin Rowe in London he's either in and he answers or he's out and the phone just rings. Sometimes my "hello" is met with "Write me a letter, I can't talk now." I cannot recall anyone else ever saying this to me. At first it might seem that Rowe's inability to talk is really an inability to think at that moment. But if this were the case he would say, "Call back later." Instead, his request for a letter seems to re-establish a distance that the telephone always takes away; it is a critical distance in which there is space and time for him — and me — to compose a thought or shape an idea. However, with Rowe such an explanation is never quite so simple.

On the other hand, when I telephone Bob Somol, Greg Lynn, or Tony Vidler — other authors in this issue — I often get an answering machine. Of necessity I leave a perfunctory message. Occasionally if one of them is in he will wait to hear who it is, and if the message he has just screened doesn't require much of a reply, he picks up and says hello. Otherwise it could be days before they return the call. "Too busy," each would say. Is "busy" another way of finding the time and space to compose a reply? Is the time and space, the critical distance, created by the letter re-enacted unwittingly in the selective use of the telephone?

Of course Rowe is infamous too for his late-night telephone calls, a habit that from time to time has turned many a friend into a former confidante. In a letter from Ithaca dated January 1976, he writes: "I have decided — temporarily at least — to abandon the telephone which is surely too expensive and altogether too fugitive a method of communication."

But oftentimes Colin's telephone calls are made merely to read someone what he has just written; in some instances even to read a letter before it is sent. In some ways, for Rowe the letter is the same as a telephone call. It is a way of

speaking to or communicating to (it is never with) a distanced listener. All of Rowe's writings are spoken over and over again to real or imagined listeners. In another sense it is also clear that correspondence is one way in which Rowe has worked out many of his ideas, always testing them on an audience of one at a time. He has also written letters to teach, in particular to critique various in-progress works and to recommend courses of study even when not asked to do so. Just a cursory examination of some of Rowe's letters reveals his mastery of his subject as well as his ability to continually massage the same anecdotes and lacunae of history with every keystroke of his still manual typewriter.

Indeed, it is the letter, much more than a casual conversation on the telephone, that for the recipient divulges the personal idiosyncrasies of its author. In November 1962, typing on his signature unfinished yellow paper, Rowe writes from 107 Cayuga Heights Road, Ithaca, New York:

Meanwhile as you must have gathered I have moved. Am located just across the street from the Sigma Chi house in a small quasi-Hollywood, pseudo-French chateau of c. 1923. Rent is \$110.00 a month and this includes garage. Apartment includes four French windows, two bedrooms, living room, dining room. There is an axis between living and dining rooms of about 28'. There is a further axis between living and principal bedroom (which I plan to use as a library) of about 35'. I am situated in other words in a small Palladian villa.

The apartment of which Rowe writes predates the house he later occupied and that Paulette Singley lays out in this issue. His description of the early Ithaca apartment reveals clues to a character that had formed early on and never really was to change: an interest in style and good taste; a concern over money; a fascination with Palladio. In March 1963 Rowe writes to a friend in England:

Haven't bought any small rugs as yet but when the weather improves I shall go over to Syracuse where there is a place with allegedly a superb collection at reasonable prices. You should probably buy silver. American tables are, on the whole, distinctly underfurnished. I doubt whether I have sat at more than one adequate table in the last few months here. And in spite of the fact that all this does sound rather snooty when everything else is so often so searsroebucky one does find some objects rather gratifying.

Rowe's "teaching" by letter, his critiques and commentaries, take many forms, including, in a letter from 1962, a kind of academic shorthand regarding the notion of a pedigree for the modern plan:

Promenade architecturale — its nature — chain of visual stimuli — no intrinsic connection between elements of chain (?) essentially scenic — essentially subjective (?) its relation to en suite planning — its origins — not recognised by Ren. theorists — recognised by Ren. practitioners — (???) see Morretti on the Ducal palace at Urbino — Bernini's Scala Regia certainly a promenade architecturale. French developments of it — Paris hotels — a great many — see Kaufmann on crisis between external expression and internal space in 18th C. France — see Gideon Klassisizismus for promenades in German neo-classical architecture — eg, von Klenze's Festsaalbau in the Munich Residenz and Schinkel in the Acropolis Palace — Kaufmann recognised something of this as concatenation. see Soane — the Scala Regia of the House of Lords — see also Barry parts of the House of Parliament — see also Canford Manor — Robert Adam ????? e.g Bowood or parts of it — see Asplund as a belated Romantic classicist using promenades. See also Stockholm Town hall.

Did the Greeks employ promenades architecturales as Martienssen believed — is the promenade essentially a spiral — was Corb the first to recognise and identify the type????

And all of the above typed on an Adler and that unfinished yellow bond.

Writing in 1994 from 65 Darwin Court in London, and now using vivid pink paper in a manual Olivetti, Rowe responds to another research paper as he must have done countless times for students, would-be students, and peers:

I think that your article would gain if, with reference to enclosing vertical planes, you were to introduce the designation facade as something distinct from elevation because though obviously related, after all these are, in the end, two very different species. So when does an elevation become a facade? And, in these matters, I tend to suppose that, almost always, a facade is a vertical surface endowed with some metaphorical or allegorical presence. Somewhat like the title

page of say Palladio's Quattro Libri, it may be an announcement of content, but it may also conceal quite as much as it discloses. While, in contradistinction, an elevation is a much more literal statement which, on occasion, may serve to convey certain important sectional information. But I would also attribute a privileged status to facade.

Rowe continues with examples of buildings to look at, the very examples he has recited throughout his career: Villa Rotonda, Villa Malcontenta, Villa Savoye. Clearly, from just a cursory examination of his many letters, Rowe's publication in 1947 of his seminal work, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," was only the beginning of a long journey with Palladio and Le Corbusier that would remain problematic for him throughout his life.

For example, one of the most recent letters I received from Rowe contained within it a copy of another letter, one sent to him by a friend who was working at the Fondation Le Corbusier. Written by Le Corbusier in 1948, the letter was addressed to a Monsieur Leslie Bredy, then American cultural attache in Paris, and concerned his wish to help with the sale of Villa Stein at Garches. In a postscript Le Corbusier writes, "la grande revue 'Architectural Review' a publié une étude extrêmement importante intitulée: 'The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,' Palladio and Le Corbusier compared n. 603 Mars 1947, numéro introuvable, je l'ai à votre disposition ici." Clearly this pleased Rowe enormously even at so much remove.

But the real issue is that while Rowe has remained somewhat constant, the status of the letter has changed. If in the 18th century one penned a letter to a friend, no one would have thought a thing of it. After the invention of the typewriter in the 1860s, one might have thought twice about the significance of a handwritten versus typewritten missive. In 1994, in an era of laptops, laser printers, fax machines, and e-mail, the receipt of a typewritten letter might well cause one to ask, what does this mean?

Though we can control our telephones with answering machines, our televisions with VCRs, and our postal service with alternative delivery systems, most of us do not exercise that control in order to create the space and time in which to write letters. In the case of Colin Rowe, however, such gestures may be full of meaning. I personally might miss the hand-corrected yellow and pink pages, but other possible reactions may be found in the essays on the following pages.

— Cynthia C. Davidson

COLIN ROWE

Peter Eisenman: Clearly, at one time, most likely before 1973, Rowe believed in the form of things and the transformative capacity inherent in modern form. To lose that belief is one thing, but to leave unexamined the political consequences of such a loss is quite another matter.

Stan Allen: Taken to its logical conclusion, the arguments for multiplicity and partiality, for the free play of object and image, lead in directions where Rowe and Koetter are unwilling to follow — on the one hand, to semiotic postmodernism in its more extreme forms, or to deconstructivism: collage-based strategies underwrite almost all of the radical practices of the 1970s and '80s, from Frank Gehry to Daniel Libeskind. Hence the radical potential always needs to be reined in and offset by the appeal to tradition and precedent.

Paulette Singley: My intention here is not to reduce Rowe's work to some radical agenda leading always from parlor games to revolutions, but on the contrary, to demonstrate that the most elitist formalist rules, when applied to the most liberal ideological sport, form an agenda that remains open to the contingencies of the contemporary condition.

FORM WORK:

R.E. Somol: The establishment and institutionalization of work on form as a discourse is inseparable from the vicissitudes of the postwar avant-gardes, a cultural formation that, reciprocally, is inconceivable without the presence of Colin Rowe.

Greg Lynn: To critique Rowe's "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" does not necessarily lead one to support his shift toward aesthetic strategies of collage. Indeed, I would like to dispense with the notion of a single ideal form without abandoning the project of the mathematics of form that Rowe initiated. Interest in diversity, difference, discontinuity, and robust form do not preclude formal and mathematical thought. It was the faulty assumption that mathematics could only be used to describe an ideal villa that led Rowe to jettison analytic formalism in favor of collage aesthetics. What is necessary for a rigorous theorization of diversity and difference within the discipline of architecture is precisely an alternative mathematics of form; a formalism that is not reducible to ideal villas or other fixed types but is in its essence freely differentiated.

Mark Linder: The ironic ambivalence of *Collage City* should not be seen as a disavowal of the abstract precision of formal analysis Attempts to oppose the effects of Rowe's earlier analytic formalism to his later collage contextualism disregard his distinct and durable contribution to the architectural discipline: his persistent attempts to venture a translation of the pictorial rigor of cubism.

R. E. SOMOL: OUBLIER ROWE

The smallest qualifiers find their way into the slightest interstices of meaning; clauses and chapters wind into spirals; a magisterial art of decentering allows the opening of new spaces (spaces of power and of discourse) which are immediately covered up by the meticulous outpouring of Foucault's writing Foucault's discourse is no truer than any other. No, its strength and seduction are in the analysis which unwinds the subtle meanderings of its object, describing it with a tactile and tactical exactness, where seduction feeds analytical force and where language itself gives birth to the operation of new powers. . . . Foucault's therefore is not a discourse of truth but a mythic discourse in the strong sense of the word, and I secretly believe that it has no illusions about the effect of truth it produces. That, by the way, is what is missing in those who follow in Foucault's footsteps and pass right by this mythic arrangement to end up with the truth, nothing but the truth.

— Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*

I. Cases and Controversies

Almost 50 years after the publication of "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," an old and forever premature question returns: what does one make of Colin Rowe and the reception to which his work has become subject? This issue becomes more complicated because to cite Rowe is already to invoke both more and less than a specific subject; it is to confront a form of discursivity. Ultimately, this Rowe effect constitutes the very possibility of discussing architecture today, or at least architecture as a particular kind of signifying regime. Recalling the initial impasse — while remaining necessarily within the terms of its forms as well as those established by the previous contents of this publication — one must ask, is the event of this issue an act of memory or prophecy? Indeed, it has been precisely around these two poles that ANY has previously organized its themes: while the second issue (on Seaside) was a debate between these ostensible opposites, and the third (on James Stirling) was a memorial, the remaining numbers have explicitly configured themselves as manifestos (on writing, electrotechnology, the feminine, and lightness). While it may be fortuitous that this issue organized around Rowe falls between numbers on Tadao Ando and Rem Koolhaas — and thereby between certain contemporary versions of tradition and utopia — this does not completely relieve the tension and sense of disquiet.

Given the fact that Rowe's voice has been directly associated with the two "memorial" issues, and that his discourse has been apparently captured by what could be called the camp of retrospection (but which often goes by the ironic name of the new urbanism), it is initially hard to imagine how Rowe could escape the fate of being remembered. Moreover, this fate seems absolutely guaranteed by the fact that, at first glance, the prophetic or prescriptive manifestos of ANY represent a systematic dismantling of Rowe's formalist version of modernism. The specific materialities and contingencies activated by the thematics of writing; the deobjectification, loss of boundaries, and elevation of technology and program associated with electrotechnology; the gendered subjectivities and new bodies announced by the feminine; and the multiple statics, subversion of the ground datum, and fall of vertical decidability proposed by lightness — all these, and others too, would seem an unbearable assault on the abstract, apolitical, and objective language of form articulated by Rowe and his associates after the war. It has been suggested that with the emergence of these issues the entire project of an architectural semiotics has become obsolete. That in short, work on form has been suspended.

In large measure, of course, this narrative is persuasive as the trajectory of the postwar period has seemed to consist of a shift in focus from the interiority of the object to the exteriority of effects. In other words, while the first generation of the neo-avant-garde in the early 1960s began to investigate the semiotics of form, its progeny (specifically, the generation that came of age after the events of May 1968) have indulged a *diagrammatics of function and structure*. This being stipulated, however — and precisely in the name of those later parties — one must still make a plea for the case of language or of form (though on different grounds), and for several reasons. First, to do otherwise would be to reinstate the dialectical form-substance opposition on which the initial high modernist (formalist) version of architectural language was constructed, and which allowed it to claim a political neutrality or, at least, objectivity. In other words, hierarchical arrangements, such as the well-known distinction made by Rowe between *physique*-flesh and *morale*-word, cannot simply be inverted. Rather, the linguistic or semiotic field needs to be expanded, as it were, in order not to be limited to a particular model of language (or, alternatively, compelled to renounce language-form).

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (who follow Louis Hjelmslev in this matter) propose one potential model for this expansion in which a double articulation exists between expression and content, but one where each term is doubled

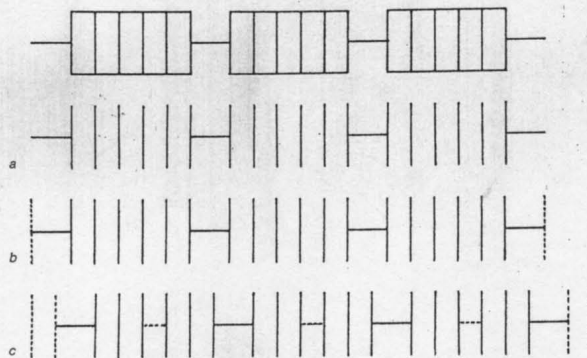
again by its own form and substance traits (for example, there is an expression-*substance* as well as an expression-form; a content-*form* as well as a content-substance).¹ This expanded model — which cannot be fully explicated here — begins to explain what could otherwise be understood only as a fundamental contradiction in the options posed by formalism and its more recent (material) discontents. In other words, it accounts for the real complicity between Rowe's distinction among phenomenal and literal transparencies and the related distinction made repeatedly in ANY (no. 5) between lightness and the merely lightweight. Far from having exhausted the linguistic model, then, we remain within a more complex version of it as recognized by the editors of the lightness issue, who (quite reasonably) desire a notational and conceptual aspect to the condition of "lightness" and not simply structures that are literally lightweight or suspended.

In addition to the fact that, as seen above, the semiotics of the object and the diagrammatics of force are related (and, in any case, could not be distinguished except by assuming the limited model of language that the latter position rejects), there are other contemporary and historical reasons for working through this tradition. First, and despite whatever animosity or suspicions either side may have in the matter, today, more than ever, work on form and form as work, broadly speaking theory and design practice, stand or fall together. Despite Rowe's individual testimony in this matter — "I find myself scarcely of the intellectual chic to cope with the choicest of recent critical confections from Paris and Frankfurt which are, to me, so hopelessly arcane" — it remains the case, *prima facie*, that formal experimentation and theoretical research are being systematically and jointly repressed in various academic, commercial, and social settings by the combined forces of the behavioral and building sciences, and, along a different axis, by the strange political alignment of developer architects (who nominate themselves to speak for the real world) and social reformers (who predetermine the limits of authentic critique). One implication of this diagnosis is that advanced theory — which has done so much to free itself from a particular version of language and has thereby been able successfully to recuperate from tradition such formerly taboo topics as program, structure, materials, the body, context, and, most recently, the earth, the ground, and gravity itself — must figure a way to rethink the discourse on form. Meanwhile, those previous definers and defenders of that discourse may be surprised that the most robust

programmatics of form will emerge from where they least expect it, from the arcane realm of theory. But of course, historically, this has always been the case.

Despite the fact that the legacy of American formalism, particularly in its trajectory from central Texas to upstate New York over the last 40 years, may have derived its most visible doctrines from traditional, historicist, or postmodern followers of Rowe (the party of the truth and nothing but the truth), it seems that the most vigorous research into the predicaments and possibilities of form has emerged within neo-avant-garde production. In this regard, the complementary extension and critique of Rowe's work found in the diverse developments of his early colleagues and protégés John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman are exemplary. The establishment and institutionalization of work on form as a discourse are inseparable from the vicissitudes of the postwar avant-garde, a cultural formation that, reciprocally, is inconceivable without the presence of Colin Rowe. Beginning slowly with the insights and blindness of Rowe's model (with, for example, Hejduk's study of Piet Mondrian and the diagonal and Eisenman's work on rotation and transformation in Giuseppe Terragni), each has developed a radical alternative to the limited way in which modernism was institutionalized after the war, simultaneously expanding and evacuating the categories of postwar formalism while opening the way for the recovery and investigation of historical avant-garde paradigms and procedures to follow. In their blasphemy they have perhaps remained the most faithful.

In their dispute with the manner in which modernism was received, the subject of Hejduk's and Eisenman's "anxious influence," to borrow Harold Bloom's model, was first and foremost a strong critic rather than a strong poet. In other words, all of their productive misreadings of modernist European predecessors can be understood as a swerve within and against the production of Rowe's formalism, and it is this swerve that allows them to



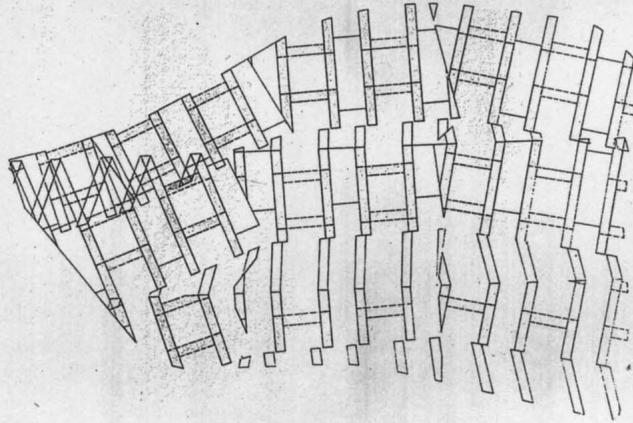
Gestalt diagram from L. Hartmann, *Gestalt Psychology* (New York, 1935).

develop other possibilities suppressed within that tradition. It is in the spirit of this prescriptive or projective chance offered by the swerve that the present issue on Rowe and form is undertaken. Moreover, the method of the swerve, or forms of misreading, may also allow the reconfiguration of Rowe's temporal opposition of memory and prophecy, an opposition that he seems committed to, provided that it presents the opportunity to perform the role of disinterested fulcrum. It is precisely this dialectic, inspired (and required) by his own discourse, that allows Rowe to be baffled by — or to express a distanced "interest, amusement, and ever renewed amazement" in — current architectural debates. However, in his silence or through his more active yet still critically distant apologetics (the voice of reasoned disinterest which begins with his negative defense of the New York Five and returns 20 years later as the identical brief employed in the name of Duany and Plater-Zyberk in *ANY* (no. 3), there resides an increasingly vehement ambivalence in Rowe's tone. While Rowe's work may not directly propose a content (expression) as is often assumed to be the case by proponents of *Collage City*, neither is his method, with its model of the critic as adjudicator, apolitical. For otherwise, with pluralism running rampant and debate proceeding apace, why would one need to enter the fray to defend and articulate diversity? Unless, that is, as happened with postwar American political discourse, a procedural formalism (the establishment of a set of rules and languages) would also emerge as a normative ideal, as an end state vision. To put the matter somewhat perversely, for Rowe literal pluralism was simply never enough and, as always suspected, the physique-form has been implicated with a morale-word all along. Shot through with value choices and questions of power, the rules of formalist discourse (with its modes of categorizing facts as well as its flexibility in capitulating to or distinguishing precedents) have always been involved with the boundary maintenance of the political. Moreover, while Rowe's formalism (and he and others would no doubt dispute the "ism") was expected to avoid the ideological and therefore could never explicitly legislate a particular style, successful forms (or good gestalts) nevertheless had to demonstrate that choices, indeed, were at once made and continuously possible. Ultimately this approach underwrites forms that obey a logic of substitution (from which historical reference is merely one option). It is from this pluralist bias that the proliferation of postmodern "kit of parts" strategies derive: In other words, each object must make evident the preexisting system

through which choices (or options) are available. In the end, the descriptive and prescriptive realms are subtly elided, creating a situation in which only forms that are themselves internally pluralist are allowed to participate in the debate. The differences presumably promoted by the formal-proceduralist model, then, are predetermined and limited by those recognized in the structure of the system, a previous whole or identity.

Perhaps the most explicit texts that both describe and enact a deviation in the aesthetics (and politics) of formalist modernism are two essays by Eisenman, one ostensibly on Michael Graves (but at least as much about Rowe) and the other a reflection on Philip Johnson (and equally about himself).² As the two strong post-critics of modernism in America projected through Eisenman's lens, Rowe and Johnson begin to appear as the original odd couple of postwar architecture. While both have been sponsors of the neo-avant-garde (bracketing, for example, the *Five Architects* publication), traditional readings of both have seemed to dominate, regardless of whether they are reviled or celebrated for their supposed apostasy and rejection of the modernism they were once imagined to have introduced. Representing mirror formalisms — one objective the other subjective — Rowe's tactic of deferral begins to appear Socratic (as "certainty in doubt"³), whereas Johnson's consumption and exhaustion of specific forms can be understood, perhaps, as sophistic ("the simulacral being, the satyr or centaur, the Proteus who intrudes and insinuates himself everywhere"⁴). Here, through varied degrees of irony and sophistication, one can begin to perceive counter formal programs, one vaguely Platonic and the other potentially Nietzschean, which coexist uncomfortably but necessarily within the discourse on form and, in the case of Rowe, begin to account for his peculiar mixture of skepticism and belief.

It is precisely these Platonic or Cartesian dialectics within Rowe's thought that must be exposed and realigned if an alternative version of formalism is to be solicited and engaged, one which, in the name of future work, swerves from the current catalogue of Rowe effects. In one way or another, these antinomies perpetually recur in gestalt science, cubist aesthetics, and liberal politics, the three primary disciplines whose collusion provided all the salient features for a formalist discourse within postwar American modernism. While this discourse privileged the now familiar notions of balance, ambiguity, framed boundaries, reason, proportion, analogy, the distinguishing of species, and part-to-whole compositional economies, it may be possible to work the status of form (and, of course, necessarily politics) through a different semiotic regime with distinct implications for the production, evaluation, and teaching



Eisenman Architects, typological schedule of urban development, Frankfurt Rebstockpark Competition, 1991.

of architecture. In various idioms, the essays that follow wager that, through an investigation of new sciences, aesthetics, and politics, or via alternative rearrangements of private subjects and public objects, a deviationist formalism may be approached. While this endeavor will inevitably be provisional and undoubtedly foreign to the politics of form as it has been practiced to date, it will at least save Rowe from those always too faithful and anxious to commemorate, bury, and dismiss.

II. The Law of the Colon: Faciality and *La Vase*

How to be intelligible without involving retrospection?; and, without being unduly sententious, it should be enough to observe that except in terms of retrospection, in terms of memory upon which prophecy itself is based, upon recollections of words with meaning, mathematical symbols with values and physical forms with attendant overtones, it is difficult to see how any ideal of communication can flourish.

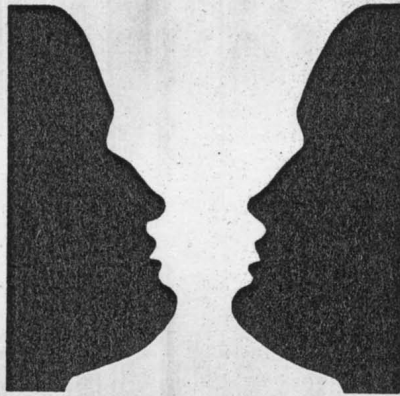
— Colin Rowe

As constructed after the war, the discourse of formalism was related to a broader intellectual, cultural, and political agenda which sought to found social arrangement on relativist grounds, to disinfect and therefore protect forms from any political (ideological) connotations in the name of freedom (autonomy) and diversity (heterogeneity). In this view, content (meaning) would resist capture by any particular value system only by remaining in a constant state of debate or dialectic or ambiguity. In this way, the new (difference) was contained and domesticated by being available only by reference to precedence, the economy of the same and the like — a previous identity located both in a form of communication and a community of form. Thus, the attempts to correlate or align architecture and language in the postwar period would establish the possibility (however contradictory that goal would become) for an architecture of both *autonomy* and *heterogeneity* against the modern (read: European and ideological) rhetoric and experience of

anonymous and homogeneous building. It is within this context that Rowe would escort American architecture into the realm of the symbolic (the realm, for Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan, of the law and language) through the device of the colon: that which establishes relation, balance, parity, ratio, proportion, analogy, and reason. The colon legislates both linguistic-visual analogies (Corbusier : Palladio : Late Corb : Schinkel) and mathematical ratios (3 : 5 :: 5 : 8), and it was largely on this dual basis that *physique-flesh* came to be severed from *morale-word*. In the meantime, the question as to the proper articulation between form and word — variously figured as vertical-image and horizontal-text, practice and theory, design and criticism — has remained as one of the principle themes that has characterized architectural production and discussion for the last 30 years.

The initial distinction, of course, was not intended to oppose form and language, but rather to elevate form as its own language, to make it unnecessary to refer to, or be co-opted by, what were thought to be external languages, ideologies, or rationales. As suggested earlier, the particular expression-substance privileged by Rowe consisted of the optical analogs of cubist aesthetics as articulated by the insights of gestalt psychology and filtered through the vision of a liberal polity. As with other areas in the postwar formalization of politics, apparently objective procedures and forms of communication (whether linguistic or legal) came to assume and require a specific image of society or community. The relativist account of liberal democracy emerged as the only remaining normative ideal. In other words, form became its own morale.⁵

While the empirical was rapidly emerging as the normative in postwar America, the attempt to articulate a language of architectural form came to rely on a set of clear, almost Cartesian, distinctions between mind and body, idea and fact, intentionality and anonymity, universal and particular, abstract and real, utopia and tradition, collective and individual, prescriptive and descriptive. Throughout Rowe's writings these hierarchical oppositions are often identified with particular places, namely Europe and America. In his essay on the frame structure, for instance, Rowe argues that the frame in Chicago existed technically as a "reasonable fact" developed to solve a particular "practical problem" in response to "commercial speculation."⁶ In



Gestalt diagram from W. D. Ellis, *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology* (London, 1938).

contrast, the gridded structure in Europe was, first and foremost, an “essential idea” and “theoretical statement” that served as a polemic for the “universal problem of architecture” (rather than the specific problem of the office building), one that expressed a deep “moral revolt.” As further evidence, Rowe opposes Mies van der Rohe’s Glass Tower, “*which is something that it does not profess to be,*” to Daniel Burnham’s Reliance Building, which “*is what it is*” — the duplicity of glass and the dependability of reliance conveniently serving as proper names for their respective formal conditions. Here, the development of a strong (and contained) language of architecture requires distinguishing mere (literal) building (largely American) from phenomenal acts of architecture (European), and it is by virtue of this proposal for an architectural sign distinct from its referent that the postwar formalist (and later structuralist) research into the *langue* of architecture evolves.

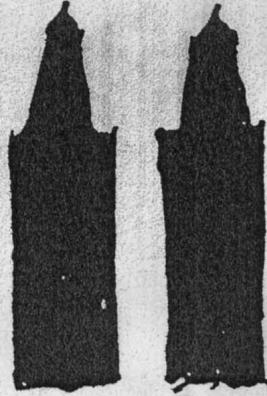
The fate of the frame is repeated, in its return trip across the Atlantic in the 1930s and 1940s, when the ideology of the European modern movement is repressed by the production and reception of the so-called International Style in the United States. It is largely as a subtle response to this translation, in his apologetic for the New York Five, that Rowe articulates a linguistic capacity for form itself, divorced from any outside social or political referent that would, in any case, be impossible in the liberal American context.

For in the United States the revolution was assumed to have already occurred — in 1776, and it was further assumed to have initiated a social order which was not to be superseded by subsequent developments. In other words, with the revolutionary theme divested by circumstances of both its catastrophic and futurist implications, with the theme rendered retrospective, legalistic and even nationalist, an indigenous modern architecture in America deployed connotations quite distinct from its European counterparts [emphasis added].
— Colin Rowe, Introduction to *Five Architects*

Again suggesting the dichotomy between American matter and European mind, Rowe nonetheless opens the possibility for those architects who will follow in his wake to begin to invent a new conceptual and theoretical project despite (or more likely, due to) their repetition of continental architecture’s *physique-flesh*. In an incredibly powerful sleight of hand Rowe steals the idea

for subsequent American postwar practice precisely by demonstrating its resistance to ideology. In other words, the American neo-avant-garde, protégés, and successors of Rowe would find themselves at the forefront of architectural ideas that would finally consider the “universal problem of architecture” (i.e., a self-reflective language of architecture) in a peculiarly Anglo-American idiom. Beginning with Rowe, the diverse series of ideal villas and collage cities proposed by this tradition represent a sustained reflection on the form and content of individual and collective arrangements, and an investigation into varied compositional and associative laws in the relation of part to whole.

The analogy that could begin to satisfy the need for an explicitly nonideological basis for form was located, not surprisingly given the American reconstruction of both modernism and Europe after the war, in the law. Based on the radical subjectivity of value, the goal of liberalism is individual liberty, an ideal middle term situated between tyranny and license, or totalitarian structure and anarchic event. And it is the neutral instrumentality of the law that will presumably mediate the complex (but articulate) contradictions constructed through this liberal vision of personality and politics. Rowe’s collage urbanism, for instance, is constituted through the balance between structure and event (or scaffold and exhibit), a balance (or collage) founded on the significantly political and eminently reasonable model of the law. As Rowe and Fred Koetter write in *Collage City*, “It is the notion of the law, the neutral background which illustrates and stimulates the particular . . . which equips itself with both empirical and ideal . . . it is this very public institution which must now be gainfully employed in commentary upon the scaffold-exhibit relationship” (146). For Rowe, the “elementary and enlivening duplicities of the law” along with “the idea of free trade” serve as emblems for the “balancing act” of structure and event as well as the techniques of collage. As forces opposed to his promotion of this legal-capitalist (contractual) economy, Rowe dismisses “accident” and “gifts of chance,” which he associates with debtorship and theft, violations of the entrepreneurial demands of the private law system. In order to begin to develop a deviationist formalism one would first have to separate the notion of repetition from the generality of the law. While generality invokes “the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences” (or as suggested above, analogy and ratio), another model of repetition would advance “non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities.” As an explicit alternative to the privileged terms of Rowe’s liberal model of the law of collage, Deleuze suggests that “if exchange is the criterion of generality [i.e., the order of laws], theft and gift



John Hejduk, "French/American/Consulates," Vladivostok (New York: Rizzoli, 1989).

are those of repetition."⁷ Rowe's collage, then, with its vision of heterogeneity as contained pluralism, ultimately maintains the arrangements of self and society. This political and legal theme finds its first explicit site for articulation in the solitary, unrelenting landscape of central Texas and, not surprisingly, it is here aligned with the question of unified or multiple subjectivity.

It is in the town of Lockhart, Texas, that Rowe and Hejduk find a specific representative of the American courthouse town, an urban type which itself was adduced earlier in their article as "a more representative illustration" of settlement patterns in the West than, for example, the mining town. Through layers of representation and exemplification, a typical situation is described that by necessity avoids the bizarre or the random.

[T]his is a town dedicated to an idea, and its scheme is neither fortuitous nor whimsical. The theme of centralized courthouse in central square is — or should be — a banal one. And it is in fact one of great power. . . . Here it is the law which assumes public significance; and it is around the secular image of the law, like architectural illustrations of a political principle, that these towns revolve. In each case the courthouse is both visual focus and social guarantee; and in each square the reality of government made formally explicit provides the continuing assurance of order. . . . Urbanistic phenomena they palpably are, but they are also emblems of a political theory. A purely architectural experience of their squares is therefore never possible. Within these enclosures the observer can never disentangle his aesthetic response from his reaction as a social animal.

— Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, "Lockhart, Texas"

It is with regard to this theme of the political theories and implications of the city, the polis, to which Rowe and Hejduk have continually returned over the succeeding 30 years in their urban thought, twin practices that form a real debate over the liberal-legal vision of the city and modernism. While Rowe would emphasize the reasonable, judicious, orderly, and decisive aspects as the

preconditions for an exemplary urbanism, Hejduk, for example, has recovered other traits with very different political, social and formal implications. It is not simply at the more obvious scale of the city, however, that Rowe's formalism finds alliances with a liberal-legal version of language and an individualist mode of exchange.

In drawing attention to James Stirling's Staatsgalerie in his essay "Losing Face," Anthony Vidler begins to suggest the central importance of the pair "face-language" for Rowe's discussion and evaluation of architectural phenomena. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, Rowe's formalism relies on a signifying regime constructed through "faciality," an assemblage constituted by the articulation of the "white wall" of significance and the "black hole" of subjectification. It is this faciality aspect of Rowe's formalism that would seek to establish a modern *architecture parlante* and that serves to reveal the specific connections of cubism, gestalt, and liberalism. Despite the inevitable plan orientation of architectural discourse, the optical bias of the formalist discipline (or, more precisely, the disciplines through which it constructed itself) has persistently committed its version of language to the vertical, the visual, and the frontal, or what Rosalind Krauss has identified as the dominant "fronto-parallel" relations of high modernism. And it is precisely within the terms of that discourse that Rowe escapes the horizontality of the plan datum and inscribes a new set of visual-optical signifying possibilities. As he and Robert Slutzky flatly admit: "after recognizing that a floor is not a wall and that plans are not paintings, we might still examine these horizontal planes in very much the same manner as we have the facade, again selecting *Three Faces* as a point of departure."⁸ Despite typology's apparent commitment to the horizontal plan, it is plan first conceived as vertical, as *facialized*. Like the faciality machine of Deleuze and Guattari, typological analysis within high formal discourse operates as a "deviance detector," sorting out, distinguishing, and establishing degrees of deviation. The development of an articulate architectural language through fronto-parallel relations is not limited to Rowe, of course, but can also be seen in the early writings and work of Robert Venturi, who also alludes to the practices and terms established by high modern painting.

Returning to Rowe's discussion of Stirling's Staatsgalerie, one can locate many of the principles of postwar formalism, including the bounded relation of

articulation within a system, a previous identity, rather than a process of perpetual differentiation (which might, as Rowe correctly feared, also imply a continual becoming identical). In classical formalism, repetition can only be thought in terms of a particular language model, the law of generality and representation. In the work of both Rowe and Michael Fried, for instance, the same critique of literal repetition is made: of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus, where movements "flow away into infinity," and the endlessness of Donald Judd's "one thing after another." Today, however, it may be possible to conceive repetition as producing difference rather than ensuring resemblance. As a procedure of the new, repetition, by setting in motion divergent series, would operate as a kind of difference machine (rather than an identity machine).

Unlike Rowe's liberal-legal formalism, this repetition would not operate by a logic of the substitution or displacement of parts that always maintain the integrity of the established kit, but through a condensation where a continuous whole-part would perpetually provoke new "kits." In place of Rowe's timeless formalism (which attempted to balance both prophecy and memory), this deviationist formalism would effect the untimely, a simulacral both and neither approach in relation to precedence and utopia. Rather than choosing between or balancing preservation and "erase and replace" strategies, for example, this expanded formalism would operate to maintain and subvert. Formal identity would emerge only as a function of a previous disparity, a differing repetition — the event of the untimely. Finally, anticipating Paulette Singley's portrait of Rowe's *interior parlante* with its undecidable irony, the tenets of classical formalism might themselves begin to unravel from within through the operation of this nonbinary formalism. As ventured by Deleuze in "Plato and the Simulacrum,"

The final definition of the Sophist leads us to the point where we can no longer distinguish him from Socrates himself: the ironist operating in private by elliptical arguments. Was it not inevitable that irony be pushed this far? And that Plato be the first to indicate this direction for the overthrow of Platonism?

And, one might further inquire, that Rowe be the first to indicate the overthrow of formalism? A program of repetition without recognition: the amnesia of form.

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Notes

1. For a full account of this model see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 40-110.
2. See Peter Eisenman, "Postscript: The Graves of Modernism," *Oppositions 12* (Spring 1978): 21-6; and his "Introduction" to *Philip Johnson: Writings* (New York: Oxford, 1976), 10-25.
3. See Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 192.
4. Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," *October 27*, 47.
5. This observation is related to Serge Guilbaut's remark that, with regard to "advanced" art after 1950, "the depoliticization of the avant-garde was necessary before it could be put to political use.
6. Colin Rowe, "Chicago Frame," in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), 93-106.
7. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): "It is in repetition and by repetition that Forgetting becomes a positive power."
8. See *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, 169.
9. Colin Rowe, "James Stirling: A Highly Personal and Very Disjointed Memoir," in *James Stirling: Buildings and Projects*, ed. Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), 23.
10. Roberto Unger, "The Critical Legal Studies Movement," *Harvard Law Review* (January 1983).

Paulette Singley: Some Instructions For Modern Parlor Games in the Architect's Country House

"There is a game of puzzles," [Dupin] resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word — the name of town, river, state or empire — any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other."

— Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter"

To write about the house of a meticulous collector on *ANY*'s swollen pages suggests an awkward, if not entirely uncomfortable fit between form and content. To illustrate Colin Rowe's rustic cottage in Ithaca, New York, upon spineless pages that frustrate library shelves might prove to be a vain stab at criticism thrust with a play knife. But, although we may toss our toys aside in fits of boredom, childish amusements often engrave the most pernicious and indelible memories. Likewise, *ANY*'s disposable though costly wrapper actually covers a sustained debate with Rowe, initiated in the special issue on James Stirling (September/October 1993), proceeding with Rowe's letter to the editor (November/December 1993), and continuing with this issue. Revisiting this playful repartee and indulging my own ambition to repeat Rowe repeating himself, I find that his vignette of Stirling's "compulsion to collect" allows me to initiate this re-collection of the artifacts Rowe recently has dispersed among friends or displaced to the urbanity of his new London residence:

A compulsive collector, he could not let a week go by without buying all sorts of things; and to a certain extent our judgments concurred. Jim's château idéal would, I suppose, have been an Empire villa to which a large Art Nouveau conservatory had been attached. And my own idea was always a small, rather dilapidated 16th-century palazzo to which had been added an Empire library. So, on the Empire component we were in complete agreement; and, as do I, Jim liked Schinkel furniture. From time to time Jim would say, Got to take you around the junk shops, which meant going to Malletts and Carleton Hobbs and Geoffrey Bennison and all the best shops in London.

While this colorful anecdote introduces Rowe's vocation as a collector of rare furniture, colloquial phrases, valuable objects, and famous persons, his formal maneuver of attaching one style of library to another style of house also proffers a ready example of the practiced digressions that, besides alleviating the ennui necessarily accompanying overerudite minds, divert attention away from his sweeping reputation as a postmodern outlaw carrying a modernist badge. It is a reputation that places him, instead, in a small, rather dilapidated

20th-century apartment to which had been added a 16th-century library in the style of, I suppose, Pirro Ligorio's casino for Pope Pius IV. While neither the abstemious furnishings of an *Unité* nor the rigorous ornamental program of the casino — neither an *existenz minimum* nor a *Gesamtkunstwerk* — would suffer Rowe's substantial collection of furniture, books, etchings, paintings, and bibelots, when transposed upon one another, these two adversarial spaces engage in an affable dialogue between the modern and the antique, the classical and the romantic, the rational and the terribly idiosyncratic. Just as Rowe describes his own synthetic activity as an argument that struggles to tie together small, seemingly paradoxical aphorisms, so too he writes the rooms of his house with the same careful attention and biting commentary as his architectural criticism. He composes the facing pages of a double room that can be described only with the atrophied language of *interior parlante* uttered by *dilettantes* and *connoisseurs*: with such sadly prohibited phrases as a "feminine milieu" or a "gay ambiance," or with such expensive words as *girandole*, *epergne*, *ormolu*, *jardinière*, and especially *escritoire*.

*No more the cedar parlour's formal gloom
With dullness chills, 'tis now the living room,
Where guests to whim, to task or fancy true
Scatter'd in groups, their different plans pursue.
Here politicians eagerly relate
The last day's news, or the last night's debate.
Here books of poetry books of prints
Furnish aspiring artists with hints.*

— Humphry Repton, *Fragments on the Theory of Landscape Gardening*¹

Although the modern house's liberation from Victorian propriety describes the parlor's desuetude into our contemporary living room, the original nomenclature of these spaces designated for talking (from which *parlor* derives its name as a space set aside for conversation, strangely resonating in Soane's "parloir of Padre Giovanni") most closely describes the central room in Rowe's house. Animated by the liberal circulation of books, food, and drink, an atmosphere of "lavishness and largesse" describes the mood of this most private "deep den" that Rowe cheerfully opens to the spirited discussion of informal seminars. During regular soirees of looking at picture books (Rowe shares Mario Praz's love for interior watercolors), the subtle innuendo of epistolary citation and biographical detail regales a small fraternity of initiates and confidants who gather around a small table in the smoky atmosphere of double entendre. The center table and the fixed circle of chairs are essential furnishings for the Victorian parlor that provide the cordial enclosure essential for promoting the club's familial rituals.

I remember very clearly the occasion. The lazy movements of a crowded architects' party had stranded both of us against a lonely pillar and he addressed me quite directly in a beautiful voice. "Leon . . ." he said, ". . . quite ravishing . . . I will write about it . . . but," he added, and his insistence was on but . . . "your Royal Mint . . . puah . . ." I have since not forgotten the unflattering adjective. The party soon settled on elegant chairs around the beautiful table, high on three lion's paws, and went on listening to the poet well into the early morning hours. I had at long last met Colin Rowe.

—Leon Krier, Foreword, *Cornell Journal of Architecture* (2:1984, 6)

Rowe's ever-expanding and fluctuating collection stimulates these table talks, where the objects serve as direct interlocutors in a conversation that, with great élan, examines the guest's ability to read as well as to be read. Typical of his "magnificence and overwhelming generosity," Rowe tosses out ideas and gifts, some of which land in the rubbish heap, but more often than not flourish in the possession of an equally astute devotee. In this scrapbook, or rather, roman à clef, each object speaks of Rowe's life, travels, friends, and foes: of the shop's exact location, the price paid vs. actual value, and the memorable company attending the purchase.

In the internal decoration, if not in the external architecture of their residences, the English are supreme. The Italians have but little sentiment beyond marbles and colours. In France, meliora probant, deteriora sequuntur — the people are too much of a race of gadabouts to maintain those household proprieties of which, indeed, they have a delicate appreciation, or at least the elements of a proper sense. The Chinese and most of the eastern races have a warm but inappropriate fancy. The Scotch are poor decorists. The Dutch have, perhaps, an indeterminate idea that a curtain is not a cabbage. In Spain they are all curtains — a nation of hangmen. The Russians do not furnish. The Hottentots and Kickapoos are very well in their way. The Yankees alone are preposterous.

—Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Furniture" (1840)

Although Poe locates American interior decoration as lower than the Hottentots, he does sketch for us a Yankee apartment that contains a "small and not ostentatious chamber with whose decorations no fault can be found." Besides being quintessentially British, Rowe, who obtained the same citizenship as his Ithaca house, is also amusingly Yankee, if not occasionally Texan, and his parlor merits the same limpid exposition with which Poe draws an ideal room.

It is oblong, some 30 feet by 15 feet, an excellent shape for arranging furniture. The first of three doors opens from the entrance hall and faces the remaining two openings that frame views of the several thousand books papering the adjoining library. Windows with pictures resting on their sills mirror each other across the long interior. The bay window on the terrace side of the house looks out onto cast-iron garden furniture by K.F. Schinkel and a little chair ornamented with snakes wrapped in grapevines. Warm tones from hardwood floors, Turkish prayer rugs, and oil paintings determine the room's character. The walls, lacking both wainscot and cornice, are prepared with a coat of plain white, the expanse of which is relieved by the collection of artwork. These chiefly are paintings by Rosa da Tivoli, 16th-century engravings by Giovanni Battista Falda and Parmigianino, a battle scene by Polidoro da Caravaggio, and engravings after Giulio Romano, Pirro Ligorio, and Giorgio Vasari. To borrow Poe's words directly:

The tone of each picture is warm, but dark. There are no "brilliant effects." Repose speaks in all. Not one is of small size. Diminutive paintings give that spotty look to a room, which is the blemish of so many a fine work of Art overtouched. The frames are broad but not deep, and richly carved, without being dulled or filigreed.

The careful arrangement of art and furniture delineates three sitting areas which correspond to the entrance, the fireplace, and the bay window. A well-worn, black leather Chesterfield sofa, two wire chairs, and a small Louis XVI table occupy the space nearest the entrance hall. A matching, equally worn Chesterfield, with two Chinese garden seats for end tables, faces a fireplace that is framed by Rowe and Brian Kelly's mantel designed in the styles of Thomas Hope and John Soane. Focusing attention inward, an 1890 Ilkley couch covered in green velvet and an 1820s library chair with attached writing table gesture toward the sofa. Given that no chandelier hangs from the ceiling, all electric light comes from floor lamps located strategically for adequate reading. At the far end, near the bay window, original Thonet chairs and a 1760s architect's table match the blond wood floors and frame a round marble table upon which rests a silver candelabra. Reflected in the polished surfaces of the marble spheres, the miniature obelisks, and the porcelain animals scattered throughout the room, candlelight and firelight "throw a tranquil but magical radiance over all" (Poe).

A room that is like a dream, a truly spiritual room, where the stagnant atmosphere is nebulously tinted pink and blue. Here the soul takes a bath of indolence, scented with all the aromatic perfumes of desire and regret. There is something crepuscular, bluish shot with rose; a voluptuous dream in an eclipse. . . . An infinitesimal scent of the most exquisite choosing mingled with the merest breath of humanity, floats through this atmosphere where hothouse sensations cradle the drowsy spirit.

— Charles Baudelaire, "The Double Room"

How his fantasy developed, aided by the arts of disguise and imagery, during promenades in the parlor, how it ran wild! — In the parlor! Everywhere one looks . . . one finds something undeniably shut-in; and out of his prodigious oeuvre there comes to us the smell of the hothouse.

— O. P. Monrad, Søren Kierkegaard, *Sein Leben und Seine Werke*

He pleased his fancy by likening a horticulturist's shop to a microcosm wherein were represented all the different categories of society — poor, vulgar flowers, hovel flowers, so to speak, that are really in their proper place only on the window-sill of a garret, roots that are crammed in milk-tins and old earthen pots, the gillyflower for instance; pretentious, conventional, silly flowers, whose place is in porcelain vases painted by young ladies, such as the rose; lastly, flowers of high lineage, such as the orchids, dainty and charming, trembling and delicate, such as the exotic flowers, exiles in Paris, kept in hothouses, in palaces of glass.

— J. K. Huysmans, *Against the Grain*

As Colin Rowe recounts Mies van der Rohe's remark, if revolutions cannot occur every Monday morning, then they occur just as rarely in rooms with revolutionary furniture.³ In rooms furnished with theoretical tables set for conceptual dinner parties, to borrow from Rowe again, where food is described and recipes appraised, we may become very full of ourselves, yet we go home hungry. The menu at Rowe's house indulges the pleasure of tasting, but also of swallowing the choice hors d'oeuvres — hooks and all. Despite the futurists' recipes for inedible meals, Marinetti composed their *Foundation Manifesto* in his Milan apartment, luxuriously furnished with hanging mosque lamps and rich Oriental rugs — the inherited taste for bourgeois comfort. It is easy here

to agree with Praz's inability to trust a man who cares little for his house, but equally, should a man with exquisite taste be trusted? A rare palate and impeccable table manners, after all, do not necessarily imply a lack of conspiratorial tendencies. (Isn't it fun to place CR in Marinetti's house?)

Given the radical, even deconstructive, trajectory of Rowe's ostensibly conservative dialectic, upon crossing the threshold of his house one might be startled by the lack of any possessions that overtly reflect the discriminating taste of a man Robert Stern, in "Stompin' at the Savoye" (1975), imagines to be stuck in the "hothouse aesthetics of the 1920s." "Because it is too small," Rowe once said, he would not recommend Charlotte Perriand's and Le Corbusier's famous chaise longue, and "because it is too difficult," he would not tolerate Mies van der Rohe's fabled Barcelona chair. But do such omissions sufficiently determine his taste to be antimod? Rowe's piquant observations on the modernists' furniture design — and by extension their urbanism — parodies their own functionalist rhetoric, but does not necessarily abandon it. Instead of ascetic walls and spartan object types, rather than the requisite chrome, glass, and leather furniture, Rowe's double room speaks directly to the dressing of modernist tenets in the Empire's clothes. The many etchings and antique furnishings initially divert attention away from the archmodernist forms underlying the historical contents. While the room displays Poe's requirements for character and repose, Rowe ignores the romantic mandate for tinted windows with the literal transparency of clear glass; he disregards the requirement for crimson curtains and gold tassels with undressed windows, and dismisses the specification for arabesque paper with pure *ripolin*.

Rowe's two major architectural interventions on the first floor of his house, the mantelpiece and the remodeled kitchen, offer clues to the duplicitous interior. For the mantel, he and Kelly compressed onto the shallow space of an Etruscan *edicula* with funerary antifixes a cornice from the Palazzo Farnese barely resting upon two caryatid busts that, in turn, stand upon a beveled surround. In what appears to be direct contrast to this articulate montage of styles, a large opening in the parlor frames a deep view, through the hallway and into the kitchen, of a dividing wall that floats free of any planimetric imperatives. Together, the simulated Regency mantel and the neo-Miesian kitchen articulate a mock battle of styles.

Within this virtual *trompe l'oeil* of furniture and bric-a-brac, certain pieces — neither uptight nor parvenu — belie Rowe's critical acumen. The sculptural contour of the Ilkley couch, a freestanding object evoking the notorious chaise longue, and the boxy silhouette of the leather Chesterfields, standing in for the *fautouil grand confort*, describe Rowe's interior as Corbusian *avant la lettre*. And while the Thonet chairs further speak of *café esprit nouveau*, the round

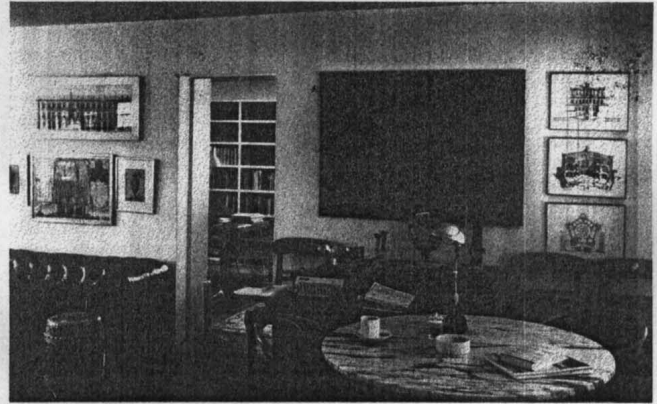
marble table, as previously mentioned, also suggests Victorian etiquette. According to this planned incongruity, then, it should be no surprise to imagine parked in Rowe's garage both a Volkswagen Rabbit and a Lotus convertible; or to stretch our imaginations and to envision Rowe himself, one day in need of a haircut and wearing a cardigan sweater over baggy trousers and, the very next, sporting a flattop and wearing a leather jacket with blue jeans. Although Stern's simplistic reference to the 1920s is way off the mark, Rowe's studied nuances of delicate hybrids allow the appellation of *hothouse* to stand. In this *tableau vivant* of objects and people, set to the thermostat of Rowe's "carefully regulated furnace," Des Esseintes's collection of exotic flowers at Fontenay fills the Ithaca parlor with their rarefied aroma. Rowe is the interior of a hothouse *flâneur* who commands his external sphere of influence from conversations around the dinner table or, when guests are not present, from late night discussions on the telephone.

"Where did you get it?" asked Cécile, examining the treasure. "Rue de Lappe, at a second-hand dealer's, who had just got it from a château they have dismantled near Dreux, at Aulnay — a château where Madame de Pompadour occasionally lived before she built Ménars. . . [and later]. . . "Does that sort of thing amuse you?" asked Madame de Marville. . . "Why, my dear cousin," he said, "it's the hunt of masterpieces! We are face to face with adversaries who protect the game."

— Honoré de Balzac, *Cousin Pons*

My aunt was at this time one of four or five people in Paris who had a passion for old things, for what was deemed beautiful in bygone ages, for Venetian glass, carved ivory, marquetry furniture, point d'Alençon lace and Dresden china. We would arrive at the antique shops just when their owners were getting ready to dine . . . when the shutters were already closed and only the door, still half-open, let a ray of light trickle through the dusky shadows of an accumulation of precious things . . . And always, at the end of the foray, there would be some lucky find . . . It is those far off Sundays that have made me the collector of bibelots I have been, and still am, and will remain all my life.

— Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un Artiste*



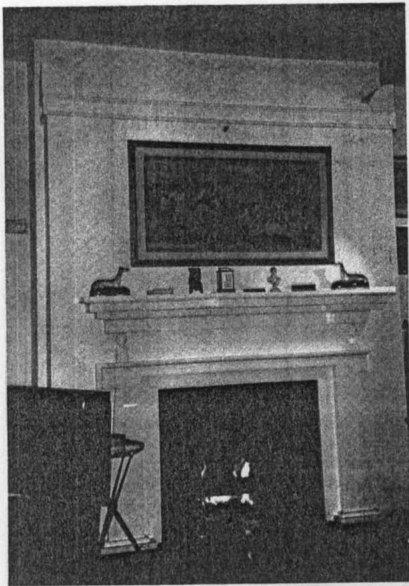
Living room, Rowe's Ithaca, New York residence. Photo: Brian Paul Kelly.

There was then a market in the Campo dei Fiori where books and old curiosities were sold, and there I bought the Italian version of Gregorovius's *History of Rome in the Middle Ages* and made my first acquisition of an antique object, an ivory crucifix, influenced perhaps by a phrase of Thomas Griffiths Wainwright, "the pale gleam of two noble Christi Crucifixi," quoted in Oscar Wilde's *Pen, Pencil, and Poison*.

— Mario Praz, *The House of Life*

Although the remarkably definitive character of this object seemed to escape the merchant who urged us to buy it [at the Paris Flea Market], suggesting we paint it in a bright color and use it as a lantern, Giacometti, usually very detached when it came to any thought of possessing such an object, put it down regretfully, seemed as we walked along to entertain some fear about its next destination, and finally retraced his steps to acquire it. So a few boutiques later, I made just as elective a choice with a large wooden spoon, of peasant fabrication but quite beautiful, it seemed to me, and rather daring in its form, whose handle, when rested upon its convex part, rose from a little shoe that was part of it. I carried it off immediately.

— André Breton, *Mad Love*



Fireplace, Rowe's Ithaca, New York residence. Photo: Brian Paul Kelly.

The various descriptions of collectors, in Honoré de Balzac's *Cousin Pons*, Edmond de Goncourt's *La Maison d'un Artiste*, Mario Praz's *House of Life*, or even André Breton's *L'amor fou* might rehearse Rowe's own penchant for frequenting antique stores and secondhand shops. But, given Walter Benjamin's observation that "there are many kinds of collectors and each of them is motivated by a multiple of impulses," it is undoubtedly reductive to relativize Rowe among these nonetheless worthy companions ("Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian"). Skipping over the equally reductive analyses of the collector as fetishist, it will prove useful to summarize the dominant types that Benjamin and Praz schematize in their writings on the interior. Some seek to disguise themselves as millionaires surrounded by priceless objects, others

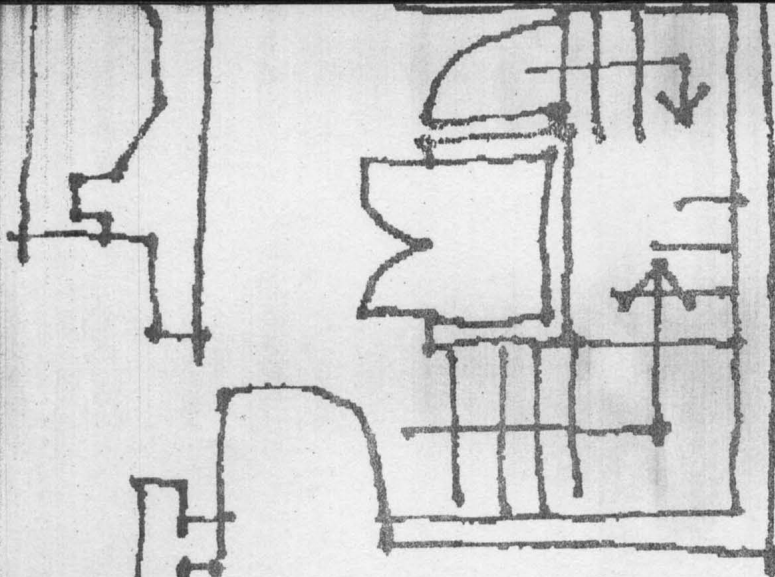
attempt to obliterate the commoditylike character of things through personal possession; for some collecting betrays a desire for the social legitimation of an authentic signature, for others collecting mirrors an excess of *amour propre* in handsome surroundings; certain collectors act as divining rods for fashion, others pursue objects to console their neurasthenia; some seek to restore the aura of a vanished Europe, others enjoy touching a famous person's most intimate possessions; for certain types collecting is an addiction or a mania, for others merely an entrepreneurial vice; some collectors are "motivated by dangerous though domestic passions" (Benjamin), others, still, by "a degeneration of the need to project an atmosphere around oneself" (Praz). In particular, and with marked respect to Rowe, Benjamin allows us to approach the collector through Poe's character of Dupin, the detective:

His "Philosophy of Furniture," along with his detective novellas, shows Poe to be the first physiognomist of the interior. The criminals of the first detective novels are neither gentlemen nor apaches, but private members of the bourgeoisie.
— Walter Benjamin, "Louis-Philippe, or the Interior"

By extension, it is possible to characterize the hunt either for clues or for curios as a search that also requires the master sleuth to be an expert of furnishings. For Rowe, who may be an enigmatic hybrid of the aforementioned types, collecting most closely follows the rules of detection that require a keen eye for detail, a sharp ability to read evidence, a thorough knowledge of paradigms, and an unpredictable willingness to question appearances. In this sense, Rowe the exclusive collector taught Rowe the reclusive detective to approach the object on the auction block with cool disinterest as well as with a ready wallet — an architectural criticism of quid pro quo.

Disguising himself as Dupin, Rowe writes in "Program vs. Paradigm":

The great detective is prone to sit at home and to contemplate the typology of the crime. Indeed, for him, it is almost a matter of intellectual chic to be, physically, highly immobile. So he restricts his in situ investigations. He meditates and he postulates. And, meanwhile, the police, who mostly despise the great detective, scurry around, active as little ants, collecting the most absurd accumulations of typically irrelevant detail and, usually, arriving at the most premature conclusions. . . . The great detective also knows that naive and disembodied abstractions will never help the solution. He remains responsible and he knows very well that only the police — with all their official resources — can provide him with the ultimate, empirical material to which, otherwise, he could have no access. . . . In spite of the showy histrionics of the final presentation, the detective story is always a relatively modest affair. It is two-pronged and hybrid; and its success derives from a conflation of findings.



In the combined characters of the elegant connoisseur and the amateur detective, Rowe sits at home in the comfort of his parlor contemplating the scene of the crime. But while his detached insouciance portrays the sedentary collector/sleuth, it does not answer the more onerous question of *Who are the police?* Perhaps they are those city planners or architectural historians who supply empirical evidence but fail to grasp its cultural significance. Possibly, they represent the canon of modern architecture that supported immature conclusions based upon too little time spent indoors. It is even conceivable, and much more bothersome, that sometimes Rowe seems to wear the sheriff's badge, nagging the premature publications of bad conscience manifestos with the threat that one day, as in his letters to *ANY* or to the *Harvard Architectural Review*, he no longer will be able to contain himself from responding to the debate with tart invective.

What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches — what is all this but an exaggeration of the application of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that all men proceed to conceal a letter, — not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored into a chair-leg — but, at least, in some out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought by which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg?

— Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter"

Not to be overlooked is the fact that Eisenman is an avid collector of magazines and documents of the avant-garde. The spirit of the collector is not that of the bricoleur, but presupposes a process of selection.

— Manfredo Tafuri, "American Graffiti," *Oppositions* 5

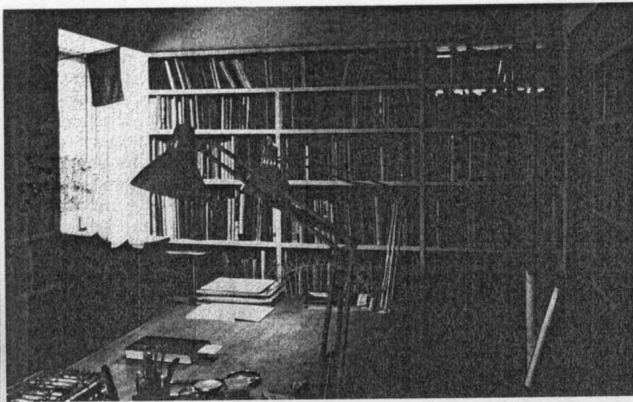
In its old sense the verb 'bricoler' applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle.

— Claude Lévi-Strauss, as cited by Colin Rowe⁴

The Prefect of Poe's "The Purloined Letter," who assumes the thief to be a poet rather than a mathematician, prematurely dismisses the criminal as necessarily foolish. Conversely, our Dupin, who also possesses a criminal mind, understands that the superior thief is a combination of both. Rowe's similar analysis of the engineer and the bricoleur recovers the police's facile distinction between mathematician and poet as a concomitant type who eludes capture by surveying the surveillant. The corresponding pleasure of detection, which requires the cognitive ability to turn objects inside out as well as the discipline of limiting oneself to available materials, prescribes an architecture based upon the science of mapping and the art of improvisation. Such criminology also problematizes Tafuri's provocative assertion that "the spirit of the collector is not that of the bricoleur," or, to venture an interpretation, that the consumptive techniques of scientific taxonomy are inherently at odds with the productive means of poetic ad hocism. For Rowe, who understands that any form of accumulation inherently is selective, the bricoleur must detect in order to discriminate, collect in order to produce. This means that, when engaging in such municipal entertainments as billiards (breaking), dice (throwing), cards (shuffling), or even charades (simulating), both the bricoleur and the detective, for Rowe, embrace games of chance, of calculation, and of suspicion as viable approaches to a reformed dialectic that is liberated from the zeitgeist and from historical determinism.

Dupin deposits his payment for recovering the purloined letter in a compartment of his writing table; he discovers the stolen document, turned inside out, hanging in plain sight from a mantelpiece; he places it for safekeeping back in the escritoire. The escritoire and the mantelpiece also feature prominently in Rowe's interior, and describe the doubling of concealed and exposed hiding places in the Ithaca parlor as the confrontation of a free plan with fixed poché that, respectively, hide secrets out in the open and leave personal accounts for the drawers. This, in other words, is the trick of formalism; for those who stubbornly seek its contents in ready-made slots, meaning will remain hyperobtrusive and the container will appear empty.

While collecting and detecting should not be so handily distilled into synonymous practices, together they construe a public space derived from the practice of interior forensics based upon the game of cops, robbers, and detectives. In scrutinizing each mote of the thief's apartment with painstaking rectitude, yet departing without the object of desire, the cops misread the robber's interior as barren of content and exhausted of space.⁵ The detective, on the contrary, disabuses the Prefect of this notion by demonstrating that the space of the letter demarcates the entire apartment. While this analysis



Study, Rowe's Ithaca, New York residence. Photo: Brian Paul Kelly.

suggests the enticing possibility that all of architecture and urbanism are constructed upon the act of concealing evidence in public, indeed constructed upon crime itself, such an assertion inevitably leads to the condition of complete anarchy and permanent revolution. Rather, in synthesizing both legal convention and criminal behavior, the architect/detective understands fully that the police often corrupt and that the corrupt might police. His or her job is to catch the thief but not to build the prison. The synthesis of cops and robbers into the detective offers a unique spatial imperative that translates interior *forensics* into its etymon of open *forum*, a counterargument to the locked jail, replete with a labyrinth of urban rooms leading from the mantelpiece to the public square.

*Hither the Heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a Court
In various talk the instructive hours they past,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last:
One speaks of glory of the British Queen,
and one describes a charming Indian screen;
a third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
at every word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
with singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.*

— Alexander Pope, "Rape of the Lock"

At the other end of the sofa from that occupied by the brilliant Mathilde, Julien sat silently on a little low caned chair. This modest position was the envy of all the trucklers. . . . He often laughed out loud at the things that were said in this little group, but he felt himself incapable of saying anything similar of his own. It was like a foreign language he could understand (and appreciate), but which he could not talk.

— Henri Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*

Though something sometimes may begin as a private joke, in this case that, like Ozenfant and Jeanneret fifty years earlier, Thomas Hope himself was the proponent of important objet types (isn't it fun to substitute Thomas Hope for LC?) — the private joke may then occasionally supersede its origins, may — acquiring substance and seriousness — become an active sponsor of such widely diverse programs as those of Stirling and Krier at the present day.

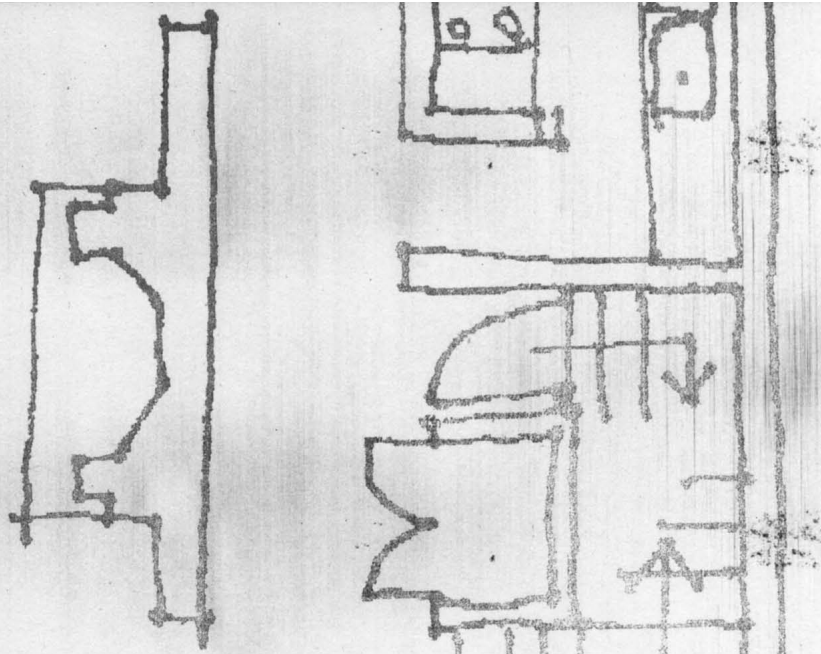
— Colin Rowe, *James Stirling*

Offering a possible conclusion to the stakes of Rowe's gamesmanship, Roland Barthes, in his essay "Neither-Nor Criticism," questions the idea that "criticism must be neither a parlour game, nor a municipal service," meaning that "it must be neither reactionary nor communist, neither gratuitous nor political." Like Barthes, rather than advocating a neither/nor criticism, Rowe embraces the relevant, even dangerous, results of discursive games:

And, for some time, one might play an architectural/ intellectual parlor game, a game which will be very dependent upon intuition, a game which — since it is without rules — can never be preceded by aprioristic definition.

— Colin Rowe, *Architecture of Good Intentions*

To repeat myself: although we may toss our toys aside in fits of boredom, childish amusements often engrave the most pernicious and indelible memories. The entertainments in Rowe's house, always more than mere diversion, emerge as urbane critiques of contemporary architecture, developed through a dialectical materialism of conventional formalism that forces Benjamin's adversarial relationship with Wölfflin into a mutually critical dialogue. The trivial pursuits of naming popes, doges, saints, or state capitals unfold into such more serious topics as hedgehogs and foxes. In this game Rowe borrows from Sir Isaiah Berlin's distinction between those who quickly



apprehend opportunity but trap themselves with weak analysis and those whose rigorous analysis keeps them out of danger, but also out of the race. An extended version of hedgehogs and foxes, mentioned briefly in *Collage City*, will appear in Rowe's forthcoming book, *Architecture of Good Intentions* as "Ideas, Talent, Poetics," just as other parlor games have appeared as "Mannerism and Modernism," "Character and Composition," or "Program vs. Paradigm."

Typical of this strategy, in "Program vs. Paradigm" Rowe begins innocently enough by arranging "the confrontation of two phenomena about neither of which should it be necessary to become duly excited." One requires that architecture be derived from the false empiricism of facts, the other, from the false idealism of formal paradigms. But in the end, these "superficial adversaries" reflect in each other the identical inability to "allow for the possibilities of . . . revolution." My intention here is not to reduce Rowe's work to some radical agenda leading *always* from parlor games to revolutions, but on the contrary, to demonstrate that the most elitist formalist rules, when applied to the most liberal ideological sport, form an agenda that remains open to the contingencies of the contemporary condition. We cannot determine whether, like Dismeli bored at a dinner party, Rowe will intervene in the flagging conversation with something outrageous, just for the fun of it, or if his diatribe is a calculated subversion of business as usual. Sitting at home, Rowe cultivates both/and criticism: both clever parlor games and urban projects, both characteristically reactionary and surprisingly communist, both a gratuitous offering to dinner companions and a political attack upon "eye's which do not see."

Author's note: I would like to thank Matthew J. Bell, Brian Kelly, and Kristen Schaffer for their help in writing this essay. Besides Rowe himself, I am especially indebted to Judith Di Maio and to John O'Brien, without whose generous contributions it would have been impossible to offer so many specific details of the Ithaca parlor.

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Notes

1. Humphry Repton, *Fragments on the Theory of Landscape Gardening* (1816), as cited by Mark Girouard *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 237.
2. O. P. Monrad, Søren, *Kierkegaard, Sein Leben und Seine Werke* (Jena, 1909), 30, as cited by Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. and ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 41. The ellipses indicate that I have removed Kierkegaard's name from the quotation; the following insights regarding the interior flâneur are from Adorno.
3. Colin Rowe, manuscript from forthcoming publication *Architecture of Good Intentions* (London: Academy Editions, 1994). The following comments on conceptual dinner parties and the accidents of history are from a telephone conversation with Judith De Maio.
4. Claude Lévi-Strauss, as cited by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 102.
5. These are Jacques Lacan's observations, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytical Reading*. Eds. John P. Miller and William J. Richardson and trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988) 38: "The police have looked *everywhere*: which we were to understand — vis-à-vis the area in which the police, not without reason, assumed the letter might be found — in terms of a (no doubt theoretical) exhaustion of space."

MARK LINDER: FROM PICTORIAL IMP

No contemporary architectural critic is more influential and, at the same time, less familiar than Colin Rowe, which makes for strong opinions born of casual knowledge. The conventional wisdom on Colin Rowe holds that his 1978 book *Collage City* implicitly repudiates his famous 1947 essay "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa." It is often suggested that *Collage City* amounts to a confession of youthful dalliances with modernist evils, and Rowe's shift in interest from painting (in the 1950s) to collage (in the 1970s) is characterized as an affirmation of the pluralist ethics of American postmodernism. Rowe's critics believe that the shrewd erudition of *Collage City* serves as an apologia for a neotraditional urbanism, and collage serves as a convenient metaphor for the design methods of the so-called Cornell school: figure-ground analysis, urban spatial typologies, historical reference, and those infamous, sophisticated manipulations of overlapping, nonorthogonal grids. Thus *Collage City* is credited with (or accused of) converting the rationalizing techniques of modernism into tools of amelioration and accommodation, and shifting the concerns of formalism from an intensive scrutiny of individual buildings to an extensive elaboration of the incidental heterogeneity of American urbanism.

In fact, Rowe's own words seem to support the notion of such a postmodern conversion. In 1973, the same year he completed the text of *Collage City*, Rowe wrote an addendum to "Mathematics" in which he reassesses the distinctly analytic mode of his earlier criticism and concludes that "its limitations should be obvious." But Rowe's retraction is not total. His addendum, despite its self-criticism, is also affirmational: he insists that his early essays "possess the merits of accessibility." Rowe thus implies that "Mathematics" is the justifiable beginning of a continuing project.

Thus the ironic ambivalence of *Collage City* should not be seen as a disavowal of the abstract precision of formal analysis. The desire to identify an obvious split in Rowe's subject depends on a parochial view of Rowe's sources and significance — yet another instance of the intellectual introversion that permits designers to avoid dealing with, or

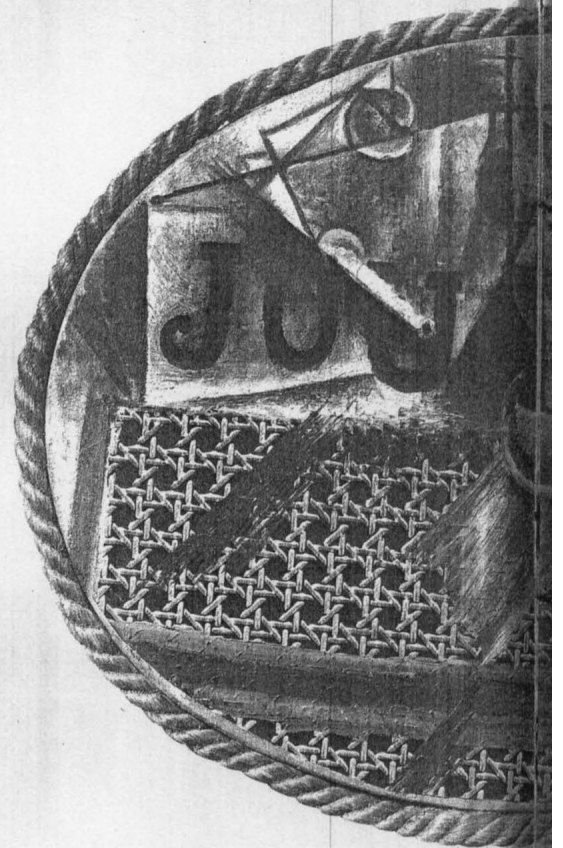
even acknowledging, the covert network that links architecture with other disciplines. Rowe's criticism cannot be characterized by simply understanding it as the handmaiden of design practice. Attempts to oppose the effects of his earlier analytic formalism to his later collage contextualism disregard Rowe's distinct and durable contribution to the architectural discipline: his persistent attempts to venture a translation of the pictorial rigor of cubism in a way meaningful to architecture.

From the beginning, the writings of Alfred Barr have been the touchstone for Rowe's presentation of cubist principles. This affiliation with the most central of cubism's American critics is the most telling continuity in Rowe's writings, a continuity which neglects the significant revisions in cubist historiography that emerged in the

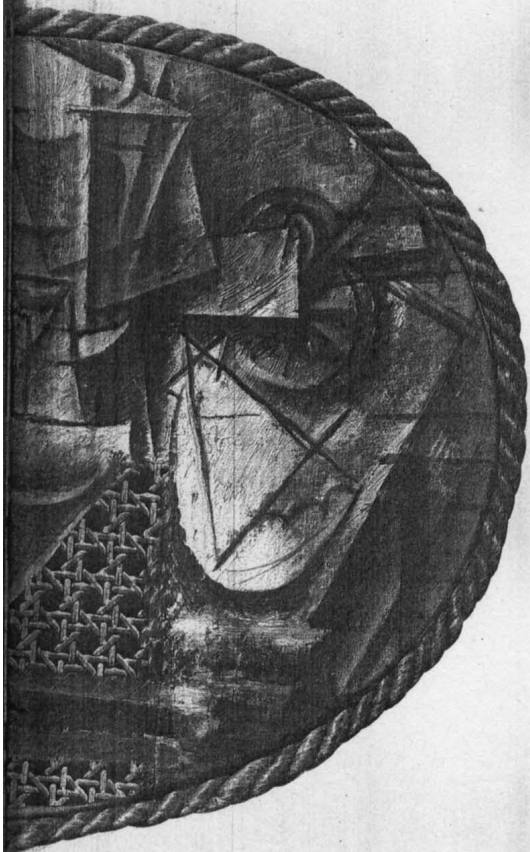
1960s. Contentious debates about collage are at the center of those revisions, and several exhibitions, from the "Art of Assemblage" show of 1961 to the first major exhibitions of Picasso's constructed sculpture four years later, prompted numerous critics and historians to reconsider the standard interpretations of cubism. Rowe does not acknowledge these developments in *Collage City*, despite his seemingly major shift from painting to collage. These problems with collage — both Rowe's conservatism in regard to cubism and the substance of the revisionist trend — are exemplified by a distinction between two objects produced by Picasso in 1912: *Guitar* and *Still Life with Chair Caning*.

This or This

By 1971 the controversy surrounding collage had become so involuted and had such repercussions that critics as



IMPROPRIETY TO SEEMING DIFFERENCE



seemingly different as Rosalind Krauss and Hilton Kramer could almost agree on the relative importance of Picasso's two objects. The occasion for their convergence was "The Cubist Epoch," an exhibition curated by the collector and historian Douglas Cooper. Working against the revisionists, "The Cubist Epoch" reasserted the standard notion that cubism is an advanced, conceptual form of realism — a new pictorialism — which had displaced perspective and thereby severed the traditional link between representation and imitation. The same realist argument had been proposed and successfully promoted a quarter of a century earlier by Alfred Barr during his tenure at the Museum of Modern Art, and a key artifact in Barr's argument is Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning*. Although Cooper was unable to obtain the piece for his show, he concurs with Barr's notion

of realism in his book-length catalogue essay (in part, by polemically insisting that its title translates into English as *Still Life with Cane Chair*).

Krauss and Kramer were provoked not simply by Cooper's strident manner; both base their judgments upon and derive their criticisms from a sympathetic reading of Clement Greenberg, the critic who conceived the first "post-modern interpretation" (Krauss) of "cubist pictorial aesthetics" (Kramer). Perhaps the most controversial, if not infamous, critic of the 1960s, Greenberg and his inexorable logic forced debate even among those who dismissed him. This is particularly true of his writings on collage, which are less dogmatic than those on painting, but no less totalizing or contentious. His 1959 essay "Collage" opens with a dismissal of critics who, like Cooper and Barr,

see collage as a new sort of picture that achieves "a renewed contact with 'reality.'" Greenberg instead insists upon autonomy, and argues that collage is entirely consistent and continuous with "the inner, formal logic of cubism." He argues that collage emerges in 1912 for purely formal, not realist, reasons: by 1911 analytical cubism had grown homogeneous and flat — "the little facet-planes into which Picasso and Braque were dissecting everything visible now all lay parallel to the picture plane." Cubist collage liberated Picasso and Braque from the overwhelming relentlessness of their painting techniques: the collages "seem to thrust out into real, bas-relief space." They jettison realism entirely and initiate a new, three-dimensional illusionism.

For Greenberg the key collage is *Guitar*, because it is Picasso's first "construction." (Cooper maintained that *Guitar* is merely a study model that Picasso used for painting.) Ultimately, Greenberg claims that *Guitar* initiates an entirely new kind of visual art which aspires to an unprecedented autonomy: "Here, at last, the decorative is transcended and transfigured . . . in a monumental unity," and cubist objects "acquire the self-evident self-sufficiency of architecture." Cubism no longer needs realism because, like architecture, it is real itself. Construction, for Greenberg, is nothing less than the mother of the "post-modern" visual arts.

Pictorial Impropriety

In *Collage City* Rowe gives no sign of interest in any of the critics or issues involved in the contemporary debate on collage. He does not stray from the sources that inform his earlier work on cubist painting; he upholds Cooper's and Barr's realism. Rowe uses *Still Life with Chair Caning* as the emblematic image of *Collage City*, and he is particularly taken with Barr's claim that collage subverts any manner of illusionism, from the optical to the ideological. In fact, *Still Life* is doubly realistic: first, because it introduces a new representational device — it imbeds actual pieces of reality in its pictures; second, because it harbors no illusions — it frankly admits, Barr writes, that "what seems most real is most false."

Most important, Rowe's realist reading of collage contains

By the mid-1960s Greenberg had abandoned his enthusiasm for "construction" and reinserted his illusionism within an emphatic pictorialism that discounted sculpture and architecture altogether. But certainly Rowe could not have predicted that Greenberg's fusion of cubism and architecture — the "transfiguration of the decorative" and the "monumental unity" he attributes to *Guitar* — would eventually find an uncanny home in deconstructivism (at the post-Barr, postmodern MoMA). Such a lineage is not as far-fetched as it might seem. In his introductory essay in the "Deconstructivism" catalogue, Mark Wigley, in effect, substitutes constructivism for cubism, and elsewhere he describes deconstructive architecture as a kind of pure ornament. Thus he can be seen to seemingly concur with Greenberg, who might as well have been describing "deconstructivism" (if not the projects in the MoMA show) when he wrote (in 1948) that "something linear, free from mass, transparent, enclosing space and emptying it instead of filling it . . . is what cubism means when integrally translated into sculpture — as the constructivists, too, can testify." In other words, deconstructivism recuperates the analytical and formal rigor of early Rowe by embracing Greenberg's interpretation of collage.

Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912), © ARS, New York. Musée Picasso, Paris. Photo: Giraudon/Art Resource, New York.

In "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," written in the mid-1950s but published two years after "La Tourette," Rowe explicitly demonstrates his visual (phenomenal) prejudice.

I coined the term *seaming* in an attempt to explain techniques and practices developed in several collaborative projects beginning in 1991. Working with Doug Garofalo and Bob Somol on an enterprise called *dub*, we experimented with the formal, structural, and figural capacities of the character æ. Early in 1992, after producing and disseminating *stationary*, *dub* entered a period of what Garofalo calls *æstivation*, which continues to this day. For the Berlin Spreebogen urban design competition, we figured out how to employ the character æ diagrammatically in our project, which remains the most developed example to date of what we call a "*seaming urbanism*." Like Mark Taylor, who in 1993 introduced what he calls "the question of *seeming/seaming*" as an alternative to folding in architecture, we proposed a "*seaming urbanism*" as a critique and evasion both of those who desire to heal the city through design (Cornell school) and those who desire to monumentalize its disturbances (deconstructivism). But unlike Taylor, whose use of the slash, or *separatrix*, reinstates the opposition between two homonyms, and thus signifies *seaming*, we introduce the ligature æ and thus tie the slash in a knot. (In other words, we take Jeffrey Kipnis's notion of "Twisting the Separatrix" literally.)

architecture within a distinct pictorialism. He treats urban plans as realist pictures and reduces architecture to the status of a real fragment "digested in a prevalent texture or matrix." Rowe imagines that such realistic realism might engender an engaged, effective, and ethical architecture, one which eschews "object fixation" and operates contextually. In the same way that Picasso's *Still Life* makes art from scraps of reality, thereby bringing the street inside the museum, Rowe proposes to aestheticize architectural fragments and implant them in a picture, which he terms (in an ironically architectural metaphor) the "city as museum."

Even in discussing a single building, Rowe proposes a similar translation of collage. "With very slight modifications (for oil cloth caning substitute fake industrial glazing, for painted surface substitute wall, etc.) Alfred Barr's observations could be directly carried over into an interpretation of the Ozenfant studio." Rowe's attempt to cast "Le Corbusier as *collagiste*" is a continuation of the inherent pictorialism of his criticism. *Collage City*, despite its insistent claims to the contrary, employs a version of the same methodological purism that appears in his first essay and, for that matter, pervades modernist architectural theory. As Meyer Schapiro pointed out in "The New Viennese School" (1936), a persistent desire for autonomous methods compels architects, architectural critics, and historians to "overlook the degree to which the designs of the architect are affected by pictorialism, by the modes of seeing and drawing developed in modern, and especially abstract, painting." Understood in this way, it turns out that the distinction between Barr's realism and Greenberg's illusionism is a distinction without an architectural difference. Both versions of collage depart from a pure pictorialism.

At no time was Rowe's pictorialism more evident or compelling than in his 1961 essay "La Tourette." Rowe's analysis discerns the pictorial aspects of the monastery (that is, the ways in which architectural effects are generated out of pictorial conditions). He traces those aspects of Le Corbusier's work to the famous

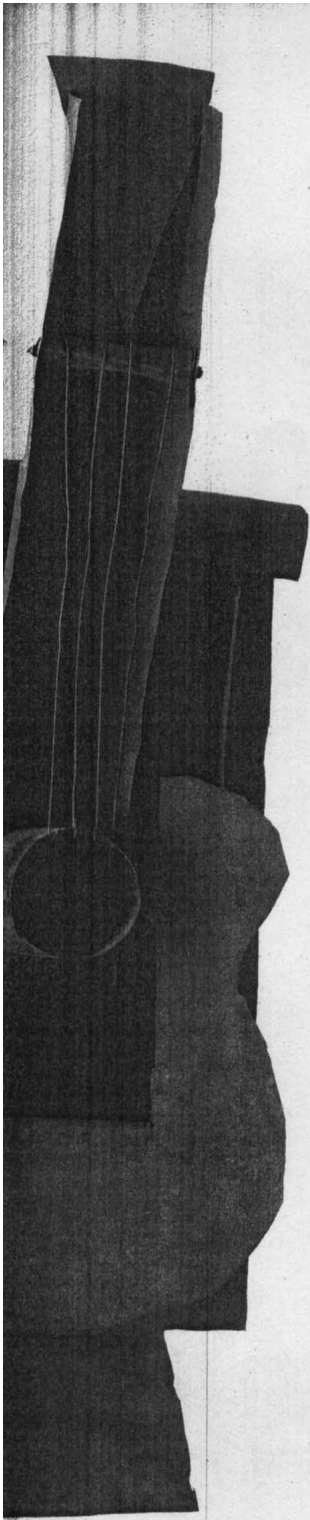
blank panel in the facade of the Villa Schwob (1916), where, as at La Tourette, the first experience of the building is of a blank wall, "a motif without a high intrinsic interest; one which, while it absorbs the eye, is unable to retain its attention." That experience, however momentary, epitomizes the structure of pictorialism: the optical ambivalence between material (literal) flatness and visual (phenomenal) image.

But for Rowe, La Tourette marks a distinct advance. While Villa Schwob merely presents a blank canvas, La Tourette produces "a depth which by no means exists in reality." Rowe argues that the depth is produced by the sloping parapet, but more importantly, because the experience of the wall is not truly frontal and thus not properly pictorial — it is an "end elevation." Rowe then "sets out . . . to grasp the object in its true frontality," but again he is confronted by a pictorial impropriety: "The anticipated frontal views never do, in fact, materialize. [There is] an elaborate divorce of physical reality and optical impression."

In other words, La Tourette is not a painting; it is a collage. The elaborate divorce Rowe describes can also, I would suggest, be considered today as "*seaming difference*." More precisely, Rowe confronts a situation that enacts aspects both of Barr's realism and Greenberg's illusionism without being reducible to either. On one hand, Rowe's realism leads him to imagine a kind of brutal cubism that situates a simple block, analogous to such projects as the Villa Stein, within a courtyard that acts as a framing device and a mounting surface. Using pictorial effects, Le Corbusier turns his earlier types into fragments by taking types from one context and pasting them into another. On the other hand, La Tourette enacts a version of the sculptural out of the pictorial that Greenberg proposes in "Collage." Building upon his perception of depth in the end elevation, Rowe describes two optical illusions which he terms "spirals": one exhibits a "pictorial opportunism" (the foreshortening of the sloping north wall) and the other a "sculptural opportunism" ("those three, twisting, writhing, and even agonized light sources"). He writes, "There is a spiral in two dimensions.

There is a contradictory spiral in three. A corkscrew is in competition with a restlessly deflective plane. Their equivocal interplay makes the building."

Rowe's sophisticated cubist analysis of La Tourette is epitomized in the description of such optical illusions as the two "spirals," and he brilliantly illustrates, apparently without recognizing it, how the conventions of pictorialism as



advanced by collage sustain both realism and illusionism in architecture. Yet near the end of the essay Rowe retreats to a description of effects proper to cubist painting — “the ability to charge depth with surface, to condense spatial concavities into plane, to drag to its most eloquent pitch the dichotomy between the rotund and the flat” — and equates them with what he calls Le Corbusier’s “later style.” These concluding remarks belie the

provocative insights of his essay and are entirely compatible with his later embrace of the *Still Life* and the realist cubist picture in *Collage City*.

Meanwhile, such historians as Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois have suggested that the cubist collage — particularly the tradition of construction — presents a whole other picture, one which promises an expanded field of formalism and a textual visual art. If one were to build on the thinking of Krauss and Bois, and to read *Collage City* not as a retreat from Rowe’s earlier writings but as a dissimulating recurrence or continuation of his incisive readings of modernism in such essays as “La Tourette,” *Collage City* might serve as the beginning for a translation of collage in architecture that does not revert to a derivative pictorialism. Rowe, however, did not exploit the potential of collage. When he shifted his model from painting to collage he simply extended his pictorial argument. He leaves two pictorially derived — only seemingly different — legacies: the Cornell school and deconstructivism.

As the names of legacies, both the Cornell school and deconstructivism are pejorative terms, each signifying a category of architectural work with shared formalist methods and stylistic effects. Each name amounts to an accusation of bad faith and an implication that its adherents have abandoned rigorous investigation of the propositions — predominantly Rowe’s — that supposedly spawned them. Each term is deployed as a weapon, to mock and discredit the professed progressive or critical intentions of a constituency by containing its practices within a recognizable and reductive historical frame. Each constituency claims the better half of Colin Rowe (“Mathematics” or *Collage*), or at least distances itself from the alleged lesser half. Yet his writings seem to be far from endorsing either constituency, were it not for the pictorial bias, derived from Wölfflin, of his criticism. In fact, pictorialism is deeply implicated within the history of modern architectural theories, criticism, and practices. Both the Cornell school and deconstructivism are made possible by a latent, enduring pictorialism, whether it is the realism that allows a whole city to be imagined in plan or the illusionism that feasts upon the

decorative pleasures of angular, complex, formal compositions.

The consequential issue of Rowe’s legacy is whether pictorialism in architecture is so habitual and irrepensible that collage techniques will continue to be crudely transformed, rather than creatively translated, into architectural practices. Justifiably or not, the early and late writings of Colin Rowe have inspired a proliferation of techniques of transformation — in his words, “criticism that begins with [the] approximate configuration” of a precedent or a site, and then aims for a recomposition “according to the logic (or compulsion) or specific analytical (or stylistic) strategies.” But as Rowe suggests, such transformation is the beginning of other projects. The desire to split Rowe’s work into two identifiable periods represses the possibility that his continuing effort to articulate an architectural translation of cubism provides a coherent field for those projects.

The assumed distinctions between Rowe’s early and later writings become difficult to maintain precisely when his pictorialism is most acute — as in “La Tourette.” In that essay collage emerges as a practice that might intensify pictorial methods to the degree that architecture begins to exploit its surfaces in ways that combine the real and the imaginary, writing and pictures, literal seaming and phenomenal seeming.

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Bois writes in “Kahnweiler’s Lesson” (1987), “Rather than resort to a trivial conception of the ‘return to reality’ that the collages should have achieved (and whose vacuity Greenberg has shown so adroitly), we should consider, from the perspective of cubist semiology, how ‘reality’ in these works (the addition of real objects, the sculpting of real space) could have been incorporated — once it had been caught in a network of differences, in a system of values, once it had been transformed into a sign.” Krauss, in “In the Name of Picasso” (1980), is more succinct: “What collage achieves, then, is a metalanguage of the visual.”

Pablo Picasso, Guitar, Paris (Winter 1912-13). Construction of sheet metal and wire, 30 1/2"x13 1/8"x7 5/8." The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist.

STAN ALLEN: ADDENDA AND ERRATA

1. Addendum

In a short addendum to the version of "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" collected in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other Essays* (1976), Colin Rowe offers the following suggestion, an early 1970s coda to a late 1940s argument: "Though a parallel of Schinkel with late Corbu might not be so rewarding as the comparison of early Corbu and Palladio, much the same arguments as those surfacing in this article might quite well be found developing themselves if, for the Villa Malcontenta, one were to substitute the Berlin Altes Museum and, for Garches, the Palace of the Assembly at Chandigarh. Illustrations might suffice to make the point: a conventional classical *parti* equipped with traditional *poché* and much the same *parti* distorted and made to present a competitive variety of local gestures — perhaps to be understood as compensations for traditional *poché*."¹

Rowe wants us to take it on confidence, but I have my doubts. He proposes here to extend the argument of "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" as an axiomatic model. The modern is to be understood as both a continuation of the classical and a departure, that is to say, a departure that distorts something already known. More significantly, modern architecture is defined as classical architecture's codependent, always trying desperately to compensate for its own impoverished means, working to solve similar problems with a now diminished catalogue of devices. But can Rowe's confidence — in a method of analysis and its implied results — really be sustained? And what is the significance of moving from the early Corbu to the late Corbu? What varieties of history are involved here?

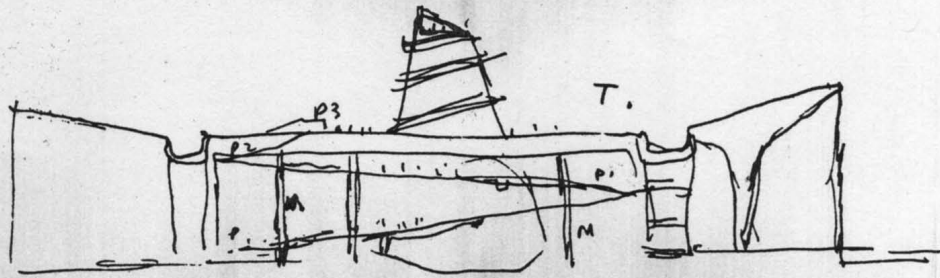
Rowe's slippery rhetoric simultaneously qualifies and sharpens his analytical framework. The arguments "might quite well be found developing themselves," he writes. "Illustrations might suffice to make a point" (*Mathematics*, 16). The critic is just the messenger, laying out arguments which should already be evident. In the next paragraph Rowe describes his method, gives it a paternity, but claims only modest usefulness: "A criticism which begins with approximate configurations and which then proceeds to identify differences . . . is presumably Wölflinian [sic] in origin; and its limitations should be obvious." Despite Rowe's own disavowal, there are important questions raised here. What, for example, constitutes an approximate configuration? In this case there is a basic similarity of plan figures (a circle in a rectangular frame), but the role of those figures is distinct in each case. To cite a single instance, in Schinkel the dome is perceived exclusively as a void space from within, whereas in Le Corbusier, the body of the assembly hall dominates the interior as a positive figure; it is perceived as a membrane with an inside and an outside. The spatial definition of the perimeter of the enclosing figures is similarly distinct. Questions of sequence, symmetry, internal hierarchy, and frontality present similar incompatibilities. Approximate configurations here constitute only a minimal level of commensurability, the result of which is to foreground differences.

The comparisons offered in "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," on the other hand, grant the reader permission to forget, momentarily, significant historical and ideological differences. In the case of Garches and the Malcontenta, the basis for comparison is not approximate at all, but rather has all the precision evoked by the essay's title. Is Rowe simply getting lazy here? ("Knowledge," Francis Picabia once remarked, "is an old error remembering its youth.") I think not and would suggest that the answer is found in the coincidence of dates. The argument of *Collage City* first appeared in *Architectural Review* in

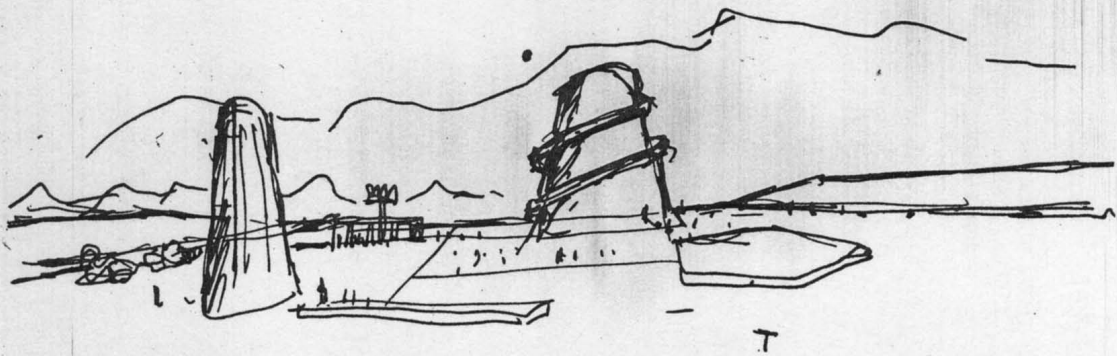
1975. There is a double operation at work here: at the same time that Rowe lends his intellectual prestige to emerging (postmodern, historicist) tendencies, he would appear to want to minimize the appearance of inconsistency in his own thoughts.

The use of certain terms pertaining to Beaux-Arts design practice (*poché*, for example, or *parti*, which appear nowhere in the original text of "Mathematics") is telling in this context. The concept of the *parti* is used here as a kind of shorthand for the condensed idea of a plan organization. Taken from Beaux-Arts design practice, this device is appropriated as an analytical tool. But to assign stability to the *parti* is only possible at the most reduced graphic level and only sustainable if the graphic instruments are employed in the same manner. In the case of the comparison suggested, it is not so much of an accumulation of minor differences, as it is differences of a fundamental order. The reading of the circle of the assembly hall as having at one time occupied the center of the organization and later been shifted off center (these formal narratives underwrite Rowe's methodology) is unconvincing as an explanation of the present configuration and is in itself difficult to imagine. The nature of the spatial field occupied by the cylinder in the Palace of the Assembly is of an entirely different order from the striated constructional fabric which fixes the figure of the dome in its central location in the Altes Museum. In the late Le Corbusier, movement is of an entirely different order, not something added, not something which *happens* to the architecture, but something already belonging to the fabric of construction.

Now for all this, it would still be difficult to claim to have departed much from the schema set up by Rowe. However approximate the configurations, we are still identifying differences. To go further, it is necessary to refocus the argument. Rowe's formal analysis cuts across historical periods, but leaves intact history's progressive teleologies. There is an implicit technical argument which identifies structural change as fundamental to the dilemma of the modern architect: *Altes Museum + Domino Structure = Chandigarh*. Hence the articulation of the plan elements as "compensation" for the loss of traditional *poché*. For the modern architect then, the equipment has changed, but the aspirations remain fixed. If the classical architect could create incident through the sculptural modeling of the fabric of the building, the modern architect, Rowe argues, is reduced to the expedient of approximating the same degree of complexity through a "competitive variety of local gestures." Technique has an instrumental role. Rowe's anti-Hegelian bias becomes clear here — historical change may impose new constraints on the architect but does not fundamentally alter the tasks of architecture. In the body of the "Mathematics" essay Rowe writes, "In spite of his admiration for the Acropolis and Michelangelo, the world of high classical Mediterranean culture on which Palladio drew so expressively is largely closed for Le Corbusier" (15). As a result, "while allusion at the Malcontenta is concentrated and direct, at Garches it is dissipated and inferential." In this description the role of invention and formal innovation is minimized. Modern architecture is defined instead as referential play, the mannered reiteration of the indiscriminate offerings of the contemporary world. And in extending the same argument to the late Corbu, Rowe minimizes key developments in Le Corbusier's own work, most significantly, the turn away from the machinic realism of the 1920s and the elaboration of the tectonic and expressive possibilities of modern constructional technique (*béton brut*, the use of ruled surfaces, etc.). The notion of compensation seems inadequate to describe either the spatial complexity of the Palace of the Assembly or the realities of modern



La parcelle d'escalier P1 P2 P3 a 133 m de long
 et s'ouvre sur elle par : sur le poteau M présent
 terrain. et a passage de la salle, office etc

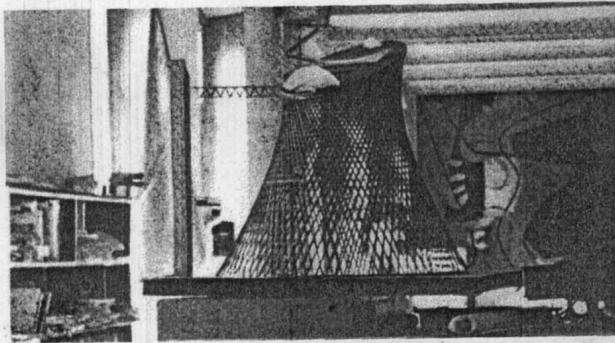


La terrasse T de l'Assemblée.

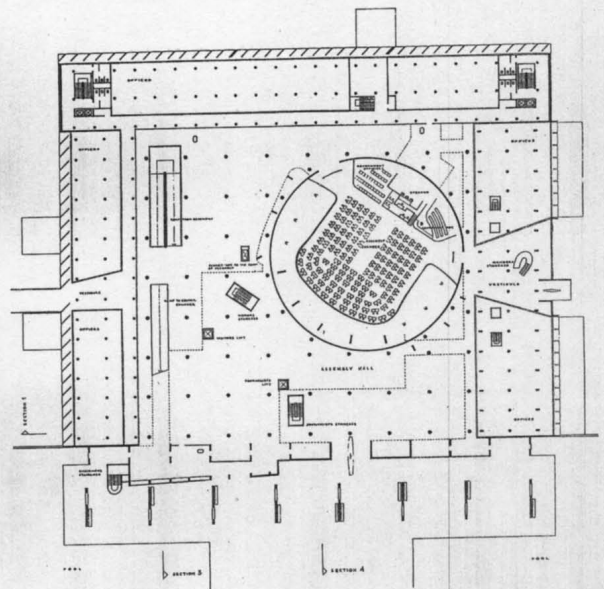
Bombay
 1953.



Les aménagements intérieurs
 de l'Assemblée
 surmontés d'un vitrail
 avant d'adhérer



View of Le Corbusier's studio with model of the Palace of the Assembly. © 1994 ARS, New York/SPADEM, Paris. Right: Ground-floor plan.



construction. These late works of Le Corbusier don't so much look backward — making, as Rowe would suggest, incremental adjustments to known solutions — as look forward, proposing new projects, opening new possibilities.

The description of the modern as “dissipated and inferential,” as “only transiently provocative,” indicates a particular form of nostalgia for the classical: not as unchallenged orthodoxy, but as a fixed point of reference for revision and reiteration. Rowe's liberal conscience depends on a strong central authority as a foil for his own mild and personal dissent. He favors liberal democracy in politics and classical humanism in architecture, knowing full well that under the difficult conditions of global postmodernity the best we can hope for is their survival in fragmented, incomplete, and ironic forms, “vest pocket utopias,” as he writes in *Collage City*; “Swiss canton, New England village, Dome of the Rock, Place Vendôme, Campidoglio, etc.,” all those imaginary places which might allow “the enjoyment of utopian poetics” without “the embarrassment of utopian politics.”⁷²

What needs to be questioned here has less to do with Rowe's proposition of a humanism which encompasses both the modern and the classical (by now a standard critique of formalism) as it has to do with his use of the classical proper. In his treatment of classical architecture Rowe reads consistency into a highly inconsistent field. In the case of “Mathematics,” for example, it is significant that classicism is represented not by the certainties and perfections of the High Renaissance, but by mannerist examples: an architecture already detached from its origins and available as linguistic material. What is significant is not so much that Rowe glosses over the mediated condition of his point of origin but rather that he hopes thereby to demonstrate that it doesn't really matter. Mediated, secondhand material can function perfectly well as a cipher for authenticity, stability, and the reliability of origins. The same is true in the case of Schinkel. Far from being a stable point of origin, Schinkel is in fact extremely difficult to pin down. As Paul Frankl has noted, “The norm is that which the ordering intellect has constructed through intensive work. . . the norm in architecture is something only apparently primitive.”⁷³ Rowe's ordering intellect constructs the classical as a norm, making an absolute out of that which is highly contingent. Schinkel's classicism was always compromised: by the pictorial (his parallel work as a stage designer and painter) or by his own opportunistic stylistic shifts — the same project drawn in Gothic, Romanesque, or classical styles, for example. Schinkel's drawings — spare, reduced, and disembodied — suggest an empty framework waiting to be filled with any content whatsoever. In the specific case of the Altes Museum, the experience of the building has everything to do with surface. Things are felt in low relief, as if the drawing had been lightly filled out. Internally, the *poché* has little to do with the massive rubble masonry of its Roman precedents. It is hardly felt by the visitor, the overall impression being one of delicacy and a surprising lightness.

In order to sustain the argument of the Palace of the Assembly as a distortion of a given plan type, it would have to be demonstrated that there is established in the plan some sort of unified systematic against which that distortion is read. Close examination shows this to be difficult. The “competitive variety of local gestures” called out by Rowe do in fact represent a kind of system, but not a unified system. The plan forms continually stabilize themselves locally, constructing figural space with adjacent forms, but that stabilization is only provisional. Because it is constituted with overlapping

figures and shared assemblies, hierarchy can be reconfigured at will. It is dependent on movement and parallax, and functions in both plan and section. There is a further effect: the initial expectation is that the paths and events are to be read against a counterpoint of regular structural grid — figure against field. But the field itself refuses to stabilize. Le Corbusier has taken full advantage of the flexibility of flat slab construction, which does not require the columns to align in a regular grid. Distinct radial and rectilinear grids (related to programmatic distinctions and shifting sectional requirements) overlap and intersect. Intervals and sequences change fluidly, and these grids themselves are modified and distorted in complex and unpredictable ways. This is not a dialectic of movement and fixity — structure as “punctuation” to fluid movement, as Rowe characterized the International Style in the “Chicago Frame” essay — but rather it is a situation in which movement is integrated into structure itself.

If the structural field refuses to stabilize into predictable patterns, movement is also visible in the figural forms of the building. This is evident in the figures formed by ruled surfaces. A ruled surface is not metaphorical movement, but a concrete instance of incorporated movement: a moving line, line becoming volume. In the case of the Palace of the Assembly, a line translated through space creates the figure of the drum, a hyperbolic paraboloid. Its planar surface encloses the chamber for the assembly hall at the same time as it activates the space around it. Sitting in a permeable field, space flows around it, while the liquid surface of the drum itself establishes a vertical continuity both within and without. A more convincing modern counterpart to the Altes Museum — and one that implicitly acknowledges Rowe's sponsorship — is James Stirling's Staatsgalerie (1977–84) in Stuttgart. Here the double operation postulated by Rowe is in fact visible: Stirling recognizes the fixity of the plan type as a starting point and develops variation (planimetric, sectional, and sequential) as a self-conscious distortion from that fixed point. To introduce this comparison, however, is only to underscore the distance between Stirling, who at this point in his career works with modern materials to simulate classical tectonics, and Le Corbusier in the Palace of the Assembly, where modern materials support spatial and tectonic invention.

In this late work Le Corbusier resolves another difficulty left over from the early work. In “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,” Rowe writes that “in both [Garches and Malcontenta] there are elaborations in detail of the dominant schema which becomes complicated by its interplay with a subsidiary system” (11). In Palladio this is consistent with the “vertical extension into arch and vault, the diagonal of the roofline and pediment,” that is to say, all of the sectional permutations available to the architect working with traditional heavy wall construction. In the case of Garches the horizontal planes of floor and roof slabs predominate, and, as Rowe says, “the quality of paralysis which Le Corbusier noticed in the plan of the solid wall structure is, to some extent, transferred in the frame building to the section. Perforation of floors, giving a certain vertical movement of space, is possible; but the sculptural quality of the building as carving has disappeared and there can be nothing of Palladio's firm sectional transmutation and modeling of volume” (11). Rowe sums up his elegantly symmetrical argument: “In other words, free plan is exchanged for free section; but the limitations of the new system are quite as exacting as those of the old.” But in the late work of Le Corbusier the ruled surface (among other devices) contravenes the dialectical counterpoint of plan and section, and allows complex sectional development simultaneously with intricate plan arrangements. The sensation of “carving”

is perhaps not to be replicated, but "sectional transmutation" and "modeling of volume" are evidently and variously present. Le Corbusier, in the years between "Mathematics" and its addendum, does not accept as givens the limitations of the new/old system, but instead works with this new equipment to find unanticipated possibilities that dissolve such exclusive limits.

What is at stake here is the possibility of a definition of modernity as something other than compensation for the certainties of a lost humanist past. To raise this question is necessarily to ask what sort of idea of history underwrites Rowe's analysis. Crudely, a version of modernity as opening up new freedoms and opportunities — a modernism of innovation and invention might be opposed to the idea of modernity as compensation — a modernity of revision and repetition. It seems important to insist on this distinction in as much as significant political distinctions might follow from it.

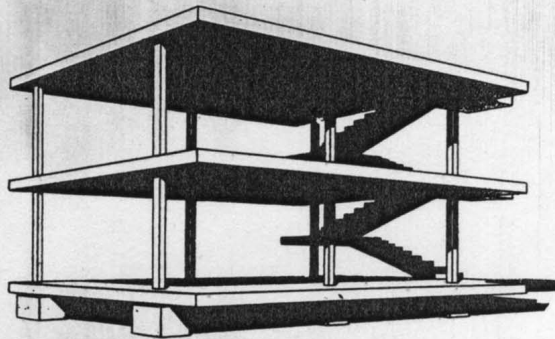
2. Erratum

To see in an explosion of shrapnel over No Man's Land only the opening of a flower of flame, Marinetti had to erase the moral premises of the act of destruction — as Molotov did explicitly when he said that fascism is a matter of taste. Both M's were, of course speaking the driftwood language of the *Modern Art International*.

— Harold Rosenberg, 1952

My dictionary defines erratum as "an error in a printed work discovered after printing and shown with its correction on a separate sheet bound with the original." A curious instance is found in the Oxford University Press (1975) edition of *Five Architects*. "For this edition," it begins, "Colin Rowe wrote the following two special paragraphs which should be added to the end of his Introduction." The short text which follows is something between a prophylactic against anticipated criticism and a disavowal. With this supplementary text, Rowe nods (obliquely) in the direction of the recovery of explicit historical reference sanctioned in *Collage City*. It might be noted in passing that if "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" is Rowe's decisive theoretical contribution, it is undoubtedly *Collage City* which has had the most profound effect on the practice of architecture. How are these two works related, and how does Rowe's Erratum signal the shift? What error stands in need of correction?

Note the laconic remark in the footnotes of *Collage City*: "The possibilities of an exponential, progressive dialectic — whether Marxian or Hegelian — are not here assumed to be useful" (see note 16, 183). Rowe rejects the historical imperative of "the spirit of the age" as much as he rejects the understanding of history as a linear progression. This forms the core of his defense of the Five in the Erratum. Modern architecture may have been born of a moment dedicated to revolutionary change and driven by historical imperative, but, Rowe argues, from the perspective of the three-quarter point of the century that grand historical imperative no longer obtains: "the great merit of what follows lies in the fact that its authors are not enormously self-deluded as to the immediate possibility of any violent or sudden architectural or social mutation" (*Five Architects*, 8). As a defense this is highly ambivalent; it justifies the act of *choosing*, but offers no criteria for one choice over another. If this choice is simply a stylistic preference for the architecture of the early 20th century, then why not the 19th or the 16th centuries? Rowe defends the work of the Five not in itself, but within a general defense of pluralism, as "one possibility amongst many." Pluralism is necessarily indifferent to ideological



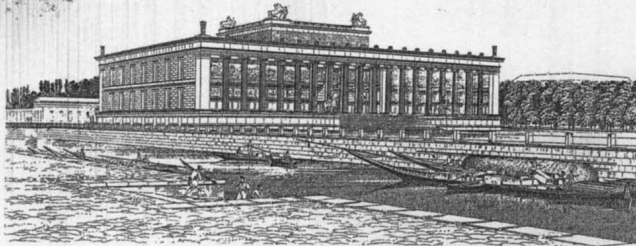
Le Corbusier, *Maison Dom-ino* typology, 1914. © 1994 ARS, New York/SPADEM, Paris.

context; individual taste and conviction instead emerge as admitted criteria.

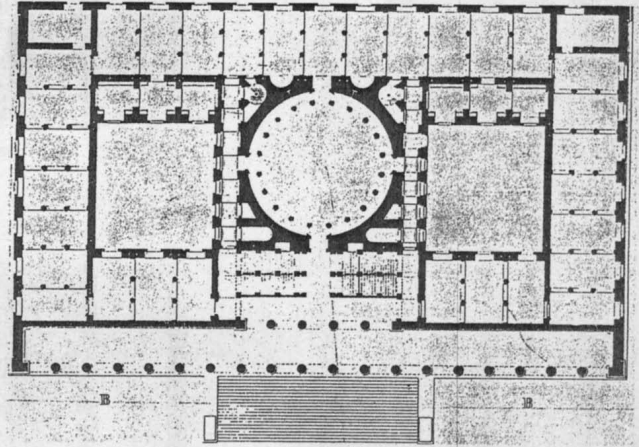
Rowe recognizes of course that such a return cannot be brought about without consequence. The Five Architects are "belligerently second hand." They are working with potentially depleted material, material at the edge of exhaustion, which must be tortuously manipulated to locate its salvageable moments. Historical precedent is found for this operation: "They place themselves in the role, the secondary role, of Scamozzi to Palladio. Their posture may be polemical but it is not heroic" (*Five Architects*, 8). Rowe's version of the end of history is a game of repetitions, the cyclical return of history back upon itself. A corollary to Rowe's definition of the modern as "compensation" reflects from his reading of postwar works. Here, early modernism assumes the canonical position, and postwar modernism becomes a belated reworking of now "classical" modernist works. Implicit in this schema is the impossibility of modernism evolving and unfolding from its own beginnings in any form other than the mannerist, tending toward exhaustion.

In *Collage City* it is precisely this exhaustion of the materials of architecture that is made thematic, an exhaustion which is seen to be the direct outcome of modernization. In the text of *Collage City*, the loss of collective identity, the loss of craft abilities, the fragmentation of the spaces of the city, and the dissolution of humanist culture all serve to justify an incremental and improvisational way of working. But here a curious contradiction emerges. *Collage City* is above all a plea for vigilance against the totalizing instrumental visions of modernity, the bad utopias of certain early modernists (Rosenberg's "driftwood language of the Modern Art International"). Against this totalizing vision Rowe and Koetter appeal to another, equally modern phenomenon: the fragmentation and partiality of modern life as expressed in cubism and collage. Yet this in turn must be disciplined, lest anarchy and partiality prevail entirely; hence the return to classical precedent and humanist values. This circularity expresses a deep-seated ambivalence toward modernity itself, and specifically toward the new and unprecedented. This is evident in the chapter of *Collage City* entitled "Collage City and the Reconquest of Time," which proposes the idea of "The city as museum, the city as a positive concert of culture and educational purpose, the city as a benevolent source of random but carefully selected information" (126). Put forward with exquisite qualification ["For whatever its reservations (this city is a rattling of dead bones, a mere anthology of historical and picturesque high spots), it is difficult not to concede its amiability and its hospitality" (128)], the idea of the city as museum introduces another ordering principle. In the museum the fragment is subject to the laws of category, chronology, display, and sequence. Invention and innovation are foreclosed; there is only the backward gaze, and the possibility of categorizing and recombining the fragments of the past for display and consumption. This particular compromise allows Rowe and Koetter to have it both ways: the vitality of modern life will be put on display, but always kept within known limits.

This is made clear in another comparison from *Collage City*. Against the totalizing, rational, and scientific model of modernist theory (certainly somewhat exaggerated in Rowe's and Koetter's account) is set Lévi-Strauss's description of the *bricoleur* which Rowe and Koetter cite: "The 'bricoleur' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks. . . . His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand,' that is to say, with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no



Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Altes Museum, perspective and plan, Berlin, 1823.*



relation to the current project, or, indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions that there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions" (102-3). Recourse to precedent and convention are of little use to the *bricoleur*. Given the limited resources and unpredictable nature of the problems he faces, tactical flexibility must prevail over strategic consistency.

Yet, as attractive as this is as a model for working in the now dissipated field of the modern city, Rowe and Koetter are unable to accept it without qualification. Fearful that an embrace of the partiality of the *bricoleur* might lead to "formalism, ad hocery, townscape pastiche, populism and almost whatever else one chooses to name" (105), Rowe and Koetter propose a dialectic, or better, a system of checks and balances whereby the scientific discipline of the engineer might offset the anarchistic tendencies of the *bricoleur*. They seek an architectural equivalent of "the almost fundamental conflict of interest sharply stipulated, the legitimate suspicion about the others' interests, from which the democratic process — such as it is — proceeds" (106). Rowe is uneasy with the consequences of an absolute improvisation; as a liberal humanist he sees society's best hope in a government of "laws not men," that is to say, in the negotiated conflict of interest, in the ethical appeal to both tradition and utopia. In another context Rowe defines explicitly what might constitute the "architectural equivalent of the rule of law." In a sentence that only Rowe could have constructed, appeal is made to the "legislative ability of mildly platonic forms, with the presumption that these are valid independent of function or technique and that, while they may defer to the age, in theory at least, they transcend it" (*Mathematics*, 102-3). It is unsurprising, but by no means inevitable, that out of this debate between the engineer and the *bricoleur* would emerge the familiar forms of Western humanism. Rowe distrusts absolutes, but his suspicion of the unprecedented is greater. And the law may not be absolute, but in practice the weight of precedent has the same effect.

The consequences of this position are hinted at in the final sentence of Rowe's Erratum: "The apologetic which has here been made is by way of being a critical umbrella almost too catholic in its functions — an umbrella which is not only intended to protect the graphic contents of this book but which is also to be understood as outspread to protect a good deal else, a good deal else which is by no means necessarily comparable in *maniera*" (*Five Architects*, 8). With an elegant sleight of hand, Rowe elides the work of the Five and the emerging historicist postmodernism. If in the early 1970s one can only justify a white modernist abstraction by untethering it from the strictures of the "spirit of the age," that same untethering can in turn serve to justify a broad manner of historical reference.

3. Excursus

No, on the contrary, I would say I am for comparison. I would compare things that are completely distinct one from another, compare them and be cautious. I can speak indirectly: there was a specialist in art who saw some beautiful jewelry, but not in context; he saw it in a Berlin museum and said, "How strange that all these beautiful things are white!" He forgot that Negroes are black. The point is to compare and remember the background.

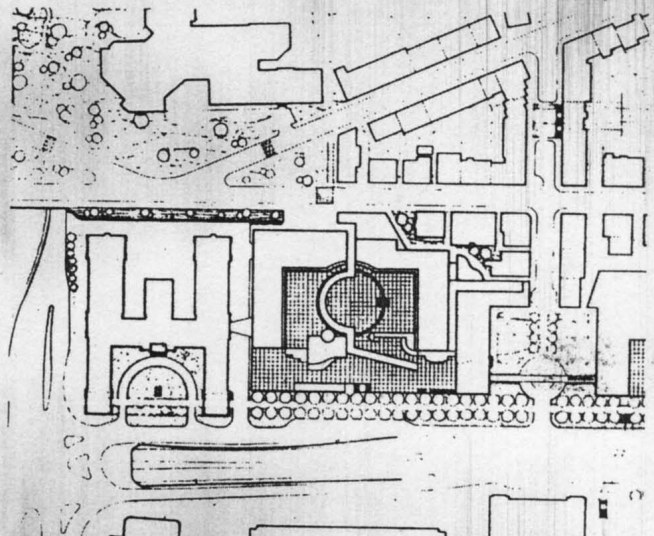
— Roman Jakobson

The graphic apparatus of *Collage City* is a kind of photography of time: meticulously recorded surfaces, mechanically reproduced and detached from

their origin, indeterminate as to scale or context, free-floating signifiers available for appropriation. The measured argument of the text is outweighed by the catalogue of examples and their didactic presentation in image and caption. Rowe's and Koetter's final chapter, "Excursus," while coded as supplemental, states in the clearest possible manner the practical ideology of the book: "We append an abridged list of stimulants, a-temporal and necessarily transcultural, as possible *objets trouvés* in the urbanistic collage" (151). Here (intermixed with a few lonely 20th-century examples) is the whole catalogue of postmodern urbanism and architecture: the squares and colonnades, figure-ground diagrams, pediments, and facades which became all too familiar in the years following the publication of the book. History is flattened and difference elided in the similarity of graphic presentation. But there is another more curious observation to be made. From the Rabbit Island at Valsanzibio or the Prato delle Valle in Padua to the *tempietto* at Bomarzo, it is the erudite and playful side of Rowe's intellect that is most evident in these images. In retrospect, the irony of the collage-based historicisms was this: that which is presented as the product of consensus, justified by its appeal to collective memory ("laws, not men"), was in fact filtered and disseminated through the sophisticated eye and ironic tastes of a singular connoisseur.

This of course represents a shift from the position articulated in "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa." In the earlier essay Rowe still acknowledges the necessity for the modern architect to negotiate with available means. Historical circumstance dictates those means, even if it does not alter the tasks of architecture. Technique is still central to the argument. In the later essay the authors propose a (limited) freedom of surface and image. The world of "high classical Mediterranean culture" is apparently no longer closed to the architects of the present. The background — historical or cultural — is no longer consequential; historicism empties history from the objects it utilizes: "the provenance of the architectural objects introduced into the social collage need not be of great consequence. It relates to taste and conviction." Cubist collage provides the authors with a model for the accommodation of difference within an overall visual systematic. It defines a catalogue of relations and passages from one object to the next, but never content. The "objects" of the urbanistic collage are reproduced images, the graphic traces of distant objects. Collage, as a visual syntax, is primarily an effect of surface. It is an effect made available by mechanical reproduction and mass media, where images are detached from context and frozen in time. And as much as this could be recognized as a departure from the argument of "Mathematics," it could have been foreseen. That is to say, if you define the modern fundamentally as compensation for a lost classical past, it may turn out that surface effects and the simulation of that past prove to be more adequate compensation than the stringent complexities of modernist abstraction.

To point this out is to point out the paradox of this late theoretical work. Taken to its logical conclusion, the arguments for multiplicity and partiality, for the free play of object and image, lead in directions where Rowe and Koetter are unwilling to follow — on the one hand to semiotic postmodernism in its more extreme forms, or to deconstructivism: collage-based strategies, it should be noted, underwrote almost all the radical practices of the 1970s and '80s, from Frank Gehry to Daniel Libeskind. Hence the radical potential always needs to be reined in and offset by the appeal to tradition and precedent. This is the precariousness of Rowe's and Koetter's position. Tradition and precedent are of necessity collectively comprehended; does this catalogue of images represent an authentic tradition, collectively understood,



James Stirling and Michael Wilford, Staatsgalerie New Building, plan, Stuttgart, Germany, 1977-83.

or does it instead symbolize Rowe's desire for such a consensus? The law as such, or a well-cultivated taste for the intricacies of legal negotiation, contractual agreement, and balanced compromise?

4. At, or after the End

There is, then, a fundamental difference between the objectification of negativity as the past has known it and that which remains possible at the end.

— Georges Bataille

Much of Rowe's theoretical speculation in the 1970s centered around a single question: how to redefine the political imperatives of the discipline knowing full well that the "revolutionary" impulse of early modernism had long since exhausted itself. Rowe has turned his attention to the implications of acting "after" history, or, as the chapter title from *Collage City* would have it, "After the Millennium." There, Rowe and Koetter cite Karl Mannheim: "Whenever the utopia disappears, history ceases to be a process leading to an ultimate end. The frame of reference according to which we evaluate facts vanishes and we are left with a series of events all equal as far as their significance is concerned" (32). Rowe's response could take the form of carefully crafted indifference (in the introduction to *Five Architects*) or more the delicate compromises of *Collage City*. His solutions are always incremental and, it would seem, driven not so much by a political impulse as such as by a recognition of the need to negotiate the political within questions of urbanism and aesthetics. Rowe, having never bought into progressive Hegelian dialectics in the first place, feels no sense of loss at their demise under what more radical (and recently neoconservative) theorists have called "the end of history." Instead, like a statesman negotiating his way out of a diplomatic impasse, Rowe offers a way out, a compromise that allows all sides to claim victory. Such a compromise necessarily keeps its distance from more radical options, both the negativity of the avant-garde and the claims of the traditionalists. By the same token Rowe scrupulously avoids any mention of the negative within the material he evokes — the will to power of imperial architecture, the exclusions of classical hierarchies, the violence of separation. He knows that these too are less than consequential today, which both diminishes architecture's capacity for meaning and restores to it a certain freedom of operation.

On the other hand, this examination of Rowe's addenda and errata — my own marginal and belated remarks — hopes to demonstrate that such a compromise is *only* possible at the end of history. The end of history, as much as anything else, implies the exhaustion of a certain strain in philosophy, of certain explanatory models. No one is suggesting that events will not continue to unfold; rather, the end of history suggests that the spiral of revolution and innovation, crisis and sublation (and the consequent possibility of the reinvention of society) has closed in on itself, stabilized and petrified into institutions which maintain and protect the status quo at all costs. It matters little that these institutions in turn guarantee their stability precisely through flexibility and the accommodation of incremental change. Unlike fascism, liberal democracy tolerates (and thereby domesticates) dissent by allowing it a place. As Bataille writes, "In this Society in which the romantic lives, one can, in fact, say anything at all; everything is 'tolerated' and almost everything is found to be 'interesting' (even crime, madness, etc.)."

This signals the profound link between the "end of history" and the

postmodern. Every period of history since the Renaissance has defined itself as modern. It is only in the recent past that we recognize the end of the idea of a progressive modernity and encode it in the notion of a *postmodernity*. The notion of petrification and the futility of innovation is common to two apparently opposed practices: all those which thematize exhaustion or loss and those which celebrate free play in the aftermath of the suspension of all constraints. The end of history also implicitly contains within it all of the past moments of history and thereby sanctions historicism. Is it possible in a coherent way to distinguish and differentiate a progressive end of history and a reactionary, neoconservative end of history? Is this critical model also foreclosed by the recognition of the end of history?

Finally, does the end of history necessarily imply the futility of activism, of invention and innovation, or alternatively, a radical redefinition of the imperatives of acting "after" history? Bataille precisely describes the dilemma of the artist at the end of history: "he has recognized that his need to act no longer has any use. But since this need cannot follow art's false leads indefinitely, sooner or later it is recognized for what it is: a negativity empty of content." Rowe, it might be said, takes all of the steps up to this one. He recognizes as problematic the notion of a totalizing concept of history, he looks for alternatives, he acknowledges the loss of meaning implicit in the collapse of historical time, but is unwilling to face up to the consequences of what in this case — to turn Bataille inside out — might be called a "content empty of negativity."

Stan Allen is an architect in New York. He is also assistant professor of architecture at Columbia University and projects editor of the journal Assemblage.

Notes

1. Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), 16. All citations from "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" are from this edition.
2. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), 149.
3. Paul Frankl, *Principles of Architectural History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968), 140.

QUESTIONS FOR COLIN ROWE

Q. How do you define 'architecture' ?

A. For the most part I don't try; but I assume that any architecture is determined by a myth which is extensively believed. This might be the notion that antiquity was better than the present or that the future will be better than today or that the engineer is better than the architect. In any case I suppose that architecture is always the exhibition of myth and I don't see how it can ever transcend this condition.

In the nineteenth century Gilbert Scott said something like this. If you see a building with windows of a size to admit an appropriate amount of light, it may or may not be a work of architecture; but, if the windows are definitely too big or definitely too small, then you can be almost certain that you are in the presence of an architectural endeavour. And I find this remark very relevant because, surely, architecture always involves an element of theatrical distortion or exaggeration. Myself, I am apt to think of architecture as the fashion trade of the building industry; and I don't mean this as either good or bad. It is simply a condition; because architecture, in so many ways—like clothes and like words and like music—is inherently pre-logical. That is: a work of architecture is rather like a theological exercise. In its later developments it may involve all sorts of sophisticated dialectic; but, at the bottom, its foundations rest upon the precariousness of fantasy and faith.

So I am surprised that this condition (which is not discreditable) is not more widely recognised. For, practically, the only propositions concerning a work of architecture which can be proved to be false or true relate to the laws of statics. They relate to the Vitruvian category of firmitas; and the other

Editor's note: When asked for an interview for ANY, Colin Rowe demurred. "Impossible," he said. "These things make me hysterical." A few weeks later he rang up and said, "I've got an interview for you," and he sent over a typewritten, hand-edited text on his signature yellow sheets of paper. The interview presented here was done, Rowe said, "probably in 1989"; it may have been conducted in Rome; and the interviewer may have been "that guy from California — you know: what's-his-name." But these are tedious details that, while perhaps mildly interesting for the record, in the end, are nowhere as intriguing as what Colin Rowe has to say, let alone ask of himself.

two categories of the Vitruvian triad — *commoditas* and *venustas* — have, as yet, certainly not been subjected to any Newtonian revolution — or revelation.

And shouldn't we be grateful that this is so? Because, if it were not so, if the "laws" of use and pleasure were capable of empirical verification, then surely all diversity and change would disappear, all would be known, all would be predictable. Therefore, the prelogical condition of architecture (which is its "mode of being" or its "existential predicament") should be a cause for satisfaction rather than regret. Architecture requires conjecture, and for this reason, those many characters who spend their lives in the attempt to render it independent of speculation should be regarded with intense suspicion.

The Abbé Laugier began his *Observations* (1765) with the statement: "Tout n'est pas dit sur l'Architecture"; this should probably be regarded as one of the greatest understatements of all time. That architecture is not an exact science is not a scandal.

Q: And how do you define modern architecture?

A: I had hoped that this question was not going to arise. For modern architecture is a very slippery and eel-like concept. I was given a quote from Nietzsche the other day which contends that only that which has no history is capable of definition; therefore, how do we define modern architecture — which was intrinsically an attempt to render obsolete the contingencies of time? I would suggest that modern architecture was an approach to building which was penetrated by the sentiment of modernity, and then I would suggest that this sentiment also represented a highly odd collection of ideas. It involved (did it not?) fantasies about progress, science, and emancipation. It also involved (certainly?) further fantasies about organism, evolution, and the structure of time. Some of these fantasies were French 17th century and some were German. Some relate to the famous 17th-century *querelle* and some relate to *Sturm und Drang*. So perhaps the French sentiments involve ideas of precision and the German, ideas of continuity and the social fabric. But this must be an overgeneralization.

From Denise Scott Brown I have annexed the term *physics envy* (apart from being amusingly Freudian, it describes an eminently French state of mind, prone to categories and possibly descended from Descartes via Turgot, Saint-Simon, and Auguste Comte) and from David Watkin, the term *Zeitgeist worship*, which displays a mostly German origin. So the idea that architecture should be an exact science (like an imaginary version of physics) and the further idea that it should be an emanation of the spirit of the age are evidently at variance. The two demands are not compatible. In no way can the exact be made so abruptly an ally of the cloudy; and if Karl Marx was able to do this, then so much the worse (so much the more ridiculous) for Karl Marx and for modern architecture.

But the sentiment of modernity is something so virulent and still so much with us that it is apt to defy analysis. It is a crazy sentiment of course, but isn't it all the more potent for that?

Q: And postmodernism?

A: I have already tried to suggest that modernism was a dangerous intellectual disease and that modern architecture was destined to break apart because it combined the incompatible. In terms of modernity the architect was destined to be both the slave of science and the obedient pencil of history. (I'm not responsible for the building, I didn't build it; the building was required by science and history, and I had nothing, *nothing* to do with it.) But if modernism was an important pseudodocline, how is postmodernism to be defined?

In the first case I am reminded of a remark attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright. It is probably apocryphal, but the story goes that Wright had been asked what he thought about the architecture of Philip Johnson. F.L.W. allegedly replied: "The architecture of Philip Johnson? Why I never think about it. Why should I?" It is in similar terms that I approach so-called postmodernism.

The so-called postmodernists, I think, are still the victims of modernity. They have shifted the visuals but not the sentiments. For what is the idea of the avant-garde, what is the idea of waterskiing over the tides of history, if not a very close by-product of modernism? No; the postmodernists sustain a leading idea of the modern movement. Unfortunately, they belong to the tradition. They are part of its *dégringolade*. The most logical

position is that of Leon Krier, who (in theory at least) remains classically aloof.

In any case, there is a little interchange in Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft's *Memories and Commentaries* which might be pertinent to this discussion. Supposedly Stravinsky and Craft have been talking of various matters — academicism, information theory, creativity — when Craft presents his question: "And modern?" To which Stravinsky replies: "The only sense in which I think that 'modern' can now be used must derive from, or so I imagine, a meaning similar to the *devotio moderna* of Thomas à Kempis. It is 'romantic,' of course, and it suffers . . . for it cannot accept the world as it is. 'Modern' in this sense does not so much mean or emphasize the appearance of a new style, though of course, a new style is part of it. Nor is it brought about merely by its innovations, though innovations are part of it too."

Now a statement of this kind, which, in my mind, perfectly illustrates the never completely articulated convictions of the modern architects some 50 years ago, may stand almost like a species of lighthouse somewhere on the edge of the current rather muddy debate about postmodernism, the death of modern architecture, etc. For surely in the full Stravinskian sense ("It suffers for it cannot accept the world as it is"), modern architecture has been dead for longer than most persons connected with it have been alive. But still another quote from Stravinsky may be apropos. I don't remember if he attributes it to Stockhausen, but it goes something like this: "My music isn't modern. It's simply badly played."

Q: And what about architectural education?

A: A calamity. Don't you think so? Increasingly a case of the inept leading the inexperienced. Surely, after the Russian Revolution, the two world wars, the Holocaust, and modern architecture itself, it ranks as one of the greater catastrophes of the 20th century. I don't want to talk about architectural education, but since you insist upon it, what else can I say? Do I refer to the horrible legacy of Walter Gropius? I think that this should no longer be necessary. Or do I think about the gruesome planning of so many recent buildings in which one can only feel like Theseus about to enter a labyrinth and slay a minotaur? But you know those dreadful buildings where invariably you become lost. They are unspeakably ridiculous (I immediately think about the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin) and their circulation defies common sense. You enter them at your peril, and to move in them you need a guide. Where are the cloakrooms? Where are the elevators? Nothing is clear. You are in a contrivance of planned

obscurity; and in this absurd predicament, you inevitably begin to think about the abundant simplicities of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where everything was quietly advertised and apparent. From Durand to Guadet you knew where you were. Color coding wasn't necessary. You were never lost. There was a portico or a porte cochere. There was a sequence of lobbies. If they wanted to relieve themselves, both men and women without any embarrassing instruction knew just where to go — but no longer. "The elegance of the plan, the virtues of the solution, eminently French qualities, these are unknown anywhere else." Such a lack of spirituality saddens me." This was Le Corbusier in the 1930s, and an implicit criticism of Bauhaus influence; but he could never have imagined how very bad things would later become.

Q: I think you are a defeated Francophile; therefore, I wonder what you think about France today.

A: It leaves me lost and miserable. I much prefer Italy, the Germanic lands, and the United States. I was educated to the idea of *la grande nation, la ville des lumières*, and the Ecole de Paris. So I will always respect a period of French intelligence. When the French are intelligent they are devastating and brilliant — they are beyond belief. I think of François Mansart and I *have* to think about the *duc d'Aumale* at Chantilly, but I respected French sensibility the other day in Switzerland. We had come from Bavaria and we were at Arenenberg (that rustic version of Malmaison); and coming from all that German stuff, we were suddenly immensely happy to arrive at a mini-château, absolutely Charles X, which was the summer retreat of Hortense de Beauharnais. Site incredible (literally a hermitage), views incredible — with the Bodensee, looking like a Leonardo landscape intended for Germanic consumption — and the house itself no more than a pavilion, *toutes proportions gardées*. So Arenenberg is a miracle, and via Queen Hortense, I was led to think seriously about what Leon Krier is apt to call "the great French restitution." This is the idea, at last to honor the memory of Napoleon III (surely the greatest benefactor of the city of Paris?) by an international competition for a monument (no French invited to compete, no French invited to the jury — and the judgment at Baden-Baden). Don't you think it's a terrific idea? I do. For it is at once a celebration of the *great France* (which all the world loves) and the *contemporary France* (which half the world can only abominate).

A CONTINUING CHRONOLOGY: COLIN ROWE

Project with others:
Buffalo Waterfront, Buffalo, New York, 1967.

Undertakes graduate studies in town planning on a Fulbright Fellowship at Yale University, 1951.

Undertakes graduate art history studies with Rudolf Wittkower, 1945.

Travels in U.S., Mexico, & Canada; visits Norman, Oklahoma where he meets Mrs. Harwell Hamilton Harris, 1952.



Joins faculty at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York, 1968-69.

Joins full-time faculty at University of Liverpool, 1947.

Teaches with John Hejduk, Lee Hirsche, Bernhard Hoesli, and Robert Slutzky at the University of Texas, 1954.

Rowe's published essays assembled in unauthorized volume by Emilio Ambasz at Princeton, 1964.

1945 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970

Writes "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," first published in *Architectural Review*, 1947.

Writes "Roots of American Architecture - An Answer to Mumford's Analysis," published in *Architectural Review*, 1954.

Writes "Lockhart, Texas" with John Hejduk, published in *Architectural Record*, 1957.

"Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" first published in *Perspecta 8*, 1963.

Writes "Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century," 1953-54.

Writes "Neo-'Classicism' and Modern Architecture I and II," 1956-57.

Writes "Dominican Monastery of La Tourette, Eveux-sur-l'Arbresle, Lyon," first published in the *Architectural Review*, 1961.

Writes "Mannerism and Modern Architecture," first published in *Architectural Review*, 1950.

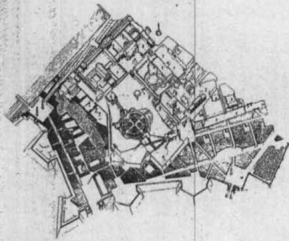
Writes "Chicago Frame - Chicago's Place in the Modern Movement," first published in *Architectural Review*, 1956.

Writes "The Architecture of Utopia," first published in *Granta*, 1959.

Transparenz (German translation of "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal") published by Birkhauser, Bernhard Hoesli, editor, 1968.

Writes "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" with Robert Slutzky, 1955-56.

Images, left to right: Colin Rowe at Cornell, c. 1970; Rowe at Villa Medici, Rome, 1978 (courtesy Judy Di Maio); Roma interrotta project, 1978; Rowe wearing birthday laurels, 1990; S. Maria della Consolazione di Todi as birthday cake (courtesy Dorothy Alexander); cover of forthcoming collection of essays from *Academy Editions*.



Participates in Roma interrotta project with Peter Carl, Judith Di Maio, and Steven Peterson, 1978, published in *Architectural Design*, 1979.

Gives the James Cubitt Memorial Lecture at the Royal Academy, London, 1979.



Participates in Nicollet Island project, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1976.

Receives Honorary FRIBA, 1983.



Joins adjunct faculty at Syracuse University in Florence, 1986-87.



Celebrates 70th birthday party in New York City, 1990.

Leaves Ithaca, NY house and moves to London, fall 1993.

Becomes professor emeritus at Cornell University, 1987.

Gives Paul Rudolph Lectures at Yale University, spring 1994.

Receives ACSA-AIA 10th Award in Excellence in Architectural Education, 1985.

Begins work on book of collected essays forthcoming from MIT Press.

1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995

"Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century" first published in *Oppositions* 2, 1974.

Writes *Collage City with Fred Koetter*, published by MIT Press, 1978.

Writes "The Present Urban Predicament," published in the *Cornell Journal of Architecture*, no. 1, 1981.

Writes "I Stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs," published in *Design Quarterly*, Skynways issue, 1985.

Writes "Grid/Frame/Lattice/Web," published in the *Cornell Journal of Architecture*, no. 4, 1990.

"Neo-Classicism' and Modern Architecture I and II" first published in *Oppositions* 1, 1973.

Rowe's collected essays published in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* by MIT Press, 1976.

Writes "Architectural Education in the USA," published in *Lotus*, no. 27, 1980.

Writes "IBA: Rowe Reflects," published in *Architectural Review*, 1984.

Rowe's lectures collected in *The Architecture of Good Intentions* to be published by Academy Editions, September 1994.

Writes introduction to *Five Architects*, published in 1972.

Writes "Revolt of the Senses," published in *Architectural Design*, 1984.

Writes "Crisis of the Object: The Predicament of Texture" with Fred Koetter, published in *Perspecta* 16, 1980.

Writes introduction to *James Stirling: Buildings and Projects*, Rizzoli International, 1984.



"Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal (Part 2)" published in *Perspecta* 13/14, 1971.

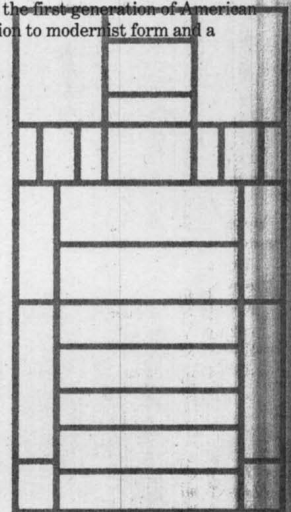
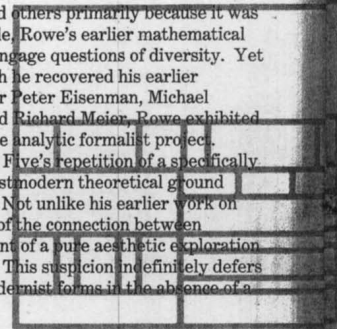
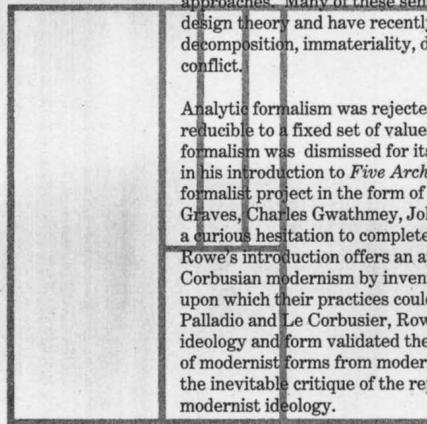
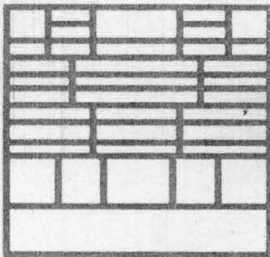
GREG LYNN: NEW VARIATIONS ON THE ROWE COMPLEX

In the early 1970s, during the time of Colin Rowe's refutation of his earlier analytic formalism in favor of bricolage and collage, American architectural theory became primarily committed to conceptualizing the pluralist and heterogeneous in architecture. Coincidental with the evolution of this commitment, over the last quarter century the potential contributions to architectural theory and design by engineering, material sciences, behaviorism, sociology, and formalism have been called into question. During this period architecture thus became resistant to models of systematic organization of nearly every sort, favoring instead design theories that premiated the contradictory, conflicting, multiple, and complex.

With the publication of Rowe and Fred Koetter's *Collage City* in 1978, their commitment to the heterogeneous, with its concomitant attack on functionalism, structuralism, and, most importantly, analytic formalism was introduced into architecture proper. In place of the earlier mathematics of form, Rowe and Koetter proposed an alternative collage formalism. By negatively defining bricolage against an ideal formalism that was characterized as reductionist and exclusionary, they implied that architectural and urban form would by default become reconnected to larger issues of cultural, political, and social diversity. In favor of the mathematics of form, Rowe shifted his interest away from questions of continuity developed through proportional harmonics toward questions of discontinuity developed through a nonanalytic formalism of bricolage and collage. As a result, rather than being theorized within architecture, plurality and difference were defined as that which was resistant to reducible organizational and systematic design approaches. Many of these sensibilities have been retained in architectural design theory and have recently manifested themselves in theories of decomposition, immateriality, disintegration, fragmentation, and formal conflict.

Analytic formalism was rejected by Rowe and others primarily because it was reducible to a fixed set of values. For example, Rowe's earlier mathematical formalism was dismissed for its inability to engage questions of diversity. Yet in his introduction to *Five Architects*, in which he recovered his earlier formalist project in the form of an apologia for Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier, Rowe exhibited a curious hesitation to completely abandon the analytic formalist project. Rowe's introduction offers an apology for the Five's repetition of a specifically Corbusian modernism by inventing a new, postmodern theoretical ground upon which their practices could be founded. Not unlike his earlier work on Palladio and Le Corbusier, Rowe's suspicion of the connection between ideology and form validated the disengagement of a pure aesthetic exploration of modernist forms from modernist ideology. This suspicion indefinitely defers the inevitable critique of the repetition of modernist forms in the absence of a modernist ideology.

Despite its apologetic tone, Rowe's simultaneous introduction and neutralization of a newly defined modernist ideology resulted in a theory and an ideology of postmodernism. This cleavage of purist form from ideology was achieved through the invention of two detachable terms: *physique-flesh* and *morale-word*. Rowe's definition of what amounts to one of the first theories of postmodernism depends on a redefinition of modernism as a failed attempt to elide utopian ideology (*morale-word*) with a pure formal language (*physique-flesh*). With this formulation, Rowe provided the first generation of American postmodern architects both a precise connection to modernist form and a



precise disengagement from modernist ideology. This insidious smuggling in of postmodernism depends on the recovery and continuity of an aesthetic discourse of transcendental geometry and pure form from the failed modernist ideological experiment. In his introduction to *Five Architects*, Rowe displays his inclination to salvage mathematical essences from bankrupt ideological projects. As in his earlier text, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," Rowe views the proportions of modernist pure form as a transcendent language. The separation of formalism from ideology is founded on a fallacious belief in the certain truth of mathematics. It is the proclivity to understand geometry and mathematics ahistorically, that leads toward systems of collage.

Ideal Villas

First published in 1947, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" epitomizes the early analytic formalism that Rowe was later to disavow. His retraction of mathematical formalism occurred for two primary reasons: first, it involved architectural techniques that were mathematical, exact, geometric, and analytical; and second, those techniques were aligned with transcendent humanist values. Until this time there had been an assumed natural complicity between the mathematics of form and transcendent architectural values. This assumption is the motivating factor in the rejection of the exact and rigorous formalism characteristic of Rowe's earliest texts. All mathematics of form, however, do not imply humanist ideologies. But in order to develop alternatives to the mathematics of form rejected by Rowe, it is important to begin with an examination of Rowe's elision of exact geometries and ideal values.

To critique "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" does not necessarily lead one to support Rowe's shift toward aesthetic strategies of collage. Indeed, I would like to dispense with the simplistic notion of ideal forms without entirely abandoning the formal project that Rowe initiated. Interest in diversity, difference, and discontinuity do not preclude rigorous formal and mathematical thought. It was the faulty assumption that mathematics could only be used to describe an ideal villa that led Rowe to jettison analytic formalism in favor of collage aesthetics. What is necessary for a rigorous theorization of diversity and difference within the discipline of architecture is precisely an alternative mathematics of form; a formalism that is not reducible to ideal villas or other fixed types but is in its essence freely differentiated. What an analysis of Rowe at this time permits is an appraisal of the value and instrumentality of form in the discipline of architecture. I would maintain that the dominant question today is in fact the question of the status of forms of order and organization in architecture. It is with this understanding — of the relevance of the questions that Rowe was raising in 1947 along with the acknowledgment of the absolute bankruptcy of his transcultural, transhistorical humanist project — that we can begin to reassess such texts as "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa."

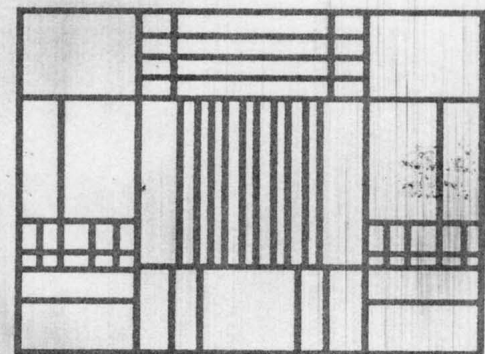
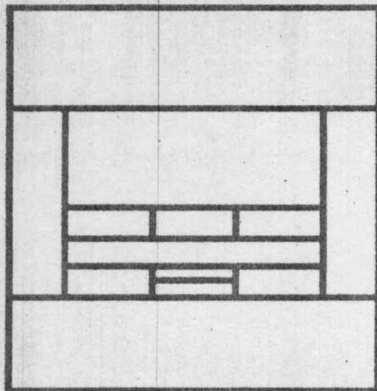
Rowe was sympathetic to the humanist ideals of Rudolf Wittkower, but, unlike Wittkower, Rowe attempted to extend those ideas beyond their particular historical context in order to generate a more general and transcendent system of proportions. Using a mathematical and formal system, Rowe was able to argue for architectural continuities that cut across cultural, historical, constructional, and spatial particularities. Employing this model, Rowe attempted to establish a mathematical-formal foundation for the comparison of two pairs of villa projects by Palladio and Le Corbusier. Emil Kaufmann's "From Ledoux to Le Corbusier," first published in 1933, might be compared to

Rowe's text based on the implied argument that Ledoux established a revolutionary protomodern precedent for Corbusian purism. Although Rowe's work at that time was more purely mathematical and was pronouncedly opposed to the allegorical arguments of Kaufmann, these differences constituted an alternative strategy for the development of transhistorical formalism. Rowe's text exhibits a conflation of the historically precise arguments of Wittkower with broad transhistorical claims similar to those of Kaufmann. What is most curious about Rowe's text is that even more than Wittkower's work on Palladio, it is a supremely fastidious analysis of the minutiae of differences within and between the villa projects. Yet, his description, comparison, and cataloging of the constructional, spatial, and contextual differences are used to arrive at an ideal and absolutely generalizable common identity for the two pairs of villas — the deeply hidden formal structure of the grid.

Facing the Composite or Average

In "The Deviations of Nature," Georges Bataille makes a rather canny observation regarding the role of mathematics and form in the sciences by referring to a series of photographs made by Francis Galton. Galton invented the technique of composite photography over a century ago as a way of capturing the average face. Galton's technique involved the superposition and multiple exposure of several faces on the same photographic image. For example, in the study of three sisters, whose frontal and profile facial images were superimposed one on another, there was the hope that a kind of familial genotypical image would emerge as the variations between sisters were superimposed and canceled. Galton provided the photographic technique by which differences could be rendered as mere variations. As those variations were compared and eliminated, all that remained in the end was the previously hidden order that was present in no particular individual, but underlay all individuals. Since this average order could never be manifest in any particular case it was the task of the analyst, or in this case the photographer, to perform the cancellation of extraneous features so that essential order could be perceived. In their search for the ideal villa both Wittkower and Rowe cast themselves in the role of Galton's and Bataille's man of letters.

In a section of *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949) entitled "Palladio's Geometry: The Villas," Wittkower develops an analysis of Palladio's domestic architecture based on the invention of "generalized, universal precepts of architecture." Wittkower's theory of harmonic proportions depended on the existence of a generalizable systematic geometric organization that subsisted below the variations of the particular Palladian villas. As Wittkower observes, "An analysis of a few typical plans ranging over a period of about 15 years will prove that they are derived from a single geometrical formula" (71). Wittkower developed a single, fixed, and unchanging type of proportional harmonic regulation (the nine-square grid: "a rectangle divided by two longitudinal and four transverse lines") that was seen ideally as an unchanging presence, a central theme around which all of the villas would be orchestrated. This ideal structure was not present in any single villa, yet the 11 villas collectively exhibited its hidden presence in what Wittkower referred to as their variations. Wittkower was careful never to argue for the existence of the ideal type historically, and since the twelfth villa was an invention of Wittkower's, it was not important that Palladio knew nothing of the existence of this newly minted regulative structure. Although the Villa Thiene at Cicogna is perhaps the most exemplary in this regard, Wittkower finds the germ for the first "systematization of the ground plan" in



Six Planmaker plans from Possible Palladian Villas (Plus a Few Instructively Impossible Ones), George Hershey and Richard Freedman, *The MIT Press*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 52-53.

the Villa Godi Porto at Lonedo, with its four equally sized rooms symmetrically deployed about a central axis. In order to invent this ideal type, it was necessary that Wittkower compare and measure the differences between 11 of the Palladian villas. Once discriminate characteristics were identified and their differences classified, these variations were then canceled one against the other. From this cancellation of differences, through variations, the proportions of the twelfth ideal villa were invented as a mean. Once averaged, this ideal villa was then used as a hidden order, against which the other 11 villas were compared and evaluated. In this manner, villas such as the Rotunda were seen to be more ideal, and therefore less compromised by the contingencies of site, program, and construction, than the others.

The influence of Wittkower's analysis of Palladian harmonic proportions on Rowe's transhistorical claims for an ideal formalism (which was so powerful that with it he was able to unite Palladio, Le Corbusier, and the Five) cannot be overemphasized. As Wittkower writes in *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*:

What was in Palladio's mind when he experimented over and over again with the same elements? Once he had found the basic geometric pattern for the problem "villa," he adapted it as clearly and as simply as possible to the special requirements of each commissions. He reconciled the task-at-hand with the "certain truth" of mathematics which is final and unchangeable. The geometric keynote is, subconsciously rather than consciously, perceptible to everyone who visits Palladio's villas and it is this that gives his buildings their convincing quality (72).

Where Wittkower was placing the "certain truth" of mathematics in quotations, Rowe began to make more transcendent claims for the humanist values that emerged while experiencing the underlying proportions of an ideal villa. Rowe's text begins with a more generalized theory of Wittkower's Palladian harmonics. He elevated the formal mathematics so that they would transcend any historical, cultural, or constructional particularities. Like Wittkower, Rowe argued that mathematical harmonics were subconsciously perceivable but as the single quality that distinguishes any architecture as timeless.

In "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" Rowe claimed that Wittkower's diagram of a rectangle divided by two longitudinal and four transverse lines was not only the regulating order for Palladio's villas, but more importantly it was a general underlying order by which, for instance, Palladio's villas Rotunda and Malcontenta could be compared to Le Corbusier's villas Savoye and Stein. This comparison was not a singular occurrence but one instance among many where a fixed mathematics manifested itself. In this way the text became much more than a historical analysis and indeed was extended as an instrumental design discourse in its own right.

Like Wittkower, yet even more rigorously, Rowe catalogued the differences between Palladian and Corbusian villas in order to dismiss them as mere contingencies below which an ideal proportional system was operative. Rowe notes that the structural lines of support differ between the two villas as do the structural systems: Palladio uses solid bearing walls while Le Corbusier uses point supports. These structural differences are used to explain Palladio's spatial symmetry and centralization and Le Corbusier's free plan arrangement and Z-shaped diagonal balance. The differences in fenestration

follow from these structural and spatial differences; Palladio employs pierced solid walls, while Le Corbusier exploits the point structure by cutting the horizontal strips of ribbon windows. Finally, the differences in roof treatment are explained by noting that in the case of Palladio they are additive and reinforce the overall volume, while for Le Corbusier they are subtractive and diminishing of the overall volume. The disparate uses of geometric regulation allow Rowe to compare and contrast the architectural bravado of the two. Palladio was seen as a rigid and systematic composer who adapted each villa to a single dominant schema. Le Corbusier was understood to be less dogmatic in his use of proportional regulation and therefore achieved far more complex fugal results, though with much less resolution. It is the attention to these proportional systems, however, that distinguishes both Palladio and Le Corbusier from their imitators whose "adherence to the rules was seen to have lapsed." Both Wittkower and Rowe invent a distinct, internal logic that is separate from exigencies. As Rowe argued, Villa Malcontenta and Villa Stein at Garches "are two buildings which, in their forms and evocations, are superficially so entirely unlike that to bring them together would seem to be facetious."

Rowe proceeds to identify a similar massing and bay structure concealed within the two houses that is identical to the geometric diagram invented by Wittkower. It is important that mathematics remain generalized and hidden for only subconscious experience, unlike more obvious and superficial particularities of culture, history, or style. Rowe begins "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" with this epigraph from Sir Christopher Wren:

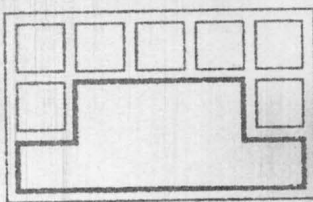
There are two causes of beauty — natural and customary. Natural is from geometry consisting in uniformity, that is equality and proportion. Customary beauty is begotten by use, as familiarity breeds a love for things not in themselves lovely.

This distinction between natural and customary beauty forms the theoretical framework within which the variations between paired villas are then eliminated. The differences between pairs of villas are thus marked as the extraneous manifestation of constructional, cultural, or spatial customs of a certain historical period. The underlying geometric proportions that remain are timeless. Their deeply hidden geometric structures are subconsciously perceivable as a kind of humanist harmonic relation that, once identified, evokes a Virgilian state in the observer. "Natural" architectural order is timeless because it refers back to antiquity when an exact geometry was first distinctly perceptible.

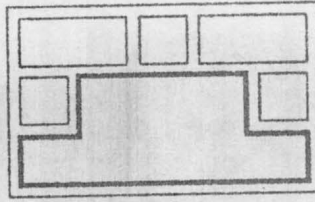
Concealed below the singularities of any villa in particular, order becomes purely internal and unchanging. The variations between the villas are neither integral to nor generative of internal order. This is ironic since both Wittkower and Rowe were exceptionally rigorous analysts of the idiosyncrasies and particularities of Palladian and Corbusian villas, especially with regard to site relationships, constructional methods, spatial effects, and aesthetics.

The Original Problem of Variations

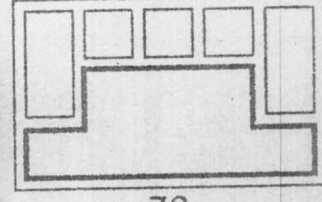
Both Rowe and Wittkower were operating with a very specific and exact definition of geometry, one that was mathematically exact and therefore definable only through identically repeatable forms. This reductive understanding of geometry and proportion led each to develop an ideal theory



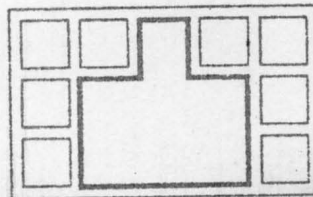
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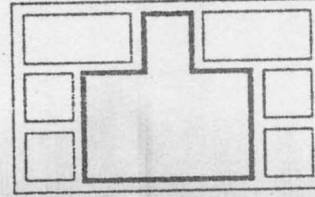
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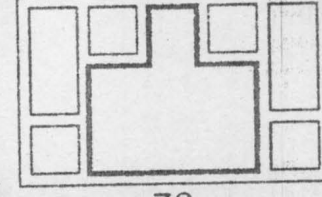
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of architectural order. The problem inherent to the exacting geometric sensibility of both Rowe and Wittkower might be illuminated by Edmund Husserl's *The Origins of Geometry*. It was in this text, first published in 1936, that the theory of the phenomenological reduction of "alterations of deformation," vague essences and "anexact yet rigorous" types of eidetic types was explicitly developed. According to Husserl, eidetic types must be visually described, identically repeatable at any time and place, and quantifiable in mathematically exact terms. Therefore, geometrically exact forms are the only potential "material eidetic" types. One such example is the sphere, which can be defined as a surface composed of an infinite number of points, all of which are equidistant from a single radial point. This example exhibits identical reproducibility, absolute exactitude, generalizability, and a resistance to corporeality. Though the form of the sphere does not exist materially in any specific place or time, it does exist as a universal, transcendental, ideal, and essential form. And because it is mathematically conceived for consciousness, the form of the sphere does not depend on corporeal definition. The sphere, like any other eidetic form, does not exist in its ideal form but must be exhibited as an essence behind the particular variations orchestrated around its underlying schema.

This kind of thinking about ideal formal patterns was not invented by Husserl, whose primary innovation was instead to explain that these eidetic forms originated from the measured alterations, differences, and variations of an exact yet rigorous protogeometric. Husserl invented a new category of geometry that was neither inexact — or unmeasurable and unrepeatable — nor exact — or reducible and repeatable — but was instead "anexact yet rigorous," meaning measurable yet irreducible and therefore unrepeatable. Vague types such as the round, dented, elongated, lens shaped, and umbiliform provided the measurable variations from which a reduction to invariant types could be performed. Husserl's problem was to develop a logical explanation for the origin of exact geometric forms. For example: When was the sphere invented and by whom? A similar question could be put to Wittkower and Rowe: When was the nine-square grid developed and by whom? Clearly the twelfth ideal villa was invented by Wittkower and not Palladio — this is the nature of variations and ideal geometric orders. To explain this process of returning to originary essences, Husserl developed the concept of phenomenological reduction which proceeded through the progressive cancellation of variations. Husserl argued that if one were to eliminate all of the differences between protogeometric forms, as with the photographic process of Galton, eventually exact geometries would emerge from the reduction. This process begins with an infinite number of round forms, for example, superimposed one upon the other and is continued until all of the differences between round contours are catalogued, averaged, and eliminated. By this reduction of difference Husserl argued that one could arrive at a geometrically exact form of a circle.

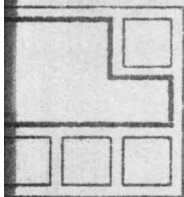
Husserl organized several techniques in order to explain the origin of eidetic forms. The first, substraction, provides the substructure or foundation for ideal form. By this technique different corporeal attributes of matter are rigorously measured, described, and catalogued. The second technique is variation, in which, as with Galton, variations are organized into "alterations of deformation." These alterations are then compared by a "sensible intuition." Eventually, through a process of "iterative reduction," that is, a comparative repetition, these alterations of deformation cancel one another and an ideal form emerges. This third technique — of phenomenological reduction through

variation conducted by the sensible intuition of a protogeometer — yields an ideal form that at the moment of its announcement can be stated once and for all. Because they are transcendent, these forms are not dependent on historical description for their validation. For example, historical appeals are not necessary in order to prove a mathematical axiom, whose status is explained for an "objective consciousness" that exists apart from historical and cultural specificity. In this manner, mathematical and exact geometrical statements become generalized models of transcendent order.

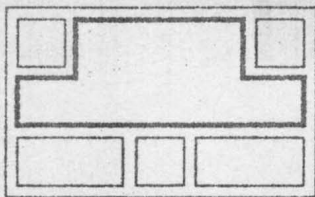
Post-"Mathematics" Reactions

Several architects and theorists have appended Rowe's ideal geometries with far more complex descriptive systems while maintaining his idealist claims. There are already at least two emergent trends in this field of the mathematics of form in architecture that should be briefly mentioned in relation to Rowe's reductionist project. The first is the new-age humanism of matrix organizations. Since the repudiation of ideal formalism, these architects have supplemented exact mathematics with matrices and recombinant patterns of organization while continuing to argue for holistic, wholesome, and humanist values. The second is computational formal grammars. Those associated with this trend expunged their discourse of ideological claims and began working on a far more autonomous, formal architectural grammar.

The first instance of a shift to an alternative view of mathematics of architectural form that does not rely on fixed exact types but instead on dynamical matrix organizations occurred just after Rowe's disavowal of his earlier idealistic thinking. Despite the move to develop mathematical and formal systems that did not rely on fixed ideal types — such as the nine-square grid villa — there was a residual belief in the ideological claims of humanist values in relation to proportions. The curious claim that fixed humane values could be legislated by a recombinant system of proportional relations was a strange new-age mix of information theory, cybernetics, systems thought, and persistently nostalgic and reactionary humanist values. There was a replacement of the fixed nine-square grid by a matrix of relations, yet the ideological claims made in the name of humanist values remained intimately connected to formal matrices. Architects began rethinking the city in terms of dynamical systems, complexity, and ecology models. In this way, Jane Jacobs and Christopher Alexander (not to mention the more recent emergence of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk) could be considered the first wave of cybernetic theorists in the discipline of architecture. They developed algorithmic or automatalike directives for deployment without appeal to fixed organizations. Nevertheless, these new mathematical proportions took on a quasi-spiritual value not dissimilar to Rowe's Virgilian tranquility experienced in the presence of ideal form. Jacobs and Alexander found in information theory and cybernetics a new age for humanism, where fixed proportional structures were rejected in favor of more local patterns. Yet the small town and the centralized religious building type were the end point of these trajectories in Jacobs's and Alexander's work, respectively. These new techniques were then turned to old uses: instead of something architecturally indeterminate one finds in their work only a determined humanist project that searches for quasi-spiritual essences. The significant shift is thus from the nine-square grid to the matrix, yet both forms appeal to common Virgilian values. The irony of this return is that the architectural differences between, say, *A Pattern Language* and the urban plan for Seaside, Florida is becoming more and more difficult to distinguish despite the distinct differences in



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Five-by-three schematic plan layouts with T-shaped central rooms in the Palladian language, William J. Mitchell, *The Logic of Architecture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 178.

ideology, politics, and stated intentions of the respective architects. What is common to these extensions of Rowe's mathematical project is the belief that a more robust system of proportional regulations will engender greater complexity and greater plurality.

Is Colin Rowe in Cyberspace?

Like the suspension of Walt Disney in a cryogenic solution, Colin Rowe's earliest texts are now being digitized. Wittkowerian and Rowian harmonic analyses and mathematical formulations have provided a grammar and a schema for the computerized mass production of a vast familial brood of ideal types. Rowe's early discourse is colonizing emerging computational and digital design environments and becoming a dominant force. As Amy Landesberg observed: "The mathematics of the ideal villa seems to equal 0,1." The early discourse of ideal types that Rowe has recently so vigorously rejected is today being digitized and used by a diverse group of designers and programmers. These mathematically reduced ideal types are today becoming the basis for writing code in architecture. These are not algorithmic automata or open systems that learn, but what are instead referred to in the parlance of computational architecture as expert systems.

It is no accident that the project of programming computers as experts capable of generating authentic architectural proportional and grammatical diagrams has been dominated by analytic models of Palladian and Corbusian mathematical formalism attributable to both Wittkower and Rowe. Since the a priori existence of fixed ideal types inherited from Wittkower and Rowe guarantees a canonic lineage of legitimate progeny, recombination in such an environment is used to identify architectural paternity. The potential for transformation exhibited by such a system is limited because it is merely an extension of an already closed grammatical system. Hence, any orle of George Hersey's and Richard Freedman's "Possible Palladian Villas" is merely an extension of a previously delineated and closed set of potential forms whose characteristics can be stated in advance through an ideal mathematics. Though the potential set of villas may indeed be so vast that it could not have been elaborated without the use of contemporary computational techniques, it is still merely a linear instrumental extrapolation and reduction of a fixed grammar within a delimited field of mathematical proportions. Like Richard Dawkins's "Blind Watchmaker" and "Biomorph" programs that take simple symmetry for granted as the regulating system for randomizing functions, Hersey's and Freedman's "Planmaker" and "Facademaker" programs begin with grammatical and syntactical structures that are merely unfolded and extended. Dawkins skirts a reductive Neo-Platonist position by combining randomized "hunting" within a vast, but nonetheless closed, catalogue of "possible" forms that are generated through various rules of symmetry and proportion.

Although Dawkins is a neo-Darwinian theorist using 19th-century metaphors of the machine, the Biomorph-generating motor he has constructed is far more robust than those of Hersey or William J. Mitchell. Rather than directing the "Blind Watchmaker" toward the production of lineages, Dawkins attempts to break lineages and generate fine-grained, discontinuous maps of morphological potentials within which algorithms "hunt" for order. The sensibility of architects who have gravitated toward Rowe's mathematics is not Palladian but is in fact the product of a persistent mechanization and instrumentalization

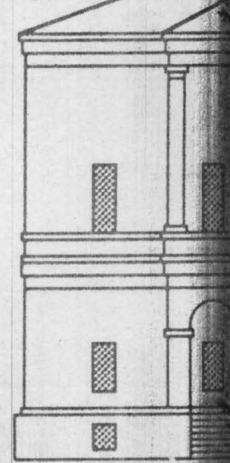
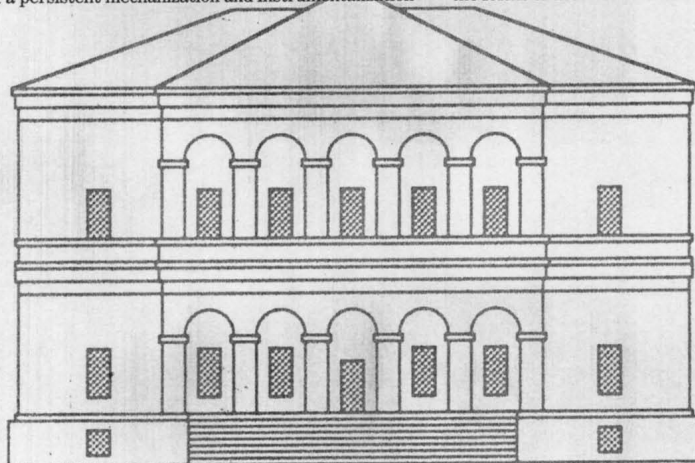
of design typologies. Hence the predominance of essential proportions and a primitive grammar of base forms. The digitization of Rowe's method points to the conspicuous absence of a retheorization of machinic design practices in the face of new computational technologies. Instead, Rowe's "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" (with the requisite fixation on Palladian and Corbusian villas as models) is being insidiously sustained as the natural and dominant model for computational design practices. As previously mentioned, Wittkower's historical mode was universalized by Rowe and divested of historical and cultural value. In the digitization and "coding" of this technique the potential for the extension of these canonic processes has become more universal than ever.

Rowe Complex

Rowe's project for the development of a mathematics of form might be rethought in new terms. The theme of complex rather than reducible variations offers perhaps the most fruitful avenue for such a rethinking of mathematical systems of organization. Such a geometry of the irreducible and anexact yet rigorous could not be equated with fixed or ideal types, but would instead describe directed organizational patterns that are capable of yielding probable yet indeterminate architectural formations. Normative architectural organizational strategies such as repetition, segmentation, differentiation, diversification, order, and symmetry would involve very different kinds of transformational processes if the ideality of exact geometries are replaced with pliant, anexact geometries.

Because Rowe's orders were unconnected to historical, cultural, and architectural contingencies or customs, they mandated a natural philosophy of antiquarian humanism. The instrumental potential of exact geometries was aligned with this attempt to define transcendental architectural orders. Rowe's and Koetter's subsequent rejection of the ideology of transcendent humanism involved the abandonment of mathematical investigations of form. Rowe's history of formal thinking illustrates the intricate linkages between genetic types and architectural theory. Without eidetic definitions of form, the "Ideal Villa" could not have been conceived. An alternative mathematics of form that is both irreducible yet precise and anexact yet rigorous would resist transcendent and universal ideological proclamations precisely because they cannot be idealized and reproduced identically. Instead, only a provisional alignment of formal patterns and organizations with cultural, political, functional, spatial, and urban forces could be made. Moreover, since those very forces would be constitutive of the orders themselves, connections would need to be evaluated within their particular contexts. Though this is of course ideological, it is clearly not an instance of reducible formal type standing for universal and unchanging meaning. Thus as presently understood, methods of differential organization do not necessarily need to calcify into fixed typologies.

Where Rowe's logic is extensive, exact, and reducible, an alternative mathematics of form would be emergent, indeterminate, differential, intensive, anexact, and creative. Outside the logic of externally motivated contingencies, a more speculative process of differentiation and variation could be the motor for the rethinking of proportional models that would not be reducible to ideal types. Anexact geometries cannot be codified into a proper formalism since the forms of these differential and dynamic types resist fixity. Instead, these



types are used to incorporate disparate and unforeseen forces into organizations that build their consistency, continuity, and identity through differentiation. Repetition is a critical concept here; Wittkower, Rowe, and Husserl's idea of repetition was that as things were repeated differences were canceled — a repetition of iterative reduction. Differentiation created through repetition offers an alternative that is not reductive but looks to mutation as a potential source of order. This differs radically from the reducible method of Rowe, where identity and continuity is developed through the progressive identification and cancellation of external characteristics. Just as Rowe distinguished endogenous orders and exogenous factors, it is necessary here to distinguish these two projects. In architecture as well as in other disciplines involved with taxonomy, categorization, and typological thinking, variation has been used as a set of deviant characteristics by which order is defined through their progressive cancellation. Typology in general is based on the reduction of particularities and differences to mere variations, behind which subsists a more general essence of invariant types. Architectural typology has influenced design practice to such an extent that what was an analytic project of classification has become not only a design methodology in some extreme cases, but a design sensibility that distinguishes between order and difference. Colin Rowe's development of "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" and its subsequent use to define a formalist agenda for the New York Five is perhaps the most obvious instance where an analytic method can quickly become a reductionist design approach.

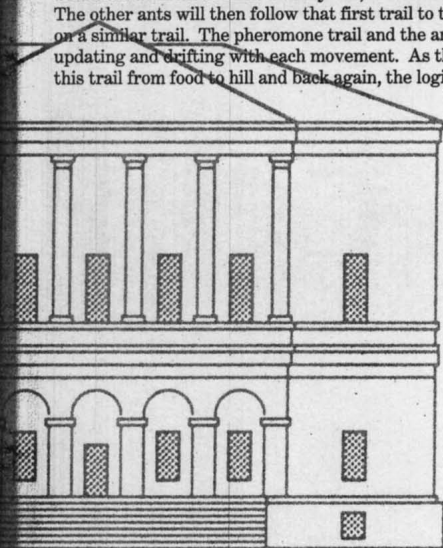
New Paths

As Rowe's legacy has been the topic of this text, there is neither time nor space to elaborate the possible trajectories for a more complex alternative for thinking about the mathematics of forms. In place of a more detailed speculation I would posit a parable that combines both mathematical reduction and diversification in a single continuous system. A similar parable has been used to describe hive, swarm, crowd, and superorganism behavior by Wheeler, Wilson, Fenymen, Cannetti, and others. I would rather focus, however, on the implications of the analogy on formal and mathematical thinking. Catherine Ingraham's description of the demented closed circuit imposed on pine processionary caterpillars provides a mirror example of the burdens of reductionist linearity. The immediate source of this parable comes from Kevin Kelly's recent book *Out of Control* where he describes how ants optimize paths of travel through the reduction of variations. Kelly argues that because ants follow pheromone trails to navigate, in instances of divergent paths between two identical points the shorter paths will be followed because their scents will evaporate less quickly. In the scenario that Kelly describes, the ants would reduce variations toward a single optimal line but — and this is a critical concept — at the moment that linearity and reduction are approached the ants will begin a process of free differentiation that might appear to be illogical. Rather than the reduction of paths to an optimal line through iterative reduction, there is a far more twisted and curvilinear operation invoked. An analogy of ants randomly wandering in a bath tub scattered with candy bars can serve as a hypothetical scene for this parable. Once an ant that has been in a random walk mode finds a candy bar, it will follow its trail back to the colony. The other ants will then follow that first trail to their destination and return on a similar trail. The pheromone trail and the ants' paths will be constantly updating and drifting with each movement. As the ants progressively repeat this trail from food to hill and back again, the logical mathematical conclusion

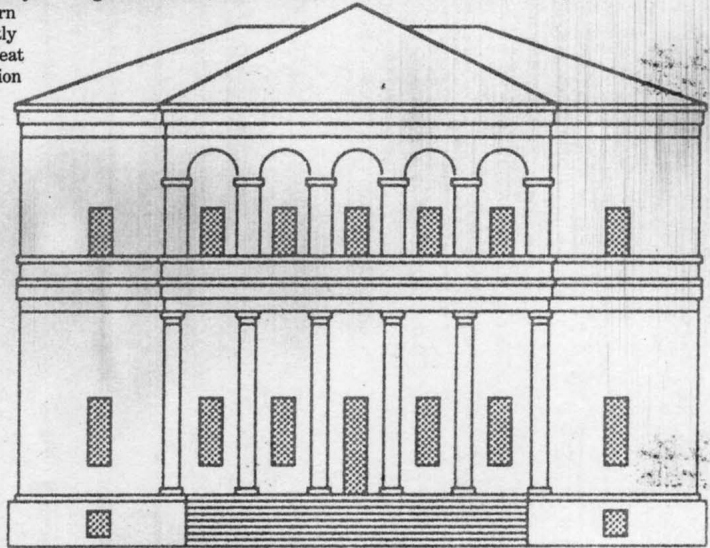
would be that errors diverging from the shortest path to the food source would eventually be canceled and errors that would minimize curvature and straighten the path would be maximized as those ants followed a shorter path and made more trips than the ants following the longer path. In some sense this is true. As the hypothetical ants repeat their trip from food to home they do progressively straighten the path. If this were to continue, eventually all of the ants would be marching single file on a straight course until they had consumed the entire candy bar, at which time the ants would have no recourse to finding new food sources that were outside of this straight line. Performing Husserlian eidetic reductions, the ants would have locked into a negative feedback loop. The reason that this does not occur in actual ants is that as ants begin to follow a straight path for a long duration some force kicks in which makes them take a sharp turn from the straight path, and certain ants are sent into a random walk mode again. This random walk might bring them back to the trail of the candy bar, thus differentiating the path at the expense of linear efficiency; or the ant might wander aimlessly or bump into another food source at which point the process begins all over again, simplifying and idealizing another path until the critical moment that it becomes too simple, straight, or ideal and more ants begin firing off of it in seemingly random directions.

This parable serves as a cautionary tale for those who would seek some essential straight and true path, but it is also a hopeful suggestion for the mathematics of the random walk. These two sensibilities — the chaotic and irreducible and the ideal and reductive — are in fact held together along a complex continuum in this parable. If there is not a theory of differentiation or randomization there is the distinct danger of lock-in, as with the ants. Directed pattern formation and mathematical thinking can be an opportunistic process that is capable of explaining generalizable orders, like the mathematical reduction of the ant path to a straight line. But without the component of differentiation, the system becomes merely reductionist, closed and incapable of discovering innovative paths of development. This was the cause of Rowe's exhaustion of "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa." In the phenomenal and geometric model of the reduction of a random walk to a straight line there is a different kind of mechanism theorized which differentiates the straight path at the moment it risks becoming simply-linear. This parable is extremely attractive because it approaches the reductionist thinking of Husserl, Rowe, and Wittkower, yet literally and metaphorically, at the moment the path becomes locked in, another sensibility is engaged and the system is freely differentiated. The only explanation for this moment of differentiation at the cusp of linear order is the value of diversification. This type of differentiation is not opposed to but continuous with the mathematical and the systematic, forming one system, the continuity of which is punctuated with moments of reduction and simplification, proliferation and free differentiation. It is the capacity for order to spontaneously differentiate and become innovative that is in the end the blind spot of Rowe.

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Study of facades of Palladian villas from Possible Palladian Villas (Plus a Few Instructively Impossible Ones), George Hersey and Richard Freedman, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 96.

Anthony Vidler: Two or three things I know about Him

When, precisely, did you first encounter the subject?

At 5:25 p.m. on the last Wednesday in October 1960.

How did you meet?

A note was placed in my pigeonhole at Emmanuel College. It read:

Your tutor Mr. Rowe will receive you at his flat, 5 Causwayside, on Wednesday next. Please telephone to arrange a time.

What was your first mistake?

I telephoned at 9:00 a.m.

What were the consequences, if any?

A voice, or rather a sound, emerged, as if from the depths of an agonized psyche, and, like a forlorn foghorn on the Solent, or perhaps the owl of Minerva, cried: "Who? Who?" When I had established my identity, it was clear to me that I had woken the subject who was by no means

pleased. The terms of our future communications were quickly confirmed. No telephone calls before noon; preferably none. Supervisions between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday. My memory was that the subject remarked that only the sound of Mozart would awaken him with pleasure. My own lame addition of Vivaldi was, I believe, received with a scornful snort.

What were the precise circumstances of this first meeting?

I left college on my bicycle before 5:00 p.m., arriving in good time at 5:15 p.m. I walked around the flats and along the meadows for ten minutes, and then climbed the stairs. The door to the subject's flat was ajar, and I hesitated to enter. At 5:30 p.m. a voice from within inquired politely, but I think in retrospect, ironically, whether I might ever decide to go in. This voice was similar to that which had answered the telephone. I was instructed to collect two glasses and the Cinzano from the kitchen on the way. No clean glasses being evident, I washed two from the pile in the sink and found the Cinzano in the refrigerator. I turned and saw a small room with books strewn over the floor. The voice seemed to

emerge from the back of a huge leather chair that (second mistake) I did not immediately recognize as an Eames chair. "What do you think of that?" inquired the voice. Rounding the chair, and holding out glasses and bottle, I perceived the subject on his knees before a folio volume, later to be identified as *Vitruvius Britannicus*. The referent "that" in the subject's question was not readily evident at first glance. This fact, allied to my hesitation as to where to put the glasses, did not ameliorate the subject's already testy manner. "Pour, boy, pour, and sit down for God's sake." But I had neglected to remember, if I knew at all, that Cinzano requires ice, and more than one cube. This settled, my supervisions began.

What did you learn, if anything, at this first supervision?

That the subject assumed I knew everything about neo-Palladianism. That his delight in Cinzano quickly exhausted the available supply. That my understanding of words like *parti* was decidedly deficient. That I

was not sure why I had ever opted to read architecture over history. That the best tactic was to remain silent but look interested. That the conversation might be advanced through the use of such noncommittal remarks as "You don't say," "Really? I had thought entirely the opposite," and — a tour de force on that afternoon — "But wasn't he a bit Whiggish?"

Were all subsequent meetings equally difficult from your point of view?

No, because the subject immediately adopted the strategy of inviting other supervisees at the same time. I remember one named Mark Livingston, who seemed to understand what was expected.

(2) Further Developments

Did you meet the subject in other circumstances than those of supervisions?

Yes. At lectures, juries, and at occasional parties.

Of these meetings, which was most significant with regard to subsequent events?

The opening lecture of the professor's theory course. The subject was sitting behind me at the back. A bustle followed the professor into the lecture hall and revealed itself in the form of a young student dressed in the style of American movies from the early 1950s, trousers pulled high to show socks and leisure shoes. The student pursued the professor to the podium, introduced himself sincerely to the somewhat bemused lecturer, and was forced to retire with the vague flutter of a hand and a gentle "Not now, not now, dear boy." From behind me I heard the subject murmur, "What, in God's name, was

tha-at?" The subject and the student (who lost no time in introducing himself after the lecture as "Hi — I'm Peter Eisenman from Columbia") later became friends. I believe the subject had a nostalgia for energetic, clean-cut young men derived from an earlier stay in Texas.

(3) The Subject Speaks To Architects

Can you describe some of the subject's views on architecture at that time?

The subject had a number of obvious obsessions. I will list them in no particular order, that is to say, in the same order that they manifested themselves in conversation: mannerism (Wylie Sypher, Wittkower, Pevsner, Panofsky); rhythm (*a-b-A-b-a*); modernism (Le Corbusier); composition (Guadet, Robertson); utopia (Becker); ideology (Napoleon III, Popper, Mannheim); sweet vermouth (any brand). My impression was that he was generally "for" modernism, although in retrospect his ambivalence might already be detected in his desire to infiltrate the compositional techniques of the Beaux Arts into his interpretation of what he called the savage moves of modernists.

But were not the subject's early writings almost entirely concerned with Le Corbusier?

Yes, and they constitute some of the very best writing ever dedicated to Le Corbusier interpretation. But they were brilliant precisely because they refused the overtly mechanistic stance of modernist polemic, and read carefully Le Corbusier's own transformations of Greek and Roman traditions — his abstraction of tradition into type and form — as starting points of the critique. That the subject wished to absorb the compositional techniques of the free plan into those of the Beaux Arts, thereby retaining the wall-based character of premodern architecture with a freedom of manipulation only possible with modernism, was only evident later. Here, mannerism became the universal flux of distortion and displacement that allowed such a work of interpretation, which of course was nothing short of a program for the conceptual and practical revision of modernism.

You spoke earlier of utopia and ideology. How did the subject reconcile his interest in composition with the modernist social program?

With ill-concealed irritation at the naïveté of modernist polemics about the good society and the ideal city. His position was clearly set out in an article published in *Granta*, where the long history of utopian architecture was called on to bear witness against holistic (a word he delighted in savoring at the time) and grand schemes for saving the world through architecture. Against the supposedly totalitarian schemes of Marxists and fascists, the subject espoused Karl Popper's notion of "piecemeal utopia."

In the context of 1960s minimalism and the critical influence of Clement Greenberg and his followers Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss, might this stance simply be characterized as a variety of formalism?

Obviously cold war Texas cannot be ruled out as a precontext for the

subject's ambivalence to modernism. But his insistence on architecture as itself steeped in ideological significance — his rich vocabulary of characterization formed by the association of form with epoch and culture — ruled out any vulgar formalism or purist asceticism. His formal analysis seemed to imply a forensic stance toward cultural conditions rather than some programmatic value by which to measure modernity.

Did the subject manifest any design pretensions of his own?

His chosen medium for instruction was yellow tracing paper. He would insistently abstract and reabstract the *parti* in question, comparing it to other models and instances, working toward a solution that incorporated the history of the scheme with its present iteration. In this sense, there was no doubt that he was an architect. In another sense, he taught architecture as if it were musicology.

Let us return to the subject's already established ambivalence toward modernism. Did you ever have any sense that his criticism anticipated the advent of postmodernism, self-consciously or not?

Certainly at the time the subject seemed more impatient with the picturesque "homeliness" of the Townscape movement — one remembers sarcastic remarks on the subject of bollards and reverence for wood — but to answer your question fully I would have to return to our first meeting.

By all means.

I omitted to recount the subject's parting words as he handed me the recently published work by Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason*. "Look at this for next week. See what he means by concatenation." In retrospect I should say that the subject already sensed the hardening of modernism into the geometrically simplistic typologies of neorationalism; a later lecture of 1979 made evident the subject's distaste for Ledoux's primary forms as opposed to the more complex interior promenades of the Parisian *hôtels*.

This last instance would seem to introduce a further ambivalence. I speak of your own possible ambivalence toward the subject. Were you not yourself to select Ledoux and the Enlightenment as an object of continued research?

Indeed. And yet my work on the utopias of the Enlightenment was itself spurred by a critique of the social reform pretensions of modern architecture and a need to establish its ideological roots in Enlightenment and utopian social thought. But my critique was in a way pointed toward London County Council utopianism, and guided by a desire to recuperate the better social aspirations of modernism. I seem to remember that Martin Pawley was writing *Architecture versus Housing* at roughly the same time. I was certainly more preoccupied than the subject with the Foucauldian questions of power and institutionalization engaged by the architectural tradition. But this is to establish a political difference and not an ambivalence.

(5) The Subject in Exile

Two years after your first meeting, the subject departed for the USA; you followed three years after that. In what ways was your former relationship changed by this shift in context?

Following a few affectionate, but already difficult, encounters at Princeton in the mid-1960s, my relations with the subject became more distant and infrequent. I have not seen or spoken to him in some ten years.

To what do you attribute this circumstance?

A sense, on my part, that a school was being established on the basis of what was initially a fundamentally counteracademic technique. That the critical individuality of the subject was gradually being transformed into a set of repeatable maneuvers, and that this, in turn, was reflected in the subject's own self-repetition. A sense, on his part (I assume), that my continuing interest in the contemporary avant-gardes, and opposition to the historical fantasies of postmodernism indicated a suspicion of collage as a postmodern technique.

Do you regret this falling away of a relationship?

Yes.

You have spoken of the early essays. Were there more recent writings, despite the lack of personal contact, that engaged you in the same way?

Yes, indeed. The critique of the Five; the 1979 Cubitt lecture; the introduction to James Stirling's collected works; the postscripts to the essays published in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*. These seemed to retain the original vitality and focus of the early essays, while extending their theses in

important ways. The subject's brilliant analysis of Stirling's facadeless museum at Stuttgart stands out as a tour de force of critical writing that at the same time diagnosed an essential characteristic of modern and postmodern design.

What about Collage City?

It had the somewhat static and flattened air of a manifesto, rather than an energetic critique or critical interpretation. Perhaps montage would have been a more flexible technique to explore. It is for this reason that I prefer the 1979 Cubitt Memorial Lecture, where similar issues were engaged with a critical complexity and in relation to a wide range of problematic examples, but without reducing the question of modern urbanism to a formulaic and nondialectical opposition between good and bad.

That said, what, if anything, have you retained from those first supervisions, and from a reading of his essays?

A distinct taste for the incisive, formal, and analytical interpretation of architectural objects and ideas; a profound respect for the political and ideological implications of architecture; a never-exhausted interest in Palladio, mannerism, Le Corbusier, and composition; an envy of the subject's continuing ability to construct a deep visual critique of architecture from a seemingly

endless storehouse of appropriate precedents; a momentary disappointment that almost everything I have said or written seems to have been anticipated by the subject if only in a phrase or word. In preparing for this interview, I found that my recent work on modern spatial psychopathologies and agoraphobia had been already broached by the subject in a lecture of 1979 on stradaphobia.

Why, in the context of your admitted lack of contact with the subject, did you agree to this interview?

Because it became clear to me that my own relationship to the subject ought no longer to remain unanalyzed. Might I, in turn, ask a question?

By all means.

Of what precise act does the subject stand accused?

Merely under suspicion at this point in the investigation.

Suspected then of what?

Of exercising a powerful and often unappreciated influence over the development of architecture, urbanism, criticism, and theory over the last 40 years; of provoking a deep anxiety among many generations of architects and critics, beginning with his own and continuing to this day. I have noticed this anxiety not only in yourself but also in the subject's contemporaries. Such an effect was named by Harold Bloom the "anxiety of influence," to point to the difficult relations of succeeding generations to strong precedents — the difficulty, for example, of writing after Milton (experienced even by Wordsworth). In this sense, the subject certainly resembles Greenberg.

Thank you. It relieves me that I am not alone.

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COLIN ROWE: ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Bernhard Berenson somewhere describes himself as being a Christianity graduate. He is, he says, highly indebted to the Christian tradition and, to a large degree, formed by it; but he continues that he would no more wish to be immersed in that tradition than he would wish still to be a student at Harvard and hence, just as he is a college graduate, so he is a Christianity graduate. His argument is a useful one — at least for me — because I myself wish to claim to be a modern architecture graduate, which I suppose means that while I acknowledge a debt and a derivation, while I am constantly moved by the magnificence of the original idea of modern architecture, and while I can scarcely think except in terms of its repertory of forms, I cannot really believe in it any longer, or when I almost can, it is the case of the *credo quia absurdum*, the (not so Dada) “I believe in it because it is absurd.”

I have adopted a pseudotheological tone which I do not consider to be altogether inappropriate to the subject matter of this conference; but then — and after having adopted this tone — it was forced upon my mind that the published image of this conference is an apple. The apple is first of all complete; then bitten into, and finally almost totally consumed. Is this a case of frivolous graphics? Or do we have here, with the fruit of the tree of knowledge, a reference to the fall of man and to the introduction of original sin? Or again, could it just possibly be that the whole and unimpaired apple represents ourselves at the beginning of this conference, ourselves intact and in a state of grace, and that its wreck prefigures ourselves at the end, corrupted, sophisticated, and having received intimations as to the nature of good and evil?

The apple may, no doubt, be given other explanations; but I shall proceed as though these were the significant ones, as though the apple were simultaneously a temptation and the index of some immensely involuted and labyrinthine trap.

Which does not mean that I believe architectural education to be so involuted, labyrinthine, and fraught with problems as is often supposed. Indeed, rather the reverse. I presume architectural education to be a very simple matter; and the task of the educator I am convinced can be quite simply specified as follows: (1) To encourage students to believe in architecture and modern architecture, (2) to encourage students to be skeptical about architecture and modern architecture, and (3) to cause students to manipulate, with passion and intelligence, the subjects or objects of their conviction and doubt.

But having said this, I could be accused of quite massive dissimulation. I have declared myself to be an unbeliever but have also prescribed for myself a missionary role; I have implied that I wish to instigate faith but also subvert it; and worst of all I have confessed to an interest in manipulation — presumably of both ideas and forms. But these apparent inconsistencies can, I believe, be made to go away; and meanwhile, their introduction only serves to preempt an argument, because supposing the sequence faith-doubt-manipulation, then just how this sequence is initiated and develops will ultimately derive from what one conceives architecture and modern architecture to be or about to become.

So we have first of all the public and received idea of modern architecture as an important response to the impact of technology, as a more or less rational approach to building which is to be discriminated from all previous architecture by the designer's lack of formal preoccupation and greater refinement of scientific knowledge. Modern architecture, it is averred, is or will (or should) become no more than a logical derivative from data which are, in themselves, the factual components of the contemporary world; and it is from this wholly commonsense relationship to reality that it acquires the authority which it enjoys or will come to enjoy.

Such has been the typical bias of much writing or talking about architecture during the last 30 to 50 years. A breach has been made with irrationality and with morbid sentimentalism; architects are no longer interested in forms to the exclusion of everything else; they are no longer purveyors of private luxuries for the rich and the privileged; instead they are enlightened builders “for a population with nothing like the leisure for luxuries” which patrons of earlier ages enjoyed; and they are the painstaking students of function who, if they are to build a soap factory, will discover all about the process of soap manufacture, and who, if they are to build a nursery school, will promptly acquire the most intensive knowledge of kindergarten practice.

This is the line of explanation which haunts the later pages of Nikolaus Pevsner's admirable and usually subtle *Outline of European Architecture*; but without difficulty, one could excerpt something very like it from a large variety of other sources. For wherever it was a question of “putting modern architecture over,” wherever it used to be a question of persuading the naive and the unsuspecting, these were the standard arguments which were rehearsed; and for all their debilitating blandness, it cannot be denied that they are scarcely a complete misrepresentation of what modern architects, at one time, believed that they were up to. Finally and fearlessly, architects are at last able to confront things as they are. They are free from prejudice, exempt from bias, innocent of dogmatic presumption; and now they have almost won through to the objective neutrality of physical scientists. They have repudiated fantasy; and they can now concern themselves with building rather than form, with public rather than private, with needs rather than wants, with dynamic rather than static, with innovation rather than with custom. If this was not the message of the Bauhaus and the prevailing tone of the polemic of the 1920s, then something very like it certainly was and still continues to be highly obtrusive. We have at last discovered, so the message ran and half a century later the would-be revolutionary message still continues to run, a new approach to building. It is a style which is not a style because it is being created by the accumulation of objective reactions to external events and which, therefore, is pure and clean, authentic, valid, self-renewing, and self-perpetuating.

This mystical vision of a new architecture, impeccable and incorruptible, was so necessarily seductive that, even when as now it has shrunk and become pathetically attenuated, it should not be surprising that this is a vision which is still extensively, perhaps unconsciously, invoked; and it should certainly not be surprising that these presumptions as to modern architecture's mode of being, now

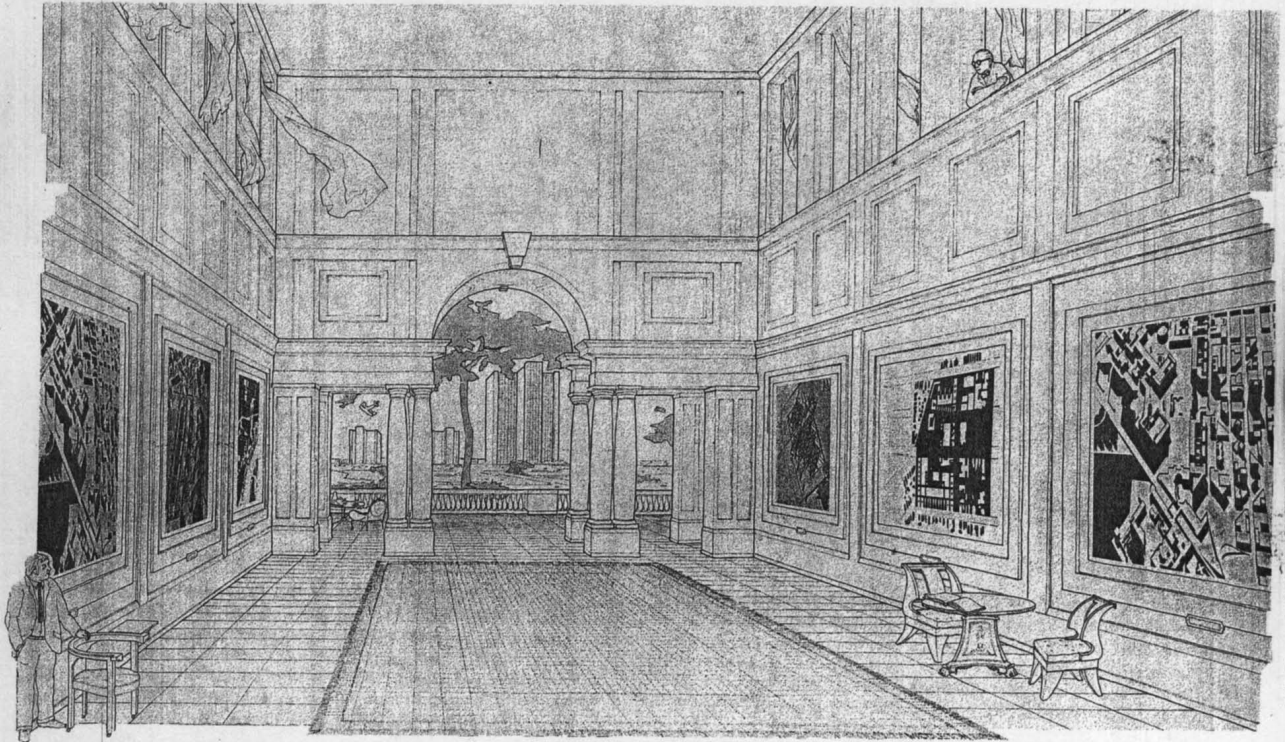


Image from poster of exhibit on Urban Design at Cornell University, March 1980.
Courtesy of Werner Goehner.

strangely influenced by ideals of management, should still continue to exercise a controlling influence upon educational frameworks which are conceived to be progressive and enlightened. Thus, since a seminal myth alleges that modern architects are properly concerned with facts and have abjured speculation, architectural education becomes increasingly what is believed to be fact-oriented. That is, while for bohemian and liberal reasons architectural education conveniently approves the so-called counterculture (which is a not so implicit protest against both management and technology), it becomes increasingly a compilation of courses devoted to the presentation of information designed to assist management and derived from technology, sociology, psychology, economics, cybernetics, etc. The inference is that no adequate, let alone valid, design decision is possible until all this information is digested, and with the even more tempting subliminal proviso that once this information is digested, no design decision will be necessary anyway. For should it not be apparent that, given the facts, these will automatically arrange themselves, will presumably promote their own hypotheses irrespective of any human intervention?

That such a point of view should, in the end, extinguish or paralyze initiative should surely be obvious; but when its epistemological foundations are so very slight, when so painfully vulnerable that it remains predominant should not be considered strange. For any criticism of this point of view has not become an assault upon an entrenched establishment, upon an establishment with a presumptive empiricist, naturalist, behaviorist, and technophile bias, an establishment which represents a major investment of emotional and political capital and which, therefore, can never react with more than a minimum show of rationality.

For notoriously — and it should not be necessary to stress the matter — behind the so reasonable public and public relations facade of modern architecture there boils a largely uninvestigated metaphysical and psychological volcano. Metaphysically one imagines that its lava is of a largely Hegelian origin; psychologically one supposes that its detritus is, for the most part, of a Platonic-Hebrew-Christian provenance. Which is to say that behind or beneath the alleged neutral surface and underpinning the often expressed ideals of scientific objectivity and/or direct social commitment there is to be discovered — to mix metaphors — a whole jungle of largely unobserved and entirely unverifiable assumptions; and these, like

Spanish moss, are all the beautiful parasites which the tree of ingenuous rationalism so abundantly encourages. Thus there is the notion of ineluctable social change which must in some way be accommodated; then there is the notion of irresistible progress with which alliance must be established; while further, with history rejected, there is the historicist notion of the spirit of the age, of the *Zeitgeist*, envisaged as establishing moral imperatives which can in no way be rejected; and finally and allied to all this there are those never-to-be-subdued fantasies of the architect as a composite of Moses, St. George, Galahad, and Siegfried, as the messianic hero, as he who leads the people to the promised land, as the killer of dragons, and as the one who keeps the faith.

Now, however much we may sometimes be led to disavow these fantasies, they are all of them presumptions and personifications which we know; and which, when we acknowledge them, are all of them destructive of the received idea of a simply rational, or rationalizable, modern architecture and of the increasingly established propensities of architectural education. Or so they ought to be. But to uncover an attitude is not to dispose of that attitude; and the idea of a total architecture which, in spite of its implied brutality, still seems to be so widely desired, the idea of an architecture scientifically based upon facts is, again and again, so much complemented and interpenetrated by a profusion of eschatological enthusiasms, chiliastic illusions, utopian fantasies, and millennialistic dreams as to be virtually irresistible to criticism. Indeed, it is an amalgam which, like Marxism, ultimately enshrines a faith in science and an irrational, contrary conviction in the immanence of the New Jerusalem; and which, like any primitive religion, effectively guarantees its devout a very large immunity from the intrusions and promptings of common sense.

It goes without saying that modern architecture was always — or at least in its heroic period — an implicit denial of the consequences of that aboriginal eating of the apple, of that alleged fall and of its later explanations. That is, it was — for better or worse — always an implicit denial of the doctrine of original sin. It knew very, very little of “the good that I would that I do not, the evil that I would not that I do.” Instead it was born, let us say, under a strange astrological combination: on the one hand, Oswald Spengler, on the other, H.G. Wells; on the one hand, the predictions of an imminent cataclysm, on the other, the prophecies of an effulgent future. And so modern

architecture, recoiling from the threat of catastrophe, assumed a faith in perfectibility and in the possibilities of a, perhaps final, cultural integration.

I do not wish to criticize further an antiquated and now somewhat sclerotic religion of architecture — particularly since I myself am highly susceptible to most of the doctrines and much of the poetry of this religion. Instead, I wish simply to suggest that its repertory of contradictory assumptions, conscious and unconscious, could usefully be subjected to a modicum of theological finesse. Two tendencies of modern architecture — architects as errand boys of the sociologists and architects as cosmological systems men — are coming to complement one another in a pernicious and potentially terrifying conceptual framework, a framework which also threatens to be authoritarian; but I also imagine that, given sufficient comprehension, irony, compassion, wit, and good sense, somehow these terrifying and pernicious effects which I assume lie latent in all primitive religions can be made, if not to go away, at least to recede and to come to occupy an overt and discussible place.

Back in 1765, in what I suppose must have been his second publication, the Abbé Laugier began his *Observations* with the entirely fetching notice that "Everything is not yet said about Architecture. There rests an enormous field open to the researches of artists, the observations of amateurs, and the discoveries of men of genius"; and it is because, more than 200 years later the same remarks are true and the field remains equally immense and open that one is emboldened to continue.

So one is emboldened to allow the big-question to emerge: With reference to any specific work of architecture, what statements can be proved to be false or true? This is the question which is almost never propounded — presumably because its results are so entirely un reassuring. That is, although one may verify certain statements about a building, about its materials, cost, maintenance, etc., most of these statements are — in the end — not going to be widely regarded as very interesting. Equally verifiable and much more interesting are statements relating to the laws of statics; but supremely interesting and scarcely subject to any verification whatsoever, there will proliferate a superabundance of strenuously maintained positions related to use and appearance.

As to the ultimate impossibility of proof or disproof, one is obliged to propose this predicament as important, since a truly scientific approach to architecture and the problems of teaching it should surely begin, not with an aprioristic method derived from the physical sciences (or from anywhere else), but rather with the nature of the institution of architecture itself, with its limitations, its mode of being, its most intimate and intrinsic qualities.

I have already intimated that there is almost total reluctance to look at these and to envisage any scientific base. But, pursuing such an approach, we might choose to recognize that, though a work of architecture in its practical aspects is very largely an affair of assembling bricks, mortar, steel, concrete, glass, timber, tubes, and entrails according to the principles of certain known statical laws, that

the supposition which is generally received — that architecture itself is a coordination of these very miscellaneous materials for the purposes of use and pleasure — already does intrude most of the ultimate problems of metaphysics. For if the laws of statics can be safely assumed to be established beyond dispute, the laws of use and pleasure, of convenience and delight, have certainly not as yet been subjected to any Newtonian revolution; and while it is not inconceivable that in the future they may be, until that time any ideas as to the useful and the beautiful will rest as untestifiable hypotheses. We might propose this as architecture's central glaring problem — a problem which neither the brisk conclusions of common sense, the refined intuitions of enlightened sensibility, nor the application of scientific veneer will ever quite suppress.

Like the exponents of theology, political theory, philosophy, or any other discipline which seeks to order random experience, who cannot passively await an ideal future solution of their problems and are obligated to disentangle significant and workable structures from a continuous flux of evidence, architects are obliged to work upon an essentially uncertain substratum; in the end their formulations of concepts of use, beauty, improvement, etc., will rest upon ideological, or at least idealistic, foundations. That is, behind any architectural system of approach, or even behind any single work, there will always be implicated a variety of assumptions as to the nature of reality, the significance of novelty, the natural man, the good society, and all the other criteria which are typically introduced in order to arbitrate problems of value.

This is the ultimate basis for almost everything architects do, and though they are prone to recognize its presence throughout the whole history of architecture, they are almost always determined to disavow this foundation as it pertains to themselves. And this is to be expected. They feel guilty about it and hope to shift the guilt to sociologists and perhaps social psychologists whom they wish to believe have none of the doubts about their own disciplines that they entertain about architecture. But the continuous identity crisis of architects is certainly no help to architectural education; and it is because architecture is concerned with the simultaneous recognition and solving of highly complex and value-informed problems that what could be called the neopositivist tone of so much architectural education can only be seen as obscuring rather than illuminating the central issues.

I may, so far, have been largely negative; and I may even have given the impression that I am hostile to computers, statistics, technology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and all the rest. I should therefore attempt to correct this impression. As far as I am concerned, all of these things and pursuits have their place and their contribution; but also, their place and their contribution will never be valuable to the degree that they serve as surrogates for architects' social guilt and permit, indeed facilitate, their abdication of responsibility.

To switch the scene and to be pragmatic: I am skeptical of institutionalized systems and much more skeptical of institutionalized objectives; I am skeptical of too much research — because how can

students conduct research until they are informed about what is already known; I am also convinced that once a thing is teachable, can be specified and codified, it is, almost certainly, not very much worth learning; and, for these reasons, I find myself believing very much in the virtues of confusion and the impromptu. Which means that I believe, and sometimes maybe to extravagance, in the centrality of the design studio and of its issue, the presumptive physical product. I quote from the *R. I. B. A. Journal* for January 1970: "The design studio is probably the most rich and advanced system of teaching complex problem solving that exists in the university. . . . Even as courses stand now, they have so much to offer students which cannot be obtained in any other university department that I am amazed that nobody has the faith to give them the hard sell." This is the opinion of a sociologist rather than an architect, and is therefore, just possibly, all that more significant.

But how we conduct the design studio will depend on how we believe about the apple and original sin, how we feel about program versus archetype, how we evaluate the role of empirical information versus that of myth, whether we consider the purpose of information to be that of a determinant or simply that of a test; and, in general the degree to which we are willing or not willing to recognize any work of architecture to be a conglomerate of both empirical facts and value judgments. Further, the strategies of a design studio will depend on attitudes taken up, on the one hand, toward research and, on the other, toward that still almost incredible constellation of novelties which emerged in the opening years of this century, toward what we think about students discovering for themselves and what we think about students becoming immersed in a tradition of which they cannot but be a part.

Now which of these approaches is conservative and which is radical I am at a loss to know; and, probably, neither designation is very opportune. But if among my personal convictions there remains the belief in the supreme importance of certain discoveries of approximately 50 years ago, then for present purposes, I wish to rescind this belief. Instead I wish to present an argument to which I am indebted to Fred Koetter. It is about a linear descending sequence and the rotations of a wheel; and it concerns the manner in which architects should accept the intimations of parallel disciplines which they should rightly consider important. The one style of acceptance is hierarchical. There are sociologists, then techno-men, then computers, and then, at the end of the line, architects. But the other style of acceptance, the wheel, is much more egalitarian; in this, everybody shares the responsibility and the guilt because when we talk about the wheel, we recognize that everybody wants to and will invent a model, but that every model is partial, incomplete, and subject to check by somebody else's.

In this wheel scene, architects, even though they may not want it, are raised to the level of sociologists and obliged to assume responsibility; and sociologists are reduced, which I should imagine would make them happy. But the idea involves neither raising nor reduction. Rather, it involves the validity of all kinds of contradictory models and perceptions. Nobody is at the center. Everybody is at the perimeter;

and all models are subject to qualification by all others.

However, it is just possible that, given architects' social guilt and their anxiety to enjoy a sulfuric acid douche twice a day, a proposal of this kind, so obvious and so easy, so tolerant and so rational, could never be effective. If this is the case — and even if it is not — then I would like to end as I began by falling back upon a quotation, this time from that impeccable liberal Alfred North Whitehead.

In his lecture, "The Aims of Education" from 1912, Whitehead condemns what he calls the tyranny of inert ideas, of "ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations"; but with these overcome, finally he says, "There should grow the most austere of all mental qualities, I mean the sense for style. It is an aesthetic sense based on admiration for the direct attainment of a foreseen end, simply and without waste. Style in art, style in literature, style in science, style in logic, style in practical execution have fundamentally the same aesthetic qualities, namely attainment and restraint."

Here we are brought back to the position from which we started, the futility of architectural education as we know it today. Whitehead continues:

Style, in its finest sense, is the last acquirement of the educated mind; it is also the most useful. It pervades the whole being. The administrator with a sense for style hates waste; the engineer with a sense for style economises his material; the artisan with a sense for style prefers good work. Style is the ultimate morality of mind. With style the end is attained without side issues, without raising undesirable intimations. With style you attain your end and nothing but your end. With style the effect of your activity is calculable and foresight is the last gift of gods to men. With style your power is increased, for your mind is not distracted with irrelevancies, and you are more likely to attain your object. Now style is the exclusive privilege of the expert. Whoever heard of the style of an amateur painter, of the style of an amateur poet? Style is always the product of specialist study, the peculiar contribution of specialism to culture.

Style, "the most austere of all mental qualities"; "the ultimate morality of mind"; "the peculiar contribution of specialism to culture": I feel obliged to quote Whitehead because of the pregnancy of definitions such as these and because, in the end, and after everything may have been said, he has cited what must be the object.

Editor's Note

This paper was first given at the conference "Architectural Education/USA: Issues, Ideas and People," organized by The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in November 1971. It was previously published as "Architectural Education in the USA," in *Lotus*, no. 27, 1980.

COLIN ROWE: BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

Beware of the prestigious international architectural competition. Try and ascertain beforehand if the final choice is going to be made by the national leader and not by the architectural judges — particularly important if you are not from the country of origin.

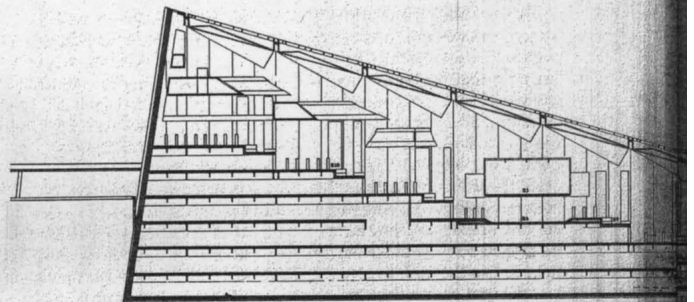
— James Stirling¹

Among the congenitally skeptical, the 1988 announcement that the Egyptian government and UNESCO were proposing a reestablishment of the Library of Alexandria was received with a degree of irony and amusement. For nowadays, how could any such institution even remotely begin to compete with the great collections of Europe and North America, with those in the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Library of Congress, or the New York Public Library? And this does not include the collections of Yale, Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, et al.

Nevertheless, it was an enticing idea, and as it was patently addressed to the third world, it seems to have commanded the support of the ubiquitous President Mitterrand and the no doubt charming Mrs. Mubarak. For here was proposed the superlibrary, no doubt immensely endearing to the aspirations of cultural imperialism in the French style (a case of more *retour d'Egypte?*). And if its financial resources were completely unknown, since its provenance was impeccable and its ambitions were enormous, it was hoped that by the end of the century it would instantly compete with the great libraries of the world.

An impossible idea, this bonanza for rare book dealers? Though it is a joy to imagine these scholarly, and slightly mercenary persons dreaming up their little catalogues in Florence, Paris, New York, Geneva, Amsterdam, and London; an almost impossible idea because, evidently, its realization must depend on a massive deployment of money, reluctant money presumably from the United States, with the implicit assumption that it will always pay, even for the eight million books talked about here — not a meager amount of money. For even if one assumes the unduly modest average of \$100 per book, it is a proposal which seems to envisage (apart from the cost of the building itself) a fairly quick expenditure of something like \$800 million!

All the same, this is not an entirely unrealistic bibliophilic extravaganza intended to return Alexandria to the cultural map of the world after a lapse of rather longer than one cares to think about. For do not we, the so-called West, owe so much to the Moslemic presence, particularly in Spain? Averroës, the



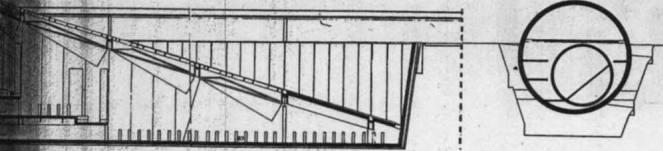
Winning scheme by Snøhetta Arkitektur Landskap, Norway, 1990, section.

rediscovery of Aristotle, and hence the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas? The pointed arch and hence the articulation of Gothic architecture? Quantities of medical and optical borrowings? Algebra and even the word *alcohol*? But of course; and more importantly (though perhaps originating in India), the propagation of the zero from which was derived a far more efficient numerical system than any which prevailed in Greco-Roman antiquity?

No, the debts of the West to Moslemic scholarship are very prominent; and even though the countries of the Middle East² have lately shown a preference for terrorism, armaments, and religious fundamentalism rather than for science, arts, and learning, a suspension of disbelief on the part of the skeptical might suggest that the proposed library, as a focus of study, could plausibly serve as an instrument to cool passions and to pacify — to bring the desert into the orbit of the Mediterranean. In which case it is surely cheap at the price. And in any case, it is surely infinitely cheaper than the cost of the recent war over Kuwait!

After these perfunctory remarks, related mostly to money and to politics, it must now be time to approach the terms of the architectural competition itself, which were published in 1988. It was a highly alluring document. The program was exacting; both topographically and historically the site possesses dimensions which approach the spectacular, and the jury was adequately illustrious. In other words, the prospects for the winner appeared to promise

ALEXANDRINA: AN ALSO RAN?



instant international *réclame*: and therefore, there should be no surprise that a year later 524 participants sent in their entries — presumably few of them willing to “beware of the prestigious international competition” which Stirling appeared to consider a major menace.

Now to imagine the chagrin of the unsuccessful, of those eager, ambitious, often talented individuals who sweated out their projects (and constitute the debris — or the fallout — of any architectural competition) is a terrible misery; all the same, it is no less terrible to turn over the pages of the book which has been produced as a record of the transaction of the competition jury. And this book, *Bibliotheca Alexandrina, International Architectural Competition*, will go far to reinforce reservations of the congenitally skeptical — not about what seems to be Stirling's greatest horror, the overriding dictates of some strongman politico. For here, at Alexandria, there is absolutely no trace of his chauvinist and dreadful presence. No, that big bogeyman can scarcely be introduced; and instead one is obliged to direct attention to the activities — and the acuties — of the professional jury itself.

Therefore, in order to discover something of the jury's mental orientation, one may quote several passages from *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*. For instance, in the case of this library, “we are again confronted with the very issue of defining the identity of the present time”³ and by implication one thus learns that the library must be expressive of some absolutely contemporary

Zeitgeist. But, though one may wonder how (and, for that matter, why) this can or should be the case, by what act of clairvoyance this condition is to be discerned, one must continue:

A building like the New Alexandria Library calls for modern monumentality. It must be modern to identify with our time, but must also possess publicness. . . . Monuments, whatever they are, are to provide lasting impressions to beholders. . . . In this respect architectural creation is not invention by discovery, it is not the pursuit of something beyond the imagination but the externalization of the collective imagination of an age. . . . Whether in the East or the West, or in the past or the present, all buildings worthy of being called monuments have had that quality. They become a testimony of the time.

A resounding accumulation of more than fatigued platitudes? A collection of highly disputable inferences almost presented as revelation from on high? But of course. Nevertheless, these are the words of Fumihiko Maki, vice president of the jury; and they deserve our attention, particularly so after having received almost the imprimatur of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. For just to think about this bland iteration of pseudo-Hegelian dogma, this notion that true authenticity requires the presence of two unknowable and indefinable imperatives, *Zeitgeist* and *Volkgeist*, is to make comment enough upon a quite painful intellectual naïveté.

By comparison, the president of the jury, John Carl Warnecke (Rose Bowl to J.F.K.), without any apparent trace of cultural pretension, is much more down-to-earth; and he contents himself largely with praising the winning design, a circular building which seems mostly to be sunken underground:

The design of the Library is in the form of a circle, which becomes its predominant symbol.

The circle is not only one of man's earliest symbols, it also expresses a basic continuity to man's existence.

The sun is a circle.

The moon is often an emerging circle.

The site of the Library looks out on the ancient harbor of Alexandria, which is in the form of a circle.

The circular plan of the Library thus relates to all these elements.

The circle is a symbol of unity and continuity that embraces the past, present and future.

In this winning design the library is the form of a tilted cylinder, whose circular roof slants subtly toward the sea and the harbor, and points toward the sky, the sun and the moon. A large portion of the Library itself is below ground. And from the ground level it appears as a strong, cylindrical masonry form emerging from the earth. It is like a new moon that will grow to a full moon. It emerges from this particular site like the rebirth of an earlier form.

And after all this neo-atavistic rapture, finally from Warnecke:

Sydney Opera House and the Arch of La Défense in Paris leave an unforgettable impression on those who have seen these buildings once.

Perhaps so, but in the case of the Arch of La Défense, could not this tribute to we know whom also be an impression which the observer might gladly be only too willing to forget?

But now to annex the Aswan Declaration on the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

On the site of the palace of the Ptolemies, the new Alexandrina will give modern expression to an ancient endeavor. A splendid contemporary design for the Library has already been adopted through an international competition.

Signed by, among others, President Mitterrand and Mrs. Mubarak, the terms of this declaration might complete a brief examination of the psycho-intellectual climate which has encompassed both preconceptions of the library and adjudications of the competition. Given the mood of the jury (Maki's somewhat retarded embrace of the tenets of historical determinism and Warnecke's enthusiasm for the Arch of La Défense), given the *délire de grandeur* of President Mitterrand (it must be far more extreme than that of the late Nelson Rockefeller), given Mrs. Mubarak's perhaps slightly ingenuous enthusiasm, in this quaintly charged climate of opinion it must be apparent that accepted procedures of analysis and synthesis can scarcely be expected to flourish and prosper. Indeed, to state the situation crudely, may it not be suggested that their survival factor is just about as tough as the predicament of a snowball in hell?

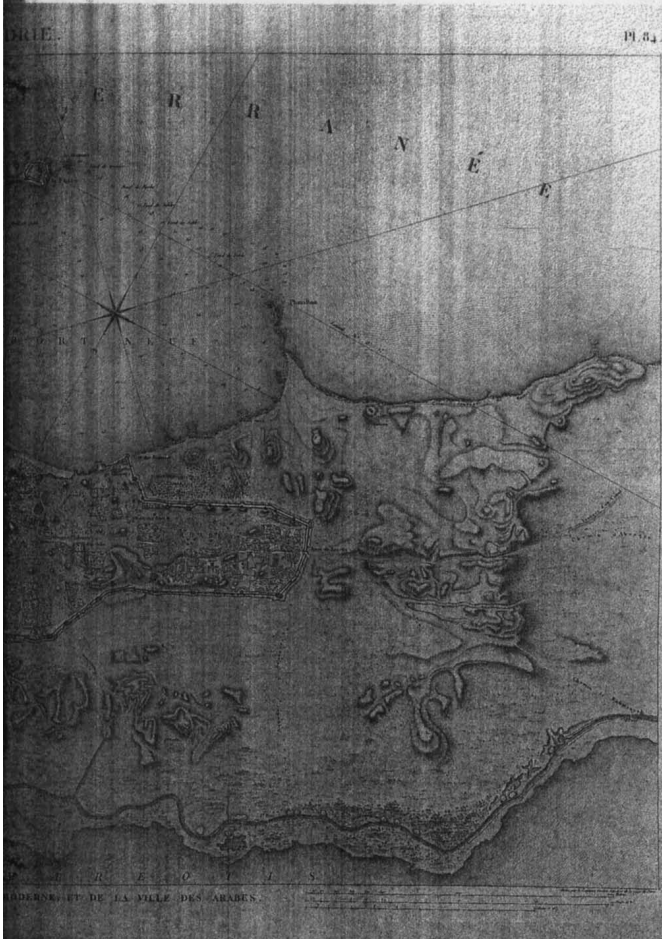
F. M. Vol. II.



As a guide to navigation, the Pharos of Alexandria was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and the most significant object in the scenery of Alexandria's eastern harbor. Then, on the other side of the harbor entrance but somewhat removed, it possessed a pendant in the long since vanished palace of the Ptolemies, its gardens, and its various dependencies.

Through the process of ruin and decay — abrupt or gradual — and the process of random reconstruction, the site of the Pharos and parts of the Pharos itself became incorporated in the present Fort Kaid Bey, the *Château de Phare* of French 19th-century illustrations. It is now proposed that on the approximate site of the Ptolemaic palace there should be established a major library which, just as the Pharos operated as a notice to sailors, will itself serve as an intellectual beacon, an advertisement of rebirth addressed to both the present and the future. Analogically, the library is to become what the Pharos used to be!

Such a dramatic confrontation or dialogue seems to have been a major idea, perhaps the major idea of the promoters of this competition; and it grabs the imagination. For by all the standards of poetry it can only be a supremely apposite idea: the eastern harbor of Alexandria approached via a great portal to be flanked on the right by memories of the lighthouse, and on the left by the new reality of the Alexandrina and all of the enlightened possibilities intrinsic to its establishment. An overwhelmingly simple iconography and a case of time discovering truth?



But between poetry and prose, between dream and reality, between the Platonic idea and its partial embodiment, between a vision of almost Hellenistic splendor and a McDonald's hamburger stand, inevitably there is something which intervenes. In this case, I think, not of the state of mind of those who envisioned this competition but of those who put together its program. And in this case, too, it is possible that the published exigencies of the program and what one might assume to be the exigencies of the site are more than slightly contradictory.

We are talking, after all, about a collection of books worth maybe \$800 million and about a building to house them, which can scarcely be inexpensive. We are talking about what is proposed to be an illustrious institution and a comparably illustrious monument to enclose it. So how much might this monument be expected to cost? Hard to say? What with graft, kickbacks, and all the rest, perhaps another \$200 million? In any case, a total sum likely to reduce any reasonably cautious minister of finance (secretary of the treasury, chancellor of the exchequer) to a quivering jelly.

However, if this is no matter, if this money can easily be afforded — from some source or other — this is not to the point; and much more important is the fact that, until quite recently, it was commonly accepted that a major building did and should possess around itself an orbit of influence, or as it used to be called, an entourage. Simply, a major building could not be reduced to

the condition of a casual episode. The building could not be conceived of as a complex in itself, complete within its own walls. It produced reverberations. Around itself it involved the extended intimations of its presence.

An anachronistic strategy which the relentlessness of a contemporary Zeitgeist has rendered invisible or only deserving of a perfunctory observation? Something like this seems to have been the bias of the program; and I am sure that, apart from myself, many persons who sent in their projects to this competition must have wondered why. For the program excluded any consideration of the peninsula which the site of the library so closely adjoins.

The eastern harbor of Alexandria is separated from the sea by a series of breakwaters extending from Fort Kaid Bey to the north and completed by the peninsula of Selselah to the south. Then from the south of the harbor and prolonged almost ad infinitum to the east, along this north-facing coastline there travels a marine drive. Backed up mostly by six-story apartment houses, it is known — with obvious reference to Napoleonic highways behind Monaco and Nice — as the Corniche; and in his introductory essay to *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, published only in French, Franco Zagari describes this general spectacle of harbor, fort, peninsula, and marine drive as:

Le scénario stratégique, le coeur psychologique des Alexandrines, où tout passe, tout se passe. Le jour, vie et trafic très intenses, la nuit, les miracles. . . . Dans cet espace magique la Bibliothèque vient se situer sur le bord à droite, dans la continuation de l'Université et tendue vers la péninsule de Selselah, joyau spectaculaire de Gait Bey.

(the strategic scenario, the psychological heart of the Alexandrines, where every one passes by, where everything happens. The intense life and traffic of the day, the miracles of the night. . . . In this magic space the Library emerges on the edge of the sea to the right, in continuation with the university, stretching out toward the Selselah peninsula, jewel of Gait Bey.)

So in this strategic scenario, in this psychological heart, in this jewellike setting with all its intense traffic and nocturnal miracles, when all this magic is so romantically envisaged, why was so little proposed to build up the *coup de théâtre*, the climactic statement which is so obviously invoked?

One might suggest that, apart from the difficulty experienced by the authors of the program in addressing themselves to larger than on-site context, there

were at least two arguments involved: (1) The peninsula of Selselah is at present a military reservation, and hence, there in the center of it all and for all its potential as a public park, untouchable; and (2) The Corniche, with all its heavy traffic, is admittedly an impediment to pedestrian access to the water and such beaches as may occur; but what of it? Pedestrian bridges can always be supplied as necessary; and isn't this the cheapest solution anyway?

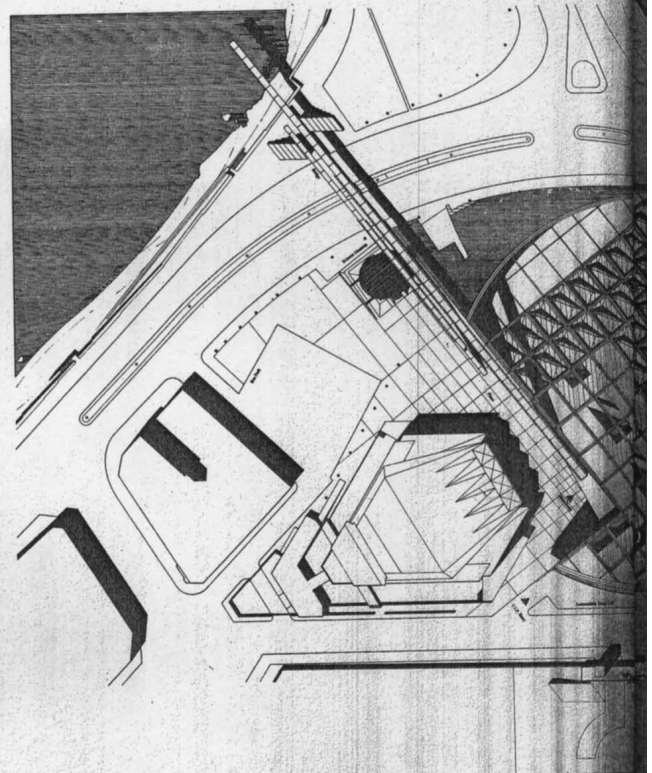
But against these arguments, there may always be cited Le Corbusier's "eyes that do not see," transposable if necessary as "minds that do not think."

Thus, although it is notoriously difficult to dislodge the military, who are often to be found fighting the last war but one, at least they might be given a suggestive push; and in this connection, a little smile from Mrs. Mubarak might have helped a lot. For it is surely inconceivable that a centrally located position, immediately adjacent to a highly expensive building and what is hoped to be a magnetic one, should forever remain a negative site, a *terra incognita*, a place of restricted access.

Rather, the peninsula of Selselah is potentially the most positive site in the whole scenic constellation of the eastern harbor. Equipped with avenues and pavilions, an extension of the university and the library precincts — in the daytime it might and should serve as an academic grove and in the cool of the evening as a place — like so many Italian places — *per fare la passeggiata* after a day which has been rather too hot.

But the Italian reference (and after all, they did do this sort of thing rather well in 19th-century Italy) may allow attention to be directed to the behavior of the Corniche as it passes between the peninsula and the yet-to-be built Library. So just what about the pedestrian crossing of the Corniche? And is it not degrading to the pedestrians to oblige them to climb and then to descend? And would it not have been perfectly possible, in the vicinity of the library, to oblige the automobile to descend and then to climb? It is surely not beyond the mind of humanity to think about it (after all we do this kind of job almost every day) and not beyond the resources of an opulent society to bring it about. And is not the automobile tunnel a slightly more elegant and sociologically useful solution than the exiguous *passerelle*, a furniture of the wasteland, which leads — for the most part — from nowhere to nowhere?

And the making of the tunnel, producing above itself some plaza or *piazzale*, would possess the merit of putting the library into direct communication with

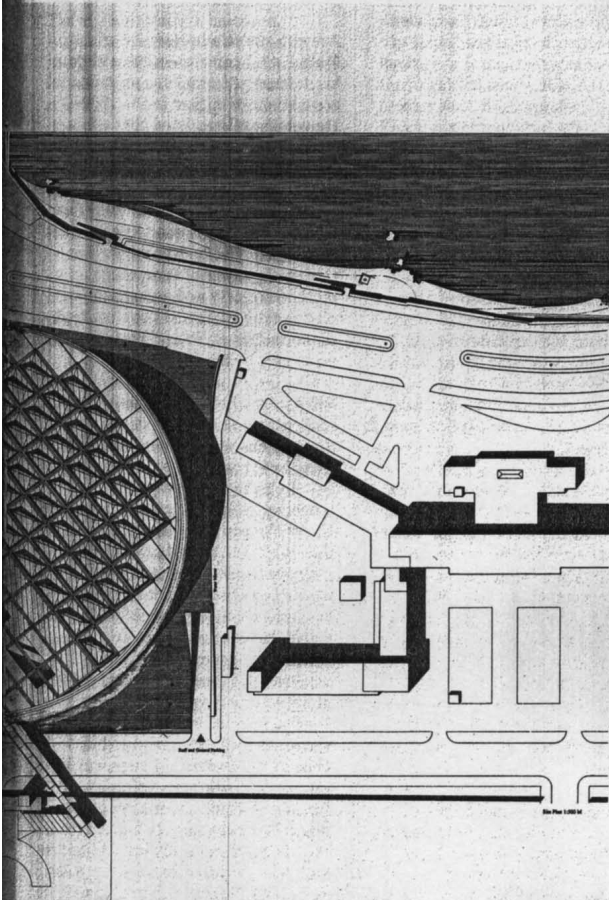


Winning scheme by Snøhetta Arkitektur Landskap, Norway, 1990, plan.

the harbor; and from hence, all sorts of benefits might accrue. For instance, a place where citizens and students might converge; a place serviced by two embarcaderos at which little motorboats would arrive from east and west loaded with eager people who, as they moved in, would find, on the one hand, the floodlit facade of the library, a beacon of knowledge addressed to the city, and on the other, the gates to the Garden of Selselah, beyond which for a few hours — and one imagines the scene at night — there would be mysterious lighting, music, the consumption of refreshments, and the occasional display of fireworks over water.

Too lurid and too much of an Italian souvenir, this image of pleasure? In any case the authors of the program, whom one might conceive to be Protestant, puritan, positivist, and blond, never conceived of such a hybrid focus of animation; and since the jury voted *hors de concours* all those solutions which involved more than the slightest transgressions of the program and all but the most minor concessions to the Corniche, as a result we are left with the anomaly of the winning solution — the glass-roofed quasi-cylinder saluting the sun and moon of John Carl Warnecke.

It might be better if it saluted the harbor or made any but the most imperceptible impact upon the Corniche; but, being in a great park sunk underground (it can scarcely be visible from the harbor) and in close proximity to the Corniche, it seems scarcely to rise above the level of the highway. In



the wall of the six-story apartment houses, instead of a climax it will be a decrescendo (surely very disastrous as seen from the harbor?); and the driver, going either way, will barely be in the position to notice it. Going east it will be a very low wall. Going west it will just not be seen!

Strange fate for a hoped-to-be illustrious institution for which all responsible nations are expected to provide their support. But stranger still are certain further features of the winning project. A glass-roofed library is surely always an absurdity since, unless the glass is screened, the books will fade. But a glass-roofed library in a southern latitude is evidently a double absurdity since it can only produce immense air-conditioning expenses; and this at a time when energy conservation is one of the great themes of the ecologically self-conscious.

Finally, while the Corniche is maintained at its present level, no tunnel permissible — the library itself is sunk — one would think this a more expensive, perverse, and less justifiable undertaking than the sinking of the highway!

With all this said, it is probably safe to add that if the library is to be built in this form, scarcely apprehensible except from the air, then surely its building will add nothing to the repertory of postcards — Santa Maria della Salute, the Stockholm city hall, lower Manhattan as it used to be, even a little Apulian-

Adriatic town like Trani — those great land-water confrontations which conscientious student tourists have been accustomed to send back to their ever-so-concerned families. Samuel Johnson said about the death of David Garrick that his “decease had extinguished the gaiety of nations”; and following his example, one might say that the proposed Alexandrina is likely to extinguish both the enjoyment and the support of those political societies most willing to subscribe to its general idea. The president of the French Republic, among his other concerns, may be overjoyed by the denouement of this competition; but there are others who might doubt both his judgment and his discernment.

Notes

1. James Stirling, “Architecture and Politics,” *R.I.B.A.*, vol. 38, no.6 June 1991, 42-43.
2. Of course, the term *Middle East* is now politically incorrect, regrettably Euro- and Americano-centric. Instead, this whole part of the world is now to be designated Southwest Asia, and Egypt, which everyone knows is part of Africa, is now, correctly, to be spoken of as in some way Asiatic! Such semantic evasions are acceptable to nobody.
3. Fumihiko Maki, “The Modern Monument,” in *Bibliotheca Alexandrina, International Architectural Competition*, ed. Franco Zagari Paris: UNESCO, 1990, 35. All following citations from the jurors are taken from this book.

Editor's Note

“Bibliotheca Alexandrina” was written in 1991 to be published at Yale University in *Perspecta*. But the *Perspecta* editorship changed, as did the subject of the journal, and Rowe's article went unpublished.

R.E. Somol

As instigated by Rowe, his colleagues, and their progeny, it is the varied tradition of formalism which, more than any other, has influenced modes of analysis, methods of teaching, and manners of building for the last thirty years. Moreover, in ways not always congruent with its initial premises, this attitude has made the recent institutionalization of "theory" possible, in part by its linguistic model for architecture as well as its appropriation of advanced models from other disciplines. Finally, it is the techniques made available by formalism (e.g., the grid and collage) that continue to inform emergent architectural and urban possibilities in an increasingly problematic quest for a disciplined design that displays traits of both autonomy and heterogeneity.

The focus of this survey, then, is not on any particular personality, but on the various trajectories — in terms of design method, production, and reception — that have developed and diverged from these techniques. This appears especially important today, as formal investigation is increasingly reduced to the pursuit of precedent or dismissed for its lack of social engagement or political commitment. Given this current commonplace held by both national professional magazines and leading academic institutions, the question remains as to whether a new formalist discourse can reinvigorate an experimental tradition with a political or ideological dimension.

In considering some of these issues, we ask that you respond to the question:

Fred Koetter

It is difficult to think of Colin Rowe in terms of formalism as we have come to receive or understand the term: strict or excessive adherence to prescribed forms, useless formalism, a corruption of the spirit, etc. In fact, the term itself has become so distorted and corrupted by excessive use that it can be conveniently applied to near opposite conditions and has hence rendered itself essentially useless, especially as a term that can be applied to architects or to architectural thought. Thus it seems that the questions asked with respect to this term are, by and large, meaningless.

At the same time, it is obvious that architects — all of them — must necessarily deal with the form of things. Whether or not this necessary concern with form can be called formalism is difficult to determine — but here again, given the extreme flabbiness of this term these days, this question is of little consequence.

One might attempt to rehabilitate the term in various ways. Formalism could, for instance, be posited as a condition of consciousness — i.e., the more conscious (or better still, self-conscious) the use of form, perhaps the more formalist the activity. In this respect, an extremely high degree of self-consciousness — for instance, a condition of simulated unself-consciousness — would, according to this interpretation of the term, constitute a particularly advanced condition of formalism.

Wherever games of this kind might lead us is hard to say, but I would contend that, relative to the subject of Colin Rowe, there exists with Rowe an interest in form that certainly transcends our assumed or contrived definitions of the term.

The figure-ground drawing — which is many things to many people, but often assumed to be a formalist device — is for Colin, I believe, far more than an illustration of form and/or space. It would seem that for Colin, such drawings as the figure-ground — and most other graphic devices as well — are simultaneously a formal/spatial notation system, and a kind of provocateur or stimulant that evokes a sometimes vast constellation of associated material, meaning, and sensation.

The diagram or the drawing is, in this way, not only a form of direct graphic information, but a highly charged instrument of recall, speculation, and contemplation. The seemingly restrictive and simplistic pattern of the urban figure-ground diagram — of a street perhaps — thus carries with it not only the abstracted plan form of the street, but, for Colin, projects a complex vision of the street itself: memories of the precise physical conditions of that street as experienced at various times in the past, the condition of sunlight (or darkness) in that street, its history, its various futures, its materiality, the circumstances of its existence; a recollection of its social, political, or cultural past, a detailed picture of buildings along that street, the smell of the street, the faces or the attire of the people in the street, the noises of the street, other versions of such a street that may exist in other places, etc. All of this is combined with an unpredictable, ruthless, and wholly un sentimental sense of conceptual clarity with respect to the fundamental nature and further urbanistic implications of such a street.

One might call this formalism or one might call it many other things. In my experience with Colin, formalism is certainly not the first word that comes to mind. What one comes to realize is that in the end Colin's method (if it is possible to use such a word in this context) involves the elimination of any extraneous material, intellectual or otherwise, that might exist between the experiencer and that which is being experienced, between the speculator and the instrument of speculation. In this respect, and according to at least some definitions, Colin's processes and his relationship to his surroundings may be most accurately described as a phenomenological transaction — ultimately a condition of informed awareness that transcends both description and prescription.

This particular attitude toward form, in its directness, its generosity, its sophistication, and its comprehensiveness, is quite far removed from much of today's more literally and ideologically based formal preoccupations. And as many of these preoccupations (which simultaneously deny any interest in form as such) become increasingly restrictive in their implications and increasingly time bound in their assumptions of plausibility, it would seem they also become increasingly fragile and transitory.

Fred Koetter is dean of Yale University School of Architecture and principal of Koetter Kim & Associates.

Judith Wolin

What is the status of work on form today? *People still do it.*

I am sure I could write 500 words more on your provocative question, but I would undoubtedly return to this statement, so why embroider it? Your letter broached several other nettlesome questions that I would prefer to ask aloud.

Are you sure Colin Rowe was/is a formalist? I remember quite vividly his defense of formal analysis against accusations of elitism in the 1960s. He vehemently insisted that what could be seen by the eye was available to all viewers and required only acute attention rather than special knowledge. It was therefore an accessible and democratic method of analysis. But he was very clear that this analysis of form was a method of study and description of plan organization, and not a method of production of form. This inference was made by his admirers.

Why did a whole generation of his students presume that his descriptions were prescriptions? They (we) wanted desperately, and still do, to be part of a project (pedagogical as well as architectural) larger than our own individual talents. Since he had inoculated us with a virulent distrust of the narcissism of the avant-garde and we arrived already hostile to the complacent, kitsch, postwar American "modern architecture," the imagined discipline of a repaired architectural language — one where everyone would know what apse shapes were for and where they belonged in a plan — was powerfully seductive. In fact, I would go farther. I would say it seemed absolutely necessary to the creation of a civilized environment. What we were not prepared to consider was how remote our social and formal notions of a civilized environment were from the culture in which we expected to operate.

Rowe himself had a more mature perspective, if not a tragic view, of architecture's contemporary relationship to society. There is hardly a sentence in his pre-1968 essays constructed without a judicious mix of formal and iconographical interpretation. Perhaps more important, every

sentence is larded with irony and doubt. In "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" there is some insightful attention to the play of column grids and objects in the Corbusian plan as *phenomena*, but equal insight is brought to "the Virgilian dream" of the villa's proprietor and the ironies of a pastoral idyll attained by a 15-minute trip in a motorcar.

Formalism is now a battered, blunted term, used most often to imply the absence of something else: social responsibility, emotional content, or originality. In the first decades of this century the Russian literary formalists had very interesting things to say about the construction of a narrative and the ways that the organization of a text supported or augmented its message. It is Alan Colquhoun, not Colin Rowe, who has been most attentive to Russian formalist propositions and their possible translation to architectural criticism.

For the last half century armies of architectural thinkers have been in search of an automatic writing, a methodology of design that would absolve them of the crime of building without authority — and only a very few have made peace with the absence of a secure source of authority or legitimacy for their formal decisions. Both the automatic writers and the few brave souls who operate on instinct or a provisional rationality could be called formalists by somebody's definition. The truth is, if you're not a formalist, you're probably just asleep.

Judith Wolin is head of the department of architecture at Rhode Island School of Design.

Albert Pope Productive Contamination

There is no single tradition of formalism from which architectural discourse presently draws; there are two. Stemming from a single source, these two traditions began to polarize into separate and increasingly antagonistic tendencies at least a century ago. The consequences of this divergence directly affect the present impasse in the formalist tradition.

Back when they could still be understood as a single legacy, Henri Focillon distinguished these divergent traditions in separate chapters of *La vie des formes*, calling them "forms in time" and "forms in space." Forms in time suggested the ongoing development of an autonomous language of form, independent of social, political, and economic contingencies. In the classical tradition, for example, it is often and easily claimed that "form follows form": that form sustains an autonomous logic throughout a remarkably diverse set of historical circumstances. This tradition establishes a disciplinary autonomy that gathers legitimacy, not from the form itself, but from the trajectory of its development over time. The historical basis of temporal autonomy can be found in architectural and urban typology.

The second form of autonomy, forms in space, attempted to invest the qualities of an autonomous system into a single object. It is not an evolution over time that is significant here, but an often complex emergent system discernible within form itself. Self-referencing and emergent rather than static systems underlay this development. There are historical attempts at such autonomy in architecture, but for the most part it is a development that is uniquely modern. Focillon identified spatial autonomy with the development of ornament. He was probably unaware of the significance of his contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright, and his attempt to transform Louis Sullivan's ornament into building form. Indeed, a lot of architects, including Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, with accomplished backgrounds in the ornamental arts were busy translating its prerogatives directly into

architectural form. Thomas Beeby has claimed in a significant and ignored essay that the genesis of modern formalism may be found, not in an architectural tradition, but in the precise translation of ornamental practices and procedures directly into the modern building plan.

The sources of contemporary formalism notwithstanding, the significance of the modern interest in a plastic spatial autonomy lies in the irrevocable split it produced in the formalist tradition. This split between spatial and temporal autonomy has not only polarized architectural and urban debate, but has pushed each tradition into an ever more vicious quest for absolute totalizing autonomy — and we are now caught in its end cycle.

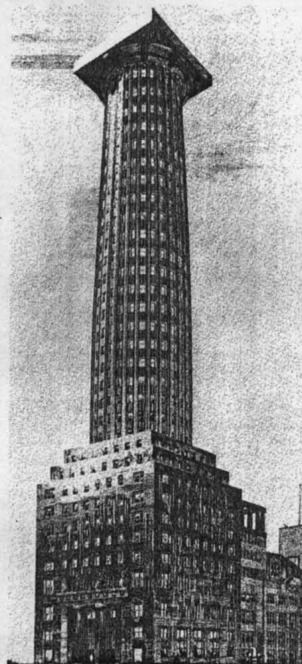
In terms of spatial development the quest for absolute autonomy has taken the form of a singular totalizing aesthetic or vulgar *Gesamtkunstwerk* that seeks to wholly encompass and eclipse the contemporary quotidian environment. Wright's or Van de Velde's complete design of buildings, furniture, clothing, and utensils is an obvious historical example, while the retrograde *Gesamtkunstwerk* of deconstructivism brings the tendency up to date. In an aggressive effort to collapse any dialectical structure into an infinite plurality (or "smooth" space), deconstructivism has itself collapsed into a monism or singularity of hermetic spatial autonomy. In terms of temporal development, the drive for absolute autonomy departs from the unrelenting weight of historical authority, itself a form of totalizing

aesthetic, in an effort to equally encompass and exclude all traces of the quotidian environment. There is also little difficulty in locating contemporary versions of temporal autonomy. In the "new urbanism," drastic aesthetic prohibitions exist, leading to the now-familiar exclusive environment of a historically simulated corporate enclave/theme park.

Whether an aesthetically contrived *Gesamtkunstwerk* or a historically simulated theme park, the tendency of absolute temporal and spatial form has seemingly delivered totalizing environmentalism right into the hands of corporate and bureaucratic power, which of course can and do put it to good use every day.

With regard to the question of whether formalist discourse can "reinvigorate an experimental tradition with a political or ideological dimension," it simply depends on the ability of architectural culture to resist its contemporary development. As much as any indicator, the recent debate in New York between Peter Eisenman and Andres Duany (*ANY*, no. 1) was not a celebration of the diversity of architectural culture as much as it was an expression of absolute incapacitation around this fundamental formalist impasse — the drive for absolute autonomy. It is clear that the present ambition to possess autonomous extremes will not produce a break in the gridlock in the formalist tradition. While it is unfortunate that Rowe himself has succumbed to these extremes in his seemingly unequivocal support of an urban typological revival, it is early identification and defense of an emerging dialectic within the formalist tradition which holds the greatest promise against totalizing tendencies. The possibility for a sustained heterogeneity resides in the ability to thoroughly and productively contaminate these tendencies.

Albert Pope is a principal of Brunner Pope Associates in Houston, and is director of graduate programs at Rice University School of Architecture.



"Forms in time." Adolf Loos entry in the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower Competition. © 1994 ARS, New York/VBK, Vienna.

Peggy Deamer

Today, "formalism" is a negative term to which it is almost embarrassing to refer. And yet, in explanations of architectural work, there is always a formal component that must be addressed; we just do so surreptitiously. A discussion about formalism should find a place for its exposure at the same time that it recasts its delineation in nontrivial terms. One should find a framework, in other words, to not throw the baby out with the bathwater, since the baby will inevitably raise its ugly little head out of the drain.

The negative connotation of formalism derives from its association with composition, but formalism's equation with this term is a relatively recent phenomenon, one that is singularly Anglo-Saxon in its lineage from Roger Fry and Clive Bell to Clement Greenberg. We can look back at a 19th-century Frenchman like J.N.L. Durand and label him a formalist for his compositional recipes because high modernism, in the Greenbergian mold, identified the term as a two-dimensional, vision-dominated prescription. But beyond this Anglo-Saxonism exist composite formalist theories developed in Germany and Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries which reveal another agenda.

In the German tradition, directly tied to neo-Kantianism (and in line with the thinking of Ernst Cassirer), formalism was not a condition of the object, but one of the subject. How one organized sensual data in one's head was the essential question; the artwork was interesting to the extent that it made evident this epistemological condition. There were no criteria — compositional or otherwise — that prescribed what proper form was. Rather, it was a discussion of where the mental province of form lay.

Likewise, in the Russian tradition — born out of the literary arts by such writers as Viktor Shklovsky — formalism was not equated with the organization of the object, but with the devices used by the author to defamiliarize the material. The roughening of the story/object simultaneously made the reader/viewer aware of the author, and allowed the object to regain visibility (the consequence of its being jarred out of the invisibility of habituation). The concrete material of the work — the words, the sounds, the punctuation and pauses,

the physical place that a sentence found itself in on the page — was seen as the link between the author's volition and the reader's reception.

In both of these German and Russian trajectories, formalism is concerned not with the form of the designed object, but with the psychological condition of which it is both the cause and the effect. In this way, formalism's link to vision is reframed. The object-fixed, compositional definition of formalism implies a reliance on the visual-as-empirical; in these other strains, vision, in its psycho-epistemological framing, becomes hermeneutic. With vision understood as an interpretative device, the formalism which is linked to vision is not a register of external fact but of inner reactions and projections.

Peggy Deamer, a practicing architect in New York City, currently teaches at Yale University and Barnard College.

Nadir Lahiji Form and Abjection

Colin Rowe reinvents the formalist and the classical Le Corbusier, but first he had to invoke a formal category: *architectural contrapposto*. Gyration around horizontal and vertical axes, he claimed, results in that visual phenomenon that is called *contrapposto*—frontality, "wall as declamation."

Colin Rowe's formal logic of visibility is a geometric optics that has its roots in the right angle and the verticality of the upright body, which Georges Bataille dresses in a "mathematical frock coat": "Indeed, for academics to be happy, the universe would have to take on form. The whole of philosophy has no other goal: to provide a frock coat for what is, a mathematical frock coat. To declare, on the contrary, that the universe is not like anything, and is simply *formless*, is tantamount to saying the universe is something like a spider or spittle." Bataille did not mean that *informe* is the opposite of form; the world cannot be separated into neat pairs of opposites — form versus matter, form versus content, form versus function, etc. It is rather a question of not locating the origin of form in an optico-geometric mastery of space.

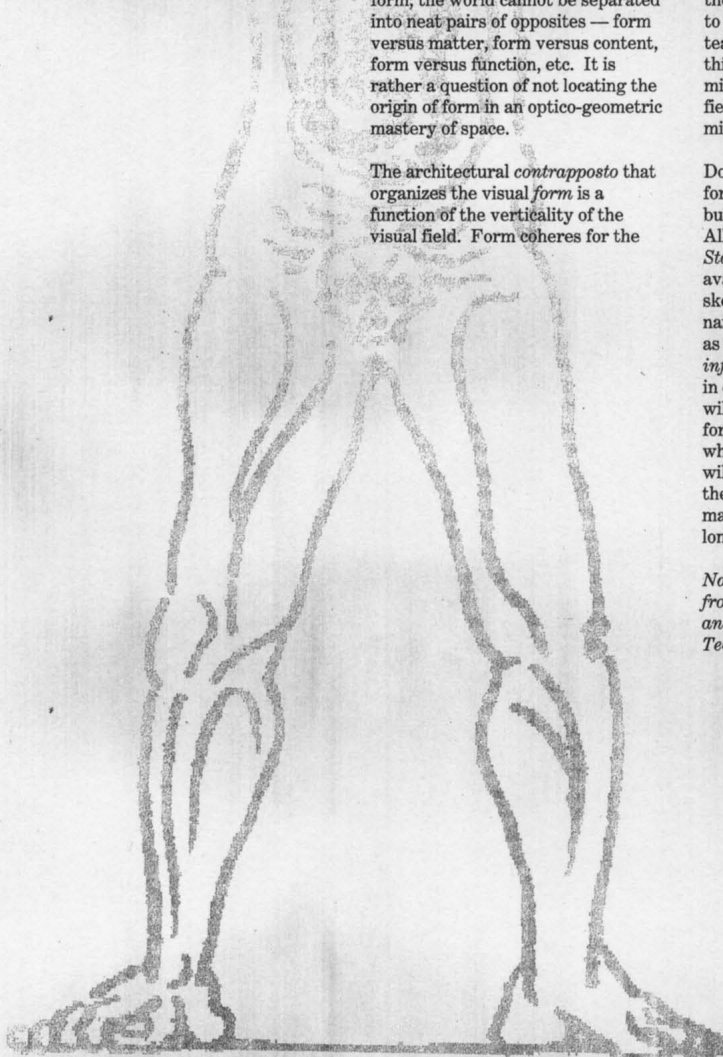
The architectural *contrapposto* that organizes the visual *form* is a function of the verticality of the visual field. Form coheres for the

observer when he or she is positioned in that field from a standing position; the wall is parallel to the upright body. Form organizes itself in an alignment that is frontal to the perceiver. Yet this is only the *image* of the coherence of form in the subject's projection into the vertical visual field. In this totalizing view of form, the evolution of the historical discourse on "grid" moves toward *quadrillage*, or "gridding," and its educational model of "surveillance" which informed the pedagogy of literature, art, philosophy, and — one should add — architecture. In fact, the formalist grid, informed by the totalitarian ethics of liberal democracy at the political level, has dominated the powerful formalist view of modernity and its teaching for the last three decades.

But at the end of the 20th century we have discovered that we are contemporary with the baroque, and that we share its vision of the world: "*La folie du voire*." The "madness of vision" in the world of the baroque, as it has been mapped out for us in the antiocularcentric discourse, goes to the heart of the formalist teaching. Significantly the model of this vision is not the flat reflecting mirror of the fronto-vertical visual field, but rather the anamorphic mirror.

Do we need another treatise on form for our time? Perhaps not a treatise, but rather a pornographic novel. Allow me to suggest a title: *The Story of the Form*. In the space available to me here I can only sketch a plot for this novel: it will narrate the story of form as matrix, as desire, as unconscious. The *informe* will inform the grid of form in dysmorphia. And this I believe will be the status of the work on form today in *la folie du voire*, in which the architectural *contrapposto* will collapse into horizontality, and the eye of the academic, with her mathematical frock coat, will no longer be at the origin of the form.

Nadir Lahiji holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania and teaches at Georgia Institute of Technology.



André Masson, Acéphale. © 1994 ARS, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Michael Graves

In the 1960s when Colin Rowe was a visiting critic at Princeton I was assigned to assist him in the graduate design studio. Through this experience I gained a very particular understanding which may be unknown to many people. Colin is, of course, well known for the extraordinary insight he conveys through his writing and lecturing. However, in that studio at Princeton (where I dare say I learned as much or probably more than the students) it was his ability to draw and make plans that was most striking. Colin would describe how a plan might be composed and developed by drawing small passages of the students' work and transforming them. We could instantly start to read the inhabitation of the plan. The thickness of walls, the tension between point supports and walls, the enclosures, and the voids seemed to change color before our eyes, emerging from the blank ground of students' papers.

What was marvelous about Colin's drawings — and sadly missing from today's student work — was the character and life which those little sketches could convey. By extension, Colin's clear understanding of the continuity of language through drawings and their variations and transformations would lead him to his extraordinary analysis of the parallels between the work of Palladio and Le Corbusier.

This recollection is particularly poignant today, since not only are many students and critics unable to make plans, they are not even interested in making them. I am sure Colin had no idea that his interest in collage could turn against his formal interest in the plan and subvert it. Colin would surely see the great latitude allowed in the plan or in composed collages like those of Juan Gris. However, if students are unaware of the cubist collage as a technique of composition, they could easily embrace another model which seems to be lodged in a formal bias toward natural phenomena. It might be said that, without their knowing it, they are reenacting the limitations found in the formal work of people like D'Arcy Thompson. I think Colin would despair at the way the shifts in plan have been exploded and made primary to the point that we can no longer read the primacy of the orthogonal and hence our own bodily stance within the composition. It is this sense of inhabitation and life — conveyed so easily in Colin's sketches for his students — that must be expressed in the making of a plan.

Michael Graves is principal of Michael Graves Architect and a professor at Princeton University School of Architecture.

Thomas L. Schumacher

The specifics of your request caught me off guard, but I have been considering the question of architectural work on form, or formalist work. I must say that I'm baffled. I know nobody who is a formalist. Colin Rowe certainly isn't one. Perhaps Zaha Hadid is a formalist, since she seems to relish the arbitrariness of her own design process. But she might object to the label, and doubtless with cause.

I regard the word *formalist* as a term of derision in the discipline of architecture and would be loath to associate Colin Rowe's work with it. The term *contextualist* was once used by Colin, having been coined in the 1960s by Steven Hurr and Stuart Cohen. But alas, that term has also been ruined; it now denotes the "method" of using red brick in a redbrick neighborhood and matching existing stylistic details in a crude postmodern collage. Too bad.

Perhaps the word *structuralist* might help to categorize Colin's theories and ideas, if you are hell-bent on naming attitudes. Unfortunately, architects think structuralism is associated with structural engineers. Maybe Colin is a structuralist because he seems to believe that underlying structures do indeed underlie many different periods, styles, zeitgeists, not to mention particular works. In the same way that he saw similarities between Palladio's Villa Malcontenta and Le Corbusier's villa at Garches, he also sees the potential of the plan of some already existing urban complex as a point of departure for the design of a new urban complex. But this description makes him look like a modern day Julien Guadet, which he is not — and it is a gross oversimplification. Such labeling demeans the subtlety and depth of Colin's ideas and influence. I am reminded of the joke about the journalist who asks Shakespeare to explain *King Lear*, to which the bard replies, "If I could explain it, I wouldn't have had to write four acts."

A longer discussion of Colin's theories, and the buildings and urban design projects which have been influenced by them, might be in order, but your limit of 500 words is probably about 5000 words too short and your deadline about three months too soon.

Thomas L. Schumacher is an architect and a visiting professor at Syracuse University in Florence.

Stuart Cohen

In reply to your question, I would like to offer both a general and personal response.

During the past few years the focus of formal investigation seems to have shifted from the reconstruction of an architectural language of historical form and associative meaning back to an architecture of abstract form. This includes the creation of an avant-garde complete with a theoretical base and new form-making methodologies. Like early modernism, this new avant-garde has an agenda that includes the self-conscious creation of a new architecture, which is not intended to resemble any previous architecture. Not all contemporary work fits this description. Like the postmodernist revival of historical forms, much of the new work being done today seems to be a revival. Not only are the forms of early 20th-century modernism being investigated, but along with them there seems to be a nostalgia for the architect, as Colin Rowe used to say (paraphrasing Frank Lloyd Wright), as "savior and cultural hero."

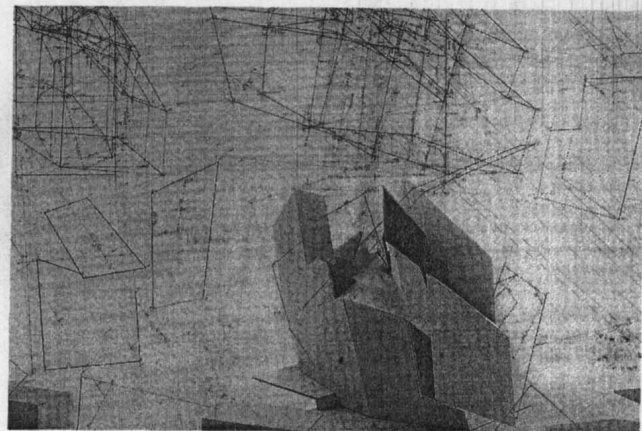
As a student, I had the impression that Colin wanted to discredit the ideological belief systems of modern architecture, so that we could get on with the business of making form without having to believe either that it emerged from the requirements of our client's program or that it came to us through the "spirit of the age." Judging from current rhetoric, the spirit of the age has proven to be a pretty durable argument.

It was also my impression that Colin believed individual architects didn't invent form, rather they deployed it. The exception to this might occur once or twice in a millennium. I remember him saying his favorite architects were Michelangelo, Borromini, and Le Corbusier. Borromini because, between

Michelangelo and Corb, he best understood the intentions of Michelangelo. I also remember Colin saying that "architecture is the making of images" (not form). His ideas, even his casual remarks, had an enormous influence on both my architectural work and my teaching. They are my memories of Colin, his pedagogical legacy to me (and to each of his students). Equally and inversely influential for me were his disinterest in Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp and his passionate dislike of Frank Lloyd Wright.

The building alterations, additions, and interventions I did in the late 1970s and 1980s explored formal issues related to contextualism, an architectural strategy derived from Colin's urban design program at Cornell. Currently, my interest is not form but architectural space: I am interested in making defined and configured (roomlike) space within or alternating with continuous modernist space. In my work, these spaces are formed by traditional architectural elements, trim, moldings, and cabinetwork, used systematically to define, link, or differentiate space. I often think how similar this is to the spatial effect of ornamental trim in Frank Lloyd Wright's interiors.

*Stuart Cohen, FAIA, practices architecture and teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His 1974 article in *Oppositions* was influential in establishing the term contextualism as a part of architectural discourse.*



Preston Scott Cohen, collage from "Stereotomic Permutations" exhibit, 1994.

Sarah Whiting and Ron Witte
Amoebic Space

A building is like a soap bubble. This bubble is perfect and harmonious if the breath has been evenly distributed from the inside. The exterior is the result of an interior.

— Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 1927

Like the soap bubble, the public sphere is fabricated by a perfect breath exhaled by a singular constituency. The purity of this singular breath structures the purity of a geometric form whose sealed, intact interior determines its platonic exterior: a smooth surface of hygienic transparency.

In a post-Corbusian world multiple breaths disturb the homogeneity of the bubble's interior and disrupt the uniformity of its taut surface. The eddies and currents of different breaths distort the sphere, creating an amoebic public space which constantly changes its shape. These volatile breaths form a language of contestation, an opaque language of multiplicity, rather than a singular voice of artificial reconciliation or silenced diversity.

On such a distorted surface, constantly altered by these breaths is the asphalt plane of the postwar city, the site of Rodney King's and Reginald Denny's contestations, for example. Opaque and dirty, asphalt oozes like the amoeba, conforming to the terrain which it occupies. Simultaneously, asphalt redefines that terrain by adding to it a layer of its own form. Asphalt complicates the bubble's pure formal model: as the temperature rises, its bituminous surface changes shape. Events like the L.A. riots define intersections and asphalt stretches in a way that no urban planner could have envisioned. Where streets once delineated territories, their pavement, now occupiable as discursive space, has become the site of contestation. The heat of contestation reconfigures the shape of the street.

Unlike the fixed models of urban planners, amoebic asphalt public space appears and disappears in response to the action played out on its flexible surface.

It's going to be a hot summer.

Sarah Whiting is an architect and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in history, theory, and criticism of art and architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ron Witte is an architect and is currently teaching in the department of architecture at the University of Florida.

Steven Hurtt

The question of whether Colin Rowe is a formalist can be understood as an objective observation, a compliment, or a pejorative accusation. As a compliment, it suggests that a formalist elucidates or creates a certain logic or beauty in the appearance, form, structure, or organization of some thing. As an accusation, it suggests that a formalist's values are screwed up in believing that the logic of formal manipulations is the highest aspect of art and architecture, that meaning is irrelevant, or that formal manipulations are or can be the substance, meaning, or value itself.

Here it is important to distinguish whether *formalist* refers to a matter of analysis or a matter of design. As a matter of analysis, formalism is certainly one aspect of a broader set of descriptive possibilities; in design, formalism is one set of issues. But the real question is whether Rowe propounds a formalist design strategy predominant over or exclusive of other concerns.

To read Rowe is to conclude that he is not a formalist per se, and that form is never divorced from meaning but rather embodies meaning. But to look at Rowe as a teacher one can scarcely deny his enormous influence on many who can more readily be seen as formalist, and who represent such a vast range of ideas that they can be seen to be on opposite sides of various theoretical positions.

As a teacher Rowe can be seen as laying the theoretical groundwork for, among other things, the renewed formalist interest in modern architecture represented by the *Five Architects*, et al. — contrarily the poorly named postmodernism and, between these extremes, contextualism. More generally, Rowe has influenced an approach to architecture that aspires to formal and theoretic rigor and has a clear

(and self-conscious) attitude toward history.

In addition, though his own position seems discernible, Rowe's interest in personality and his view of the fundamental psychological condition of humankind explain the extremes represented by his intellectual progeny — Stirling, Meier, Hejduk, Seligmann, Graves, Eisenman, Frampton, Koetter, Beeby, Dennis, etc. Architectural education is obliged to address formal issues, whether implicitly or explicitly, abstractly or related consciously to precedents, types, styles, or persons. Rowe and his progeny have favored explicit and history-conscious teaching methods in contrast to some of the talent-and-zeitgeist methods that have sometimes prevailed elsewhere.

When Rowe was confronted at the University of Texas with a teaching situation dominated by the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, he convinced some of his colleagues to expand the disciplined study of modern architecture to include Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. The faculty (the so-called Texas Rangers) took this new method of teaching architecture to other institutions.

In its early phases this new method was as committed to a style of architecture as had been the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* and the Bauhaus. The model encompassed not only the study of principles but also architecture and architects. Nothing but bias or blind faith could prevent expanding the range of architects, periods, and styles studied, which is revealed in the extreme variations in

points of view of the Rowe progeny and their descendants, whether modernist, postmodernist, eclectic, or revivalist.

If one examines most of the late phases of modern architecture, at least from *Five Architects* forward, whether called structuralism, deconstructivism, neoconservatism, the New Architecture, or whatever — and if they exhibit a fragmentation of form and a fluctuation or tentativeness of figure and insistence of ground — and if one strips away their interest or lack thereof in materiality, and likewise ignores their theories and apologies in order to focus on their formal characteristics and interests, it is possible to see all of this work as a continuous line of inquiry into the implications of cubism for modern architecture. It is fair to say that Rowe set much of this intellectual and artistic activity in motion. Rowe's early essay "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," coauthored with Robert Slutzky, clearly describes the spatial and compositional properties of protocubism and cubism, and finds them wanting in most modern architecture except in the work of Le Corbusier. Rowe and Slutzky saw in both cubism and Le Corbusier a tension between deep and shallow space; alternating spatial rhythms (which in architecture lay beyond grids that were rationalized in purely structural terms); a visual order of space that was one of diagonal recession (secondary in neoclassical architecture but primary in modern architecture). These observations led their protégés to see that cubism allowed for the survival of figure (which modern architecture nearly did away with), and therefore a possible interaction or fluctuation of figure and ground in both plan and elevation; and that cubism's overlapping and interpenetrating fields of reference could be used conceptually like those available in traditional architecture — gestures which had been made suspect by modern architecture's disinterest in entourage, and focus on the rational object.

Though interested in cubism, Rowe showed little interest in collage until the mid-1960s, when he was directing the urban design studio at Cornell. He and some of the studio students arrived at the critique that collage provided to the studio work, to the modern city, and to modern architecture. This critique became *Collage City*, coauthored with Fred Koetter.

Rowe defined the urban problem as the extreme antagonism between the precepts of modern architecture and the traditional city, the absurdity of the antagonism, its intellectual and historical roots, the horrific consequences of its manifestations, and the possibility of reconciliation.

The studio demonstrated that the impoverished repertoire of modern architectural building types was not equal to the task of reconciliation. The formal analog to cubism quickly ran its course — the nonaligned and fragmented grids of American cities were ordered and clarified through their extension, completion, overlap, and interpenetration. Rowe paraded traditional building hierarchies and exemplars before the studio as objects worthy of study. Scalar studies of districts, buildings, and spaces were introduced into design work as comparisons. Direct conscription rather than reinvention was tried, and the question of literal or representational use was left somewhat ambiguous. Then this quasi-literal, quasi-representational use began to be rationalized: after all, the process and product were those of collage, an entirely modern operation and idea — but collage offered an additional critique.

The collage procedure was not so different from the use of known buildings and types selected for associational and iconographic value in traditional architecture and city making. Interpreted in this manner, the idea of collage challenged the already suspect zeitgeist argument, for the 19th-century city that created the nostalgic atemporal city seemed, in the studio, to be more successful than the 20th-century futurist city that emphasized the temporal. Premodern architectural examples offered clearer hierarchies,

richer urban textures, decidedly honorific buildings, and complex or hybrid buildings that seemed both to engage texture and be distinct from it. The reexploration of these historical exemplars offered critiques of modernism: its destruction of defined urban space, its resistance to amalgamation into traditional urban fabrics, its destruction of distinctions between private and public realms, its resistance to associational content and rich iconographic programs, its uniformity and related implication of totalitarian design and politics. This and more supported the lessons of the traditional city.

This critique, transferred from urbanism to architecture, was equally relevant. Thus, for some, modern architecture no longer seemed a viable design choice. This is the common ground of Rowe, Venturi, Moore, and others and explains those progeny of Rowe who are more eclectically and historically oriented, less stridently modern, less formally reductive than others. It also explains, by virtue of Rowe's illumination of unexplored formal/intellectual paths, those who selected a more narrow focus.

Rowe appreciates that formal investigation can do as much to reveal a problem as any other method. He has constantly challenged deterministic notions of design, no matter how they are rationalized, and has offered a constant critique of the narrow-minded, deterministic, acultural, ahistorical, reductive, noninclusive, antisocial, megalomaniacal, millennialist themes within modern architecture and what continues to pass as architectural theory and criticism. It has been his constant effort to demonstrate that, despite modern architecture's polemical declaration of revolutionary status and rejection of custom and tradition, the movement is entirely indebted to and solidly embedded in the history and culture in which it developed, and that its call to the liberation of individual expression is contradicted by its own notions of the zeitgeist, megalomania, and simplistic social and intellectual order — that the world and humankind are simply more complex, contradictory, and inclusive than modern architecture would have it.

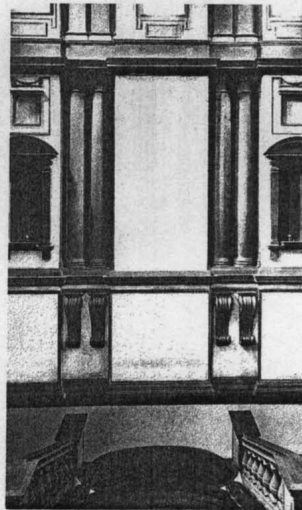
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Ben Nicholson Damn Good Form and Exceedingly Bad Form!

The seat of good form is found in the finger pads. The bad work of a maker seems to exhibit the same traits, in line and form, as the good work. An elusive vein supports the finger-printed lines and washes in the work — irrespective of how fine or feeble a person may be on any given day. Sketch grubbers, the vapor trail of educated scavengers who dive into wastebaskets beneath the master's desk, are on the right track. Form is evident on yellow legal pads and counterpart rolls of even yellower trace; yellow — the color of rascals of the office underground.

Ask someone to draw a freehand rectangle and invite him or her to color it in. The telltale elongated square will show all the elements of a person's form. No two rectangles are alike: each will grace us with its department slouch or ringing straightness. (By the way, this three-dimensional rectangle is the key to taking pleasure in Stanley Tigerman's work. Its beauty lies less in the encyclopedic nature of the jackdoor shape than it does in its mimicable finger-padded form, which always glows through the mask fronts that are deftly propped around the plan.)

Form resides outside the glove which encloses ideas emanating from within it. Once a thought has run the gamut of historical, philosophical, fiscal, and political enquiries, it arrives at a point where it cannot proceed unless it sheds its intricate system of justification. This form is called the FukKit form, the one that comes when the maker is sick to death of exhaustive inquiries. It is made by those who have become impatient with winding ever closer stories around trumped up facts and who have gained the will to declare: FukKit! With the word FukKit follows the irreverent action of spilling form, which bowls over the critical mass and passes on, never to be tagged.



To be caught up in this form is to suspend momentarily any sort of logic, and it is wholly disinterested in goody-goody analysis. This form is the very hardest to locate, or retreat from, for it is the discovery of one's own code within the fingerprints.

M-a-t-u-r-i-t-y is another way of spelling form. There is early, middle, and late maturity: in these particular moments of a person's life, things just seem to come out right, irrespective of the conditions. The work thrusts out, unimpeded by anything, anybody, or any sort of nonsense that might get in its way. This is the form that Van Gogh mouthed when asked why he made his paintings in a particular way: he replied, "Because. Just because!"

In our overarticulated realm, it is the underarticulate that often gains the most respect. We like the dirty grunting that follows the scissor strokes of Matisse's blue paper cutouts. He knew the form of FukKit. Of course, it is Bad Form to say such a thing in public, but such a pronouncement is conferred by those on the right side, who make up, establish, and live by the rules of Good Form. Anything outside of Good Form is usually Bad Form — in this case, verging on Bloody Bad Form. But Bad Form becomes Good Form sooner or later, as it stakes out latent ground and settles it with its own voice and reverberating echo.

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"Michelangelo's elongated square." Entry to the Laurentian Library, Florence.

Richard Sommer

When we speak about architecture as work on form, we are upholding a tendency, inherited from 19th-century aesthetics, to imbue pure, i.e., original, form with a utopian function. Feeling the pressing weight of historical consciousness, our formalist ancestors sought a transcendent category of endeavor where, through the medium of artistic form, the human imagination could produce a second nature — rivaled only by the first in its beauty.

Against this historical background the reason for the architectural avant-garde's concentration on formal research in the postwar era is clear; new forms promise the possibility of work (conceived as both verb and noun) freed from the all-pervasive commodification of the marketplace. The hope has been that by bracketing off the work of architecture from the repressive forces of the market, a thing of beauty may emerge. In this view the beauty of the thing is an effect of its resistance to being instrumentalized by an ever increasingly technological society. Witness on one hand a recent fetish from archaic methods of construction and on the other an interest in computer software that models complex biological processes capable of producing extremely differentiated forms.

The paradox of this particular avant-garde posture is revealed when we recognize the degree to which almost all contemporary architectural practices are situated in, or serve at, the pleasure of established (i.e., conservative) institutions. Thus the schizophrenic work style of the architects who, in vainly trying to avoid the commodification of architecture, separate the formal apparatus of architectural production from the practical contingencies brought by the corporate, academic, and cultural interests who are their sponsors. More often than not we find that the experimental or original image of a project provides a powerful veil to the lack of any reform in the cultural program it houses. Only by acknowledging that architectural form always entails a social and political content can we bring criticism to bear on a process that typically provides a progressive face to all-too-stable institutions.

If we no longer uphold nature as a transcendent phenomenon separate from human endeavor and beyond a particular culture's ability to represent it in language, then artistic form should be thought of as relative to the same cultural forces as common language. In this sense nothing is new under the sun except those forms that carefully engage and challenge what Paul de Man termed a culture's horizon of expectation.

If work on architectural form is to maintain a utopian function, as I believe it should, it will not be through the projection of an alternative system of form and space to the extant one. We would do better to read, engage, and rewrite those time-full forms that surround us and contain the promise of a better future. By letting go of the imperative to be original and finding in history that discursive play to which the meaning of all form is subject we can work to give architectural form the status we desire for it.

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Mario Gandelsonas Formalism and Poetics

The effects of Colin Rowe's work can be measured in the theoretical/ideological realm, as well as in the production, and more specifically, reproduction of architecture. Rowe has developed one of the more influential theories of modernism, a theory that has permeated contemporary architectural discourse. He has played an equally strong role at the ideological level, where his teaching and the "underground" circulation of his articles and later the publication of his books influenced two distinct and opposite tendencies. While *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* influenced the neomodernist architecture of the Five Architects in the 1960s and later the avant-gardist deconstructivists of the late 1980s, *Collage City* became the discourse adopted by the conservative postmodernism of Rowe's Cornell students in the 1970s and '80s.

Although the role of avant-gardist and traditionalist tendencies may be minor in the history of architectural production, their role in the development of Rowe's formalist theories is relevant in the realm of architectural reproduction, in the form of education. It is through these two tendencies that Rowe's theory has permeated the educational milieu in America. It is still the case that when people argue the question of architectural form, the notions developed by Rowe are part of the conceptual armature of the discussion. The possibility of a discourse is crucial for the teaching of architecture and therefore the reproduction of the practice.

This reproduction — and therefore survival — of the practice depends on form, on continuously evolving formal structures, on transforming syntactic processes, and if it does not depend on "type," it depends on some complex typological processes

on the basis of which a dialogue can be sustained and developed. This is precisely what Rowe has done in his work.

However, formalism does not address the issue of poetics. It is the poetics (related to the unconscious processes suppressed by the discourse of vision and practice) and not the syntax that determines the persistence of an architectural building, and in some rare instances, of the work of an architect. Poetics is the force, the energy that animates architectural history. When the poetic is articulated by syntax, the resonance of a work becomes very powerful, as can be seen in the works of Palladio and Le Corbusier. These works not only become part of the architectural intertext, they punctuate it, resonating in a history of long duration. Colin Rowe's fine ear perceived those resonances and, by bringing together Palladio and Le Corbusier, he began what has become the history of this architectural intertext.

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**Sanford Kwinter
Who's Afraid of Formalism?**

True formalism, most of us imagine, has been under siege for nearly as long as it has occupied — and for the most part, merited — the forefront of rigorous analysis in the arts and the inexact sciences. But in truth, this has not been the case. For in fact, it is only the poor or degenerate formalisms (what might be referred to as the merely “formalistic”) that have shown any capacity to draw cogent challenge from so-called higher-minded, more ecumenical modes of analysis. “Poor formalisms” I would claim, are really just unextended formalisms: parodic analytical methods derived from the great and genuine aesthetic and epistemological innovations of modern, avant-gardist tradition, but which have simply forgotten that that is what they are. The poverty of what is today collectively referred to by the misnomer “formalism,” is more than anything else the result of a sloppy conflation of the notion of “form” with that of “object.” The form problem, from the time of the pre-Socratics to the late 20th century is, in fact, an almost unbroken concern with the mechanisms of formation, the processes by which discernible patterns come to dissociate themselves from a less finely ordered field. Form, when seen from this perspective, is ordering action, a logic deployed while the object is merely the latter's sectional image, a manifest variation on an always somewhat distant theme. The form of the object (or the form of the expression) and the form of the theme (form of the content) are, in truth, in continual dynamic resonance, and, when grasped together by formalist analysis, open up onto a field of limitless communication and transmission.

What I call true formalism refers to any method that diagrams the proliferation of fundamental resonances and demonstrates how these accumulate into figures of order and shape. The very fact that

the figure of a facade, the plan of a villa, or the marquetry of an urban fabric, might enfold within it a resonant, transmissible logic of internal control, one that can be at once dissociated from its material substrate and maintained in communicative tension with it, was once an assertion of great contentiousness, so that the moment of its rigorous demonstration became one of the watersheds, not only of modern aesthetics, but of modern science and philosophy as well. Colin Rowe's work in architectural analysis laid one of the cornerstones in this century for the possibility of the emergence of a true formalism.

Yet the configuration of the contemporary polemic is deeply misleading. It holds, among other things, that an enlightened science of meaning, of ideology, or of commitment can, and ought to, be mustered as a palliative and corrective to a sterile, abstract academicism that seizes only the visible but lifeless schemata of things, one that weaves its pallid array of skeletal elements into a fraudulently brilliant, self-fulfilling but world-denying, view. Such a position might be partly valid — it could be seen as attacking the poor formalisms of the object — that is, if this latter were but the concoction of the former's own flawed understanding. Indeed there is not, and never has been, any such thing as “meaning” or “ideology,” not, in any case, one separate from the physics of history and power, a physics, not incidentally, which is always a physics of forms: be it the form of an idea, the form of an epoch, or the form of a tool. True formalism holds out for us the real possibility both for a pragmatic description of historical emergence (why this object, institution, or configuration here, in this place, at this time, and not that?) and the superseding of the most tired and woolly metaphysics dogging thought today, the metaphysics of the signifier.

Formalism demonstrates first and foremost that form is resonance and expression of embedded forces. The best local formalisms (Rowe's, Focillon's, Schoenberg's, Foucault's, etc.) show that these embedded forces are themselves organized and have a pre-concrete, logical form of their own. The dynamic relation between these two levels of form is the space where all indeterminacy or historical becoming unfolds. Extended or true formalisms are different only in that they also describe relations of resonance and expression between, local forms or

form systems. This is why most antiformalists are essentially poor formalists themselves; they see only the shell of object-forms and sad enclaves of inert matter, never the resonance of wild, directed formation. The great formalists, on the other hand, have always been able to peer into the object toward its rules of formation and see these two strata together as a mobile, open and oscillating system subject to a greater or lesser number of external pressures. The manifest form — that which appears — is the result of a computational interaction between internal rules and external (morphogenetic) pressures that themselves, originate in other adjacent forms. The (pre-concrete) internal rules comprise, in their activity, an embedded form, what is today clearly understood and described by the term *algorithm*. Algorithmic formalism (the most dynamic, extendable kind) was an invention of Goethe's and remains the basis of all robust, generative formalisms (including those being used today in computational biology).

Among other things, Goethe posited the concept of a “type” as an abstract formative principle to be acted upon by other primary transformative processes. This may well be the source of a disturbing misunderstanding today regarding the role of generative or “deep structural” elements in designed systems and designed processes (and it is here that I must emphatically part ways with my pal Greg Lynn). For the type concept is never a development of a supersensuous Platonic *eidos* (one intuits here the tendentious, reductive influence of Derrida), but is related rather to a dynamic inner intelligibility (the *eidos* of the Physicians, linked to *dynamis* or power), or to the actualization of formal causes in Aristotle (*eidos* in its relation to the entelechies or to *energeia*). Type, in Goethe as in Rowe, is at least partly active, and it is on this active aspect that we need to concentrate if we wish to give place to new extended formalisms.

Ernst Cassirer once said of Goethe that his work completed the transition from the *generic* view to the *genetic* view of organic nature. He was referring to the break from the tabular space of the *genera* of the

Linnaean classifications with their emphasis on what is constant and fixed to a *generative* space where the processes of coming-to-be are given shape. Goethe's formalism, like all rigorous and interesting ones, actually marks a turning away from the simple structure of end products toward the active, ever-changing processes that bring them into being. With any luck, 20 years from now one will be able to make the same claim for Rowe's work in architecture that Cassirer made for Goethe's in science. And should this not come to be, it will be far more the fault of the one-dimensional semioticians and ideologists who propagate the cliché of the “social construction of meaning” than of second-rate formalists who merely trivialize a powerful method and inadvertently lend credence to the suffocating arguments of the former group.

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NOT THE LAST WORD PETER EISENMAN: THE INTELLECTUAL SHEIK

If only abstractions could be relaxed, more empirical material allowed to enter and a further generalisation to take place, then how happy one would be.

— Colin Rowe, 1979

Author's note: Colin Rowe, Manfredo Tafuri, and perhaps Reyner Banham are the most influential architectural thinkers of the last half of the 20th century. They are to my generation what Rudolf Wittkower, Heinrich Wölfflin, and perhaps Paul Frankl were to the generation of the first half of the 20th century. But why Colin Rowe? Clearly it cannot be because of a prodigious amount of published work — particularly in the last 25 years. Only two small, though extremely important collections of his essays exist (I include Collage City). Perhaps it is because of the legion of devoted former students who now occupy much of the architectural teaching establishment across North America. Whatever the reason, Rowe's influence is undeniable. And yet, it is precisely because Rowe's influence is so commonly felt — in a way that places it above suspicion — that it should be critically reexamined. As is always the case, those who are the least suspect should be the first questioned.

In order to initiate this process of reexamination, one must first put aside any personal feeling or studentlike admiration for Colin Rowe (my gratitude for his intellectual mentoring goes without saying), for it is just such a too-close view, rampant among many of his admirers, that smothers any critical assessment of the Rowe phenomenon. Just as one should never ask an architect about his or her own work — because they would be the least likely to know — so too it is impossible to ask Rowe's followers to offer an objective assessment of Rowe. Equally, it is not always wise to allow the glow of history to enhance or shadow what can be better done in the present. I am always more interested in the view of contemporary culture provided in current journals than I am in digested thought on the same subjects.

The voice, the tone, and the style of speech were all too familiar to me. In a timbre that was at once gruff, precise, imperious, and alternately imploring, beseeching, perhaps sometimes even bored, Colin Rowe held forth one Thursday night last spring in the tomblike room that serves as a lecture hall for the Yale School of Art and Architecture. I thought I had heard the content before, endlessly recited since we had traveled together throughout Europe in the summers of 1961 and 1962. (I can still recall the name of practically every restaurant we dined in and even what we ate.) But on this particular spring night it was not the subtlety of the cuisine that I remembered, but something which sounded different, something which did not seem quite as it had in the past.

It was not that age had sapped Rowe's energy or his mind — indeed the opposite was perhaps true. Nor, for that matter, had time and a certain distance colored my memory. Certainly it was not the *maniera* (it was never *manière*; that would be too French and too obvious) that I remembered, a cross between precise High Victorian belles lettres speech, that needed very little editing when it could be put to print, and a kind of cracker, redneck, blue-collar slur of slouched contractions and popular slang. No, it was something else. How many times I had heard, *C'mon, doncha think ol' buddy boy... whaddabouddit, jes whaddabouddit?* as he was want to implore. The conflation of styles was now almost habitual, long having lost their purposeful collage. It was high culture pretending to be low; great wit and insight

pretending to mouth the obvious. But what bothered me that evening at Yale was not this remembered affect. No, it was something else. It occurred to me that, had I not been hearing Rowe's voice, what he was saying could have been said with equal conviction by Vincent Scully. No doubt the existence of such an idea would have bothered Rowe, as it did me that evening, because Vincent Scully represented (at least at one time) all that Colin Rowe could not reconcile (and he was always able to reconcile a great deal). Nevertheless, the thought continued to work inside me, as I remembered Rowe's critique of Robert Venturi's Yale Mathematics Building competition entry, and how ever so gently he critiqued the building by referring obliquely to the hype of the position it represented at the time, a hype that had been created in part by Scully and others. So here we were at Yale, and I could not help but think how much Rowe, Venturi, and Scully would now find they have in common.

And, my dear Peter, whaddaabout Yale? Here Rowe becomes very precise. He slips out of his cultivated Amerenglish. *One would have thought that Scully would have had slides on cottage orné, on the Ward Willets house without some gahddam tree in front of it — OH NO! I realized, he said, that my interest in cottage orné and Vince's interest in the Stick Style comes out of Hitchcock. In fact you have to understand Hitchcock if you want to understand ModArch in America. . . . You know, to understand ModArch in America, doncha think that Hartford is important?*

Some months later, in London, all of this was thrown at me at breakneck speed, hardly allowing for interruption or reply. My response, which indicated precisely the state that Rowe's remarks were intended to put me in, was, as it had been for the 30 years previous, one of stunned immobility. What was one to say? Clearly one could not ask, "What do you mean, Colin?" because that would too readily reveal one's ignorance. Better to say "yeah, yeah," and go on to another subject. This simultaneous acknowledgment of my ignorance and Rowe's *aperçu* allowed him to proceed without explanation, which itself may or may not have been possible given the elliptical and metaphorical nature of the remarks. But rather than merely letting it go for future reference, as I often do, I realized that Rowe's loaded term *ModArch* had been raised twice in this conversation. Perhaps this reference could in some way be key to my concern that night in New Haven. Curiously, at the root of his seemingly throw-away remark about Hartford was Rowe's continuing fascination with a subject that he has ostensibly disdained — namely, Modern Architecture — he always was — but somehow a change in the terms of that ambivalence seemed to be present in Rowe circa 1994.

In London it was apparent that Rowe's personal style as manifest in his *décor de la vie* had changed. In the early 1960s his rooms were filled with every form of superb mechanical furniture of the late-18th and 19th centuries. If anything was on the walls it was books — literally from floor to ceiling. The space of these rooms appeared to be defined by objects floating in a void landscape, without any specific context of time or place. And clearly, Rowe always had a preference for the object as opposed to the space. Today in London, the same furniture is still in place, perhaps a little worse for wear, but it appears in a context, a context that is enveloped by wall-to-wall engravings from the late-17th and 18th centuries. The space in these rooms has changed from an experience of the volume of objects to one of their surface — even the columns that have been added by Rowe "as a touch of Loos," serve to

delineate a particular place, an attempt to make space as object, to give it some form of delineated texture. In the past Rowe's interest in surface was as flattened, layered space; as a painterly, phenomenal abstraction and never as a figured reality. Did the style of the apartment then merely reflect the peregrinations of a mandarin exercising a promethean taste? Or was it another manifestation of a newly found virtù?

When confronted with his obsession with ModArch there is silence. I should know better, know that he will never answer questions directly, that answers always come back elliptically and in ways one least expects. I realized that a precise answer to my concern was not possible; only the circumstances for such an answer. For in Rowe's own words, "Logic, like morals, presumes always a question of geographical (and temporal) location." And since it is precisely logic and morals that are at issue in this particular confection of ModArch then perhaps one should obey the dictum of its author and attempt merely to locate or situate one's concerns.

I have always known that one of the problems with the conflation of Mod and Arch was the particular and perhaps unwanted portmanteau quality of the neologism that resulted (much like the unintentional portmanteau quality of the word deconstructivism). I suspect that it was not so much the Arch as it was the Mod that always disturbed Colin, for more than anything else this conjured up the spectre of the workings of the zeitgeist, which, along with the architect's science envy, have remained two of the more interesting concerns that seem to bedevil him.

As the so-called "neutral agent of the epochal will," the zeitgeist was always a problem for Rowe. On the one hand, in some way the zeitgeist conjured up for him a denial of history qua history; on the other, it appeared as an historical imperative and thus as some form of an overly deterministic ideology. In addition, according to Rowe, the zeitgeist was never neutral and always exhibited a set of preferred forms. Yet it could be argued that history in any sense is no less a form of determinism than the zeitgeist, and in its own right it too will always exhibit a set of preferred forms. Perhaps, then, it is not so much the question of determinism that is a problem for Rowe as it is the question of value and, ultimately, morality. For the zeitgeist implies that its spirit, by virtue of its supposed contact with the here and now, is more virtuous and thus more ethical (and perhaps even more reasonable) than a history which, because it no longer contains the relevancy of the now, no longer has the same moral authority. That these arguments troubled Rowe can be seen by the questions he always had about who interprets the moral authority of the present. "Facts are like sacks," he would always quote. "If you do not fill them up with values, they refuse to stand up." Rowe, I would argue, is from the beginning concerned with form and, so to speak, takes refuge in form, because he considers form to be outside such questions of value and morality. The "inside of form" to which Rowe refers is for him not a subject of moral authority, but rather one of logical consistency, ironically the same logical consistency that he argues against when it is exhibited in forms imported from science.

But the question of an overriding morality is also one of Rowe's problems with science when it is introduced into architecture as some superarrogating form of thought. This conflates with his zeitgeist angst to produce an antagonism to all conditions of thought and being (linguistics, thought, even philosophy) that

seem external to architecture. Clearly, one side of any argument for using models of science in architecture would hold that science, as a logic of reason, can more easily arbitrate the moral imperatives of the now than any individual. But that same attitude produces a form of science envy in the architect. This also becomes problematic for Rowe when it begins to suggest preferred forms. For Rowe, the preferred forms of science seem overly generalized, without the specificity of the random or the partial. Again, because of their supposed authority of reason, the forms of science lacked the possibility of an individual and idiosyncratic taste. Therefore, it was not so much the particular ideology of the Mod that seemed to trouble Rowe (although one cannot altogether dismiss Rowe's Tory preferences in this matter) as it was that the fact that this ideology that supposedly invoked a neutral and therefore somehow virtuous construct, always exhibited a preferred set of forms. For being the only one to raise this as an issue for contemporary thought, we must be thankful to Rowe, but this still leaves unanswered some other more troubling issues in the Rowe enterprise.

If the idea of preferred forms bothered Rowe, this does not seem to square with one of Rowe's own major theoretical urban strategies, namely contextualism. For example, it is curious to me that uncomfortably resident beneath the surface of contextualism lie several countermending arguments, arguments that perhaps can only be seen in retrospect. For isn't contextualism, which gives a value to what exists in a site as opposed to what could be, just another form of a zeitgeist argument, but a zeitgeist of the past? And how much of the idea of context lies buried in, as opposed to, the idea of text (and vice versa)? The idea of text, or at least the French interpretation of it as seen in the writings of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, supposedly remains an anathema to Rowe under a calculated guise that it is French and thus thought to be bound up with what is structural and rational as opposed to what is rhetorical and excessive. But then how does one account for Rowe's taste for Taine and de Tocqueville? And how much of figure-ground, a staple of Rowe's urbanism, is tied to the gestalt aspects of phenomenology in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, and is thus decidedly French and continental? One must discount this supposed anti-French bias as just so much English bluster and ask, if Rowe was against the preferred forms of the zeitgeist exhibited in the Modern, then why do his urban proposals, whether in the continuous megabuilding or in the figure-ground gestalts of exedrae and other forms of Nolliesque collage, have their own set of preferred forms? Again I would argue that the answer is not so much that these forms simply possessed a virtù for Rowe, as it was that the preferred forms of modernism came with a moral authority, whereas the preferred forms of history came from what Rowe has called the "deep inside" of architecture, and thus possessed some internal abstract and conceptual force that could stand against any moral authority. This would have been, I believe, something like Rowe's argument up to and through the ideological revolutions of the late 1960s and the movements that occurred around what he would have considered to be late-Modernism and Post-Modernism. How this argument has changed conceptually may have been what concerned me that night in New Haven.

None of the current theories concerning Rowe's confrontation with the Modern provides me with any satisfactory explanation for this change. I put very little stock in the idea that there are two Rowes, an early and a late, both of whom are thought to follow logically as well as chronologically. Some people date the first Rowe as ending with his article on La Tourette and his return to

England in 1959 (this being a particularly traumatic experience, in light of his hasty return three years later to the "US of A"). Others mark the end of the early Rowe with his introduction to *Five Architects* in 1972 and his addendum to "Mathematics" in 1973. This, they argue, signals an end to both his analytic formalism and his strange flirtation with modernism. Rowe himself often throws up the explanation that that he was always in favor of the objects of the Modern — its architecture — but always against its spaces — its public realm, its urbanism.

A further set of explanations, in the realm of the psychological, would seem to suggest that there were always two Rowes inhabiting one mind and one body. This line of reasoning traces both personas all the way back to Lockhart, Texas. In this scenario each of the oppositional categories such as figure/ground, literal/phenomenal, etc., that are characteristic of Rowe's thought, mirror in some strange way a split psyche. Other arguments might claim there is only one Rowe, that there has been no change, that whatever evidences change is merely the maturation of a rather complex personality. But that Rowe was full born in 1947 at the time of "Mathematics," or that he has a complex psyche offer only partial explanations at best. These accounts cover up concerns, particularly in relation to form, which may provide clues to another reading of Rowe. Therefore, I would rather subscribe to another — perhaps also partial — explanation: that there has been a subtle, if not major shift in Rowe's work that has nothing to do with a chronological, psychological, or linear development. Rather, this change has to do with a shift in what might be called Rowe's formalisms, from one which was seen as ideologically neutral, that is, as a refuge from the Modern, to one which was ideologically loaded, which more or less embraced a form of Post-Modernism. If these are the terms of such a shift, then they are also more than loaded with a good deal of irony.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that considerable evidence points to a conversion of Rowe that occurred somewhere in the late 1960s and early '70s, and that Leon Krier may have had a part in this, playing perhaps a not unimportant role of John the Baptist. Charles Jencks has already alluded that Leon Krier operated as some form of deus-ex-machina in his relationship with Jim Stirling. And haven't others said that Krier is somehow also complicit with the shifts in the work of Michael Grayes and Jaque Robertson? Rowe himself said that he had wanted Krier as a UD (Urban Design) student since their first encounter in Stirling's office in early 1970, when Leon was working with Jim on the Derby town hall competition. And hasn't Rowe said, somewhat disingenuously, that Krier would have been better off had he come under Rowe's tutelage at that time? But to focus on what Krier would argue about Rowe, or on how much influence Krier had in changing Rowe's attitude about modernism from ambivalence to something approaching open hostility, again misses the key point. And this key point devolves around the change in Rowe's work over the question of form.

For Rowe, form was always something that came from a "deep inside architecture," hence his suspicion of those things which he considered external. How Rowe reconceptualizes this deep inside constitutes a significant change in his work. The essential arguments concerning the nature of what constitutes Rowe's initial conception of this deep inside are always seen in the figure of Le Corbusier. In the Palladian traces of Le Corbusier's plans, Rowe could argue for both the ghosts of an academic and a classical tradition and

their transformative capacity. The transformative role of modernism was important for Rowe, for in it could be found the seeds of his early interest in Wittkower's analytic methodology. At one point it is possible to say that Rowe saw modernism as potentially able to sustain what Tony Vidler calls a necessary part of Rowe's apparatus, that is, a conceptual tradition. But when modernism was no longer seen as a conceptual vehicle — even after the editors of the *Architectural Review* gave their publication of Rowe's *Collage City* the subtitle "cities of the mind" — Rowe changes. He rejects Wittkower and with it the analytic tradition that had penetrated his work. More importantly, Rowe rejects formal abstraction as a means for deploying his urban ideas. This is the key rupture. He then takes up what can be called a quite literal and historicizing tradition. It is not merely Rowe's rejection of the zeitgeist ideology inherent in the Modern Movement, nor its fixation with the object building, that brings about this change. These anxieties were always with him. Rather, it is his loss of faith in the capacity of modernism to provide the necessary transformative formal mechanisms necessary in the Rowe schemata. Once this loss of faith occurred it is easy, in retrospect, to see the pathways of the fall, even though to this day I am not convinced that Rowe himself can acknowledge this change.

One telling sign of this change in Rowe's trajectory is his movement toward empiricism and his attraction to an English architecture that in 1961 he would have rejected: "The Italians always did it much better," he would say. If he looked at English architecture then, it was no more than VanBrugh, Hawksmoor, and Butterfield, whom he considered to be English mannerists and therefore not English at all. While he was always interested in English silver and Thomas Hope furniture (I remember how much he wanted the 24 Hope chairs he had found in a little shop on Trumpington Street, Cambridge, in the summer of 1962, long before Jim Stirling publicly exhibited such a taste), but this interest never extended as far as Lutyens (who at the time he considered second-rate). Yet by 1979, in Rowe's Royal Academy lecture, Lutyens occupies a central position on the game board, if not for his architecture (which Rowe still felt was "disgustingly cute"), then for his extended urban and garden layouts, which could become one of the counters to be added to a "collage city." Is the Lutyens omission from the 1978 edition of *Collage City* significant to his appropriation one year later in 1979? I would argue in the affirmative, that the adoption of Lutyens is one of the acknowledgments of Rowe's gradual abandonment of a conceptual strata of the inside of architecture for a more literal one. With this abandonment also went the supposed ideological neutrality of the operation. This assumption of an ideology, which again I believe remains largely unacknowledged by Rowe, would seem to compromise the entire position that form previously held in the Rowe strategy.

Interestingly, Rowe always disliked what he perceived to be the literalness of Gothic cathedrals and Greek temples — *Is that all they could do in three hundred years?* — he would rail. And he always preferred the formal excesses of a Parmagianino or a Pontormo to a Bernini, and late Raphael to middle Raphael. These continuing preferences would seem to mitigate against my argument here, but I do not believe that the purely formal dimension of this inside alone accounts for Rowe's shift in sensibility.

Rowe's pivotal shift, as seen perhaps in his newly found preferences for Lutyens over Le Corbusier, is not merely one of architecture instead of

urbanism, object instead of space, but rather mirrors a deeper ideological shift. The shift from the abstract and conceptual tradition to the empirical tradition brings back the question of some form of moral authority. Why this is so and how this happens becomes clear when the ideas inherent in the two terms *promenade architecturale* and *architecture parlante* are used as a kind of quasi litmus. Both terms carry important ideas in any discussion of an inside of architecture, and for centuries they have helped to define some of the specific formal characteristics of that inside. Both, however, are also loaded with ideological overtones. Clearly Rowe has never accepted the ideas inherent in any manifestations of an *architecture parlante*, precisely because they are too allegorical and thus too ideological. (What must be seen as ironic in this sense is that it was specifically the advocates of Post-Modernism, who were against the ideology inherent in the modern, who reintroduced this term into architectural discourse.) Yet, at the same time Rowe was somehow able to be interested in the character of facades and in what he alone was specifically wont to describe as their crucial distinction from the "literal" sectional expression of the elevation. Rowe could see no contradiction in his concern for the facade and its possible expressions as long as that expression was about something internal to architecture, that is, when it was ultimately formal. For Rowe, the abstractions of the formal were somehow thought to be imbued with a spirit of the authentic and therefore in some way outside of the issue of value judgments. Yet he was clearly afraid of a building not having a face, as in his elaborate discussion of the problem as it related to Stirling's Stuttgart Museum. However, when this face referred to something outside of architecture, when it signified some allegorical content, as in the case of Ledoux, this became a problem for Rowe.

The promenade architecturale, which was to gradually become one of Rowe's favorite devices, whether in a Parisian hotel plan of the late-19th century or in Le Corbusier's villa at Garches, was somehow thought by Rowe to be free of any ideological content. On the contrary, the idea of the promenade contained many conceptual strategies for Rowe. He saw it as a counter to the literal necessities of movement so manifest in the city plans directed by transportation planners, who saw movement in anything but conceptual terms. While Rowe is interested in public objects as opposed to public spaces, these objects never take the forms of "tubes of circulation" because these tubes signified the victory of function and determinism over form and the possibility of the partial. In each case of his idea of the promenade, the route was somehow an embodiment of what he could rationalize as a formal idea, but a formal idea distinct from what he would come to think of as the pseudoanalytic, and pseudoscientific formalism of the German *kunst-historische* method.

However, many people would say that the same allegorical content exists in the origins of the promenade architecturale as it does in *architecture parlante*. For example, in *Blindness and Insight* Paul DeMan argues that the allegorical nature of the French version of the *Jardin Anglais* is due to its pure artifice. And the *Jardin Anglais* is nothing if not a promenade architecturale. Supposedly such pure artifice would delight Rowe. But the moral and conceptual content of the allegorical always obtrudes this state of pure artifice. It is in this sense that any formal construct can always be seen to be inhabited by ideological content. And ultimately the critical issue with respect to Rowe is political, with the idea of the moral that underpins the artifice of the natural.

It is interesting that Rowe does not see the possible interrelatedness of promenade architecturale and *architecture parlante*. Like the embedded nature of text and context, *architecture parlante* refers to an architecture of readability, and that readability speaks of its own internal logic. There is a critical difference between the internal logic of form and the internal logic of reading. The internal logic of reading is a conceptual one, since it relates a formal integer in one place to an idea totally removed from that place. In other words, understanding does not come from the internal workings of the form alone. The promenade too can be seen to provide an internal logic, but it only derives from the in situ experience of the mind and body. Furthermore, this experience is one of partiality as opposed to generality; for example, the seemingly random path of an expectant observer who encounters things with no predetermined purpose. In the promenade the emphasis is placed on empirical observation, on the experience of the eye as opposed to the processes of the mind, on a calculated partiality and ultimately on appearance as opposed to essence. Rowe was always taken by the partiality of the view in the promenade. But when the promenade loses its so-called naturalness, when it abandons its so-called nature for the artifice in the conceptual and formal aspects of the promenade held to be so important by Le Corbusier, the promenade, like the *jardin anglais*, takes on an allegorical, and thus a moral, component and begins to be equatable with the idea of an *architecture parlante*.

It is here that Rowe becomes blinded by his own necessarily dialectical insights, for he fails to see the possible imbedded nature of the two terms. He fails to see the difference in the two kinds of formalism and ends up in two different traps. First, in the shift from one formalism to the other Rowe adopts a strategy that seems to embody ideology, but it was specifically the escape from ideology that attracted him to formalism in the first place. Second, since all such formal movements must be seen as movements from one ideology to another, Rowe's movement can be seen as no movement at all. To argue that one formal position is ideological while another is not, is to take up a quasi-liberal position that is also the most ideologically inscribed.

It is not possible to suggest that questions of value are neutral, that they have no political consequences. This would be like comparing Rowe himself to a *zeitgeist*, to a "neutral agent of the epochal will." As Rowe has a disdain for such a neutral agency, he must surely be aware of the consequences of his supposedly neutral politics. The Rowe position can no longer be seen as one of mere virtuosity. As the Scully position has spawned unabashed consumerism in the persons of Robert Stern, Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, so too must Rowe be accountable for the essentially retardataire manifestations — no matter what one may think of their quality — of his current formal propositions. Clearly such strategies as espoused by Prince Charles in England and the city planners of today's Berlin, have some knowledge of Rowe's pronouncements. To think otherwise would be disingenuous.

To abandon Modernism for some form of Post-Modernism, to abandon an abstract tradition for an empirical one, is not the issue. Clearly at one time, most likely before 1973, Rowe believed in the forms and their transformative capacity inherent in the Modern. To lose that belief is one thing, but to leave unexamined the political consequences of such a loss is quite another matter.

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