pulp architecture

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pulp architecture

For Laura, Nancy and John Maruszczak

and for all glazed hams everywhere, on their way towards another architecture; prepare yourselves, look for the spaces in between go for the blind spots in architecture give back to surroundings all that has been lost alter the programmes as only you can re-write the software and re-occupy architecture from the street up show others the architecture that they do not know exists not the architecture of prejudice and preconception scripted by others

Not a shred of evidence exists in favour of the idea that life is serious. - Brendan Gill There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in. - Leonard Cohen 200 years of American technology has unwittingly created a massive cement playground of unlimited potential, but it was the minds of 11 year olds that could see that potential. - Craig Stecyk

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1

a new movement-in-progress

For me to plan something like a lecture six months in advance is not only dangerous, it is impossible. To be asked to give a title assumes I would have something in mind at that time. It also assumes that I wouldn't change in the course of the intervening months. This is even more dangerous as I seem to change much these days. But if I did change, then at least the title could remain the same. When the letter came to invite me to deliver The 2003 Brendan Gill Lecture and I was asked for a title, I had no idea what to speak on. Having tried to put the tongue away for some years now, I could see no decent way to respond to this dilemma. I don't know why but the title, the idea of Pulp Architecture, popped into my head.

However I do know why.

I had just returned from Tokyo, Nagoya and Kyoto. I had just taken the Shinkensen train, the fastest, smoothest train I had ever been on. I had learnt about an even faster train called the Magnaleve; a train that will hover over tracks at a speed of 200 kph. I had witnessed the purchasing power of the

Pokemon Centre and seen the Swedish Embassy turned into a cyber café. All was food, flow, data, absolute vodka and the culture of the launch. This time, it was the revolution in the 'rucksack', all promoted by Japanese Dj's, hip hop music and Abba. There was an increased competition for time, a need to fill in the redundant spaces of an old world. All vacuums had new noise.

There was much talk of crossovers as the newly dressed outraged the old. New reality groups were desperately signalling their desire to be at the cutting edge. Talk was of a constant border condition. Stay there, where you are. Never try to reach the other side, seemed to be the message. New ways to display art, music and television outside the more traditional media were less important than staying outside the traditional media and commercial music industry. 'Please wait for tracks to load', the website announced. 'No stress!' flashed onto the screen.

I was witnessing the changed role of diplomacy. Embassies had become travel agents, promotion centres, trade fairs. No longer was it worth reporting back to base when machines do that quicker. How, if we were to never leave our homes, our states, or our countries out of fear, would we be conditioned by this condition?

In Japan I had been with some architects, of course, but mostly I had been with electronic artists, new media artists, DJ's, soft-porn photographers, publishers, furniture designers, graffiti and rap artists. These young artists seemed to be doing things in between. Not necessarily tired of fame, they certainly appeared to show indifference toward it. And luxury was itself a luxury, tired out. The 20th Century felt more like a rumour than history. Importantly, these people all around seemed to be travelling, uninterested in arrival.

What might this mean? Did it represent a wider urge for the unfinished, the incomplete and the unasserted? Were they wary of closure when the last century had closed on itself so brutally? Call it anything you like, but could this represent a new movement? Would that make any sense in a period constantly moving? In a fit of panic I called this Pulp. So, when asked for a title for a lecture I had not written, for a presentation I wished to put off for as long as possible, the word 'Pulp' jumped out at me and the title offered itself clearly: Pulp Architecture, a new movement-in-progress. I naturally imagined Pulp might have some relevance to architecture today. I have spent the last few years thinking about this in the hope that it might go away. It hasn't.

2

a letter from the hotel architecture

Some of you might be familiar with the Letter from America. Between 1946-2004, it was delivered weekly on the BBC World Service by Alistair Cooke an Englishman who arrived in America in the 1930s, after being educated at Jesus College Cambridge. Cooke delivered for his world audience a sharp but personal approach, usually addressing something topical in American society. In this I am coming the other way and would like you to think of this as a Letter from the UK or, if you prefer, a 'Letter from Britain'. More accurately, it is actually a letter from Wales because it is being written, was written, from a place called The Hotel Architecture.

The Hotel Architecture, named after an epic poem, is a small guest house situated in a market town called Ruthin. From the window where this is written, glancing to the right, one can glimpse the 800-year old Ruthin Castle. And, glancing left, one catches The Star Inn, a four hundred year old hostelry. The Star Inn was once a popular public

house for locals, the unemployed and those agrarian youths on the rampage on Friday nights. It is now boarded up with perforated sheets of silver metal on which a sign reads: All valuables have been removed. Not a chink is left, not a crack through which any light shines. Previously I used to see the rampaging youths from this window accompanied by girls dressed, whatever the weather, in skimpy fashion statements. Attached to the outside of The Star Inn, you can see the mounting stone still in place. Highwaymen called at the inn, and would use this to mount or dismount their horses! It is said Albert Pierrepoint, the refined and agonised excutioner also stayed here, within 30 yards of the Hotel Architecture

The Hotel Architecture is undoubtedly a rather unusual place from which to write a lecture that not only talks about the ongoing failure to be contemporary, but which puts forward an approach to architecture which I decided to call, using the usefulness of a random moment, Pulp. All will be explained later but at first it might seem that from such a backwater as this, the notion of the 'contemporary' must certainly struggle. You are right, it does. But not always in the way we think. The more the world seems to seek its moral guidance from global sources, the more we sometimes feel that everything really happening in the world is going on elsewhere. 'Everywhere but here' is often a phrase heard, especially here in Ruthin, North Wales. In fact it is heard so often that it might suggest to many that, to recall the title of that novel by Milan Kundera, 'life is elsewhere'.

This however would be a big mistake. To believe life is always elsewhere would distort and misrepresent the way the world now alters and is being altered from unlikely places in the world. A recent local example presents itself. Take a half hour drive from the Hotel Architecture and you will find yourself

on the North Wales coast, in a place called Llandudno. Llandudno is a quiet, seaside town, once a thriving Victorian resort. There, in an unremarkable suburban house in Fairways Llandudno, the DJ and web designer Simon Vallor wrote and distributed three separate viruses through a mass mailer.

The Gokar virus (real name W32/Gokar-A) sent the worm via an email with a randomly chosen subject line and body text. Vallor used such lines as: 'If I were God and didn't believe in myself would it be blasphemy?' For others, those already let into this world, he would use the phrase: 'The A team vs. KnightRider...who would win?' Other lines were more relevant to personal loss and pain: 'Just one kiss will make it better, just one kiss, and we will be alright.' The body texts in the messages were equally ambiguous, apparently nonsensical: 'Happy Birthday... Yeah, Ok. So it's not yours, it's mine. Still, cause for a celebration though, check out the details I have attached.'

Do we? Do we check out the details or scan with our habits and world already formed? The police traced the virus to a less than attractive house in Fairways, Llandudno by following a British Telecom internet account. The pagan cyber-virus creator, the newspaper reported, had been rumbled. Simon Vallor was charged under Section 3 of the Computer Misuse act 1990. Meanwhile the Gokar virus appeared in January 2002 in the top ten list of most commonly encountered viruses, just before Vallor's arrest.

That might, should, have been the end of it. Instead Vallor continued to index his thoughts and conducted a series of diary postings on the internet. In his last diary posting, Simon Vallor was aware of what was to happen. On December 18th he posted his thoughts on the net before going

down to London to appear in front of the court: "...Just in case I do get sentenced remember this: Mundis vult decipi, ergo decipaitur. I can't say everything has been good in this life, a few laughs, a few jokes, a few drinks and a few smokes...I have regrets, but I don't regret being me...Hopefully, this isn't goodbye from the Devil within...see you in hell.'

How often we talk about the failure to be contemporary as if others are diseased not us! As if too there is ignorance to those talents we cannot identify. Vallor is clearly talented and had used phrases in code which relate to Wicca, a pagan religion. These were cleverly written to invite the recipient to open the mail. After the drives had been reformatted by one of the viruses and then rebooted by the user, the message 'Bide ye the Wicken laws ye must, in perfect love and perfect trust' appeared. The explanation for Vallor's deeds by the Police is rather surprising. Instead of the obvious, that Vallor was being contemporary in a world often failing to be contemporary, a senior technological consultant tried to demonstrate that Simon Vallor's profile followed that of many virus writers: 'Most tend to be boys between the ages of 14 to 24 – I think eventually most guys grow up to discover girls and discover virus writing in rather pointless.'

The senior technological consultant implied that such talented young men lose their way. Instead of a creative response to the unknown and the unpredictable, instead of using their interest and enthusiasm in a contemporary way, guys like Simon Vallor are supposed to know better. When they grow up, the sickness is removed, normality returns, and the world goes back to what it was. This is the scenario society scripts for them. They are then free to go back to do what they wish to do: chase girls! Or so the Police and social workers have it. "From a semi in North Wales, this man cast out a

cyber virus that spread to 42 countries," the local newspaper headline ran.

Other attempts have been made to find a reason for this allegedly errant behaviour. As usual there is a required solution, a reasoning that exonerates all but society itself. His mother apparently suffered a heart attack whilst swimming in Benidorm. Neighbours speak of a normal young man. A 'mate' of Vallor's said he never imagined his talented friend could have created something with such an effect, but – he stressed - it wouldn't spoil their friendship. The same lack of imagination happens everywhere. Another neighbour was shocked: 'How could such a person cause such havoc, and right next door!' Now it's terrorists or suicide bombers, but the same shock reverberates and limits the world's understanding of itself.

Was it not rather obvious? Life, for most of these people, is still elsewhere. The police, the neighbours, the journalists, the jabbers of eternal gossip imagine the contemporary to be somewhere else, always somewhere else, when in fact today it is next door, on the street, in the Victorian town, down by the sea.

For me this is the world according to pulp. How we see the contemporary in energy as errant as this cyber-crime is crucial. How we re-tool and re-cycle even lives lived out by others has become crucial. How we use abusive talent in something as abusive as this is essential to our survival. Normalise it, give these young people like Simon Vallor metltdown jobs, take away their computers, show them the sadness of their actions and what will they do? To believe the police, these talented young people will then realise that virus writing is rather pointless. They will return to girls,

women or soft porn.

Are we so sure? Might they not begin anti-war campaigns or anti-global campaigns from their semi-detached houses in a northern seaside town? Might they not re-tool their own lives and the lives of others by re-writing software for their own purposes? Some may cleverly hack into corporations like Microsoft and alter our vision of a shared and sharing world. Others will go even further. Terrorism?

At the university in Texas where I used to teach faculty often speaks good-naturedly about young first and second year students of architecture as 'glazed hams'. These young students look up, mystified by tectonics and trigonometry, seduced by gratuitous images, unable to understand the nostalgia of their professors. Meanwhile life for many of the faculty is always elsewhere, a senior moment stuck in replay mode. Some students, graduates, successful or not set up design firms called Droog, Factory or Love-Hug. Some enter collaborations under inventive acronyms DHLM or THFDKF or then pulp things together into an open design collaboration called DON_T, where things are not underscored but left to chance and ultimately spread deliciously beyond the control of the designer.

As students start altering the conditions by which they learn each day, are we missing the point? Is there something happening right in front of our eyes that have become screens? It is quite possible if this goes on and versions of the apocalypse reach us, a secure insecurity and partial destinies will have become a reality. There will be no required solutions anymore and our social conscience and responsibility will suffer. And suddenly by the very act of being able to read this sentence the worm will have copied itself onto the C drive in your brain, used Outlook Express

or Mozilla Thunderbird to send itself to all contacts found in your address book. Your hard disk will have been invaded and you, too, are spinning the W32/Redesi-virus around the world.

Part of our skill at being contemporary surely demands that we know just when we are the guilty bystander, and just when we know how not to stay away from such invasions. I finished the early version of this book lying on harsh, rough Texan grass called St. Augustine. The name had to be appropriate. On my back, in a garden in Fort Worth, I would look up to the sky as if parts of the Columbus shuttle could still fall and would go on falling long after I had left the State of Texas. Don't mess with Texas, the saying goes. As I lay there, I realized why another resonance exists to Alistair Cooke. I began with a reference to his Letter from America. Though years apart we attended the same College in Cambridge, Jesus College, as did Laurence Sterne, the writer of Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey. It can be no surprise to us that the last century looted the French philosophers and grafted them onto architecture in a bewildering, and admittedly creative, number of ways. From Barthes to Baudrillard, from Derrida to Deleuze, from Virilio to Tschumi. "In France, Sir," Sterne has it, "they order these things better." Though not all of these maneuvers have been routinised and become gratuitous to architecture itself, did Laurence Sterne know something we didn't know?

3

a new movement-in-progress

the professor of night

'First we take Berlin then we take Manhattan' was scrawled on the remains of a wall in Ground Zero in New York. There was no time to lose, the future had to be envisioned and the moment taken. Newspaper reviews were ferocious, defeat calculated. Faculty were shocked. How could architecture play such hardball?

"I smell a law suit!" the Professor of Night said.

The Professor of Night was however somewhere else entirely. His apartment in Manhattan had been near Ground Zero but it had survived the attack.

Is this not how architecture in the 20th century was perceived, he thought to himself. Were we not to go forward, tempted by the inventions and ideas of those greater than ourselves?

The last twenty years of the Twentieth Century presented a slightly different version of this. It was ruder, harsher than any of us imagined. Architects played hardball. No one was safe. Students began happily jumping off the shoulders of the giants. Many of them took up living under the armpits of the new giants. He knew the names of these new giants. He had even had to teach them to the Glazed Hams. Koolhaas, Nouvel, Ito, Holl, Perrault, Herzog, Lynn, Eisenman, MVRDV, Libeskind, Nox, Tschumi, UN, Foreign Office, Rotondi, Dinari, Arquitectonica...he could reel off the names like a litany.

The new architecture, he felt, was already in the shadow of the minorities who were on the way to becoming the majority. His old friend Winy Maas from MVRDV, the well-known and well-marketed Dutch team, used a radical diversity and collaborative practice. Though the mix of disciplinary categories allowed these new architects to use experimentation to undo the usual systematic methods, the Professor of Night didn't buy this.

But the glazed hams loved it.

Everyone proceeded as a team today, inviting different and at times unexpected practices to join forces with them. Inside the Academy, however, there was the Casablanca Syndrome; the growing feeling that all architecture was increasingly about all other architecture. Further, there was an increasingly desperate feeling that the 20th century was about to be realised in the 21st century. "This is no longer a paradox beyond any of us," The Professor of Night stated with some aplomb.

The audience stared back. Fire up the barbecue, he laughed to himself recalling a joke doing the electronic rounds during the mad cow disease.

the world according to pulp

Does Pulp exist?

Yes certainly, there are countless pulp mills mostly on the eastern, forested side of the USA.

But does it exist in architecture?

Possibly!

Is it useful?

Again, possibly!

Well, can it explain something in architecture so difficult to explain, the contemporary?

Impossible, wouldn't even try.

But if we did, if we attempted one more critical scheme, would it help us be contemporary? And, while we are at it, do we really need another way to be contemporary after all the last century threw up?

Everything's possible.

So what would 'pulp' be, as a notion? Corresponding to the genre 'pulp fiction', would it be lurid, ordinary, re-hashed, re-cycled and excessive? Or excessively ordinary? Would it be something we could relate to a soft fleshy substance, something malleable, the pulpiness of movement? Prod it, like a de-stressing palm toy and watch it take another form.

Any form?

Or could Pulp be the core of something else brought in from the suburbs of our minds, from the edge; residual, marginal even? Could pulp be an articulated longing, aftertheory, post-ideological, occupying a post-critical space? Might it be a new architectural programme, or a strategy, a parti, an alibi, a motor, a resistance, an optimism, an ethic? Or could pulp be something that exists merely to avoid being

what it already is? Outside all, was there nowhere else to go but back inside?

Certainly we could make a case for this and more. We could capitalise it and see Pulp responding to changing social, cultural and economic conditions. We might even imagine a Pulp Architecture responding to political uncertainty, terror, surveillance and deceit, shifting the goalposts once more. Would this help us out a little? Does it help us know where are we going, if indeed we need to know such a devastating direction as the future?

We might be braver, or more arrogant.

Surely if Pulp exists to avoid being what it already is, it cannot avoid all the talk of the New Media? But it might though, programme its potential uses within an architecture augmenting itself so unhappily. Pulp might be so obvious as to border all ideology with its own barbed wire. And what about the post-critical space, lonely until re-tooled and re-theorised? Then there's that ugly attractive idea of reprogrammed or trans-programmed architecture.

Or do we get more immediate signs? The fresh pulp of architects delivering news flashes, architects running press conferences and architecture about to turn again, whilst the limousines wait down in the street? What about the cowboys and cowboy architecture? Is it useful to follow the New York Times style section? Those hand-stitched cowboy boots made not for drafting surely, but for walking from lecture to lecture, 200 times a year? On the road has never been so literal!

Is this Pulp? Yes, certainly and more.

To come in at the edge, to resist an architecture already scripted and an architecture to come; are these not attractive notions to the outlaw in us all? But the future? Remember what Marguerite Duras said, "If I had the slightest idea about the future, I would still be behaving as though I possessed power."

googling pulp

Let us for a moment 'google' Pulp.

Pulp is allusive. The immediate resonances are obvious: Pulp as in paper, pulp as in cheap, pulp as in lurid content, pulp as in the fictional tradition of the Manga comic in Japan, or the same-named film (Pulp Fiction) by Quentin Tarantino. Pulp is a response to known conditions. It is a response that can either re-emphasise them, make fun of them, or then plays off known conditions to re-order them.

Pulp re-frames, re-creates, re-tools and renews.

Pulp fiction operates this way. Under conditions of known excess, the pulp fiction writer plays up the expected violence and seaminess in the manner of a dirty not magic realism. Existing in the conditions of a culture already underground, Pulp is a contra-strategy. Tarantino's film 'Pulp Fiction' invites us to consider the absurdity of a known but varied script. The slight of hand is never so slight, the street never so trivial. Tarantino demonstrated immense skill in reinterpreting what we think is too well known!

Might we not then choose such a fleshy, pithy resonance if we wish to stay away from anything like a new movement in architecture? At the same time might this not introduce us to all the talk of hybrids, crossovers, partial, transprogrammed and software architectures?

Do we do this merely to capture a transition?

Look around!

Everywhere, though often hidden to the untrained eye, there is a new architecture appearing. It is not easily identified. Its position is made uncertain by its own process. The main protagonists may no longer only be architects or students of architecture. This pulpy mass, this informed and unformed architecture, usually acknowledges influence and interference. Carried out by architects, designers, other professionals and students, it acknowledges influence precisely because we know more about previous architecture, styles, histories and critical shapes than ever before. Outside it is there, virtual and real. In Cyberspace or in Central Park, in networks or on the street, we may seek a history in the illusionary spaces that can indeed be traced back to antiquity. But it insinuates and does it well.

Hence Pulp!

But surely, you say, there is nothing neat in the fleshy, messy interior, for example, of a pumpkin as it is gouged out during Halloween. And though neatness may not be our objective, it does not lessen our critical responsibility to the present. Publications continue to locate the latest contemporary architects in relation to previous performance, previous signatures. The discourses are controlled by the games played. Where signatures cannot be identified, mutual theory is sought. Branding turns recognisable moves into a community of like-minded designers. Thanks to the Internet we know more about the shapes of contemporary architecture going on in our neighbourhood right here, or as far away as Tokyo, Sydney or Alaska. It doesn't really matter where the contemporary takes place, it is accessible and available.

If we can go ahead and use a word like 'Pulp', if there is indeed a new movement out there, somewhere in the air, where are its signs? Have I imagined it, and why this need for the 'next big thing'? Is it naivety and cleverness that can orchestrate it into an invisible and impossible movement-in-progress?

Perhaps! I do not know, yet!

But apparently this desire for the 'next big thing' in art - to go by one British newspaper The Guardian - was represented by a show at Tate Britain some years back called 'Days like These'. Not a new idea, the curators admitted. But they did try and subvert the notion of any new generation or movement by linking together a kaleidoscopic range of work. This isn't difficult to grasp. It means that artwork by established Modernists exists alongside scratch and video artists. Guerrilla film-makers just out of art school are put alongside grown up painters and shy photographers, just as they would be on the street if they remained unrecognised. The show refused the tag of any one idea or movement. Again not a new idea of course, but it is something we recognise; that movement once again denying any membership, that movement to which none want to belong.

The curators - Judith Nesbitt and Jonathan Watkins - insisted there was 'gentleness' in this contemporary kaleidoscope. It is a gentleness which they claim runs counter to the sneering partisan games in contemporary art. It is an attitude which ignores the accepted judgments and prejudices in conceptual and popular art. This is an attitude which does not mock but is indifferent to the gangs

and discourse circles that have identified and divided artists throughout the 20th century. These young artists are no longer snapped up by this or that entrepreneur. Instead the new work lives in the backrooms, warehouses, underground dens and on the street. Dreamy, reflective even, this is not hard-edged work but drifting. It is an ordinariness brought out by the street and on the street; it invites the possibility of reverie and discovery.

It is the here and now. Nothing more, nothing less!

'Days like These' suggests an art - why not an architecture? — which requires little prior knowledge. Like the work of Pierre Huyghe on show at the Guggenheim in New York around the same time, it shares a fascination and comfort with the journey, not the point of arrival. "I don't have an atelier practice," Huyghe says, "I get my ideas from encounters — with people, books, films, artistic collaborations. I need the polyphony."

Creating a logo and defending a territory are strategies denied by many young groups today. Lack of any artistic logo or branding is not a hindrance; more than a sense of pride, it is irresistible. Things appear, dissolve, are re-framed and re-appear as in a topological system. The painter Margaret Baron displayed her painting in and around Tate Britain on walls and lampposts. Taking a photograph from the spot the painting will be placed she then painted this scene and affixed it back on the lamppost. Thus the view and the painting exist alongside each other, like club stickers or fly posters, exposed to the rain and the anti-graffiti teams.

The curators speak of correspondences. We might extend this to collaborations. The link to architecture is obvious and not only in Rachel Whiteread's latest casts, the stairway of an old synagogue in the East End of London and the reverse space of a flat nearby. New communities share points of connection then spin off into other work. There is no one brand, no single direction, nothing which unites the contemporary and announces a single understanding of it. Refused to be drawn into any coherence, might we not say these practices are pulping?

Here we have our conundrum.

If indeed there is something happening in art and in architecture today which refuses to be drawn into any coherence, how are we to recognise the signs and characteristics of communities and works that are potentially journeying? How do we recognise ideas that are ill-formed though not unformed? How are we to re-assess days like these when structures, spaces and building wish to express flux itself? Not only that, but if so much of what it means to be contemporary today involves constant change, short attention, insistent movement and rapid denial, where can we see these signs without being fooled? The absence of stable narratives should not put us off. Flow, motion, the ephemeral, the provisional, unrest and uncertainty, are all aspects we negotiate whether we feel comfortable or not. So where can we see these signs assuming they exist in architecture and why might we call this pulp architecture?

the university of glazed hams

Well, look around. Considering the word 'architecture' has been hijacked by software designers, interactive artists, cosmetics adverts, golf course planners, peace negotiators, insurgents and anti-terrorist war planners, it is probably

reasonable to look for something a little wider. The lasharchitect is on the rebound. I would suggest we see 'pulp' in students, in practices, in interdisciplinary teams, in unusual collaborations not only of artists and architects but wider, in research papers and novelists. Yes, in novelists too.

At the University in Zetaville in Texas faculty speaks good-naturedly about young architecture students as 'glazed hams'. Well-meant, it is often a symptom of embarrassment and confusion within a changed and changing curriculum. These young students repulsed yet seduced by fashion, fame and 3D Studio Maxx have already started altering the conditions by which they learn each day. Do faculty miss the point whilst the 'glazed hams' begin to show an increased unwillingness to be content with any banner, any branding and any prejudice the architecture profession tries to foist on them?

As the curriculum attempts to re-make education as a recruitment centre for a confused profession, there is a strong desire in some students to complete their education with more than a little guerrilla strategy. Many in relation to a conventional, often rigorous but nostalgic architectural education, have learnt, been immersed in, and demonstrated their talent in everything the older faculty members have often thrown at them. Many students have learnt to clone architecture from the famed and the damned. And many graduates leave school having perfected their talent of producing, what I think we can fairly call, a simulacrum of Modernism. We might begin to speak of cloned neo-Modernism.

Much of this is of course highly ordered, cleverly designed, and wonderfully assimilated to some of the latest materials and technological developments. Fostered by the fame academy in architecture, we see a sort of meme machine replicating architectural image from school to school, from discourse to discourse, from city to city. Meme Machine is something we should recognise from recent genetic studies, from the work of Richard Dawkins and Susan Blackmore. Remember what Douglas Rushkoff said in his book Cyberia: 'May the best meme win!'

Recognising this, it is possible to observe how many students and graduates in architecture remain unfulfilled. Whilst confirming to some of the miracles of contemporary design and advanced visualisation systems, they desire more from an unpredictable, unknown contemporary talent. Many have a further untapped talent to see architecture in a wider, much wider social sense, without always knowing how and why this should be put into critical practice. Their professors, many of them grounded in solid 20th century thought, pre or post-modernism, pre or post-structuralism, believe their time has now come.

I have witnessed this in the University of Glazed Hams in Texas, Stockholm, Prague, Innsbruck, Venice, Tokyo, Graz, Toronto and Helsinki. Combined with added computing skills, new software and advanced CAD modelling, much architecture is seen as a brilliant visual continuum of the 20th century offering the promise once envisaged in the Modern Architecture movement. There emerges a gospel of restraint. It becomes a battle with the contemporary itself. The result is a significant emergence of what we might call an augmented modernism. For many students though, it suggests a replicated, generative process. The replica implies the pulping of the known world.

Architecture becomes a meme machine. Doomed!

the meme machine

Many new buildings look as if they are versions of an accepted kind of contemporary architecture. The replica is something the public identifies easily, accepts easily, but which invites a continual itch. The glossy publications demonstrate how these buildings perform well to new material, space and function. Like those lifestyle shops peddling all sorts of plastic containers now seen in any city in the world buildings begin to demonstrate their own ubiquitous programme. Technological and material sophistication often disguise the generative nature of this architecture. Accepting the nuances that many architects can identify within such new works of architecture, the public however thinks differently. They see versions of architecture always done elsewhere, always down the street from where they live.

This is architecture elsewhere, but not here!

For the professional, the narrow range of representation and spectacle that such architecture holds out begins to look ominous. Advanced visualisation programmes seduce where previous versions failed. Already the computing software and advanced modelling systems prove able to produce replicated versions of just about any contemporary expression. Interestingly, in my experience, it is often the younger more talented students and graduates who are being hired in the big architectural practices in Dallas or New York. It is these students who work up projects through the latest 3D modelling software. Their credentials are Form Z, Macromedia Flash, Photoshop, Microstation, 3D Studio Maxx, Director or After Effects.

Where the older convention of drawing, rendering and perspectives no longer suffice, sophisticated digital representations of a previously un-charmed Modernism begin to convince. We see the meme machine at work. It is like a late flowering lust. Versions of Bilbao Guggenheim will not only flow from the consoles of Frank Gehry's office, they will self-adjust and re-appear in any country in the world. Lifted out of the brilliant critical scaffold and agonised parti that an architect like Daniel Libeskind uses to generate his 'caring chaosmotic' works, soon every student, every office will be able to enter competitions with 'chaosmotic' look-alike shards of agony and memory. The result is a cloned architecture of spectacle and diagony, detached representation, rather elegantly represented in Salford Quays Manchester where Michael Wilford (the partner of James Stirling) has produced a somewhat carnivalesque Lowry Building, and across the canal, Libeskind has abstracted air, water and earth into his diagrammatic Imperial War Museum.

Meanwhile there is still something in the air. And it is not debris.

Today we are sensing - if not always seeing - in many young collaborative practices an informed architecture that tries to avoid using the term 'architecture'. We are sensing hybrids, crossovers in architecture, design, engineering, science and environments. These are not only appearing in books and manifestos about liquid space, portable architecture, transarchitectures or cyber-architecture, they are slowly beginning to establish their own difference from those that closed the 20th Century. Finally we are being invited to understand the contemporary before it slips into nostalgia. There is an urgent social and political sense and responsibility that

one must resist the architecture that is already scripted to appear. It is beginning to seem more and more reasonable for the moment to call this process 'pulp' and the collection that may never want to emerge, Pulp Architecture.

an architecture passing through

We begin to see why there is an attraction to imagine architectures that resist closing too quickly on any thin critical neatness. 'Trans-architectures' is a phrase heard more and more. In the shadow of the architecture of event and event spaces, these new architectures begin to diagram a new inter-personal space. Like the notion of Tele-urbanism from Japan, these might be new forms of urbanism which may ultimately take us onto the next level, as they say, in computer gaming strategy.

In the process of journeying we are always on the way to somewhere else. This is becoming as comfortable as it may be challenging. Students and young design practices speak more and more of partial destinations as if we need not arrive anywhere. The professors at the University of Glazed Hams look increasingly worried! Are they right?

Should we not be cautious about claiming too much, too quickly for such altered and altering conditions? Certainly! And yet is it not appropriate that we should speak about something like 'trans-architecture' that wishes to remain fleshy, juicy, a seductive, soft mass? High-technology or soft-technology, are we to stay away from such ideas that have no critical hardness yet? If we are unable to establish difference, if we are wary of announcing a position, should

this make our enquiry less valid? Do we need to invent a pulp theory and attitude to do this?

When we think of 'pulp' we need also think of the rags, the detritus and the wood that is used – recycled? - to make paper. Soft and shapeless this mass of thinking may be at present, but it will not stand around and await the crushing and beating of less encouraged minds. Whether these are strategies produced simply, accidentally; whether these trans-architectures are the result of easy connections made to incomplete discourses, whether these are environments shaped by more economic means, or whether these are pulped ideas with wilder, uncontrolled vision utilising huge sums of advertising funds to embed sensational ideas matters little. Instead we are being offered new dynamics and new strategies. We look likely to enter new urban conditions, new morphologies.

In some cases, considering recent work in France or Tokyo, we may already have entered the world of 'Transurbanism' and 'Tele-urbanism'. The internet society changes urban conditions, as space itself is colonised by new media. The flow of people, meet the flow of data for example in central Tokyo, in Shibuya. The J-phone, with digital imaging systems built-in, begins to alter the urban space. Community, society, trading and dating, become more than mere urban games. The emergent field that will shape such architecture includes telematics, immersive VR, mixed reality, hypermedia, advanced data imaging systems, telepresence, transgenics, trans-urban generative processes, robotics, technoetics, nano-technology and so on. Life itself is being re-shaped through the responsible architecture that creeps out from within these systems. But: indistinct or partial as these models of an architecture passing through may be, the forms denied and the forms manipulated from these processes will not prevent these trans-architectures emerging in all cities, in all countries.

the danger of architecture

But is there really 'something in the air' outside this usual anxiety and stuttering for the unrevealed? If we rightly sense a resistance to an already scripted architecture, we must surely now consider the conundrum: a movement in progress.

We are all familiar with the term 'work-in-progress'. When used by a novelist it suggests a draft work. It is always on the way to being completed. It might be one of many draft versions. Or then it might be close to being a final version. In 1930s Paris, when sniffing around James Joyce Samuel Beckett came up with a strange collection. It was a sort of celebratory volume about Joyce's then work in progress; Finnegan's Wake. Beckett of course could not resist punning on the actual process itself. He suggested instability as the very talent and creativity of Joyce's exercise. Beckett called his volume 'On Exagmination of a Work in Progress'.

Exagmination is neither the word 'examination' nor is it the word we associate with 'exacting'. Does this not remind us of how a culture like Japan, continually misappropriates the English language and makes from it such thrilling hybrids? Or, as William Gibson puts it in his novel Idoru, 'one of those slogans the Japanese made up in English, the ones that almost seemed to mean something but didn't.' Is this not intriguing; something that seems to mean something but doesn't? In other words, might we suggest this also close to an architecture that almost seems to mean something but doesn't, a truth beyond meaning, a work-in-progress perhaps. By suggesting a movement in progress however, we accept the idea that this is a movement on the way to becoming a more defined Movement. At the same time we must accept the conundrum once more: the word 'movement' is also necessarily in progress.

I think we can now begin to suggest what our new movement in progress might be. If it is architecture as a work-in-progress, never quite completed in the conventional sense, is it an architecture soon-to-be-real? Is it a dangerous architecture? According to Sanford Kwinter, architecture becomes dangerous when it forgoes all that is 'pre-given'. Gone are the fixed types and predetermined matter. A dangerous architecture, Kwinter continues, "takes the actual flow of historical connections as its privileged materiality (not the habitual discrete domains of geometry, masonry, stone and glass), and works these, adapts these through transformations and deformations, in order to engender and bind its form." Pulp Architecture then, might be a dangerous architecture resisting its own script!

when cool is no longer cool!

To try and capture a new movement is often a thankless task. It usually requires theoretical and critical work. How quickly identification can turn into critical triumph often depends on this. Bilbao Guggenheim was seen as the high art of architecture meeting the brief of all possible leisure

and icon. Advertising has now become the final insinuation in this architecture. The logo meets the icon and becomes seamless. The next stage is cloned projects.

When cool is no longer cool, when modern is no longer modern, when it is exhausted, memetic, unquestioned and unchallenged, when it is timeless, when it is an age where intelligence is not particularly emphasised, when celebrity even saturates architecture and art, it is necessary I would suggest to fall short of any new name, category or movement.

Is there any doubt that Pulp is a new movement? Or are we too keen to see the next big thing and think we have the critical brilliance to have spotted it? Should we sacrifice our intelligence for its ambiguity and uncertainty? New relationships to architecture, to urban ideas, to collaborative practices, to the New Media may not have trickled down to the local offices but they do dust the radical surface.

Not all Pulp architecture is of course predicated on the new media and inventive warped space, blob-invention and worm-holing. But all of it will probably be shaped in some way by advances in new media techniques. Architects are naturally involved in this. But the important thing; they may no longer work alone, nor need to, nor indeed want to. Pulp Architecture then would desire to alter the social and critical responsibility of the architect. The time for pouring over the journals and surveying the latest star architectural turns is passed. Long passed! Mongrel, hybrid works of Koolhaas and Holl are only slightly more influential than the re-created modernity and neo-expressionism seen in new computer enhanced works. Some act out the lost beginnings of the 20th century, others act out the lost ending of the same century.

Today, do we not live in that pulpiest of all moments,

the Karaoke world? According to Malcolm McLaren this is "a world without any particular point of view: where high culture and low culture have their edges blurred. Karaoke is mouthing the words of other people's songs, singing someone else' lyrics. Karaoke is an amateur performance of other people's ideas. It is a virtual replay of something that has happened before. Life by proxy - liberated by hindsight, unencumbered by the messy process of creativity and free from any real responsibility beyond the actual performance."

Remember Malcolm Maclaren? Remember The Sex Pistols? Remember The Clash? Should we stay or should we go? Should we rock the Kasbah, or is that not what is happening right now in Iraq and Afghanistan as I write? The clash of civilisations or the clash of fundamentalisms; knowledge pinched into hubris, aching for obedience? Architecture primed by redundant ideological warring ready for the perfect fictional take-over?

Pulp architecture then would not be an approach to architecture that believes that it can rescue a type of architecture that might otherwise have gone missing. Pulp architecture would be an attitude that may ultimately have nothing to do with architecture at all! This is hardball time!

hardball time

The last 30 years in architecture has made serious gaming out of language, philosophy and theory. Nothing was believable, when all was believable. The mediation of architecture important for the star architects became a

critical act for those following. Architecture opened up to 'narrative management' and spin could also be infinitely reapplied, re-appropriated.

This was hardball time.

Fame became more important than ever. Increased pressure on architects to communicate, to write there own press releases for buildings and environments led to a new way of pitching works. It misappropriated movements like 'Deconstruction' and innovated architecture from it. Controlled suspicion of the star architectural discourses appeared regularly in schools of architecture around the globe.

This was hardball time.

Elsewhere, an unlikely, even untimely utopia for architectural thinking on the fringes of built architecture failed once again to convince. Game strategies were introduced. No fear of theory but no fetish for theory. Theoretical exercises ran up against a structural glass wall. The 20th Century became a repertoire, distanced and distancing itself from its original promise.

This is hardball time.

There is no longer any crisis of influence. Hyperarchitecture operating much like hyper-text rejects influence and originality, and slowly begins to widen the site of architecture itself. Ideologies began to weed themselves out. There was no direct relationship to French theory, yet Rhizome was practised around the world. Now as a website it is considered a social sculpture, more than an electronic field.

This is hardball time.

Pulp architects began to invent their own ways to negotiate this encounter. Creative digitalisation arrived and suggested a future hallucinatory architecture. Whilst the star architects continue to design specular and spectacular buildings the pulp architects operate within new menus of radical individuality. Radical pragmatism and public relations exercises ensured an opportunity for partial architectures, architectures without a destination.

This is still hardball time.

Slowly an operative knowledge of architecture began changing, a new vocabulary took over. Notions so beloved in the 20th century began disappearing. In their place, rhizome, sampling, prototyping, nomadism, meme-theory, blur, liminalism, streaming, adjacency, texture mapping; all words like those unhappy mistakes of a Tokyo cooktown restaurant.

This is hardball time.

For pulp architects cycles of dissent and rebellion are secondary to constant invention. Reading is not dead, but it is less on the agenda than electronic cruising. In the popular television game 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' if you do not know an answer you have a chance 'to call a friend'. Imagine this in global terms. Using the Internet and social networks, if you wish to work up and design something, anything, that appears impossible without the help of a specialist or inventor, you may - literally - now call a friend, google an expert, date a partner, or fish for a new collaborator. You may even complete the work-in-progress, call it architecture, pulp it – literally - from anywhere in the world.

articulated longing

or the theory and resistance to everyday life!

Pulp architecture then? From the street up?

In common with street culture, there is a 'horizontality' which the young architects, students and glazed hams take for granted. Inter-disciplinary and collaborative work no longer needs definition. There is not only a thrill in contemporary unrest, there is that licensed accommodation of uncertainty. Take contemporary 'hiphop'. The main dynamic behind hiphop is sampling. Sampling is a way that pulls beats, bass lines, loops and rhythms, (whole) melodies, even vocals from previously released tracks. The very question as to whether this is a creative, artistic process, or piracy and plagiarism is part of the dynamics involved.

It does not require a huge leap in the imagination to observe that the more architecture looks over its shoulder and sits comfortably with the rise of the media and the pace of trends, 'sampling' is a creative, artistic process similar to what architects are now faced with. A technique where recorded sounds or extracts are incorporated into a new recording can be extended to architecture. 'Sampling' implies then a technique and vision of incorporating extracts from past and current architecture into new provisional hybrids. The Casablanca Syndrome: the film that is about all other films as Umberto Eco showed us.

Street culture is model, invention and influence. It has proved more than attractive to shape architecture from the fragments and fusion within other architecture, other disciplines. Old boundaries no longer exist. New attitudes invite new gaming strategies and imaginary soliloquies for architecture. Artistic influence is nothing to be anxious about any more. As Pierre Huyghe said, people, books, images, encounters are all departures for art as well as architecture.

Diagramming, scripting and prototyping alter architecture's departure whilst postponing architecture's arrival. Ideas innovate, replicate, loop and fuse. Sampling, transformation, simulation are new tools expanding the site of a practiced architecture. Transformation, a process whereby things can be changed by rotation or mapping one configuration or expression onto another, is not confined to mathematics or linguistics. It offers a set of rules for weaving and transforming the supposed underlying structures of another language into potential architecture. A procedural method which can make a functioning model of another system or process, 'simulation' can also function memetically as a diagrammatic alteration, but is itself transformed into an architecture beyond any superficial likeness or imperfect imitation of any 'original'.

There results a privatization of architectural meaning and a social globalisation of new ideas. No longer uninhabitable, these are hybrid architectures. The rave dancer has no purpose, no agenda. Software architectures, the hacker ethic and digital engineering have begun re-defining community and privacy, communication and debate. Architecture becomes inter-textual, open to the seductive commerce of influence and exchange.

Is there any such thing as a hostile field in architecture?

from the street up

Pulp practices, like Richard Brautigan in Trout Fishing in America, are working on the fringe of praxis itself, continually fraying the edges. Heroes are individual, dangerous and alienating. Buildings representing the sculptural outflow of such heroism are of little interest, though the technology that makes some of them possible is naturally of extreme importance. Pulp is a hunchback strategy. It takes for granted the obscenity of fame and the star architectural system.

I do not see these individuals or young pulp groups attending world conferences on architecture and swapping stories with Charles Correa or Daniel Libeskind. Nor do I see them appearing at biennales, although they may be tempted soon enough. When someone like Peter Eisenman says 'we'll be seeing you again' I don't think these pulp architects would be rude, but I fancy they would not be seeing him again. They may not even turn up at these events at all. In this way our imagined new movement-in-progress is an underclass including those whose thinking might not conventionally impact on architecture.

There is nothing visually or identifiably similar in the pulp practices that appear to be working at the edge of architecture. As yet they have not branded their work so that we can recognise their future projects or identify a common practice. In this case they are not and may never be a community at all outside these papers. Artless, leading away from any self-promotion, they move, their work is in progress; their solutions often partial, their destinations restless. From Delhi to Tokyo, from Graz to Ottawa, from Terezin to Toronto, from Arlington to Yale, they are working

in the seams of other disciplines.

Such a new movement would under usual circumstances come to a stop. The usual circumstances involve the critic, the world and the text. The critic organises a critical enquiry suiting the strategies. The written project becomes a tactical way of expressing larger strategies, greater agendas. There are many examples of this in the 20th century. We are familiar with this way of scripting architectural practices and work into critical groupings like Post-Modernism, Late Modernism, Neo-Modernism and more recently Liquid Architecture and Neo-Expressionism. Charles Jencks is one of the more well known critics. He demonstrated a brilliant, fluid talent at addressing change before it received critical recognition. From Post-modernism to the new paradigm, Chaos and Morphogenetic Architecture, often his own critical recognition stood in for the professional triumph.

No mean feat!

But it is the inherent ambiguity implied in the phrase a 'movement in progress' which naturally resists this kind of grouping. Many are architects who have left but haven't arrived yet. Some are practitioners in other disciplines displaying a new approach and thinking that will re-shape our environments. Many desire to stay away from more conventional terminology: the city, the town, the streetscape, the road.

Even the word' architecture' proves too narrow for this vision-to-come, this emerging engagement.

the pulp challenge

The Pulp challenge then is both to architecture as a discipline and as a profession. To many of these Pulp practices, architecture as a profession is already defunct. Much contemporary profiled architecture is propelled by the self-arranging processes of fame and the media. Meanwhile there is a gentleness in some new even anonymous architecture that rejects such developments. This gentleness does not preclude rigour, is not as velvet as it appears, and rebellion dusts more than the radical surface.

How, they ask, faced with urban decline, deadspaces and unsafe environments can architecture make a difference? And how might it do this without the hubris in the profession creeping in once more? And without spectacular but irrelevant contemporary neo-modern buildings, how can architecture make a difference?

There is nothing naïve or ridiculous in these questions. And - almost a hundred years later - it is timely to ask that question again: architecture or revolution? Perhaps it is a naïvety that rejects spectacle and representation without yet knowing what this rejection leads to. This includes the new experiments in mixed reality, ubiquitous programming and trans-programming, A-life, nano-technology and various other soon-to-be-named processes. It is possible that these experiments will no longer be confined to the narrow utopia of digital art and virtual reality.

Then there are those outside the discipline and there are many - graphic, fashion, web-designers, systems architects, physicists, computer scientists, engineers, bio-geneticists, mathematicians, skateboarders, interactive artists - who are sitting and working at the edge of architecture. These various individuals and collaborations work without always knowing that they possess the talent and ideas that could re-shape our cities and our lives.

Sampling, transformation and simulation are all options incorporated within pulp architecture. Put these along with topologies, surfaces, weaves, patterns and folds and we begin to see the new adventure. Or do we miss the point, avoid the mediocre and elevate these strategies beyond their usefulness?

Would this make Pulp merely a freshly repetitive and recycled intelligence like those pulp novels re-framing the sensation of the underworld? Or could this be a long overdue, sophisticated refusal to negotiate architecture as we see it? Could it represent what many of these new practices think: dazzling metaphors and alibis for a future architecture stealthily leaving architects behind? 'Hiphop' and 'house' may appear unassertive in its looting of a musical past, as horizontal as it might be un-intensive, but a rave flattens out of course, identifies its own subversive power and moves on. It must. Intense as it might tempt the reckless, pulp architecture may prove to need the edge of irresponsibility to appear so talented.

the final frontier

Pulp is arbitrary, random and a fruit machine, a flash of orange in Tarantino, the manga frame broken by Japanese pain, reflection, excess, redemption, a passage from Ezekial, a tarantula on an angel cake, an idoru, a yahoo lounge in Narita airport, a character called Hiro Protagonist or Low-

Rez. Pulp is a samurai sword talking back to its future user, a French girl softly asking whose chopper is that? Like everything, pulp is only the street, lying in wait, just as Duchamp said, waiting to take over from the dead-museums, the dead-malls and the dead architecture.

If movement itself is essential to our contemporary existence then Pulp Architecture can only ever be a movementin-progress. Pulp is theory and anti-theory. Pulp is an architecture that seems to wish to stay on the edge. It may be an architecture that respects but rejects the star architecture system of individualised spectacles. No total architectures!

Pulp challenges existing architecture as much as it challenges architecture already on the edge. In a contemporary condition 'between' rather than 'within', Pulp is an architecture informed, engineered and invented from and programmed by, film, street culture, art, play, terror, surveillance, the hacker ethic and new media.......

Of course the list can never be closed!

It is important to repeat: Pulp Architecture is not an approach to architecture that believes that it can rescue a type of architecture that might otherwise have gone missing. Pulp Architecture is an attitude that may ultimately have nothing to do with architecture at all! Or Pulp may be a naive attempt to resist the architecture that already appears to be scripted by forces beyond.

We toggle architectural parti, we google the future, we scroll through other lives as we scratch out other buildings and scrawl our own future. Pulp may ultimately resist an architecture we have no right to resist!

so tell me if you will

Where did Pulp come from? Was it chance invention, a ground swell or a critical calculation? No coincidence that I had just returned from travels in Japan, from visiting Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka. No coincidence that as I stood in the middle of the Roppongi crossing in Tokyo the word 'pulp' seemed to jump out at me. But on looking back it is possible I should have rightly called this Punk Architecture. There are obvious similarities between the relentless branding and celebrity cults in architectural spectacle and the situation at the end of the 1970s. The recent death of Joe Strummer, the lead singer of The Clash gives us another opportunity to consider whether this may have resonance to that time past, and lead to a growing street activity of gentle or less gentle outrage.

Are the parallels ridiculous? Strummer, real name John Graham Mellor, was a punk rocker born in Ankara, Turkey. He went to public school in England, founded in the late 70s one of the most important bands of the 1980s, during an era when extravagance began creeping back into society. Who can forget The Clash and 'The Guns of Brixton' or 'Lost in the Supermarket'?

It was impossible to miss the coincidence of the death of Joe Strummer at the same time as the release of the six architectural visions for the new World Trade Project in Manhatten. Was I alone in thinking this a rather predictable spectacle for an architecture, an action, an event which we wish not to be so predictable?

Surely not!

Pulp Architecture does not exist yet, but in a way it does.

For if it is work in transit, then those transitional stages exist at all times. Pulp Architecture is not the work that becomes the museum of the future. Pulp Architecture would not offer a vision for New York that must last for eternity. Nor is it work that makes these visions possible. Pulp Architecture is a rehearsal. It is that stage before accepting what architecture knows it can become.

Pulp Architecture is more at home with the Citroen car as the exact equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals as Roland Barthes claimed in the 1950s. Pulp architecture is the final frontier, the anti-thesis of slick as it reviews and re-tools the production values connected to architecture. It may need luxury and capital to create it but will always lie beyond luxury and capital. From the street up, it is an architecture generated by game strategies. Ultimately like the notion of pulp itself it is a manipulation of code. It is an intervention in a system that has no predetermined form. Youthful in its excitement, much of it might be in the hands and consoles of the young, but it is hardly immature.

coda - intimacy

I have seen Frank fight with Peter, and Peter fight with Bernard. I have seen Daniel whisper to Frank and Peter fight with Daniel. I have heard Herb rag Daniel and Peter rag Herb. I have seen Peter fight with Michael and Philip fight with them all. And then make up. I have seen Bernard deny jet-lag and Rem go off with Jacques to the Noucamp in Barcelona. I have seen John remain detached and Philip

come back again. I have watched people come and go in the lobby of the Hotel Architecture and you think you recognise exactly what I am talking about.

For some reason in the profession of architecture there is a tendency to scorn the ideas and projects of other architects. Taking sides, making waves, occupying positions and destroying others, these gladiators of ideology look for the weakest link. Some think of this a natural dynamic. A creative way to make sure we get the architecture we have already thought about, but not in our own minds. The democracy in this includes rancour, bitterness, envy and personal disaster. Suicide even! It is a kind of natural hardball, as if you should disappear if you cannot play this.

If you cannot stand the heat, Peter will say, or Philip or Daniel, then get out of the kitchen!

Peter, Michael, Daniel, Bernard, Frank...whatever, whoever!

Can anyone really remain detached from the architecture the world has made for itself? Is there in this hopeless task the potential of an architecture gone missing? And if so what could that architecture be?

The Professor of Night had been preparing his ideas for the Faculty meeting. He was working on the idea of a parallel architecture. He couldn't find a name for this, at least a name that would stick. He wouldn't dream of calling it anarchitecture but he did sympathise with those who thought it was a work-in-progress that never actually progresses. But those architectures forever shifting, informed by the everpresent fear and security didn't entirely convince him.

What was architecture unable to respond to HIV aids? What was architecture unable to respond to the grief of the twin towers in New York? How architecture mourned the hypnotic, but could not deflect the bullet's trajectory, nor heal the gun-shot wound of the civilian or the stabbing in the department store.

The Professor of Night picked the short straw.

This was a new intimacy, a way of avoiding that degree zero again. And yet grafted onto all those buildings that will re-appear in New York might be nothing but the degree zero of architecture. And not only when the sun sets and the light diagonizes in on September 11th each year!

The zero is the fullest space from which to start over, the Professor of Night wrote on his Powerbook.

A single sentence! The first sentence of the book he would write. Everything would flow from these words. Nothing else would be possible. Everything else would be possible.

4

the art of swerved poetry

Post-Culture

Stir well from source. Add various sorts of battered, paperback editions of Modern Thinkers. Call it 'The Crepuscule of the Idols'. Continue to stir. Add further quantities of a new laxative, previously tested on the unemployed, even those geriatric Dionysians. Shake furiously before turning upside down and pouring.

Use sparingly. (Keep away from the hands of children!)

Post-Critical

Depending on how useful this intellectual wants to be, could spend time identifying the latest thinkers and critical masters as being responsible for future 'trends'. But would not necessarily need to absorb these as the pace of cultural change would blur the effort taken to attempt any 'understanding'.

Post-Authoritative

Would have to invite momentary authority external to the self; if only to imagine a 'self' outside and even beyond that self.

In other words: 'the other'

Post-Informational

Would imply a return (have we ever left) to the necessary tyranny of meaning; an essential selection process in all diverse (perverse) stimuli to prevent drowning in any further excess (some hope!)

The computer at home may help!

Post-Fallible

Abdication, admissions of defeat, ironic or otherwise will be unnecessary
Being 'wrong' will be the shame it unfortunately always has been (whichever authority is cited for this 'express' purpose).

Post-Nietzschean

A post-kantian practising a philosophy of language at its most critical and post-critical stage but denying it all by scepticism. Continually! So hard, so hard!

Post-Subversive

Taking subversion on and on will naturally re-return to itself, collide with Nietzsche, entertain Kirkegaard, subvert back to the previous mountains from which to fall off again; not a particularly pleasant activity.

Latecomer!

Post-Modernist

Will interrogate its own synonymity and even similarity to Modernism and may see it all later as an inadequate 'good laugh', 'bon mot' or useful jape. That would be such a waste!

Post-Fragmental

Partial words become a whole; scholars will trace this endlessly back and beyond whilst novelists have been doing it deeper for years: continual contravention, continual obedience!

Post-Ideological

Art nor indeed culture has any arrogance outside its own momentary (im)possibility. A pity? Following that, all looser and looser applications will make sure that each era has a dominant hold over itself. Or then ignores it for a decade or so.

That would be such a shame!

Post-Kantian

Tongue definitely in cheek. No need to rescue philosophy from abysmal snares of sceptical doubt. No need to rescue the rhetoric by insisting that the mind could 'know' reality.

Neither is it necessary to have the interest to show the inevitable structuring.

Instead, throw the dice again. Pass GO.

But GO straight to Jail

This is no holiday for language.

Post-Newtonian

Naturally this will begin and end (neat sequence?) with the paradox of taking a role in the shift from A (Aristotelian) Thinking towards

Non-A Thinking and believing it precise when known as Non-Newtonian thinking.

Post-Cartesian

But will this introduce not only the doubt but even the 'why' of the discourse. Some will yawn. The aim will be to know the questions in advance, recognise the 'repertoire' in order to drag one's parole into certain, known directions (if at all possible!)

Post-Mediocrity

No longer will it be scandalous to indulge in the phenomenology of mediocrity and banality. Some cultures will naturally do it with more elegance (once more with feeling!) a celebration then a brief denial of intellectual terrorism.

Post-Political

Mercer, Resnais Bogarde? (Who?) Post-providential then? The third wave, the holistic shift, the turning point, the diagnostic look; the slow lizard-crawling elegance of chance coherence, and more, much more than momentary irresponsibility.

Post-Phenomenological

After Husserl (who else?) but Waiting for Flaubert.

Post-Providential

A nonsense and non-sense: a state which though never losing sight of the exaggerated objectives of political change operates in the excruciating slowness of change itself.

Post-Modernism (Revised)

A way of thinking (hardly!)
a sensibility that cannot suddenly be expected
to avoid the decay of Modernism
as explored through its limits (and Habermas...)
Neither can it suddenly be expected to resist
the eventual dispersal and decay of

any other movement in and of ideas. (Mischief is here to stay!)

Post-Scriptural

Writing is about writing
a disease to explore its
own contamination.
Waiting for its subject, it is there
to defeat itself and its sovereignty. Its own confessional
authority will pull it down.

Result: supreme self-defeat.

Post-Beckettian

More and more concerned with the reactions of the audience which will in one era make the third-rate work first-rate and in another era first-rate work third-rate.

There should be no sighs at that. Coughing perhaps! Then one can participate in a desperate attempt to choreograph all sound, all theatre, all personal croakings once and for all¹.

Post-Flaubertian

Living in a 'liminal' space, stepping over from one zone another! Able to change, go backwards and forwards and in between make a hobby of encyclopaedic rehearsals, with a strong interest in gossip of the higher (non-sensical) sort.

Believes this is achieved by inventing such post-flaubertian space.

Post-Aporian

The super-searcher for the cogent, accessible, talented, credible, intelligent, rigorous (stop now!) alternative to linguistic scepticism; pauses just before this remarkable discovery. Why? To doubt it of course!

Post-Derridean

A willed, wit-full intellect of sovereignty, vomiting choices to reinstate a passionate, often blind (according to the era) but nevertheless longed-for reason and closure. Sad, but a more-than-momentary hater of carnivals.

Open hospitality, awarded generosity.

Post-Undecidability

The useful, talented indifference that refuses to be remotely interested in the simple quest for variations or that quest for cognitive assurance from any first principles.

Post-Aporian (The right version!)

The repeated authority limps back from all contamination shouting stop, stop, can't take any more. Cognition in hand, being in head

and urgency in Body.

Ethics castrated from Aesthetics.

S & M. So it moves!

Post-Provincialism

Or fortunate slithers of the world that avoid
Deconstruction. Ending up in Fin-Lande or Ground
Zero with nowhere,
absolutely nowhere, to go
The Never-Ending story
The Whisperer's Gallery and Yawning Heights
Hell's Angels on 750 Hondas from here to Leningrad.
And back. In a day!

Post-Kierkegaardian

The trembling depriver of any redemptive or exculpating weight and authority. Will try to go even further in transforming guilt by displays of narrative skill, making redundant anything written not as it originates but way, way back long before its emergence was even intimated.

Post-Deconstruction (Scenario 1)

Needing the authority and nominations of a movement that questions authority ensures that anyone needing this authority will anyway pass on to the next movement.

This, all quite painlessly

with the one useful difference:
The Library is much smaller.
Deconstructed authors were burnt
(along with their books!)

Post-Deconstruction (After the flames)

In the ashes, comic remorse! You are full of it!
As Jacques-the-useful-fait-accomplished and Gang
pushed Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, Plato, Hegel
and Freud in a Bataille of batailles over the precipice
until they were no longer worth their own singular salts
They trapped you in your own word.
You destroyed all trace of them

You destroyed all trace of them.

Now it's too late to begin The Library anew.

What? You're actually sorry. Oh dear,

You don't know how lucky you are.

Post-post-Saussurian

Aim for the willing, welcome denial of the arbitrary nature of the sign in a (desperate?) bid to re-establish the referential function of language. The carnival's over!

Put another way:

that wounded recovery of the word denied in post-Saussurian discourse.

It will not be easy.

It will not be any picnic. Heads will roll.

As when all carnivals are dismounted.

Post-Intellectual

The weary though not unattractive individual contaminated with a new type of cultural journalism swerves from all the indifference presented and refuses (absolutely refuses) to prepare terser entries for the Encyclopaedia asked by The Chief Editor.

A Fair Player or sorts, a carnival seeker, a precipice finder, a self-lacerator, a kenotic actor, a full performer in the final labyrinth of all.

5

sily people rely on ideology!

Used loosely to signify a collection of ideas, 'ideology' more often indicates, to those who possess not the 'ideologyshared', a state of fanaticism. So what would it possibly mean to be suspended in an 'after-ideology'? Notes by Daniel Bell allow us to explore the way 'ideology' has shifted in meaning. But afterall the gossip in architecture are we so sure we want to take this on, opening ourselves once more to the eminence of a period we appear so easily duped by? We warn ourselves by way of greater minds that we too, powerless, have a choice. Does this not suggest an obvious, redundant condition for those of us suspended, those of us loving diverse viewpoints, and those of us enamoured with the privilege of cheating decisiveness and certainty by opting for partial systems, partial architectures? When faced with such conditions, we are advised to explore the loss in the idea of 'ideology' itself.

Originally coined by the French philosopher Destutt

de Tracy in Elements d'Ideologie (1801-1805) 'ideology' denoted the science of ideas, a study which was to reveal to man the source of their bias and prejudice.1 The word has of course gone on to characterise ideas, ideals, beliefs, passions, values and, from Marx's The German Ideology (1927) onwards, ideology has been used generally to signify a collection of ideas with religious, cultural, political, philosophical and/or moral justification. The rest is, as they say, history. In Modern architecture we tend to think this cliché adequate. But is it?

When did making history become faking history? How does a set of ideas inhabit consensus, thereby re-frame itself into an ideology? And how does it become justification for the agenda proposed? If earlier ideologies masked specific interests surely today we are more aware of the agendas implied by such justifications. Though there are many diverse studies of ideology and the various ends of modernity, it is worth a few thoughts anew. In Modern Architecture, ideology took up the role of a 'social formula'. It became a belief system and dominated the 20th century; architects mobilised to carry out that system. But the promise faded, the set of ideas blurred into a damaged ideology altered by chance, heroism and circumstance. The public was always some way behind. The public understanding of architecture still is, the public bewildered often by a confused plurality professionals so readily acknowledge. Discourses were often alienated and alienating. Does this not invite the obvious question: is the decline in apocalyptic beliefs merely the way generations catch up with their own enthusiasm, bias and hubris?

When this happens a resistance to theory often produces sliding manifestos. These become highly pitched, warring speculations on a worrying future. Books, journals, installations appear called After-Theory, After-Ideology, After-all. If we go along with the notion of ideologies as 'styles of thought' open to their own alteration, then the resultant ideological combat and indifference would place us once more in a post-ideological condition. Is it only now we seek a new commitment, a new social and critical activism and begin to question architecture once more as it plays out its indifference and inadequacies?

Already in response to various developing total ideologies, (weltanschaungen – complete commitments to a way of life) thinkers like Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell analysed this in the 1950s as part of a wider notion of the 'end of ideology'. Yet issues remained unstable. For Clifford Geertz, ideology represents a kind of symbol system among other cultural systems. For Jean Baudrillard, the loss of any belief system deprives us of essential resistance; we are adrift unable to exist in the provisional world.

There are other giants, other shoulders. The disappearance of avant-gardes must produce more than a resistance to the comfort of strategies producing gratuitous architectures too easily within reach today. But as lost criticism is re-shifted within contemporary architecture, we must consider whether, with the loss of utopias and ideologies, 'we lack objects of belief.' Answers to staged questions are not an option; more risk, chance and indecision invites an architecture of informed, ignored, neglected and re-defined narratives. Multiplicity and inter-disciplinarity offer a framework without necessarily coming to rest on any renewed, coerced critical thesis. Perhaps this is as it should be after such a 'modern' century of hope, progress and pretence.

If we wish to fall back and resist the ideologies we have

misunderstood, how do we translate this energy into a chosen profession which becomes our 'malaise'? Able to assess the self-interest in specific groups and a set of ideas implies the architect's critical self will become more important in the 21st century than the agendas disguised. But if it is vital to have things in which not to believe, it is just as vital to explore disinterested practices. We might inhabit, without realising it, an era of de-radicalism. The disinternet awaits!

In 1976 the English professor Raymond Williams wrote a useful little compendium called 'Keywords'. In a time of dense after-thinking, not after-thought, Marxists everywhere were analysing 'failure'. Ideology became a series of speculative systems; something we have little difficulty in agreeing with today. But at that time, in a decade when 'critique' pluralized the Modern Movement, Williams finished the entry on 'ideology' with a hint of the post-ideological. Politically, culturally, ethically it seemed impossible to support sets of ideas which proved speculative, abstract and false.

'Meanwhile', Williams wrote, 'in popular argument, ideology is still mainly used in the sense given by Napoleon. Sensible people rely on experience, or have a philosophy; silly people rely on ideology. In this sense ideology now, as in Napoleon, is mainly a term of abuse.'2 Abuse travels of course. And if we are not careful any after-thoughts will also suffer the abuse of the lonely and unconnected. We warn ourselves by way of greater minds, that we too, powerless bystanders, have a choice. Perhaps then we should have noted those giants that have gone before and, like Kolakowski in his essay 'Why an Ideology is always right', we should leave aside the various proposals about how 'ideology' should be employed and accept this: 'Briefly, what common usage tends to imply most frequently is that the social function

of ideologies is to furnish an existing power system (or aspirations to power) a legitimacy based on the possession of absolute and all-encompassing truth.' So if silly people rely on ideology, are architects ahead of the game?

6

after-all

If there is a truth in architecture, it appears doubly allergic to the aphorism: essentially it is produced as such, outside of discourse. It concerns an articulated organisation, but a silent articulation.

- Jacques Derrida Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword

allergies

After-ideology in Architecture? The vision has fallen out of the visionary; to be replaced by what? Let us dispense with truth. The response to this is blurred and a creative lying is deflected. Faced with this condition, like many today, I wish not to make sense in any acceptable 'sense' of the word or world. Glib, foolhardy, cynical this may not be answered or helped by a clever discourse that takes on the same terms as the agenda which it sets out to dislodge. Where cynical reason allows; the operative cabal

of the known and famed architects of the world filter out. In the centres of the periphery, we get more or less miniature versions of these caballic leaders, more or less miniatures of a world already known to us. I would term this a sort of Architectural Imamology.

In a way this notion, the 'end of ideology', paradoxically contaminated the last century with that devastating conspiracy of hope. The resulting over-reach is only now arriving. How have architects, those monstrous saints and sinners, been complicit in this conspiracy? Is this why we see doomed projects in the latest utopias? Or is this why we identify the altered spectacles rising out of the phoenix-years offering us a stacked-up version of routine but hardwon ideas?

Theory, when linked up to a fashionable mechanics of persona often scaffolds further but necessary unmeaning in architecture. Instead of the rigour and contest essential to open up architectural production to questions about its social and critical relevance, questions fringe the scholars, skirt the canon and swerve from the normative, whilst the cabal orchestrates discourse with all necessary 'contemporary' support. Must there not be a warning about these words as about these architects: too brutal, too glib?

If it is still hardball time in contemporary architecture are we to stand aside and let others more talented, more powerful, more energetic, more opportunistic take over the game? Architecture has always been about going too far and knowing it. To some this is the threshold that we fall back from, constantly and effortlessly. To others this is the edge that now allows us too little time to pull back. Yet any call for tolerance today does not mean we must accept those who speak for us, those who prefer visions to arise without

contest.

the archeology of the frivolous

'You who have learned nothing while reading this chapter, you are clearly convinced that everything I said is the same thing as what you know.' So writes Jacques Derrida in The Archeology of the Frivolous.⁴ Much talk today is of plural positions; multiplicity and inter-disciplinary suggest we have already arrived in an irreversible zone. This isn't always the case. But an acceptance of difference and multiple power structures has, for the moment, replaced the illusion we once had of a Twentieth Century controlled – in the main – by a dominant if not always singular mode of operation. This has allowed us to consider a critical hiatus; we have come to recognise the 'end of ideology'. But we are not the first to arrive here and we will not be the last. We do not, will never have, that eminence.

Today there is a growing nostalgia for a critical condition known as 'after theory' which attempts to eliminate the influence of not-too-distant brilliance, much of it French. We wish the hegemony of issues that encouraged such singularity could be removed once and for all. And yet the consequences for us depend on our own critical self. We choose ignorance if the future does not fall for us smoothly. We theorize our own frivolity into acceptable scenarios. Yet we are thrilled by the disappearance of one sense as it is replaced by another. This allows us respite, surely?

But what is this longing to articulate the constructed dream, kept so securely within professional limit? The failure of poetry can only add to our demise as on the page, on the building site, we see the Fountainheads re-emerge. Visioning architecture need not of course be a cognitive delusion, nor then is the operative myth that functions as talent. Inviting demythologisation is our contemporary action; a delusion in which we lose ourselves by privileging resistance and theorising 'privilege'.

Surely when faced with an archaeology of our own frivolity we might go for Witold Gombrowicz's 'jaunty indifference' from his novel Ferdydurke, rather than any attempt to see 'total' once again our own conspiracies? This condition coming after-all is itself a time warp:

I was afraid he might mention the letter, but fortunately the modern code forbade them to talk a great deal, or to be surprised at each other; they had to pretend that everything was straightforward and self-evident. Casualness, crudity, brevity and audacity - see how they struck sparks of poetry from themselves instead of groans, sighs, and serenades of the lovers of former times. He knew that the only way of getting the girl was by jaunty indifference and that there was no trace of getting her without it. All the same, he added a trace of sensual and modern sentimentalism by saying in a muffled voice and with his face against the virgin vine which was trained up the wall: 'You want it too!'⁵

architecture, the gay science

Nietzsche was addressing the Realists: 'You sober people who feel well armed against passion and fantasies and would like to turn your emptiness into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you only and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it.'6 If, as we attempt to announce, there is much critical fraudulence around in architecture today are we sure where it lies? Not quite understanding any awkward 're-ontologisation' of architecture, architects enjoy the phrase as much as the critics. The result is another retreat from the word which in turn becomes a retreat from critical architecture itself. If one has witnessed what passes for the generalised world of the realists in the last 20 years it is impossible not to be caught up in this retreat. Do obvious implications follow?

An operative knowledge of architecture has remained impassionate, stubborn and unaltered since the 1990s whilst the theoretical boundaries of architecture have been extended. Theory knocked on its own window with a sponge; ideology and dogma were re-sited by misreading architectural movements from elsewhere. Architecture loaned the inter-disciplinary nerve but kept it within, never rebounding, only ever seeing itself re-scripted in the image of its own conspiracy. There are of course other realists: 'We have hesitated for a long time to acknowledge the powerful phenomenon known as Modern Architecture. Such caution is requisite in anyone who stands in the position of mentor to the public taste. Too often, isolated manifestations of anomaly can be mistaken for a broad popular movement, and one should be careful not to ascribe to them a significance they do not deserve. But Modern Architecture has stood the test of time, has answered a demand of the masses, and we are glad to salute it.'7

frank heron, architect

'He was one of the best architects this country has ever produced. He began to answer the demands of the masses. He was absolutely brilliant in every way. And he was a good man too, a man with wealthy humour. He joined the Special Forces and after that his ideas and methods became...well, unsound.'

If you knew who I was, how famous I am, you won't believe what I am about to tell you, so you'll understand why I prefer to remain anonymous. Buildings from the last century are beginning to disappear. Don't be fooled by this. Modern architecture has always been a sham, run by the few for the many who still do not understand. It was only when I started to get a chance to build my architecture that self-destruction offered itself. Feted for an architecture that disgusted me, I wanted to create nothing, communicate nothing, assert nothing. The more famous I became the more I felt like an endangered species.

Up until that moment in my self-effacing and diminishing career it had only shown itself during my lecturing. Only when the second or third medal I received had been awarded me, and I was stepping up to what had become a dreaded place, the podium, that I realised I was getting further and further away from my ambition. Idiotically it must appear now to anyone who has read my obituary that, according to that loose but very useful French phrase, "j'ai toujours le vertige".

From this point onwards I decided to rectify the immense dishonesty perpetrated by modern architecture by organising a network. With great deliberation and the utmost cunning, we have decided to remove any record of our work as architects. This not only includes the destruction

of all drawings and records but a far more chilling plan of removing the actual buildings designed, those which are still standing. We now work as an architectural combat team. Our concerns are demolition, erasure, illegal settlements and squatter infrastructures.

Besides carrying out conventional architectural work, urban and environmental planning, we perform architecture as the Directors and Chiefs of Operations of the International Special Architectural Service; les architectes sans frontières. Our most recent mission, Matrix 2050, a post ideological meditation factory, will be completed in the next year or two.

Like Max Frisch's 'fire raisers' we now sit in on the world of our own architecture, with our own drums of petrol, laying elaborate plans for setting them all alight. Voids will appear overnight in cities, deconstruction, in the literal sense of the word, will occur at the dead of night. In the morning there will be nothing left.

the last supper

- 1. Import to a base-camp in Kenya, Tanzania or to other relatively accessible countries: equipment, staff etc. One or two transport helicopters (Mi-8, Chinook...) will be loaded with: 3x4 man team of protection (one medical team), 4 waitresses, 2 cooks, violin quartet, film crew of 4, liaison officer, 2 4 pilots
- 2. Chopper-lift into LZ in South Sudan, Eritrea, or other country with starving problem. Low altitude Night flight with search-light; licensed (or not licensed) for example

red-cross or other humanitarian licence.

- 3 LZ is a refugee camp, above which the choppers floating. On ground liaison-office, radio, lights etc. Protection teams rappelling down + construction material: metal-fence, barbed-wire, searchlights. The protection teams will isolate an area of the refugee camp and paint the lines of a tennisfield.
- 4 Chopper landing on field; building up the table, music playing, cooks start cooking. The refugees surround the area.
- 5. Chopper up. 13 refugees will be selected to have fancy diner, french cuisine A Last Supper. Starving people may suffer complications; a medical team will be on hand. Set up from Da Vinci's last supper.
- 6. When the dinner is done, choppers down, fence and barbed wire away and evacuate site. The tennis-field and left-overs of the food will remain.
- 7. The documented material will be internationally broadcast in the macabre document entitled "A Last Supper". (Casagrande & Rintala, Helsinki 2003: Budget around $150.000~\rm USD.)^8$

the critical self

The end of any hegemony requires of those that come after to live just that little bit longer in a condition of the unresolved. Do we, by this, intend to put off the resolution for fear of such dominance overtaking our lives again, or do we consider this a condition of choice: to live in a space in between, to defer and enjoy doing so, to procrastinate in

order to avoid any single dominant mode of operation taking over once again? If, as is acknowledged in many disciplines, critique itself is in trouble and difference is all but accepted as a modus operandi, then how are we to operate in a critical manner, edit out our infelicities and invite authenticity for strategies which involve collective positions we avoid?

A condition devoid of a dominant ideology does not necessarily indicate a condition void of ideology itself. It may be that ideologies scatter, become part of a warring condition on a smaller but more vicious scale; both personal and political as in the New York World Trade Towers events. The Critical Self becomes once more the Divided Self.

from reticence to resistance

In 'An Anatomy of Reticence' from the collection 'Living in Truth', Vaclav Havel writes about ideology. Attempting to explain why there was so much scepticism about in Czechoslovakia in the latter half of the Twentieth Century, Havel's words are a timely reminder about the role ideology played in the 20th Century and the curious addiction to ideology often expressed by those who lived inside a system which is ideological through and through. "Still," Havel writes, "I wish it could be understood why for us, against the background of our experiences, under conditions which ideology has utterly terrorized the truth, this all seems petty, erroneous, and far removed from what is actually at stake."

It is perhaps an exaggeration to claim the ideology eventually attached to architectural 'modernism' 'utterly terrorized the truth', but there is no question about the expectations, the social and cultural promise this ideology offered society through architecture. Perhaps the very radical scheme of things required of architects such programmatic rigour, such fervour. Is this why we have arrived at the point where we can even consider a condition that is strangely 'afterall'? And if so, surely we cannot be the first to register discontent with the very dogma, rigour and discipline that brings is to this point? We may disagree with all the talk about failing ideologies, we may be oblivious to the discourse that puts even this into question, but in decline this matters little, for the decision has been made without us, leaving us but a fellow traveller, the more or less guilty bystander.

fellow travelling with modernism

Modernism as it picked up its momentum in the 1920s was, through architecture particularly, to be the shaper of modern life. It was to reap the benefits of an industrialisation that had, for some countries, already begun in the 19th century. And it was - to many who agreed with ideologues like J.M. Richards - to be a movement that would transcend ideology, transcend any 'isms' used about it. This was attractive. After all, it was to indicate an end of sorts; the achievement of which would imply a profession aligned with the only acceptable and prevailing trend. If architecture was to have such power, it would and did briefly make heroes of architects. In fact, the heroism implied in its achievements is a heroism continued and repeated today. And through the huge proportion of invisible architecture produced by

invisible modern architects, it would also take advantage of the progress, speed and 'stylishness' offered by technology. It would repeat the cloning procedure from the Renaissance though it would not be referred to in such terms. It would propose narratives re-shaped for immortality, though immortality would itself be thrown open at the end of the Twentieth Century. This invisible architecture would lose much of its supposed special virtues as it started to fill up almost all towns and cities in the last century. But of course contemporary architecture never really got its chance. After all, the tyranny of the ideology favoured led to an almost instant decline; in part due to being the style the public came to refer as a 'modern architecture'. The consequences were there, and remain, for all to see.

unforgivable eyesores and generalisations

Is it now impossible to be generous about any of this? Consider the confusion between ideology and the public understanding of architecture when 'modern architecture' appeared in the chaos of a city like Venice. There are in Venice, according to John Julius Norwich, 'a few unforgivable eyesores: the post-war extension to the Danieli, for example, or the elevation of the Bauer-Grunwald on S.Moise, or the Teatro Goldoni, or that dreadful new bank on Camp Manin.'10

Faith of course puts a noose around ideology and will go on doing so whether our critique succeeds in falling short of its own decline or not. But what irony then do we note in a crime novel (Donna Leon) entitled 'The Death of Faith', as we hear the thoughts of the detective hero, Guido Brunetti: "As Brunetti walked up the Riva degli Schiavoni, Sansoviono's library came into sight in the distance, and as it always did, its architectural unruliness gladdened his heart. The great builders of the Serene Republic had had only manpower at their disposition: rafts, ropes, and pulleys, yet they managed to create a miracle like that. He thought of some of the horrid buildings with which modern Venetians had defaced their city: the Bauer Grunwald Hotel, The Banca Cattolica, the train station, and he mourned, not for the first time, the cost of human greed.'11

Faith also puts a noose around the critique of that which condemns ideology. By being able to replicate itself as a sign of 'modern architecture' in so many parts of the world, to many it became a movement of extreme eminence and even arrogance. The modern agenda assumed in the architects' enthusiastic programme suggested it would not only produce social benefits, but it could define - in a strangely permanent way – what it would be like to live modern lives and drive modern cars, in modern buildings, in modern cities. The script was the modern novel; but the result was never quite the one Aldous Huxley predicted. This was the 'end of history' before the end of history as posited in Post-modern thinking. It was after all before journals and discourse could take on their own critique of this 'decline'. And as the Twentieth Century drew to a close, it was obvious that many in the 21st century would never know the thrill and excitement of the revolutionary ideas and thinking that appeared in Europe during the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century. Nostalgia didn't need inviting in; it lived alongside Modernism's promise. Do we not now live in the orphanage of ideas which were never in our reach?

the orphan philosopher and architects

By wishing to address a condition that is considered post-ideological, surely we cannot do so without the spectre of Nietzsche or the orphan philosophy of George Bataille. The feeling of assault on just about everything has not yet seen in us the true birth of the hybrid species, yet signs are that the artist and architect begin to merge. That at least is a start and cannot fail to echo the trajectory Nietzsche outlines for this hybrid species: removed from crime through weakness of will and fear of society, though not yet ready for the insane asylum, this hybrid species, the artist and architect of resistance, is now extending his or her antennae in both directions. Towards and yet at the same time away from a society that has caught up with us, that has invited our weakness to become our ideology. Is this a condition that will allow us to fall short of an architecture already scripted? The orphan in Bataille was correct: we have no choice but to go further. For to articulate such a critique is - afterall - already a decline. The very act of speaking of the post-ideological condition whatever definitions we bring to it belongs to the decline in the very condition we find ourselves in. It is if course of little use to announce that we lose the possibility of speaking when we do just that, by not opening our mouths. If decline is inevitable, if we have an inaccessible confusion, if we can approach only by not approaching, then is not our immediate option to close

all schools of architecture, to end the tyranny of weakness within architecture's ideology. You begin to see what this implies: the insane asylum or disregarding these signs of weakness, fresh escape attempts and fresh resistance to just about everything that is happening in architecture today.

orphan thinking

The Twentieth Century could not become anything more than a dream. It was non-action and blindness and left us out from the very beginning whilst continually asking us to perform in it. A career was talked of until it was necessary to think of one. But by then it was too late. The great voices got greater, the great thinkers thought greater thoughts. Countries exchanged themselves with each other. They wanted roles, by-lines and advertising copy. The untutored symbolism and wayward thinking of The B Team was so seductive it left us passengers to our own birth. What right did we have to know of incarceration, of injustice? We just hadn't lived, we were told. We have no war experience, they remind us. We have no real guilt. Bystanderhood has become our art. We are continuously un-astonished. We are told this time and time again. Yet we came through. How? By reading the Bible cover to cover in four years, from the age of 12-16? The architects pause here knowing that they want to continue, feeling that The B Team would never abandon them. They go off and cut glass. They clean out a cup, make coffee and let the water run in the stainless steel bowl. But it has to be brief. After some minutes they all return convinced that they are the right persons for this job. They convince themselves this is so. They convince themselves what they have lived through is both important and unimportant. If this is the end of ideology, it is the beginning of another life. It has to be like this.

what is architecture?

What does it mean?

How does it mean what it means?

Has architecture stopped meaning for us?

The question is not when did this apparent singularity occur, when did any dominant mode pass over to the multiplicity we see each day, when did any of the system of values associated with an ideology stop? The question is not when architecture stopped meaning for us, but has it ever meant? Was Architecture that higher art, supported by metaphysical elegance or arrogance, awareness or naivety, a social formula applied to carry out its own promise to itself? Or was architecture that lower art, nearer the ground, less of the heavenly about it, dignified by the passion of building and construction, veering away but always lifted by heroism, architects and their metaphysical aching to be asked to perform more. A little hop skip and jump through the semantic and philosophical scaffolds in architecture in the last century inevitably invites us into the world of 'redundancy'. Perhaps we have reached the 'afterall' condition because we have gone through a period when these questions carried more alarm than is really possible for architecture to sustain. But let's not be over pessimistic about this redundant condition in architectural thinking. Work in progress always takes us

a step nearer the de-radicalism around today. Theory here is discursive, frivolous and a narrative pleasure. We are thrust beyond an architecture we have come to expect from the urgent melodrama and deep unease of recent architectural theory into a restless area where architecture can never quite be as narrowly defined as we might like. Asked whether he is optimistic or pessimistic, on a BBC Radio Show called Desert Island Discs, the architect Daniel Libeskind replied "optimistic of course. Architecture can never ever be pessimistic. The process itself is one of construction not deconstruction." And in the wonderful reversal of words and fortunes, careers, buildings, signatures are made and then collapse.

post-dis, ex, de-

Is it possible to have nothing in mind and still go ahead? I remember lecturing in 1995. I showed no images of spectacular buildings, brought with me none of the usual flourish of the world architectural scene. Those appalled. Instead many of the images presented during those lectures were blemished if not artificially darkened. There was a rough, kind of deliberately pulpy edge to the images. To gain more than the usual information, it was necessary for the audience to work harder. It was also necessary to look at the periphery rather than the centre. Usual scanning did not work. Now 10, 12, 14 years on, has it changed? We could have examples of a shining architecture. There is, in the wild technical polish and individuality of many contemporary buildings, something strangely time-warped. In spite of

the huge advances in technology and the sophistication in construction, there is something distant about the closeness and intimacy of material. The spectacular buildings possess taste, aesthetic balance and blaze. But there is an alienating discomfort invited by the very achievement and spectacle of these individual buildings. Their warring ideologies give a little, whilst fame gives far too much. Not a hair is out of place, not a person to be seen, not a single image is displaced or misplaced. Celebrity is celebrated. And photography replicates this. The result is chilling! So much so, we lose ourselves. We see these buildings but are no longer really interested to go there, in reality or on the page. They ignore what much architecture in its spectacular individuality has gone on ignoring. And what is that? Is it the street? Is it the pulpy mess, the upset and unpredictability that we find on the street? Is it surprise, the art of un-planning and disorder? Post, Dis, Ex, De, Super! Or has the moment arrived when our only duty is to resist, in whatever responsible way we imagine, all architecture already scripted?

frank heron, the rumours

Don't believe the rumours. Frank Heron's architecture is glancingly approached, seemingly whimsical, sometimes collapsing on new meaning instead of old. It is a serious frivolity that enjoys not quite knowing everything of the journey it takes us on. It allows the user to imagine an investigation the architect might not have anticipated. We need this to increasingly upset the way we accept architecture's hallucinatory scope. Frank Heron's

architecture is an architecture spoken about and theorized often in unmitigated haste; an architecture that has yearned so long for an urgency of message. It is an architecture of insistent but inescapable travesties, inviting us to consider anew how meaning is tacked onto architecture. Is it to distract us, to distress us or then to ask us to move on? Not afraid to disrupt a safer architectural writing, Frank Heron organises his investigation by the seductive power of incongruity as it opens to his own conceits. This proposes a validity that, in writing as in architecture, is capable of both doing and undoing, leaving us to decide just how much of architecture we can safely turn over to the imagination. Heron does not always answer back with such ease. Architecture fulfils the permanent ephemeral promise. It follows fiction and the fallen form of language. It is no longer an improbable personal architecture from a cyberspace menu, it is an architecture meeting the uncertain promise of its own redundancy.

afterall¹

Where are those architects now reddened by loading their work with intolerable, monstrous language and rhetoric? What will happen to architecture and our environments if we can't get to the evidence of the buildings themselves? After all, it will always be possible to make the architectural envelope from any form and follow the potential 'deformation' or invisibility of new materials however unstable or non-rigid. Or are we already in some sort of cynical, dulling endgame? An endgame both critical

and political which globalisation and instant information technology seems to offer? If some architects naturally innovate from new technological developments, others imitate. More or less competent even brilliant versions of an architecture seen and already published elsewhere in the world can result, with the exception of those who, in current argot, 'go for it'. As fast as structural glass appears and is marketed, so too do rain-coated, impermeable glass buildings appear in all cities of the world. The profession samples and assimilates these trends as it always has done. yet we still seek something else, something in between. Yet what does it mean to say to a young architect today: "Go for it?" Is image everything and nothing? Is image more powerful in architecture when it is backed up against the wall and has to come out seductive and embryonic? Are we sliding down the surface of things without realising? Only to be asked later what 'on earth' we were thinking about? With all the acknowledged-echo in the world, can we still speak of the aesthetics of the shadow, when we think we have all learnt to live in that shadow?

an uncommitted reader of one's own life?

We all go along with little hobby-horses. The rumour mentioned earlier was deadly serious. Let's not mistake its urgency. Most people living in the second half of the Twentieth Century confused their own lives as interpretations of all the thinkers of that century. I too happen to have done it for a small period of my life with an obsession matched I am told, by a football fan or an opera fan. For me I happened to

link all thinking with people whose name began with B. The sporting allusion would be obvious. The B-Team. I tend to do less of this now. But for a period, a considerable period, perhaps years, it became one of those structured ignorances that control the thinking life. However much time spent exploring the role of images and pictures in the various arts in the Second and Third World, working as a university teacher, an architect, an art director a graphic designer or an exhibition designer, I found myself always pulled back to a line in language. For instance when I imagined the orphan world controlled by people whose name began with a B this always made me think of those lines by Paul Celan: Don't make me bitter. Don't count me among the almonds. Count me as data.,' Madness? Insanity? Ideology? Of course because the writer was Paul Belan!

the invisible world of invisible architecture!

A question we need to ask: has our vulnerability assumed a greater role and if so are we beginning to acknowledge our own fallibility? We need speak only of the spate of linguistic-philosophic applications in architecture. Architecture redundant is paid off, given a gold watch or the signed cheque in the post. Is this madness? Suspecting such a liberating role for architecture if it continues to prove redundant to the political and social forces that control and shape our environment? Curiously enough this promise shakes ideology to the core and now attracts us to the errors of the major thinkers through the thinking of the commentators. Architecture has stuttered along like this for

the last thirty years, if not more. It was clear, even already in the early 1980s, that such a set of "invisible" theories demanded its own swerve and deflection. Ultimately the condition whereby a critique is impossible produces an ideology as a record of the prejudices taken to reach such resolve. A subtle avoidance of the obvious could then open the gate for a spate of natural looking theories of little relation to architecture itself but of ecstatic application. Though Adorno tells us that every ecstasy prefers to take the path of re-communication rather than sin against its own concept by realising itself, it is 're-communication' which today is surely suspect.

cutting edges

Take a look at the Dictionary of Contemporary Slang by Tony Thorne published in 1994. Surprisingly the phrase 'cutting edge' does not appear. Even the phrase 'state of the art' makes no appearance. What might we infer from this? Could it imply that the 'cutting edge', the phrase so many use for being right at the edge of things, right on the frontier of the contemporary moment (so close as to be fashionably edgy!) only gained recognition through wide usage in the last few years? Or is it something much simpler? Does it imply that our spoken language, the way we assimilate and scramble all kinds of slang, happens much too quickly and instantaneously today to accommodate such things as dictionaries? Judging by the pace of fashion and an often ambiguous rejection of much contemporary architecture by the very public that uses it, we might opt for a more instant phrase - from Brett Easton Ellis' Glamorama - 'sliding down the surface of things'. Are we really to be so shakily influenced by the present as to be offered 'hideous distortions of the seduction of the superficial and glitzy'? Though somewhat harsh to the architectural profession, it has to be admitted that the predominant view of contemporary architecture, a view conditioned by steel and glass may be one of superficiality and glitziness. 'Cutting edge' now makes its appearance in the New Penguin English Dictionary (2000) as "the most advanced point where important action is taken." And 'state of the art' too now appears, meaning an action that uses the most advanced technology available at the present time. The 'cutting edge' in a dematerialised architecture was probably represented over a decade ago by Jean Nouvel's Cartier Foundation building in Paris. Inside and outside, this building turned steel and the medial facade on its head, the naked masks revealed architecture the wrong way round. Surveillance watched you watching surveillance watching architecture. Architecture took on the catwalk and won. In a way this was architecture-in-waiting. Buildings appear to simulate other buildings as architects speak of an insubstantial and dematerialised architecture. The public of course does not use or understand the term 'simulation'. Instead, when they see the concrete, glass and steel versions of city and office buildings around the world, they describe it more simply, more understandably, as they slide down the surface of things, as 'copy-cat' architecture.

We reach this condition surely because we are redundant. But again let us not be over pessimistic about this redundant condition in architectural thinking. If Adolf Loos actually did succeed in pulling the rug out from under architecture, in so limiting architecture to the monument and the tomb, and if we can get passed the way architecture got its hump, then would we not be nearer understanding the very real de-radicalism around today? Are partial destinies possible: a serioius un-resolve of strict resolve?

Must we learn to collapse on new meaning instead of old, increasingly upsetting the way we have come to accept architecture's hallucinatory scope? Insistent but inescapable travesties, invite us to consider anew how ideology is tacked onto architecture. Is it to distract us, to distress us, or then to ask us to move on? And how do we open to our own conceits when we no longer decide how much of architecture we can turn safely over to the imagination, because it is already done for us. We are only now learning to answer back with such ease.

partial destinies and afterthoughts

Navigating an architectural field devoid of dominant ideology does not mean a discipline devoid of all ideology. Ideologies shift, multiply, re-shape and return, re-defining notions of radicalism and resistance. This prompts us to ask whether an "afterthought" is irresponsible wisdom for the future or reckless hindsight. If the pre-text for an unparalysed architecture can be explored through strategies

of resistance, do theories of multiplicity lead to new utopias? The very language and criticism, the very way we like to see architecture as the constructed word, may in part be responsible for the current uncertainty throughout the discipline. Is there a kind of post-ideological urgency around the corner inviting those totalising solutions again in order to compensate for lost criticality and the loss of "objects of desire"? The paradoxical legacy of such a century in architecture might be that the process and necessity of building, learning how to design and build well, may have become secondary. If so, architecture can only become an action, a strategy, even to the extent a theory and a resistance to every day life.12 These actions are part of a series of multiple strategies, resistance strategies. The success of any such strategies cannot be defined in advance but will depend on the missions outlined and the range of strategies used. Aligning with prevailing trends may be less important than resisting pre-scripted futures. Surely then the very action to 'combat' any limitations in the current de-radicalised condition encourages an architecture of Partial Destiny. Thus it will become impossible to partake in such rhetoric as 'the success of'. Neither can we accept unquestioned issues central to the architect's case. Even failure can be success. shifting the very conditions for combat in architecture education, practice, production. Using unusual departures, social actions, a work-in-progress, re-shaped sites, even an urbanism without architecture can all be proposed as examples of different contemporary resistance strategies.

There seems no point any longer in serving a clever critical thesis that is applauded for insight and brilliance. Even coherence has to be sacrificed sometimes for any new radicalism, any response to the exhaustion of the contemporary spectacle. Provocation is not only gradual, but inevitable. This unlikely degree zero condition is not another participation in a critical destruction of one event in order to replace it by the hubris of another. Language itself is also part of this 'degree zero', it has to be otherwise we would be guilty of sophisticated counter-strategies utilising the same language and procedures so heavily disliked. Is the after-ideology the end of ideology or just a more flexible approach to the ideology itself? Is there a "post-ideological urgency"? Is it really apparent in educational institutions and individual and group architects? If so, in what ways has it been articulated? What is the relevance of attempting such a critical exercise, of identifying the pedagogical and professional value of recognising such post-ideological 'urgency'?

If this demonstrates an energy within something not yet fully formed and theoretically framed, does the theory and practice of resistance to just about everything pre-scripted in contemporary architecture offer a guerrilla strategy for a liberating condition? Is this an unlikely but plausible degree zero brought on by the sense of exhaustion and redundancy all around: in students, graduates, architects and artists? Are these notions related to larger political and cultural changes, to a new commitment, to wider environmental concerns? We believe so. If agendas are personal and collaborative, how

does a conscious strategy to resist closure translate itself into new sites, new conditions for contemporary architecture?

The result: the architect as critical self. Authorial control will be challenged even in architecture. The end of the architect however does not mean the end of architecture. No logo, the World Trade Organisation, sympathy for the devil, whichever side allows us to re-site radicalism, the more resistance expressed, the more frayed architecture will become, the more impact it will offer. And the more frayed this resistance is, the less future architecture can be subsumed and re-controlled within the profession, by education and institution.

We have a choice, a personal, social and political choice. Each one of us has to decide which side we are on. On the side of the institutional process, the sad privilege of speculative thought and ideology; a future so clearly mapped out for us by those ahead of us, those in power, holding positions over us. Or are we on the side of the 'afterthought'? The former may leave us on the side of a pre-scripted future of spectacle, luxury and indulgence. The latter may see us on the side of a liberating action that knows no previous form; a combat that naively expresses delinquency and collaboration in a constant movement and knows not what safety is for. Perhaps like Regis Debray and Thomas Merton, we can no longer regret being innocent nor can we remain guilty bystanders. The dignity of immediate reality, not anything in the future, depends on these 'after-thoughts'; it is these that ask more irresponsibility from us than we have been able to give so far.

a jealousy of architects

I remember some years back sitting in a bar in Helsinki called Corona. Behind me I noticed a group of professionals who all seemed to have crashed into their own celebrated curmudgeon, the Finnish poet Paavo Haavikko. Dressed in various shades of black to grey, the atmosphere appeared somewhat more fogged than usual. The bar itself resembled a knock-about railway station café in an abandoned ferry port in Eastern Europe. It hadn't won a design award partly because it would have mocked the irrelevance of such awards. Behind, the pools of light showed up the expanse of billiard tables, full size and smaller. But it was the fog of this profession that seemed denser than the usual smoke. This was apparently an architectural competition jury. They were meeting to choose the award winning town kiosk which would be replicated all over Helsinki in the next few years. A sense of vertigo overcame me as I sat on the precarious chrome and black bar stool. It was possible that one of these young professionals had found his way back from the accident for his tie was decidedly red. However as he approached it turned out to be a red of such ambiguous darkness as to question the whole notion of colour. Erase the idea of colour, this was a smudge. It was as much as I could do at that moment to finish the equally ambiguously dark smudge of Guinness I was drinking and exit. Upon doing so, the comedy of the moment proved rare. I realised that I had discovered the collective noun for this beleaguered, onceprivileged profession: a jealousy of architects.

7

the end of pulp architecture

I was finishing these pulp papers sitting in a white cabin in Fort Worth, Texas. That morning, as luck would have it, some hundred of miles to the east debris had fallen out of the sky and landed in the back garden of houses in east Texas. The hunt was on for the parts of the puzzle that would put piece together the story of how the Columbus space shuttle disintegrated. Later, somewhere in Houston, all the collected fragments of the shuttle lay in a huge hangar. My mother, hundreds and hundreds of miles to the east of Fort Worth naturally imagined the space shuttle had come down right in this garden and that I was already dead. In fact, though she didn't know it, my mother was obviously thinking along the lines of Richard Brautigan. She saw me not only in Watermelon Sugar, but in iDeath. Others, ill-minded and optimistic, thought the shuttle debris might have come down on a ranch in Crawford, Texas. No such luck, they cried, the world must go on. I had in fact escaped the debris by the skin of my teeth and could get on finishing these pulp papers ready in fact to take Pulp Architecture to Yale.

At the Yale School of Architecture the notion of architecture of a partial destiny, architectural projects or ideas falling short of required and known solutions and prejudices resonated significantly with students and graduates. When Pulp Architecture was taken to dinner after the Brendan Gill Lecture, there was a growing anxiety about the warring ideologies, published manifestos and pretentious theory. It was possible to file this under architecture of uncertain futures. The index began forming without having to say anything further. Pulp Architecture resisted architecture already scripted. Pulp Architecture represented architecture that refused to be called architecture. Pulp Architecture explored architectures and solutions which desired to remain in-between. Pulp Architecture became a way of inhabiting this space, as a constant, unfinished, contested and dynamic process. Interactive, collaborative processes and methodologies were taken seriously for the options they offered. Pulp Architecture not only attempted to produce architecture from the edge or the margin, but was a conscious choice and recognisable activism to keep architecture on that edge.

As contemporary architecture looked set on various repositioning exercises in a media circus, many students present felt architecture could only be relevant if there was once again no division between life and architecture. Grand claims certainly, but there was much disgruntlement with existing conditions in architectural education and practice. Students found much proposed in Pulp Architecture part of their daily thinking about contemporary architecture and, even, life. This was not the usual resistance, tolerated during graduate school only to disappear later. Instead Pulp Architecture met many students from the old Eastern

Europe, 'Balkania', South East Asia and the Pacific Rim who felt all this depended on life's investment. Pulp Architecture was to meet this Post-Critical situation again and again as it began its parallel life as The Pulp Architecture Graduate Studio in the University of Texas at Zetaville.

At Zetaville the Pulp Studio took on the city and came out with, amongst other productions, Knowtopia Interactive exhibited in Stockholm Museum of Architecture. There in Zetaville, young graduates re-designed the wooden ramps up which skateboarders trained as they changed into Gundam warriors. They took an urban corridor and made from it a night-path. They hacked into existing warehouses for migrant worker squats and astro-turfed the roofs of deadmalls. They created a centre where none exists and challenged the city to institute the first public transport system. They wished to erect a five mile 'running fence' with pockets of architecture in the Texan desert. In some of the new communities, an LCD ticker tape ran through the digital fabrications and deadmalls as one more sliver of the world's uncertainty became a new urban morphology and parts of a city where none existed before.

Many of these students and graduates wished to enter the profession of architecture differently. Many had secretly lost patience and wished not to stay within the conventions of the profession. Pulp Architecture began to acknowledge that the discipline of architecture, according to these students, is the only discipline that can still – virtually - take in all. To them Pulp Architecture advocated a constant fringe activity necessitating an intelligent strategy of resistance. If these students and young 'pulp' practices recognise a failure in some architecture to be contemporary, it is in the interstices of the implementation of a known and accepted architecture

where this takes place. What was interesting about these new, young, often collaborative practices occupying architecture's once sovereign domain, is that they wanted to see architecture, urban planning, art and public space work with the same intensity and social relevance as street culture.

These pulp practices wanted to get the youth to use the car parks and re-contour existing buildings and landscape, as if to take revenge on the lawn and the asphalt. They imagined an airport runway re-lighting unhappy parts of the earth so easily environmentally trashed. Literal flows of data or trash, new urbanism or not, Pulp Architects may not always be architects as we know them professionally, but they represent groups who wish to be more creatively irresponsible; some of these groups wish to design from delinquent experiences, in delinquent sites, in delinquent cities, yet always with architecture as a social and vibrant dimension. Opting for deferral or an elegant procrastination, they imagine versions of architecture of partial even incomplete destinations. No less relevant, no less resistant, and no less revolutionary!

The Post-Critical/After-Theory condition met in Yale for many students had become the obvious and inevitable challenge to traditional late-modernist pre-scripted concepts of architecture. Pulp Architecture asked them to go back and forward in time as it tried to tap into an urgency that lay outside the usual fame academy in architecture and all the New York/LA stars dropping in and out of Yale and other universities regularly. Also in the air, over that fine evening dinner and wine, no longer the feeling of an absurd or futile exercise, there was real enthusiasm for going beyond that 'plane of the feasible'! Versions of a trans-programmed,

trans-urbanised, transgressed architecture were important but secondary to the urgency for less than total solutions.

All this over the years encouraged Pulp Architecture to continue, attempt something a little more unusual. It would sport with Richard Brautigan and iDeath. It would meet the First Pulp Architecture book, File Under Architecture by Herbert Muschamp. It would encounter the creative ennui and malaria dreams of the Indian architect, Gautam Bhatia. It would bump into the 'altered states' of Mr. Libeskind and his softly uttered but terribly seductive 'ground control to Major Tom'. After Yale, Pulp Architecture would be invited to many other places including Stockholm's Royal Art Academy and Waterloo University before ending up at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism in Carleton University in Ottawa.

The process by which a 'random' trace is turned into built form has become familiar. The way all and everything can be folded back into itself and produce the reverse of architecture will always remain divergent and relevant. Because of this I admit I have chosen to see this fleshy softness, a mass. It is precisely why I opted to give it the name, Pulp. But I realise this has limited use. When the juice is pressed out, we may need another way of describing this attitude. Of course pulp literature and pulp mentalities might offer us other clues to the contemporary mind. If the violent, the sensational and the erotic signify different facets of the modern experience played out in the gaudy pages of kitsch literature, do we attempt to rescue this underworld for our own purpose?

The French artist Pierre Huyghe spoke about encounters.

Ideas, he said, come from people, books, films, artistic collaborations. The polyphony is all around. Interference today is easier to acknowledge, so usual has it become. But we choose the word carefully. Much of the architecture of the Twentieth Century had the knack of appearing to conform to what was written about it, thereby confirming the intentions of those that designed it. Modernism appeared highly controllable, always in service of the required solution. Those required solutions do not seem so required any more, suggesting we may just need to start over once more, in the middle. Many of those working on the edge of architecture today are happy to be relieved of such methodology. They may go on being relieved as encounters are everywhere and random.

Books and people interweave. Meanwhile software bleeds into reality. Interferences, like film, interactive media, dance, cuisine, fashion or sound compositions, all begin altering the process that goes up to shape architecture as we know it. Responding to New Media is no longer the privilege of computer scientists and enlightened conceptual artists with a smattering of technical know-how. And even though scientists may continue to be incensed at the way architecture lifts and appropriates domains, they are unlikely to stop this crossover traffic. The search for hybrid spaces and forms may catch up with our hybrid existence. But don't bank on it. In the world according to pulp, money is only a strategy to learn how not to avoid it. At the same time it is the chance to turn capital into something else entirely.

This does however suggest ways of investigating the underworld of architectural production. From this we have sketched a new set of co-ordinates for architectural practice. Ideas of genre and commercial production, high and low

culture, the canon and censorship, and the rhetoric of current critical debate could all be explored under Pulp. It is not out of the question that we might also go further. We might theorize a generous, unselfish architecture that radically alters our perceptions of Modernism. Are these the anxious visions of the modern subject caught, as Tony Vidler writes, 'in spatial systems beyond its control, attempting to make representational and architectural sense of its predicament?' If so, I think I prefer the pulp strategy of Nadim Karim. This is the age, Karim writes, where you talk nonsense until it makes sense. The end of Pulp Architecture is when it forces itself to begin again. This then is also Pulp Architecture; something passing through, reduced to pulp, removed from the core of the city and reproduced somewhere else, at all times, at all moments.



endnotes

For this and more see The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, (3rd edition) 1999 - Ideology by Daniel Bell, p.414. Raymond Williams, Keywords, Fontana, 1976, (ideology) p.126-130 Leszek Kolakowski, Modernity on Endless Trial, Chicago, 1990, p.232. Jacques Derrida, The Archeology of the Frivolous, Nebraska, 1987. pp.120-121. Witold Gombrowicz, Ferdydurke, Boyars, London 1979 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Vintage, New York 1974. p.121 6 Avn Rand, The Fountainhead, Signet, (1952) 1993. p.474. with thanks and credit to Marco Casagrande, Casagrande & Rintala, Helsinki, Project 2003. Vaclav Havel, Living in Truth, London, p. 178. John Julian Norwich, A Traveller's Companion to Venice, Robinson, London, (1990) 2002, p.25 Donna Leon, The Death of Faith, Pan, London, 1998,p 225

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pulp architecture

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