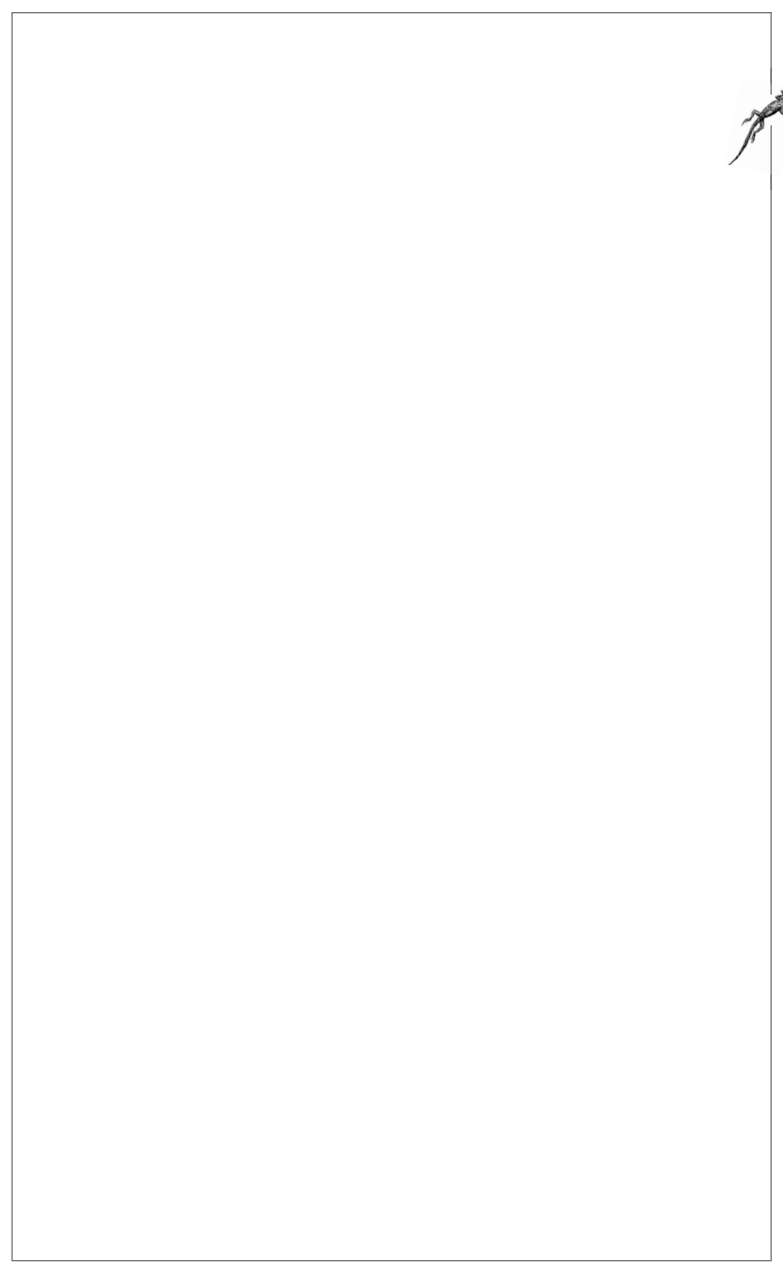




Zetaville 257

I am Architecture ROGER CONN/4H



I am Architecture

I am Architecture

the education of an architect



Student narratives and confessions
compiled & edited

Roger Connah

Zetaville 257

to the UTZSOA classes 2004 & 2005
to all students whatever their age

I am Architecture
the education of an architect

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I am Architecture

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Student narratives and confessions from the University of Texas at Zetaville

1 **engagement on planet utzoa** *a note from the editor* (9)

2 *the temporary* **contemporary** (24)

What is Contemporary Architecture? • Contemporary, to me • Contemporary means modern • BIG BUILDINGS DON'T MATTER • A huge question • while scanning an architectural theory book • Ciento sesenta • I perceive • I am Switzerland • zeitgeist. now • buying. selling. trading. • underscore_ Contemporary architecture • I'm not even sure • adjective • Contemporary Undefined

3 *the trigger for architecture* (42)

The trigger is quite unrelated • I want to be an architect • searching for an architecture trigger • Growing up • I came to architecture • the trigger • I can say • die-cast society • I once found a gun • i started climbing • to pinpoint the trigger - closing night • the catalysts of dreaming • Leila's Advice • it's a feeling i still remember • all around, and no interest • I was in my last few months of Army service

4 *the shock of the old* (61)

shockitecture • caps and gowns • the first shock • CONFESION :: PECADOS :: • I believe architecture • we are in the business • the first lesson • EXPERIENCIA :: EXpERIENCE • shock • my shock in architecture? • the first shock of architecture as a coded system? • before actually coming to architecture school • the misinformation of an architect • I have discovered • Runnin' on empty

5 **history** *isn't made, it's simply passed by* (77)

I was reading Frampton's • History and Architecture? • History of a Worthless Future • Multiple choice • YO CONFIESO - NOMBRE :: EN_ • I am still studying Gordon Matta Clark • growing up • history...mine...the anachronisms • I was never concerned • history_tv_pbs_flw - DNRchitecture • below is a catalog • three men in a tub • It was a series of regurgitations • b-o-l-o-g-n-a • history... • the history class

the education of an architect

6 *the teacher in the dark* (97)

learning to fish • the expected reply • one can scarcely breathe • I've been fortunate • ENCHANT-ED :: DES_ENCANT • in my 6th semester of architecture course • hmmm....most influential teacher • I once read the book • the worst thing • somewhere along your education • I will not tell you who I am writing about • no one teacher • 2551_postcards • It is no secret • Last Wednesday night • a teacher, someone that all of us have • learning to fly • so can i get back to the way i do it, now? or "i could have driven to fucking estonia!"

7 *architecture students who don't usually talk write about work* (120)

when I start a project • I was working on "structuring" • state the problem • I was thinking • "lord, I was born a ramblin' man" • otherwise all is well • a newspaper article • ESPERA :: LUZ ROJA • life experiences as self-educators • In the GA Document • a OCIO :: IN_ACTIVIDAD :: ABURRI_MIENTO • most of the time • after reading • Ian McHarg? • Refloating Architecture • in The Diary of Frida Kahlo • Who is the student? • Daniel Libeskind's argument • Sometimes when you start to draw • I love this manifesto • Cedric Price's manifesto "Non- Plan" • Sex, crime and architecture? • On calculators • What has *Howl* done for me? • Discourse is not a compromise

8 *imaginary letters to the Author of Malaria Dreams...* (149)

Dear Mr. Bhatia • Dear Author • Dear Other Visions of Architecture • Dear Castles of Lies • Mr. B • Author • Dear Malaria Dreams • Oh Dear • Architect • It concerns me • Dear Gautam • Dear Builder of Lies • Dear Lucky One

9 *I am Architecture, this is Me* (166)

first you must know • the beautiful game • Margaritas for studio • the swiss army chainsaw • TO PORT or NOT TO PORT • fleeting glances • I have written • with all this 'education' • I have some other things on my mind • we aren't glazed hams! • everything i need to know • I really think we should • t_dizz_oh says • [I COULDN'T ASK MY MOTHER TO EDIT THIS]

10 *The I am ARCHITECTURE undefined Quiz* (194)

coda **We are Architecture** (202)

Into the distance, a ribbon of black;
stretched to the point of no turning back
a flight of fancy on a wind swept field
standing alone my senses real;
a fatal attraction holding me fast,
how can I escape this irresistible grasp?

can't keep my eyes from the circling sky
tongue-tied & twisted just an earthbound misfit, I
ice is forming on the tips of my wings
unheeded warnings, I thought I thought of
everything;
no navigator to guide my way home
unladen, empty and turned to stone
a soul in tension that's learning to fly
condition grounded but determined to try

can't keep my eyes from the circling skies
tongue-tied & twisted just an earthbound misfit, I
above the planet on a wing and a prayer
my grubby halo, a vapour trail in the empty air
across the clouds I see my shadow fly
out of the corner of my watering eye
a dream unthreatened by the morning light
could blow this soul right through the roof of the
night
there's no sensation to compare with this
suspended animation, a state of bliss

can't keep my mind from the circling sky
tongue-tied & twisted just an earthbound misfit I
(Pink Floyd)

Engagement on Planet Utzsoa

A note from the editor

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will
make violent revolution inevitable.

John F. Kennedy



We often speak of being on another planet when we don't quite understand where we are, when we don't quite understand what is happening to us. That is often how I have felt over 6 years teaching in Texas. The world is to be decoded but we seem not to have the key, not to understand the merits of systems that hold us. Systems like education, disciplines like law, monsters like Wal-Mart and professions like architecture or dentistry. We imagine help to be available. We imagine agents to come and meet us and tell us how to behave. We imagine guides to entertain us, take us through the difficult first steps. "Modern, all to modern," the guide will announce and leave us at the airport to find our own shuttle. The eve-

ning closes in, the waft of soft warm air turns in the wind. Suddenly it can be cold, cold as anywhere in the world. Colder waiting for the shuttle at Dallas Fort Worth Airport under the concrete palisade than in the Khyber Pass up there in the transit world of the North West Frontier Provinces between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The last time I was there, the first time I was there, an AK47 was thrust into my hands as I sat on the jeep. “Watch for the snipers,” the agents said to me, “they fire from the hilltops. At least they will see we have a gun!”

How quaint and useful we find the use of acronyms. All over America, there is that terrifying talent at shortening the institutes, curtailing the lengthy, abbreviating the obvious into something less obvious. The school of architecture at the University of Texas at Zetaville is known as SOA. The full abbreviation is more impressive. When students are asked which courses and which university they attend, they announce: “Oh, I’m studying at UTZSOA.” Pronounced Utzsoa, soft ‘z’ and soft ‘s’, Utzsoa in Texas becomes a strange land, a frontier wildness, a place to occupy. Utzsoa in Texas is also another planet. But, just as in the Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, Red Dwarf or Star Wars, Utzsoa is a university and a school that students can navigate if they learn to know the codes and the rules.

But what are those codes and rules? And are they as easy to navigate as the first video games? The contract is simple but often unrecognisable, disguised as it is within any university in the knotted discourse of bureaucracy, accounting, funding, grading and expected achievement. Those students of architecture that recognise the codes and rules, survive Planet Utzsoa. Those students that don’t may still survive, but their engagement in education lessens, anxieties take over. Education becomes heavier, it weighs upon immaturity and innocence. Youthful enthusiasm and desire turns into sadness, moving often into a resignation a little too quickly. There is grief, and there is guilt at feeling grief at such a young age. Why do we

study what we study? The question is put to the back of the mind. It is too important not to succeed. The pressure is on. The student sits at the back of the jeep with a Kalshnikov, but doesn't know the difference from an AK47. Do they need to? Certainly on the Khyber Pass, but perhaps not on *Planet Utzsoa*.

Planet Utzsoa is an invention and a reality. Utzsoa offers an education that might last as long as the student's life, or - more alarmingly - for as long as the student remains interested, motivated and engaged. Or this life might be over the moment the student steps up and receives the graduation certificate. Engagement in one's own education begins from where? From being allowed in, or being allowed 'out' at every stage you are taken in? What codes are necessary to understand this? To be left out, unengaged in education, is to be left out of life. It is to be stamped out of the world you have entered. Welcome to SOA in Planet Utzsoa! SOA is also an acronym. School of architecture, yes! But it was also used to mean 'stamp out architecture', the name of a seminar at the university of Texas at Zetaville school of architecture, spring 2005.

As the instructor I came into the theory course late. The original professor charted online to carry out the seminar had suddenly announced that she was taking leave. It all happened so quickly. I was asked to step in. I had ideas of course about theory and the general fear of theory at the school of architecture. I had written books about this and got tired of those books. So few read these days, that I began to think of those thin volumes: Kant in 90 Minutes, Kafka in an hour, Le Corbusier in half an hour. I had seen frightened faces and fatigued faces in the previous years of teaching in various universities in Europe and in America.

Around the world, not only in Zetaville, there was talk of a nebulous movement, something indistinct like an 'after-theory' world. Students could punish profes-

sors for bullying, for demanding too much. Yet what could it possibly mean to be ‘after theory’ in a world so afraid of theory, a world so afraid of ideas, of experiments? Was this symptomatic of a whole world looking the wrong way, afraid of the future that it had planned for itself? Here on Planet Utzsoa the situation was unusual. Four deans had been in place in five years at the SOA. The Faculty was re-structuring the curriculum but difficulties and history made the system dysfunctional. You didn’t need to be a brain surgeon to notice this. Still, there was hope but the atmosphere in Zetaville was obediently depressed. Students were surprisingly and depressingly closed. Why? This was no fault of the student, I felt, yet how could such indifference be so strong? The morale was low, mirroring the uncertainty in contemporary architecture and education.

I had for some time sensed a frustration and apathy but I wondered if we could identify its features more accurately, and how to do this. What is a *cutting edge* today? Why talk of architecture ‘over the edge’ if we don’t know how to control the metaphors? What defines the new architecture, or the seduction of the avant-garde? And why were students so seduced by fame, by the celebrity, by the images of a theatrical world architecture? Was this ‘seduction’ defined by Faculty or resisted by the Faculty? And were not the Faculty once if not now seduced by the images of another world architecture, 10, 20 or 30 years back? Or was it the network, the contacts, the fashionable journals, the trends and the ‘incomprehensible’ post-structuralist discourses? Does an established Faculty impede innovation in architecture or guide it toward its own development and resistance? Do the Deans in schools of architecture have an agenda for change, or become brokers for accessible but safely conservative new ideas? Which are not really new ideas! Who was wearing the emperor’s new clothes? Was there really a swing to the technical, the notion of ‘praxis, and the non-theoretical? Does this suit a necessary ‘pragmatism’? An American pragmatism taking us all the way back, past Richard Rorty and

William Gass to John Dewey and some of America's distinguished thinkers?

Few students can live with uncertainty and the world was unhappily and unnecessarily beginning to divide into the *digital* and the *analog*. Talk was of a paradigm shift but no one was quite sure whether this was the third, fourth or fifth paradigm shift. Self Help books by Zen Buddhist monks or Sufi scholars on the comforts of uncertainty didn't seem to do much to change the situation. Though I wished they would, because I was at the time involved in the world of Islam and coming to understand the richness of Sufi thinking from the 9th to the 12th century in cities like Baghdad that were now flattened beyond recognition. But a slow terror had permeated the world; education may immune itself from it but we are all affected. So much so that it is no longer certain which parts of the world are safer than others. Whilst sitting on the jeep on the Khyber Pass heading for the Afghan border I remember thinking that I was probably in one of the most dangerous places in the world. It just might have been one of the safest places in the world too. No one could be so sure.

Back at the school of architecture, battle lines were drawn where they need not be. The fake dualism and unnecessary conspiracies led to difficult times for the students. The consequences were alarming. Some students feared the new world of computer fidgeting whilst seduced by it, others feared the old world of pencil propaganda, not knowing how to re-connect with it. Questions were posed. Was the architect supposed to return to days when understanding was more accessible? When meaning was less problematic? And when was that world? Was there a time when anxieties were laid out in site meeting and committee and through conference calls and the Blackberry? No one needed to say this. Engagement, a useful word in the 20th century echoing the resistance and strength to stand up for one's own ideas and ideologies, had all but disappeared. The more architecture could appeal to the journal and the circus of fame, the more seductive architecture ap-

peared visually, the more architecture was tired, thrill-less even. Was this a paradox we could understand? Was not education caught up in this carnival?

How had architecture and education got to this point? Was it useful to pretend this was not happening and go on living in one's own bubble? I had been in teaching long enough to know how comfortable at times it was to teach within a bubble of one's own making. But was it enough to excite a few students when the world outside *Planet Utzsoa* cared very little for education, experiment and engagement? It was heavy even thinking about this. It fatigued me too. Stamp out Architecture was a phrase that came to me. If architecture continues like this, what was the worth of our education? What was I teaching? And why? And what was worth knowing in architecture when it appeared to have lost such thrill, such excitement? How could I alter this? How could we as a seminar class learn from fatigue, I thought? Was this hubris, another part of the bubble? Yet it had to be possible to understand what was happening. How could we tackle the disinterest and disengagement many students and graduates had in the discipline they were learning, in the profession they were thinking about joining?

Was it an accident? Did only those disinterested and disaffected with the school of architecture and the profession come into this seminar? Was this seminar already marginalised to appear interesting only to those few who attended? Had an interest in theory and ideas, those 'paper architectures' some so easily mock, already marked out these students? Or did this represent something else? Had an interest in advanced visualisation systems, already separated these students from others? They knew the rules and the codes; many had been fascinated by Digital Methodology strategies which allowed them to explore design process-based spatial constructs. Had theory somehow been collapsed on advanced computer applications? Why could the notion of a skills-based software methodology not be explored

alongside more acceptable conceptual development? Or was this only the realm of upper division design students? And could they not be allowed to fail? Or was this part of the taming of the profession?

Interesting questions! The seminar students knew only too well how work could be dismissed for illogical thinking, for incoherent operations. Their knowledge base was weak; they had no vocabulary to contest their own education. But what encouragement and guidance were they being given: epistemologically, cognitively, psychologically? In the world of hybrids and architectural uncertainty, they had become guinea pigs. They were the students who shifted between the analog and digital. Often they could do this well but whenever they were criticised for the fashionable move, or the 'fashionable nonsense' of such computer generated architecture, they knew not how to respond to such criticism. Were they to be condemned for wishing to twist and transform architecture through a menu of digital moves? Or were they being condemned for being seduced, for having a desire, unknown and dangerous? Did not their own professors feel seduced by fashionable architecture so many years back? What happened in the early 1980s when Post-modernism re-aligned the Modern Movement? When schools like Princeton, Harvard, or Cornell's Collage City re-aligned architecture and urbanism and offered another controlling paradigm for future teachers and curriculums? Were those professors guided away and tamed for a post-modern world that softened architecture into a cosmetic relish? Or was the post-modern city the authentic response to the world of collage? And was not the notion of 'collage' the pre-runner today to the notion of 'hybridity'?

Are we not all sampling at some stage the work of others and attempting to hide away our own originality? Were these students to be guided away from such constructs that could respond as they thought to the contemporary moment? Could

they learn ways of advancing their ideas without feeling isolated? Or was this a forbidden development? Did architecture need pulling back to a degree zero: and if so why and what conditions make up this ‘degree zero’?

Without saying anything about all this, I knew the SOA students had all this in mind. They may not have been able to voice it or articulate it but they enrolled in the seminar class nevertheless. What would I be teaching this year? They didn’t ask. They had come to expect something unusual. Many expected being challenged and many wished to analyse their own thinking. Why did they feel so frustrated? What part of their brains was being stymied, and what part of their brains was not allowed to open up? And they enrolled because they felt they could speak, engage and voice their thoughts. In Planet Utzsoa, though this might be alarming, these students felt they would be listened to. And when I began to listen to these students, I had an uncanny feeling that this was the first time they were ever listened to. Indeed, some of the graduates even voiced this later: “We have proceeded through four of five years of study in architecture. We have been told what to do and had to find a way through this. We have appreciated the different skills and the knowledge we have picked up. We have navigated the school of architecture. But along the way something has happened. We have been narrowed and closed at the same time as we have been educated. Have we been listened to?” One particular student paused, as did everyone in the class: “no! no, we have not been listened to. Have we nothing to say about our education? Are we considered so lame that we cannot contribute to architecture and its education?”

School of Architecture. Stamp Out Architecture. SOA! That seemed a useful phrase to begin with. For the seminar I listed some ideas quickly. I did not want to frame these students. I did not want to over-organise them. The worst thing I imagined would be if the students tried to identify what I wanted. Many of them

reiterated this in their own education. “Either we do what we wish to do, and experiment with some learning. If we are lucky we can find an instructor who guides us. Or then we opt for less energy. We try and find out what the professor wants and then, with the minimum effort but maximum use of tactics, deliver what is expected of us. This is not difficult. Professors have their codes and their preferences. Many of these codes are transparent. We learn how to utilise laziness. We don’t call this education. But we will graduate.”

Was this so unusual? I had met this in other schools in Europe and the US. Some with more cynicism than others. But the healthy contest of mind and matter, of master and pupil, of method and anti-method was crucial to any education surely. During the seminar, whilst I planned all this in my small hermitage in Fort Worth, I would often play the Van Morrison song with the line: “You don’t pull no punches but you don’t push the river, no.” I certainly wanted the students to push the river. It was urgent that they did so. But how could we do this? Could we use discussions, lectures, blogs, random events and screenings to help the students understand where they were in their own education? Could this help them situate themselves in the increasingly ambiguous profession? Had we really understood as Faculty the privileged alienation of the architectural profession? Do we really understand the blurred public perception of that same profession? Smiling, I imagined a new professorship: the Professor of the Public Understanding of Architecture. Ridiculous? Not quite. In Oxford today, Richard Dawkins, the reputed writer of the *Selfish Gene*, is the current Oxford Professor for the Public Understanding of Science. Dawkins claims that science and its development can only be advanced if its public understanding is advanced. Why have we never considered this in architecture?

So the list for the seminar was written down in haste as if ‘haste’ could avoid the

usual 'game'. The seminar 'Stamp out Architecture' was to begin from the following notion of 'departure': why do we start from where we start? In the relations between theory and praxis in architecture, in this shift and oscillation between the nostalgia of the analog world and the seduction of the digital world where was their departure? And, along the way, how have perceptions, accidents, errors, ideas, misreadings, prejudices and disinterest shaped their education in architecture? I remember telling the class the Irish joke. That well-known one. A Texan is in Dublin looking for the post-office. He slips into a pub and asks a convenient local where the post-office is. The Irishman takes a long time thinking about this. Even drinks some of his Guinness and looks into the dark liquid as if it could provide an answer. The American is frustrated and gets irritated, though realises this would be bad form. Nevertheless, used to more instant service back in Texas, the visitor says..."please, I am in a bit of a hurry." The Irishman smiles. He wipes that rim of white cream of Guinness from his top lip. "Well, Sir, if I were you" – and he says this very slowly - "I wouldn't even start from here."

It was obvious. There could be no 'wrong' paths, only perhaps more acceptable, more appropriate and more suitable paths. But what makes them more appropriate? Surely this depended on the conditions we set up, on the way we approach problem-solving, on the way we approach ourselves. This was true whether in architecture, banking or dentistry. Student engagement became crucial. How could we understand the decline? Did I have to be a policeman to get students to attend a seminar? Were students to be frog-marched to visiting lectures just to make up the attendance figures? This is what they do in more constrained societies. In India where I lived for some years, whenever the ruling party held a rally, busloads of Indians were ferried into the capital Delhi. They were given 10 rupees, a party banner, a hot drink, and told to cheer. Is that what I should have done? A free iPod Nano for every student who writes 5000 honest words without resorting to

the internet?

I proposed the students write narratives and stories about their education. What I called 'triggers' were used to set this going. They were to be reflective and retrospective. These 'triggers' were simple but useful: *contemporary, trigger, shock, history, teacher*. The intention was for each student to see these narratives build toward a cognitive map of their own educational journey. The students were asked to refine their writings and previous texts whilst thinking ahead – spirally – to the eventual completed story of their own education. Each student was asked to consider their views before entering architecture school, their ideas during education and the evolution of their thoughts as many of them were about to graduate. By doing this I felt we might understand how this 'journey' informs the professional 'system of architecture'. We might understand also why there is a resistance to theory or to other aspects of the curriculum like structures, soil technology, drawing and professional practice. This could lead to the obvious: what might be the shape of this resistance and how important was the influence of accepted, unchanging interpretations, theories and histories in architecture? What then was the influence of 'dogma'?

I invited the students to go fictional to go deeper. They had to take care with their writing, spelling and structure. This was just as important as any line they drew, any line plotted on paper, computer screen or in the mind. They wrote much more than I imagined, much more than they had ever written before. They were also encouraged to be more self-disciplined than usual. Self-questioning and self-monitoring their own thinking allowed them to go deeper into their motives, action and self-learning. Quickly, without prompting, questions were aired and the students began asking the obvious: did they go to architecture school to discover what is (really) worth knowing? The seminar was web-logged (blogged) weekly

and students were encouraged to write when, as is well known with architecture students, they had rarely ever written more than their signature or marked a cross in a multiple choice question. They were encouraged to think what they had rarely thought, and also question what they had never been invited to question.

Much of what they wrote was fragmented, no whole picture seemed to exist – that wasn't really necessary. Life was either beginning to be abbreviated or architecture itself was an abbreviation of something else; something unknown, something confused and confusing. The resonance to a Zen conundrum became obvious: do we go to school to know why we went to school? Do we go to school to know why we need not go to school? Or do we go to school to learn the models of others in school? Or was the ultimate question: do we go to school to know what is (really?) worth knowing? Each student also chose and discussed with me after a week or so an imaginary theme to begin the longer narratives they would write about their education. Some of the eventual texts had nothing to do with these triggers, some had everything to do with these triggers. The first list was inventive and productive.

NW – Escape Routes: Heidegger and the Bored game

LS – Why I stopped reading Venturi's C&C on the third time and then started again

MK – The Thesis I might do, the Thesis I can't do.

MS – Learning to Fly, Learning to learn.

MG – Refloating Architecture

BB – Derrida and McLuhan: This Architectural Life (fragments)

TF – Climbing (&) Architecture : existential parallels.

RJ – Why I don't need to read all the Classics to become an architect.

EW – The unknown interior text in architecture

BS – Concrete Poetry.

SW- The Truck or the Porsche: art or architecture?

TR – From Child to Adult (the hood – the bully – the cross – bildungsroman – the spiritual)

TN – Despuntes: Architecture, Language and Untranslatability (a lexicon)

KJ – I've only finished one book in my life. I lied: (life in a graphic novel).

SB – Collapsing the Da Vinci Code & Architecture (graphic novel)

RH – The Hacker and Architecture's Next Game

RP – How John Cage & Brian Eno would meet Sonic Boom and interrogate Architecture (a sonic text)

I began to note the obvious gap between the architecture imagined at 'school' and the architecture outside, whether this latter consisted of the imaginary clients, cost cutting, efficiency, maintenance and other more practical strategies. Issues taught in school prepared the students, they admitted, for the unspoken work in an office but this was separate from the administrative elements of managing a project. The school and curriculum seemed to remind them constantly that they might always lack the technical information to solve issues. They felt trapped in the tautology. You are not clever enough to know how important the education you receive is, they were told. However, rarely did this take into consideration how they might learn to work in a team with engineers and other experts who knew and would always know much more than they did about the technical potential of their ideas. Could the students imagine the potential of ideas which they were not encouraged to 'invent'? And if they did experiment or invent unknown processes, the students lamented, they were often mocked in the jury processes for attempting the unimaginable. They could not be allowed to invent before they had a technological base which, sadly, was already falling behind what was being used in the offices. What must it feel like to be told you don't have the education to do this? They were often patronised. Were they to be tamed to do in school what they would learn in an office in the first apprentice years? And to whose advantage was that taming, that loss of creativity - the profession, the corporate office in Dallas or Houston, or the student? This left a growing dissatisfaction.

Did the students have a right to this dissatisfaction, or were they just the unfortunate ones? Were they all trying to find a place in an office, or were some of them trying to place themselves 'intellectually' and 'unrealistically' in the profession? Many felt it necessary to find an office that matched the way they worked. But too many expressed a dislike of constantly putting themselves out there for interviews. Working in an office continued to be a totally different learning experience than in

school, they felt. It was no longer sure if one led to the other. There was little enthusiasm to be 'out there'. They were doubtful and grew disinterested in this. Real Life was attractive certainly but not all students could see the potential solutions and could express themselves within the constraints offered by 'real work'. Many suggested they might not end up as architects, even after all this time.

I was not sure how the students found pleasure in what they did on *Planet Utzsoa* or would do when they left the architecture school in Zetaville. During the seminar we had begun to use the word Zetaville to describe this fictional university. Often they said, it feels as if it is all from a novel, it has all been fictional. Clichés usually followed; careers widened their knowledge. They were supposed to pursue their interests in a way that was unrecognisable when you went into detail about what they were doing. The romantic urge to succeed in Dallas - whatever the work - was immense. Most of the seminar group lamented this. As I said, perhaps these were the unfortunate ones; the ones attracted by hybrid systems, hip hop and sampling strategies that had no future. Tracking down the leads was not something they looked forward to. Was it only the practical, unchallenged, pragmatic students who claimed that almost anyone could design interesting buildings with an imaginary client and an unlimited budget? The students were tired; disengagement was a word too often discussed. But was it only momentary? Were the cynics out there on *Planet Utzsoa* correct: dissenters, just a bunch of losers? They'd be better out of the school, off the planet!!

I think not.

These narratives are in no way the record of a few dissenters. The range of writing and self-analysis is uneven and intelligent. All of these architecture students, whether in command of their language or not, whether writing well or not, have

things to say. They should be listened to. That is why we invented the University of Zetaville. Everyone will think they know exactly where Zetaville is. Everyone will think Zetaville is only in Texas. But don't be so sure. Zetaville exists all over the US, even all over the world. And that is why I am ending and beginning with an obituary written by one of the students from Zetaville:

Nicholas McCartney (1980—2073) The architect was known for his complete disregard for new trends in architecture. While quite educated, well traveled, and "locked open" (as he described himself and his work), McCartney never seemed to grasp the current spirit of the times. Compared to many of his contemporaries, McCartney never produced a great amount of work. Rather, he focused on quality and due to this old-fashioned approach, was deemed dated, quasi-lackadaisical, even hermetic. The simplicity with which he visualized building as art has been criticized for having no relation to the current practice of architecture. It seems that he was born, say colleagues, 100 years too late. He is survived by only 12 actual built projects, only two of which still exist in their original state – the unfortunate result of his lack of aesthetic and programmatic risk-taking. Architectural historians will ultimately decide the fate of such a blank, and yet quaint, body of work.

Roger Connah

1 The students were also asked to consult the following references on the role of the teacher, education and pedagogical strategies and hoodwinking techniques. How many of them did this I don't know. I suspect very few. Letter to a Teacher, School of Barbiana (1970) - Teacher, the one who made a difference, Mark Edmundson, (2002) - Conscientious Objections, Neil Postman, (1988) - Thought and Language, Lev Vygotsky, (1962), School is Dead, E.Reimer (1971) Teaching as a Subversive Activity, Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner (1969) and Deschooling Society, Ivan Illich, (1971).

2

the temporary **contemporary**

What is Contemporary Architecture? • Contemporary, to me •
 Contemporary means modern • BIG BUILDINGS DON'T MATTER
 • A huge question • while scanning an architectural theory book •
 Ciento sesenta • I perceive • I am Switzerland • zeitgeist. now
 • buying. selling. trading. • underscore_Contemporary architec-
 ture • I'm not even sure • adjective • Contemporary Undefined



Contemporary – a word that allows you to live
 anywhere else but the present. Why do we fight
 to hold and spread opinions we no longer touch?

Frank Heron

What is Contemporary Architecture? It's a question I never really ask myself, and the more I think about it, the more I realize that I am even less qualified to define the word "contemporary," solely, because I'm usually isolated in the confines of the architecture building. God forbid, if I ever find out what architecture means, notably, in the "real world."

Yes it's true; we are in an age where we face the problematic phenomena of information overload. Trust me, though I live in studio at school, I know. As a student of architecture, I am constantly finding myself at the crossroads. The perfect metaphor for selecting a design studio every semester is that of a rag doll being pulled in every possible direction, with your limbs in the care of a pack of vicious bulldogs. I try a little bit from sample A, then B, and then back to A, and when I feel really exhausted and in need of a break, I pick C. But, little do you know, sample C thinks 'studio' is an opportunity to talk kids away from the 'fantasy of architecture' and demands that you leave your enthusiasm at the door before you enter class. *Contemporary* for me is going through undergraduate school and trying to decipher what it is exactly I am trying to do with architecture, whatever that means!

This may sound timid on my part, but I assure you I am slowly taking it in. Skepticism plays a big part in my process of learning what architecture is and what it is capable of. So ask me that question at a later date. But, considering the contemporary is in constant flux, I am pretty sure my answer would not differ from what I have answered here. Better, I say: "what I have not answered here."

Contemporary, to me, means up to date with the time at hand. Contemporary architecture has reached its end and it's time for a new era. Contemporary architecture has been the same thing for too long, and there hasn't been much of a change in it to adjust to the contemporary times. On the other hand, what more can buildings be, than what they already are? Architecture seems to be stuck at the same phase right now because we have discovered no new materials, or new purposes that a building can meet. Architecture has to move on to more than buildings. It is a part of everything, and everything has room for architecture.

For example, take my passion for video games; could they not be more advanced? Practical and non-practical architecture exists in all areas of video games. However it has not been fully discovered. Games now are made to look appealing and pretty. But, with more architectonic qualities inside the video, it could become immensely engaging and original. Video games would then reach an entirely new level, and so would architecture. Buildings need to share their wonderful architecture with everything else in the world. Hopefully that will be the new format for architecture.

≈

Contemporary means modern, fashionable, up to date, current, etc; probably a term to describe a style in architecture, but it is not really that static. Contemporary architecture is a term that I really do not know what it means. So I just take it as the word to mean “new” architecture, because it is not really a style as yet defined in architecture. Sometimes it is complicated, sometimes it is simple, sometimes it flows with the context, and sometimes the context does not seem to have been considered at all. There are so many varieties in these designs yet they are all called contemporary architecture. There are buildings that are simple, and those that you could never guess how they came up with the form. Sometimes the building

itself is simple yet the skin is important. So if contemporary means up to date stuff, newer things, what happened to the things that were produced before that? When a building that used to be contemporary falls out of the category, where will it be? Will it be just “Modern” architecture now? And when does a building fall out of the contemporary category? When newer or stranger things appear? Will it be based solely on a time period? What makes it contemporary? Every design has its own uniqueness, so what are the standards? I don’t know. Do I really want to know?

≈

BIG BUILDINGS DON'T MATTER Architecture lives in \$10 magazines. People visit architecture on Sundays.

Architecture is printed on our money.

I don’t know anyone who has commissioned a building. I don’t know an architect who builds buildings. I don’t know anyone who employs other people under them. I know teachers, students, house-moms, artists, ministers, software engineers, physical therapists, archaeologists, grocery store cashiers. I know black people, brown people, Mexican, Cantonese and Nigerian. I know \$38,000 a year with credit card debt from graduate school, and spending \$3,000 in one year on computer stuff for your kid. And I know that to participate in contemporary architecture as currently conceived would be a clear choice to isolate myself from life as I know it. I’m not sure which demographic I belong to, but one thing I can define: my demographic is not a part of the process that imagines and creates architecture. Why should I have to have a college degree to participate in architecture? Why should I have to talk to white people all day to participate in architecture? For me it’s about this partly. Architecture means MONEY and no one’s talking about it as a dysfunctional system. Money seeks itself and is dictating infrastructures and

lifestyles that are doubled over from the growing pains. Architecture is as isolated from and as antagonizing to society as the White House and the Fortune 500.

So...

WHO DO YOU SERVE?

WHAT'S YOUR AGENDA?

≈

A huge question What is *contemporary* and what is contemporary architecture?

In the last hundred years, the practice of architecture and the treatment of built environments have been through many changes. After WWI architecture in the West began to show the influence of industrialization. Choice of materials, types of structure, and planning of spaces were all affected by an attitude to be modern. It produced many buildings and spaces that were interesting design schemes but didn't place much importance on individual comfort. With the turn of this past century current Western Culture is showing a strong influence from advances in technology, namely the computer. This of course affects architecture as well. Many recent architectural projects are products of advances in computer software programs. Designers can develop structures in a computer that only a decade ago would have been impossible.

Usually architecture is slow to react to changes in culture due to the longevity of the built form but even this seems to be accelerating with the influence of technology. It is, and will be, interesting to see how architecture develops over the next few decades. There are so many new possibilities opening up for designers to explore.

The challenges are many. It will be the job of designers to develop architecture in this new environment and not forget the people who will be living in it. Many lessons can be learned from the architecture of the past in this regard. That's not

to say architecture should copy the past but that it should look to it as a library of previous experiments to learn from.

≈

While scanning an architectural theory book, I wrote down the words and concepts that attracted my attention: paradigms, phenomenology, aesthetic of the sublime, linguistic theory, structuralism, post structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, feminism, post modern, historicism, anti-modern, meaning, representation, place and regionalism, contextualism, man and nature, neorationalism and typology, learning form linguistics, new American urbanism, political and ethical agendas, projection and anthropomorphism, humanist projection, reductive, complexity versus picturesqueness, figurative, ideological allusionism, ornamentalism, signification, semiology, pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, spatialisation, limits, surface effect, notation, order, biotechnical determinism, mathematical methods, free expression, diatonic system of harmony, iconic system of representation, fragmentation, de-centralization, space, symbol, persuasion, analogical, cybernetic systems, individualism, product, genius loci, homeostatic plateau, elementarist, intrinsic logic, abstraction, universalization, techne of logos, Cartesian representation, fertile details, tectonic....the list goes on and on. How can I take this further and create a graph that conveys the idea of rush or flood of ideas that comprise contemporary architecture. Why would I even do this? Contemporary architecture represents the ideas of a given culture at a given moment in time.

≈

Ciento sesenta y siete palabras en arquitectura contemporanea
one hundred and sixty-seven words on contemporary architecture

past + future + history + utopia, contrast, politics, reality, technology, dynamic, social, interactive, multiple, elastic, adaptable, id -volumes + spaces – aggregate of autonomous entities, cultural, reactivating, influential, paradojica, risky, innovative, contextual, progressive, material, environmental, exploration, artificial, transparent, confined, multiple, strategy, synthetic, beyond the classical and the modern, now, informational, media, territorial, diversity, tension, new, rational, consumerism, elitist, post-rational, virtual, plural, utopia, poetic, commercial, multifunctional, structural, polyvalent, additive, circulatoria, organic syntax, narrative, migrante: inmigrante, urban-rural, accidental, geometry, forms, symbols, paradigmatic, images, materialization – visualization, textual, fashion, personal, symbiosis::relacion de necesidades mutual entre diferentes entidades la cual puede existir competencia, oposicion, y lucha en tanto y en cuanto elementos y valores communes que mantienen la continuidad de la integracion, heterogenea, opposition, signs:: readable exterior spaces that merge in the inside, meaning beyond function, distribucion de densidades, hybrid, desplazo, material, art, mutation, functional, objects, infrastructural, investigation, environment, material, aspirational, recycling, frictional boundaries, escenarios, interlinked, flux, rational, fluid topographies, red/network, society, vehicular-peatonal, flexible, bilateral, conceptual, medios de transporte, polivalente,divergente- convergente, direccion, sentido, money,

~

I perceive contemporary architecture beginning in the 1920's, which in fact was the beginning of the Modern Movement. No doubt this – *contemporary* - although “freed from the rigours of modernist theorizing, but employing much of its basic vocabulary...” has and continues to evolve from this early precedent. I have just started a book for another class titled “Wilderness and the American Mind” and while only just into the first chapter the correlation between contemporary

architecture (a part of the built environment or more generally architecture, which co-exists with wilderness to make up our world) and wilderness is intriguing. The book describes the evolution of the word “wilderness” and goes on to discuss man’s perception of the term. Contemporary architecture I presume has evolved in much the same way, over time, having a generalized and accepted terminology or vision but also containing an individual concept. It is the total of these individual concepts that make up the varied definition of contemporary architecture. Contemporary architecture is...

≈

I am Switzerland I disapprove of the constant use of the word *contemporary* to describe the state of design at this point. I see no relevance in its ambiguous definition pertaining to issues of the present when such an identity is lacking. We have no concept of ‘present’, as we find ourselves in limbo between past sentiment and future ideology. Likewise, I do not consider contemporary architecture a movement, but rather a state of confusion or a constant struggle. We cling to things that have already been done, or we talk about what we would like to do, but few of us actually do anything about it.

To do architecture is to wage war. You can join forces with the Sentimentalists or dream with the Idealists. Truly we should find a philosophy that transcends both of these if we wish to leave the loop, a kind of anarchitecture, if you will. Fight or flight? Defiant or compliant? Such are the situations young designers are thrust into, and such are the sides that we are asked to choose from. Essentially it becomes about survival. Our field is for battle. Can there be any compromise?

I am Switzerland!

My goal is to become the COVERT CRITIC. My task is to infiltrate and survey both sides of the spectrum. In doing so I hope to avoid total immersion and

retain my own methodology for architecture. In fact I don't even think it should be called 'architecture'. I deal with analogs, concrete or virtual, that elicit emotional responses and interactivity. We speak of sampling. This is a vital practice, to sample everything one might encounter and convert it into an analog. In this way our world becomes activated, and we can feel more like participants rather than spectators. We don't want to be tracked, recorded, analyzed or catalogued. We'd rather be on the other end due to our voyeuristic nature. The analog allows us to push the boundaries of perception.

Architectural education is flawed. While I appreciate the beauty of Rome, I no longer view it as a lucrative model for design. Context has become all but non-existent. Today's advances occur so fast that there is no point in maintaining position for any length of time. We have gone from the moment to the event to the flow. Technology adds the convenience of instantaneous response, which interestingly enough continues to become obsolete. An instant grows shorter and shorter.

We will soon run out of ways to increment time. Urban planning is no longer possible due to the unpredictable nature of society. The need for permanence has been replaced by the need to accommodate possibility. We are asked to support the mobile nomads that grow restless within the confines of the 'prisons' that have been constructed by the disillusioned. The typical day is framed by movement through a succession of confines; from the house, to the car, to the parking garage, to the office, etc. How do we satisfy the need for shelter without confining ourselves?

If we're not careful our field will get left behind, wallowing in the dust that just about every other field of study is stirring up. The problem in architecture is that the approach to the design problem has changed little. What has changed is the rubric of acceptability. We are slow and reluctant in our response. We substitute invention with convention. We taint functionality and adaptability through aesthetic interference. These things which are acceptable to the community are in fact, the

most vulgar.

I am in no way condoning the total abandonment of precedence or tradition. I merely imply that they hold too much weight. My expectation for my education is to shift the focus to a more open-minded perspective. No one can tell you how to go about design. No one can tell you what is good. The subjective nature is what appeals to the free spirit.

And the free spirit is what this is all about.

I am – yes - architecture.

≈

zeitgeist. now. time-ghost. is becoming.

contemporary architecture is

“das Gebäude wird lebendig!”

[the building is becoming alive!]

becoming. experiment. improvisation.

what does it mean to build now? why do we build in an age of globalisation of commerce, maximum information flow and daily corporate mergers? where does ‘building’ fall in this lineup? as the world changes, architecture must try to keep up. does it?

does the New Architecture need to know how to change? how does one nail down the architectural needs of a civilization that never sleeps, spends more than it makes, and doesn’t know what it believes?

buildings shall respond by not responding.

buildings shall be built by not building.

people shall use buildings by not using them.

space will continue to be enclosed,

light will continue to be filtered,

water will continue to be shed...

but people will find no use for building.

building is dying.

≈

buying. selling. trading. merging. e-merging. building. e-building. non-building - today we don't need buildings or use them like we used to. before we needed space for things; things that supported us. but these things are now being taken from Wal-Mart to our garages and finally dying to the U-haul storage centers. we've run out of room for the things we believed would define us as people. and now that they are gone – in “temporary” storage, that is – we don't even miss them. Now, we need space to house the computers that tap us into the virtual. We need the virtual to free ourselves from the objectiphilia around us. we are each one of us materiophiles – lovers of stuff.

architecture is a becoming of virtual, anti-stuff, the non-built.

it is super-real, hyper-natural,

and yet exists in our random access memory.

humans need no longer to design.

they merely buy, use and throw away.

trash architecture

mega-building

micro-tecture

building death.

≈

underscore_Contemporary architecture

01. 5 lines, a skin pulls taut

02. A rectangle hides inside
03. Bezier spline, interrupted surface
04. Unsure, but unwilling to accept: reflection
05. Blue cube floats and waits
06. Extruded face breaks the night
07. 4 thin tubes hang on for their lives
08. Thin wall, a long way up
09. And then the building turned inside out
10. Denied
11. Big box, thin legs
12. Architecture Exhibitionism
13. 2 red dots, 1 blue field
14. Architecture forms the sun
15. Approving Virgin
16. Highbrowed
17. 3 bands, a surface folds
18. A circle blinding birds
19. Lines break, a sky becomes façade
20. Irregular growth, a cube divides
21. Street trees, speed, and freaks
22. Surface erasing
23. Denied
24. Birthing concentricity
25. 20 lines, a city hangs
26. 6 rectangles collide
27. Exploding panes
28. A surface swirls, pockets form
29. Europeans under pressure (misreadings)
30. Black box supports golden carrot

underscore_Contemporary architect

31. Stereoscopic Gehry
32. Living experimental
33. 2 men standing, staring
34. Woman without architecture
35. Converging trajectories, familiar surfaces
36. Islands float
37. Man without architecture
38. Forbidden
39. Inflatable fuzzy form
40. Architecture without humans
41. Titanium kiss
42. Concrete meets the sky

underscore_Contemporary architects

43. Folding paper, making roofs
44. Parasitic skylights
45. Beyond media
46. Transparent skins
47. Becoming landscape
48. Only left with names

Anything, everything, anywhere, everywhere, anyone, everyone_fast space, no space, activating, in between, variations, approximately almost there, something closer than your own backyard....

underscore_then, yes!

≈

I'm not even sure if contemporary architecture is the current style. What is *contemporary*? Who or what elements determine whether something is contemporary? To apply the term to architecture seems to leave a somewhat vague description. I admit I had to analyze the definition before I could form a cognitive opinion. Who decides what defines a style or movement? Is there a group of intellectuals somewhere deep below the earth who conspire to determine the latest fad in mob mentality, produced by whatever the latest issue of the world's popular magazines dictate?

Society's demands are changing more and more rapidly with each new discovery and disaster and architecture is the framework and solution to emerging needs. But is it contemporary? I suppose technically it would be, considering that it is of the current time period, but considering it in that respect, wouldn't everything have been at one time or is now, contemporary? So, how is using the term in relation to architecture meant to be referenced? Is it the label of a style or movement? If it is, then what does this style look like? Does it change depending on the context? Is "contemporary architecture" in Texas different from "contemporary architecture" in, we'll say, Arkansas? If so, then can it still be considered a style or is it merely a word we've chosen to describe any architecture anywhere, a word that reflects our needs and interests at this particular moment? Soon it will no longer be contemporary and we will refer to it as something else. What, I don't know. Does it really matter what we call it? I'm not so sure it does.

≈

adjective

contemporary

happening

existing

living

coming into being during the same period of time

simultaneous

current; water; wave; now; know

marked by the characteristics of the same period; cycle

ages, era, cons: past

pantyhose; membranes; permeable

coincident

VH1, Mtv

existing; instant; extinct

up-to-date, until now; on the down low

meat, meat, meat, meme

fad

diet

fashion

black is the new brown is the new pink is the new green

and green is it

press the walls... the box

from the inside-out

outside-in

play...

cut, fold, puncture, destroy, (re)create

meditate

build, tape, glue, (re)present

what?

fast...

food, connection, turn-over, layover, internet, relationships, track, forward,

women, (re)action, car, living, entertainment

pronounce

human-nature-technology

recycle

signage

advertise, consume, dispose, build-up, landfill

empty land

re-do

fluctuation

of kinetic and potential energy	of society
energy...	
drinks, bar, saved	
reshape; play-do, silly putty	
bigger toys	
sunlight; night lights; spotlight	
loosing trees	
man's guilt	
how to amend what our hand has done	
what our hand does	
speak before think before act	
post-analyze	
gas or no gas	
question; comment; declare	
recovery	
patterns	
drawing in the sand	
leaving a mark; making a mark	
graffiti, art, trash	
interpret	
pointing the finger	
spell check	
copy – paste	
standardized testing	
#####	
\$\$\$	
five stars	
millions of	
#####	
##### one of many, many as one	
new and improved; infomercials; saves time, space, and quality of life	
work hard, play hard	
hardly work, get paid	
short cut vs. scenic route	

interpreted, modern architecture?

Contemporary. Conglomerate. New?

These elements are not new, but the 'usage' might be. How will this work in a place where parking is already limited and the streets already congested? Why must they continue to build in a congested area? Is this where contemporary architecture is heading - the inter-relation of parts building cities as inhabitable spaces? One thing is certain: a mass transit system will be needed once the streets have been leveled and new buildings erected.

Contemporary? Each of us has their own interpretation of the term.

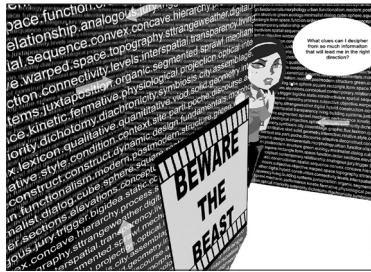
Contemporary, infinite! Contemporary, undefined!

Which might also be 'contemporary'.

3

the trigger for architecture

The trigger is quite unrelated • I want to be an architect • searching for an architecture trigger • Growing up • I came to architecture • the trigger • I can say • die-cast society • I once found a gun • i started climbing • to pinpoint the trigger - closing night • the catalysts of dreaming • Leila's Advice • It's a feeling i still remember • all around, and no interest • I was in my last few months of Army service



We have not just thoughts but feelings about ourselves, our world, and the world outside our world. These feelings strongly affect and build on each other. They determine how we grow into the world, and whether we can grow into it.

John Holt

The trigger is quite unrelated to architecture itself. Around 3 years ago I was an Art student at the University of Texas in Arlington. I was thinking to myself whilst having a cigarette outside about what I really wanted to become. I kept thinking, especially about one of my teachers who was a quite successful artist. He had had his works published in magazines and had some gallery shows. Yet, I kept thinking about his life and how he drove a late 80's truck everyday. Then Professor B. came into my sight driving his Porsche searching for a parking spot. At the time I didn't really know who he was, all I knew was that he parked at the faculty parking lot. After a while I knew he taught Architecture. While still keeping the thoughts of a future in mind, something struck me: the comparison between the teachers' cars. One drove a truck and one drove a German sports car. And I was lured onto the German sports car side; in other words Architecture. With the intention of searching for some new information about the architecture school, I visited the advisor at the time. We started talking for a bit and the next thing I knew he was shaking my hand whilst saying "welcome to architecture!". That was the trigger to get myself into the School of Architecture.

≈

I want to be an architect At 16, my favourite thing in life that came the closest to being some type of profession was the school musical.* So I went to music school. My favourite classes were women's chorus, sight singing, and foreign diction, because we got to sing in class and I didn't have to study too hard. But I started to skip my other more intense classes—keyboarding (piano), composition,

music theory. I was giving up, and the word *architecture* literally fell out of the sky. And then I remember looking up architecture schools on the internet—it had to be in Texas for in-State tuition, UT Austin and A&M were out because my gpa was too low, and UTSA seemed too small. So UTZ it was. I came here as a mediocre student, and architecture was calling the anxious dropout in me. I wanted to be successful at something, but I didn't know what my skills were. I didn't know what architecture was exactly, either. So it was a perfect match in that way—two unknowns with the possibility of turning out to be wonderfully similar. Architecture and I were together because it didn't feel like a commitment, it felt like it could be many things, and that's the closest to decision making I could manage.

* Now I use architecture words all out of context because of mental laziness; nearly everything can be trigger or a cell or a system, etc. So I start to take pictures of cross sections of grapefruit for their cool organization, and trailer parks for their transient nature. Architecture has gotten all over everything. We really ought to let other jargons get all over our architecture. Case in point, musical theatre: the rehearsal of performance art is interactive, highly focused, likewise highly flexible, and thrives by collaboration. A performance takes the impact of a captive audience and uses it at turns to complete the story, alter it, or destroy it. The process of crafting performance art is steeped in the act of conversational communication (in the forms of direction, iteration, reiteration). Can drawings move with the speed and nuance of conversation, taking information from fellow participants with every sentence and gesture? Can we utilize our behavioural instincts and impulses, which are so receptive, in the forming of architecture? Acting, singing, and dancing are modes of the forms of everyday life, primarily conversation, radio/music and ambient sound, and how we move around. To understand and know the experience of architecture, architectural exercises ought to be performed in these modes. That architects primarily work alone sitting at a desk seems restrictive, and in some ways removed from life. What can we learn from inside a cubicle, really?

≈

Growing up at a young age I never excelled in English and Grammar classes. However I was always excited about drawing and many other creative activities. I remember building ramps and tracks for my Hot Wheels. That may sound somewhat normal, but I ‘normally’ had a Bottle Rocket duct taped on the sides and the top. Creativity was about the only thing that I was good at.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

Well I never really knew, but I figured that I would have fun, and hopefully be successful as an architect. I got to watch my uncle do a lot of interesting stuff. He had tons of little trinkets and other items that looked somewhat inspiring. He also got to draw, and got paid for it. I thought: “Man you can’t beat that”.

As I grew a little bit older, I kept this interest for architecture. I have always wanted to sketch something out on paper and get to see it on the side of the street. I felt that experiencing this would be a fantastic achievement. So I decided to go for it. I didn’t really know any other profession that I would be good at.

Now as a Senior in the architecture program, all of my feelings have changed. I have enjoyed every single aspect of my education that has excelled my creativity. However I have completely lost all interest in buildings. I would love to take this knowledge that I have obtained and take it to a new place. Where that is, well, I’ll tell you when I know.

≈

I came to architecture between beats in ambient music, a skewed 4/4 pulse emerging, at first, across the backs of napkins and receipts.

Architecture was everywhere in ambient tracks.

I would more fully realize this a few years later.

I stumbled into architecture. Initially it was Brian Eno’s “Discreet Music,” and

then Moebius Plank that introduced me to the subtleties of space. And through patience and persistence I would define the incalculable, organizing spatial narratives from improvised sound chaos, and wondered if Eno, at times, considered himself an architect.

ar chi tect n.

1 One who designs and supervises the construction of buildings or other large structures. 2 One who plans or devises. For me, architecture was an accident, a 45 played at 33 (rpm's) in the living room of my parent's house. Ambient music is full of ambiguity. I'm never told what the composition is supposed to be, just left to exist within the sounds- the noise. Architecture was at first a pull rather than a push, a soft voice leading me to an earsplitting place of implied geometries and adjacent spaces.

I've been listening to architecture ever since...

≈

The trigger..... It sounds almost violent like the trigger of a gun. What is a trigger? Something that hurtles an object into space at a particular target? What is my trigger?? I've been asked this question in regards to architecture. To tell the truth I'm not sure. I started looking for some major event or realization or epiphany from my past that threw me towards architecture like a bullet but for me it's been much more subtle, more like stepping stones along a path that led me to choose architecture as my life long pursuit. That's it isn't it?

A life-long pursuit with no defined end! Something to sink my teeth into, something to tie my mind up in knots about, something without any definite answers but many paths, choices, decisions, options, something that can drive me. That's what drew me to it. To this point in my life I've been meandering trying to find my way, not sure where I was going, but always moving forward. Well, not always

moving forward, sometimes standing still, marking-time. That is until I get bored or frustrated and make a decision to change things in my life, often drastically. I can map my ascent towards architecture through these decisions and steps.

I started out pursuing fashion design but found it less than satisfying intellectually and financially. From there I jumped to a business pursuit - sales, better financially but very stressful and not very challenging mentally. I got burned out, bored, and due to market forces, laid off. After that I decided to return to a design related career. I was good at and enjoyed redesigning (redecorating) interiors. I decided to return to school to pursue an interior design degree. I chose the University of Texas because the interiors program was in the architecture rather than the art department.

It never occurred to me to choose architecture but after my first studio I was hooked. I liked the mix of art and engineering. That was it, architecture. I switched majors and started the path-A masters program. I can see a path that led me to choose architecture but it was definitely a series of events, not a single dramatic trigger.

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I can say that I always dreamed of becoming an architect. That around the house there were frescoes of my own creation painted on to the walls, that if someone were to look into one of my pockets they would find pieces of Lego, that I would use to build objects and experiment with them. I could say that if someone were to see me the way I behaved and expressed my emotions there would be no doubt that this was the path that I would take: ARQUITECTURA.

But it was not like that, there were no frescoes on the walls of the house, at least not of my own creation, I did not build castles and objects out of Lego (I don't even think I owned any Lego), and most surely there was no indication of

the path that I was going to take. Now that I look back I don't recall knowing any architects, or even knowing what 'architecture' meant. I knew engineers (my father being one of them), doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants, and even a nun but no architects.

I can say that I ended up following this path because of seduction. I was seduced by the sound and image of the word. I liked the way it sounded, it had presence and power: "ARQUITECTO". I liked the way it was spelled and how it looked on a piece of paper (specially right next to my name Tania Nunez :: ARQUITECTO) but what I liked the most was that it was a new wor(l)d - something to discover, a chance to explore.



die-cast society I didn't realize that my predisposition to matchbox cars would be a precursor to the 'real' world as they think it should be named. I would arrange my rather large collection much like vehicles would be arranged in any suburban neighborhood you might stumble upon. At first I used the bricks of the fireplace in our living room as a series of driveways. It was funny how my decision process worked at that time. My house would usually be centralized, on the cleanest and best of the bricks I could find. Those immediately adjacent to it on either side were the next best. So you see that even as a child I wanted to be surrounded by only the best of things.

As I advanced in age I became a little more creative in the manner which I constructed my neighborhoods. I moved from the rigid pre-formed grid of the fireplace to the intricate free patterns of the area rug. With these I had a little more to work with but still the methodology behind each placement was the same... having the best and being surrounded by it.

In the later stages of matchbox play I would begin drawing the streets and driveways on large pieces of poster board. That was the most direct representation I

was able to achieve. It's funny how I was able to accept an entire world where the cars were the only visible avatars of the nature of things. There were no houses, no people, so the only judgments which could be made came from the cars they owned. The streets and driveways were the organizing structure.

It always bothered me that I was restricted to a specific scale with these toy cars. I could only draw so much 'road' on a piece of poster board - and it became a hyper-zoomed view of a tiny piece of the city. I yearned to keep going when my pencil hit the end of that piece. Sometimes I would tape more than one together... but there's only so much space on the kitchen table. I dreamed of an endless series of these, strung out in a huge network of streets and driveways. It seemed to sprawl impossibly but I wanted it just the same.

In reality our site tends to be zoomed in as well, focusing only on ourselves and our immediate surroundings. Here we are judged only by our possessions, when we too are part of this huge network. The matchbox car and my treatment of it revealed the materialistic nature of things. Now when I think back to it, the prospect of children pushing around cars with no driver in them is both horrifying and fascinating. It's interesting to think that he projects himself into the seat of that tiny vehicle, imprisoned in an aesthetic, die-cast metal shell.

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I once found a gun and six hundred dollars, well I say I, it was two friends and myself. My father is a carpenter and sometimes a contractor. At times in my life I would claim him a contractor solely, which did not faze me at the time. When I was very young he and an uncle had a motorcycle dealership (i.e. he worked for my uncle that had the motorcycle dealership), he worked many hours and managed to make most of my little league games at school. But outside of that it was Hondas and Harleys. At the ripe old age of eight, I witnessed my father's dumbest move:

with the option to take over the business, he left the motorcycle business to “make it” on his own. Turns out it wasn’t so dumb. Sure I missed riding the 3-wheelers in at days end but with time the evenings in his shop were much more interesting than the few minutes a day I got to ride a piece of machinery built for someone twice my age.

So into my early teens I built many oddities, from pencil holders to coat racks to paper towel holders all fashioned crudely out of some form of scrap wood. On hindsight of course it was being in the same room and using the same tools as he that made those evenings entertaining. Very few artifacts still survive from those primitive construction days and as years passed I grew to despise that shop; it became a place I would have to go after school sometimes even after dinner to assist in completing a task necessary for the next day’s schedule. My playground had become a place of involuntary labour.

When I went off to college, I was good at math and had a hand for drawing, which coincided nicely with architecture (at least in my mind) seeing as how I had been exposed to construction for the previous ten years. More than anything it was my desire to be behind a desk, in an air-conditioned room, out of the weather, that most appealed to me, all the things that working for my father was not.

In more recent years I have decided that, in fact, I do not want to be cooped up inside, behind a desk all day and more importantly that “dumb” move my father made was not that dumb at all. He had a desire to provide for his family doing what he truly loves and has managed to do just that. The trigger is not a single moment but the culmination of many hours spent with my father working as remodels came together, additions were completed, and houses erected. This is the part of architecture, the physical, the constructed, which first triggered my interest and is still an integral part but one of many I have learned and continue to discover.

CONSECUTIVE ACCIDENTS

secondary modern school

i actually wanted to do an apprenticeship

i started climbing

i wanted money to go climbing

but parents persuaded me to take a test for a technical high school

i met a lot of climbers through school

started comps - won the austrian championships -
3rd at youth world championships - got sponsors...

focused on climbing

decided to go on further with school -

studying something i didnt know what - main thing ability to organize your own time

the end project of high school - roadbridge made from wood -
statistical calculations - to the very end - 3d design of the bridge

trigger to get in

ARCHITECTURE

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To pinpoint the trigger, that force which made me gravitate towards architecture I would have to look very far back. When I was a very young child in west Texas my family had a house. Not an extravagant house but a house filled with a lot of memories. After my parents divorced around the age of ten, my mother and I moved from one apartment to the other. I had at least five different addresses before high school and those were spread between two different towns. During this period I became intrigued and almost obsessed with domestic architecture. I began conceiving plans of my elaborate dream home and loved going to the Tour of Homes in the Metroplex and looking at the grand multi-level houses. I would collect the brochures with all of the plans in them and then make critiques and alterations based on my own interests. My parents just laughed.

Nobody really used the word ‘architecture’ or encouraged a direction for me. It wasn’t until I had a cousin go into the field that I started to embrace the possibility. When I designed as a child I only conceptualized in plan. I never drew perspectives and axonometrics although I did imagine them. My houses were usually pretty insane. I had glass bottom hallways, motorized transportation, wall to wall aquariums, you get the idea. For me, it was just fun. Now I know I’ve chosen something I will enjoy learning about and practicing for a very long time. There is really nothing else I could see myself doing and since I’ve been in school I have been enlightened on the many aspects of the arts and architecture that excite me even more. I feel like I will never stop learning and I love that.



Closing night of senior musical after curtain call I was coming back from the dressing room, and the whole cast and audience were excitedly finding each other (swarm theory now when I think about it). I passed a gay stage hand (a vaguely remembered sophomore) humming the melody of one of the closing numbers, an upbeat duet that Eugene and me sing. It’s the moment in the night that signals a resolution to the dramatic conflict and takes the congregation to some higher ground. Inside I took a pause and smiled. That little punk kid was getting hype off a song that I had sung. Every afternoon preparing that show had been life, and scary; acting and singing in front of 100 fellow cast members, those teachers who cared about me, part of the orchestra, and the top band director for a month and a half everyday. I was afraid for real, not just at those rehearsals, but honestly I was afraid a lot all the time.

On closing night though I was too full of better things to be afraid. So began the craving of zealous work, and mythical experiences. And a desire to contribute in a personal way, to see spiritual gifts handed out in swarming congregations. It turned

out I wasn't happy in the work of music school, so then I thought of architecture. I had never pictured myself as an architect before I was 17 and floundering at something else. The word architecture literally fell out of the sky, but it was akin to me and my pursuits in life still haven't changed.

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the catalysts of dreaming - his world was a static field of grey buttons. here he could find solace in the lack of hierarchy. they were all the same... each served an equal purpose. everything reduced to one simple plane. No expectation, only the silent offering of support and stability. here on even ground he could build his masterpiece. with each primary colored plastic brick he placed, he began to like this place more and more. it was his world. he could shape it however he pleased. he could inflict his own sense of order and wonderment at the same time. his imagination seemed at once boundless and free. he continued through the rigorous process of selection. one brick at a time.

he worked in layers, just as his life tended to do. base, foundation, structure, shelter. it seemed entirely logical. occasionally he dabbled in the disruption of said order. it was controlled chaos - completely exhilarating something began to form, to take shape. even having not realized its full potential he was fascinated by it. the unfinished looked finished, it looked right somehow. but what if he placed one more here? it became an anxious process, for each addition could serve to topple the balance of the previous one. he felt more alive than ever.

the instruction book lay unnoticed on the floor, masked by a veil of youthful naiveté. innocent yet sinister, his defiance of what the book stood for revealed his true intent. he didn't want to be told how to do it.

what had he done? he took a moment to sit back and scrutinize the outcome. he picked it up, rotated it and viewed every angle. He wished he could turn it inside

out and reveal its guts to everyone. he imagined it as a captured moment in time. he had his finger on the pause button, and could restart the dynamic motion of this miniature world at any moment.

a sudden impulse racked his slender frame. he allowed his current masterpiece to fall to the floor and shatter into thousands of tiny pieces. but it wasn't broken. he had merely sent it back to the realm of possibility. he smiled as he realized he could try another iteration of the same idea, or branch out on a different path all together.

he thought to himself "i can create... and destroy. this world cannot be taken away. it can't be infiltrated, or tainted, or judged, or forgotten, or silenced. this is where i want to be. this is where I belong."

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Leila's Advice I occasionally would ask myself, "Why did it take so long for me to decide on architecture as a major?" I don't know what it is that makes me believe that architecture has always been in me, but only now am I beginning to explore it. I had always wanted to design things, anything. Particularly, at some point, I was interested in car design, but had it been any other type of design, I believe it would not have mattered. Only, how was I going to make that work? In high school, I never was exposed to design, let alone taught how to make a career out of it. The closest thing I had towards a direction in design was an art class, but was a paper maché mask to determine a substantial career effort? The idea of becoming a designer of some type never seemed possible to me, and because of that, I had always suppressed the thought, pushed it to the back of my mind. This had forced me to handle my future from a backward approach. Find out what skills I was good at, and try closely to retrofit them into a model for success.

As a combination of a blurry career plan and a lack of enthusiasm to carry-

ing it out, I stayed in my hometown of Denton and attended the University of North Texas. Before architecture, there were the TAMS kids. TAMS kids were pretentious squawky brats of high school age who attended the same classes that I was taking as an undergraduate chemical engineering major at UNT. The TAMS program allowed teenagers who had finished their first two years of high school to begin taking college level courses at the university earning dual credit for both the completion of high school and the beginning of university. Basically, these kids were smart, and college students, who had traditionally completed their high school career at an actual high school, hated them. The acronym, TAMS, stood for some title involving the words “mathematics” and “science,” and was heavily geared towards getting those kids into engineering. If you wanted to get an engineering degree from UNT, it was most likely that you would have shared a class with these annoying little people. Had I known this, my decision to be cooped up with these younger, smarter, loud-mouth teenagers in a classroom would have required a second thought.

I was decent at science and math, but the TAMS kids were even better. I was jealous of the TAMS kids; we all were. But the root of my jealousy didn't lie with envying their smarter intelligence. Of course, that was always arguable among my fellow non-TAMS students. Instead, it was the fact that TAMS-ers, the common nickname for the variety, had brought to college everything us, normal undergrads were hoping to finally get away from in high school. The drama, cliques, popularity were all around us again, only magnified by these squawky underlings. As high school graduates, the non-TAMS students had matured beyond such trivialities in order to concentrate on their schoolwork. How was it possible for these kids to get this opportunity of previewing what college life was like and still maintain their adolescent nature that they had no consideration of subduing? Did they not realize what they had? It was their opportunity to begin thinking about the future at an early age with the optimistic view of a dreamer. They had lacked the serious-

ness the older students understood. Then again, when I was their age, I neglected responsibility at every chance I got.

Anyway, my academic career at UNT consisted of two years of fumbling through the state's basic requirements for a degree without actually committing to a major. I skilfully selected my classes in a matter of versatility, one semester in hopes of becoming a chemist and the next of becoming an accountant. I know I had previously mentioned a major in chemical engineering, but that was always just a common path response to get people off my back about committing to my future. In reality, I was all over the place with only one constant factor, the desire to learn. TAMS-ers, I felt, had more time to decide their fate. They were the luckier ones, who had the opportunity to make a more just decision.

One day, I ended up at the main library doing my physics homework. Little did I know; a future encounter from my past would alter the direction of my life. Being a Dentonite, it was always common to run into old high school friends, who were also attending the university, in the library. My head in the book trying to get a few problems solved before class started, I was greeted by a familiar voice. I looked up to see my old friend, Leila. Immediately, we're surprised to see each other and go through the "I haven't seen you in a long time" motions. We exchange initial college experiences, and then get down to the hard stuff. I am referring to the intentions of why we were attending college in the first place. As Leila succeeds in mapping out her distinct direction for a career in radio/TV/film, I fail in agreeing with my decision in becoming a chemical engineer. Sensing the uneasiness of my situation, Leila attempts to go through a list of career options for me to consider. Leila's next response was the trigger for me to finally make the decision I had always neglected to make: "You had always been interested in math and science, and you like you to create things. Why don't you become an architect?"

An architect? I had heard of the profession before but never considered it. As an architect, what would I be doing? Where would I even go to study to become

one? I played around with idea in my head for weeks. After all, this was the first time I had ever given it a thought. The idea seemed novel and exciting. This newly undiscovered ground sparked the yearning to learn more. Leave just the science and math to the TAMS-ers. Instead, I was going to take both science and math and utilize them to create. Why not, the answer is so simple. Become an architect. Research led to action, and action led to more action. All of a sudden, I found myself at UTA.

Fortunately, architecture is so immense that the initial drive to learn more about it still exists. As an architecture student, I have become an adolescent once again; only this time, the future seems a little more optimistic. My decision to study architecture is characteristic of architecture itself. Architecture is an ongoing process to want to learn more; it is simply a vessel in which one can satisfy the need for exploration.

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it's a feeling i still remember to this day, and continue to get when my senses tell me things are just right. i admit, it's purely intuitive. there is no quantifying this feeling. but since i was a child, there has been this knowing that a building felt right, or a painting meant something, or a piece of music had space. about the same time i started listening to Bach, i learned the word "architect". it's funny, now, to think of how closely related the two actually are. so while Bach was changing my brain, which i believe it did, i began to realize that there were people who built things. my friend's father was an architect, and he designed this amazing wood playground in east Dallas that we visited for a field trip. he was the first architect i had ever heard of. and he made that place which stood out in my memory as the best playground i had ever experienced. so the connection of architect to design was established. about that time too, i started noticing the "feel" of places.

more specifically, i suppose that was more a realization that certain places had the ability, due to some non-material quality, to make me feel a certain way. either the smell of it, or the size or the character of a building affected me. well at some point, in high school or so, i decided i wanted to be the person who gave buildings that. i wanted to make them “feel”..

ok?

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All around, and no interest... I don't care about concrete and steel. I don't care how strong or weak it is. Boring! What's on the radio? We trade our music with the cassette. We talk about the now and not the future. There are many arguments for architecture. Countless relatives who work in construction... Mom is an artist and I like music. The thing that got me involved in architecture was research. It was a roundabout way for me. One would think that since my dad was a civil engineer, my grandfather a carpenter, and so on that it would be a natural for me to end up in the construction field. But it wasn't. I didn't want anything to do with drawing. I didn't want anything to do with thinking. I didn't want to swing a hammer either. For the longest time, anything related to building was the furthest thing from my mind.

There isn't just one big moment or trigger that got me here. Rather, there were many small things that led up to it. I went into the Army right after high school, got married and started building computers. This was back when building computer hardware was still lucrative and generally easy to get into. From there I moved on to networks, teaching and consulting until I finally settled into a comfortable corporate sales job for anything technology related. All along the way I took classes at the community college. After several years I graduated from there and started

thinking about what I would do next. I really wanted to be a poet and a musician. But the cold, hard truth is that I cannot sing, and that is what I wanted to do the most. (Actually...I sing well, it is everyone else who has the problem!)

To be serious, I thought, I would have to know what is out there and what I am best suited for. So I researched. I looked high and low at careers. I looked into medical, but I dislike touching live things. I looked at databases of careers and sorted them out by the skills I think I have, personal interests, test results and the like. There were about five things on my list. (Landscape architecture, architecture, law, writer/editor, and something else I cannot recall at the moment.)

Ok, so what is architecture? As I read, I thought more and more about the artistic side of it. I thought about the analytical. My dad has a high IQ and mental capacity and while growing up, I made straight A's in math and science. It was a requirement to live. Logic became easy for me. I wanted to wander and this is where I ended up.

I ended up with a song, Pink Floyd's "Learning to Fly" an image and a sculpture. That was it.

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I was in my last few months of Army service at a installation in Germany when I noticed there was something else that I wanted to do other than repairing heavy equipment and driving trucks. I was on 30 days leave, staying on Post to save some money. I was wondering how to spend the time so I found a construction site on the south end of the Post where they were building new houses. Now when the Army puts up houses, they go about it in a grand way. They were

building a small city or so it seemed to me. The plan was for about 60 or so multi-family buildings. I was intrigued by all of the construction workers and equipment moving around. There were Sea-Land vans stacked three high and loaded with prefab wall units, nails, drywall, and other consumables. With nothing else to do for thirty days, I thought I could lend a hand working on the construction equipment or something. While introducing myself to the construction manager who was a very short Pilipino Architect of about 40 years, I noticed the rack of plans for the buildings. I was completely amazed at the drawings, all hand drawn like artwork, and racks of them on very large sheets of paper. I think it was at that moment I realized I wanted to be able to do something like that. All of a sudden I wanted to be the one that came up with the plans. When questioned about what it takes to be able to do something like this (the plans) the construction manager told me to get my ass in school and get an education and that I would find my place in the business somehow but only after school. And so I did. However the journey through the education system and my path toward becoming an Architect has been anything other than a linear one and could be a book about how NOT to become an Architect.

4

the shock of the old

shockitecture • caps and gowns • the first shock • CONFESION
 :: PECADOS :: • I believe architecture • we are in the business •
 the first lesson • EXPERIENCIA :: EXpERIENCE • shock • my
 shock in architecture? • the first shock of architecture as a coded
 system? • before actually coming to architecture school • the
 misinformation of an architect • I have discovered • Runnin' on
 empty



The good thinker can take his time because he can tolerate uncertainty, he can stand not knowing. The poor thinker can't stand not knowing; it drives him crazy.

John Holt

Shockitecture “Architecture is not a game;” I knew he was probably right. I mean, how could architecture be anything other than boxes, at least in his class - maybe even his entire world? There were no arguments regarding the validity of his assertions. We nodded and agreed, that yes, architecture was not a game. In fact, by the way he spoke about it, architecture had a good chance of not being fun at all. We knew buildings were supposed to be “square” or slight variations of square, like, umm... rectangular. This concept was strengthened by building examples offered by Mies, Corb (of course with no mention of Ronchamp), Aalto (although he said this was not “good” architecture), Gwathmy, Meier, etc... Especially Meier! Clean, white boxes! “The façade must speak the truth,” as if there were no lies in architecture - no surprises. Somehow everything was supposed to be just that simple, as if nothing outside the world of architecture had ever changed since he was actually apart of it. I wasn’t buying it though, and he was well aware. The more I read about the buildings he said “were not architecture” the more I loved it. And the more I loved it, the harder it was for me to figure out how someone could hold onto something so tight that its death would go unnoticed...

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Caps and Gowns “Is that it? Is that the architecture building?” My father and I stood across the street wondering if our longwinded excursion across the divided campus of UTA was finally over. “There are some graduates coming from that direction. We must still be on the school’s property.” It was fall commence-

ment when my father had agreed to accompany me on a visit to the University of Texas at Arlington's campus. As we made our way through the architecture building's breezeway entrance, we passed proud parents smothering their kids with congratulatory praise for finally finishing a long awaited achievement. This emotion deeply contrasted my father's exhausted countenance and silent expression hinting at "when is he finally going to pick a major, so he can put one of those cap and gowns on?"

I have always been proud of my father's patience with my indecision in academics. When I told him that I wanted to study architecture, he supported me in every way that he could, but that never stopped him from the occasional, "are you sure that is what you want to do?"

This visit was set out to answer that exact question. I had already been leaning towards the affirmative, but I needed to be sure. I needed to visit the architecture school. Though, now, I could equate the term architectural shock to 'an instance where awareness of my surroundings becomes so evident that architecture could be realized,' I would have never made that statement had it not been for my decision to go through architecture school. So, I consider my first architectural shock to be that initial visit roaming around the halls of the architecture building with my father.

I remember being literally surprised at what architecture school was all about. I am referring to that first glimpse of those first few models and drawings displayed up against the white walls and those set in the display cases. I remember asking myself of whether or not I was capable of creating such cool models similar to those that I was seeing for the first time in my life. At the time, I had no idea of those strategies used to produce such works of art. Conflicting emotions of asking whether or not I would be successful in such an environment paralleled a new excitement of - you will never know unless you try. All I knew was that this was where I wanted to be; this is what I wanted to do.

"Now, are you sure this is what you want?"

"Yes, dad, this is what I want to do."



The first shock - before I got myself into architecture I always thought that architecture was all about engineering. About structural systems, calculations, math, trigonometry, geometry, physics, all of those technical things. Because that is how architecture was in my country, Indonesia: technical. I came from a place where the concept of architecture is still “build a structure, make it functional, habitable, and make it pretty by adding details”: everything already had a template. I have an architect uncle, and when I was young what he did as an architect didn’t really make me want to be an architect, but rather to stay away from it.

I was never good with numbers and the technicality even in drawings frightens me. When I entered architecture school, and had my first studio I was surprised how “un-technical” the design process was. I was surprised how much freedom we had to derive our ideas from and form a concept. There is no template. Nothing was saying this thing needs to be so much distance from that thing. Yes, there is a standard of size, yet not as enforced as I would have expected. Finally the most important thing was how much fun the process was for me. To me that experience, this shock, was more like a happy feeling, a hope that I might even be able to enjoy architecture.



CONFESION :: PECADOS ::

SIN [WHITEOUT] I lied every time I went into confession; I did it since the first time. I thought to myself if I had done something wrong and I came to the conclusion that I have not done anything wrong. I have been a good girl, had good notes on conduct, was an only child and spend most of my time reading and watching T.V. – Carajos. What kind of wrong could I have done at 7 years

old? Remember that some girls at school wrote on a piece of paper: PECADOS. They would underline it with red and then read it to the priest. I would feel really nervous because I would see that all my classmates were sure about what they were going to say, except me. Remember reading one girl's piece of paper that said: "Forgive me father for I have sinned, I have given my cat a bath with cold freezing water." When I get nervous I don't know what to say, so I make up stories that take me into another world. I didn't have a cat, but I made up a dog. "Padre no le he dado de comer a mi perro en varios días y lo he echo a propósito." And since I made up a dog I made up a father as well: "Padre le he faltado el respeto a mi padre, le he robado dinero de su cartera y he usmeado en los cajones de su escritorio." The priest wanted me to tell him what it was that I found; as a seven year old it didn't occurred to me that my dad could have had porn in his drawers, but I'm sure the priest would have liked that. "En los cajones padre, encontré cigarros, muchas monedas de otros países, pastillas y recetas para sus pacientes. He leído las recetas que guarda y he olido los cigarrillos." I always wanted to have a father that was a doctor. I felt like a bad girl and liked it, but at the same time I was confessing therefore I could do anything because I was going to be forgiven. I don't remember what other things I made up. Remember the priest's face, I could see it behind those little squares like a mesh, he was bald and his breath smelled like olives. He gave me my penitence and I prayed. I thought of myself as bad and smiled, but at the same time thought of myself as good, almost like a martyr. I was taking the blame for sins that I had not committed and was sure that others had done. I was doing their penitence. Like the stories that we were told in Catholic school about the saints that punished themselves and took the blame for others.

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I believe architecture is the spatial expression of the culture of our time. We have to discover and explore new fields of operations where architecture may

install itself, as well as developing future-orientated concepts of a broader understanding of our environments. We must evaluate every possible field of operation, and strive to use every possible medium of radical experimentation. Apparently this is limited to the theoretical world of architecture, because professional practice mostly differs. Working in small offices one must confront the other side of architectural reality; constrained not only by inarticulate norms, conventions, institutions. There is a lack of imagination amongst many clients with regards to what architecture can do. Many clients are not interested in “better” qualities of living, nor do they see architecture as a cultural assignment. They are probably influenced and follow traditions not coinciding with the reality we live in today. I am questioning why such people prefer houses with no identity, chosen from a catalogue; or residential buildings that look nearly exactly the same...

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“We are in the business of providing architectural services” Mr. Wiggins, a man about 50 years old with white shirt and republican tie, proclaimed. He said it as if I were there merely to understand what all of those words meant. Of course, on the surface, this was a simple statement. But in the context of my under-age, the reason for my visiting Mr. Wiggins, and everything I thought I knew, it was earth-shattering.

As I drove home from that meeting, I kept thinking about what I had just witnessed. It was my junior year of high school and I wore a sports-coat, thinking it would reflect my seriousness about what I was doing. A few weeks before, my friend from art class overheard my “what I want to be when I grow up” statement and suggested that I go visit her father, Mr. Wiggins, at his office. “Oh yes, he’s the vice-president at XYZ Architects,” she said, “and you should go let him show you around.” I got really excited. So excited, as it turned out, that I put a sports-

coat on that morning, thinking it would impress Mr. Wiggins and he would offer me a summer job.

“Bing!” the elevator door opened. As I stepped into the lobby of XYZ Architects Incorporated, I was really impressed. It was well appointed with black leather furniture with chrome legs, an avant-garde looking flower arrangement and an ear-piece wearing receptionist sitting before a backdrop of burl-oak paneling in a square grid etched with the XYZ Architects Incorporated logo complete with their 16 global office locations inscribed underneath.

“I’m here to meet Mr. Wiggins,” I said with the image of the man I created in my mind. I saw him wearing a black Armani suit, really cool glasses, slicked hair, thin and smelling of exhaust from the moped he rode to work on.

“Just a moment,” she returned, whilst pressing a button on the phone. “He’ll be right with you.”

Mr. Wiggins, Vice President of XYZ Architects Inc. came around the corner and shook my hand. He asked me why I was interested in architecture. I told him I loved to draw. He showed me the office. The burl-oak stopped as it wrapped the corner. So did the warm halogen lights. He told me about his role as a project manager for getting hospitals built. He showed me his little desk against a wall with no window. He opened a set of drawings and it looked totally, incomprehensibly, complicated. I had never seen a drawing with so many lines on it.

On my way back to the elevator lobby, I thanked him for his time. And just before I walked away, he said it. He must have felt the need to leave me with a seed of wisdom. Just then, I had a moment of clarity: XYZ Architects probably had 48 vice-presidents. Behind the burl-oak wall lay a ceiling tiled fluorescent-lit prison with five-foot felt cubicles.

Architecture was absolutely boring.

Architecture is a BUSINESS.

Nobody draws.

Nobody rides mopeds.

It wasn't what I thought it was going to be.

I was lost.

≈

The first lesson: “I just want a map... maps of weather... satellite imagery... pay attention to the notation...” What's a façade? What's an axon? Who cares! It's what are you revealing? Why are you cutting across there? Architecture is not something you interact with like a painting on a page in a book—it cannot be understood by looking at it front on. Programming is all that matters. “Map a space with photographs.”

I cruised around and found some awesome parking lots for skating hidden in neighbourhoods; broad esplanades in the midst of some old army fort type public housing. I was afraid stepping out of my car, and took some photos as fast as possible. It unnerved me how close I was to the Interstate. By all appearances these should have been Sunday brunch spots, but something was telling me to get out of there. I cannot know anything meaningful about a space without knowing the way I behave in it. It was social protocols of where you go and don't go, and subliminal triggers to fear. It was this photographic mapping assignment that made me realize how space is defined by experience and emotion. The wood and bricks barely matter, don't matter. Something restricts our behaviour that isn't apparent. These unknowns are architecture too.

≈

EXPERIENCIA :: EXPERIENCE I have tickled my brother so he would stop crying, I have burned myself playing with a candle, I have played with bubble gum

I am 'pissed'. But not really, just enduring what I need to endure until my time is due. I passed 'pissed' a long time ago. And THAT was the biggest shock about architecture... the school. I can do much finer things on my own, and that is just the way I feel about it. I can learn the pragmatics, the much desired and necessary. But my work will be my own. Wherefore art the art? When does the soul take control? Perhaps it doesn't in school. Back to following the rules of space and anti-space.

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The first shock of architecture as a coded system? I had to really think about this. I'm not sure if it was a shock so much as a realization. Prior to studying architecture as a major I was superficially introduced to the subject as an undergraduate in an art history survey course. It was lumped between painting and sculpture as a category of art. Architecture was treated as an aesthetic art form mostly applied to facades and interior decorations. It was categorized into movements like the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Modern, Art Deco, etc. much the same way fine paintings and sculptures were. The class was taught through slide lectures as most survey courses are. While this is done as a matter of practicality it doesn't do justice to any piece of art work to see it in a slide format. This is especially true for architecture which needs to be experienced spatially and not just seen as a 2d image. The inadequacy of my first encounter with architecture as an academic pursuit probably accounts for the delay in my choosing it.

I think - as humans - we have an innate understanding of spaces. Whether we can articulate it or not, we know if a space does or doesn't feel comfortable. At an early age I manipulated my surroundings superficially, generally cosmetically, through painting rooms, adding curtains, putting up shelves, or rearranging furniture. I found I could improve the feeling of a room by simply adding color or moving things around. It did not occur to me until much later I could actually

change a room structurally. I worked within my given enclosures. When I started my first architectural studios I started seeing the bigger picture that architecture offers. I could see numerous systems working within and around structures. I guess it was a bit of a shock having to think about all these interlocking systems while trying to design a structure. It was this hidden complexity – a shock perhaps - that attracted me to architecture as a field of study.

≈

Before actually coming to architecture school I had basically no idea what architecture was or entailed. I did not read architectural magazines or keep up to date on trends or educate myself on its' history. What I knew of architecture consisted of all the images of buildings that I had seen and floor plans that I had studied, most recently apartment brochures. I didn't have much of a building block to start from. Therefore, upon entering the department I found everything to be a bit of a shock. I moved alone to a town where I knew no one and began a pursuit I had no preparation for. People in my freshman level classes were already discussing people, architects and techniques I had never heard of. They seemed to come by skills with more ease than I did. Everything I tried was rough around the edges and I immediately felt lost. Having to alter my state of mind to accept the things I was about to learn and learning to train my hand and my eye to notice things I never knew I never noticed were probably the greatest epiphanies I've ever had. Shocking!

≈

the misinformation of an architect - it wasn't so much a shock as a slap in the face. i had crossed the threshold between curiosity and realization, and was

now committed to what was labeled a straightforward path at the time. the path became a meandering one. my education began with estrangement. according to those charged with establishing my architectural foundation, i should replace radical ideas with predetermined standards. sure, they didn't say this outright, but their actions spoke louder than the empty catch words they kept spouting without even knowing what they meant. they spoke of structure, form, transparency, even cross-programming... but why couldn't they tell me what it means now rather than what someone said it meant a long time ago. it seemed like the only proclivity they had to educating me on the subject was through 'name dropping'.

what would corbusier do?

this would be my first real association with architects, and what i witnessed puzzled me. i saw old drones dressed in black. i heard the same words and phrases regurgitated over and over. i smelled coffee breath. i tasted bitter resentment. but most of all i felt insecurity and doubt as a result of their oppressive nature. what bothered me most was that they treated education like a sentence. to them it had a period at the end. no question mark, just that small demarcation of finality with no room for improvement. and to this day some of them retain this position. they participate in the sedation of the idea. they are satisfied with leaving architecture in the past, premature, during its infancy. anyone who opposes, anyone who represents change gets swallowed up as though by lions in a roman coliseum. so my first shock was the revelation of how barbaric this 'fine art' could be.

≈

I have discovered that you really must give your best each and every time you sit down to design a project. In other words, you really have to design like you give a damn because sometimes the client does not care or does not know what they want and that it is up to architects to show them. This little story caused me to

pause and think about what I had done and to consider my actions on the public. I am not at all proud of this but it happened and is maybe worth talking about. Like what are the responsibilities of an Architect as far as style is concerned. Whatever you design you had better damn well love it. I mean be behind it like there is no tomorrow, especially if you have to drive by the project every day on your way to the work.

Here it goes.

Not that long ago in an architect's office not too far away, the boss handed a junior designer a rush project. "Here," he said, "crank out a scheme for this speculation office building that will be going up just down the road from here. Make it cheap. Use house materials and make it *Western* if you can. The client likes western stuff." A mental image popped up of John Wayne on horse-back with a rental contract in one hand and a 45 Navy Colt in the other. "Rent from me pilgrim, or else," he said.

Around the office, this junior designer was the go-to guy for a quick elevation sketch. All of the other designers (read 'drafters') only used CAD. At some point, the office management noticed that to the last, no client was happy with a CAD drawing presentation even with the low budget stuff they were constantly working on. So mister junior designer was stuck with it. Actually he was a little upset with the fact that he would be working through lunch to get this done in time for the boss's meeting.

He was thinking that he would play a little joke and mount a one man protest. And thereby lessen his load in the future by doing as bad a job as best he could, in the hopes of not being asked to do this sort of thing in the future. He never thought about getting fired or the possibility that reverse psychology might not work. He furiously sketched up an idea for that building. They want western, do they? Well, I was to please the boss and sketched up a sure fire Texas wild-west store front, resplendent with cast iron Texas stars, stick on ashlar stone, some fake

stucco and a whole bunch of brick. Just the sort of thing they like in them thar parts. The only thing missing was the hitching post and a saloon door.

As if blinded by the heat of protest, he proceeded to repeat the very same element all around the building in order to get the required amount of entries. Hell this worked so well, he did the same on the second building. “They need economy, make it cheap, western, howdy doodie, and yhee ha” the words echoed in his mind.

The meeting went off on time and that was the last he heard about it until two weeks later when he found himself drafting up the working drawings, unchanged! He went in to talk to the boss and to confess. Were they serious? Do they really want this? “Hell yes, they loved it,” he said and he told him not to change it. He tried to confess but felt the futility of it all and went about his business, puzzled. To his private chagrin, he had to look at his creation every day on his way to work. That experience made him realize that sometimes the client does not know or care about what they want in architecture. Sometimes numbers are the only thing that developers are looking at. In other words, would they be able to lease it for a profit. He never thought that the project would be built like he sketched, or much less be copied by someone else in a city not far enough away. The designer did realize later that he has a responsibility, if not to himself, then to the general public to be careful about what comes off of his drafting table. Because sometimes, just sometimes, that ridiculous joke you sketch up, just might get built and he and several thousand people a day might have to look at it.

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Runnin’ on empty or John, I’m only Dancing - It was spring 2003, my “sophomore” year at UTA, when I became over exposed to a whole new world hovering around my preconceived belief (no, opinion) about what architecture is. I always believed that process was a series of steps from point A to point B; a start and

a finish. He taught me otherwise. From ideas of mapping to conceptualization I was forced to re-evaluate what an ‘all-nighter’ meant to me. In high school, I could work hard on a project and get it right the first time through. Here in the studio the idea of ‘right’ was not used; it either worked, or it didn’t. Forget what you know, or think you know...re-do, un-do, think backwards, think forwards, think laterally, concept, idea, craft, think beyond your whole capacity to think...whew...

“Are you with me?”

And the moment you thought you could think no more...your brain was sucked dry and running in 100 different directions because you hadn’t slept in three days... those fuelling yet so frustrating words shoot at you...”you almost have it”...

AHH. Again.

Architecture is not limited to a building; it’s not something you can comprehend from a book or even learn from an architect. Architecture is a sense, a process, a language, an idea. Architecture is in your hands, in your mind. It is a way of ‘seeing’ the world and allowing life to swell around you, consume you, and embrace you.

All-nighter survival tips: work smarter not harder; time management is the key; procrastination kills, but you will learn much about you and your neighbour’s limits; don’t beat yourself up about being “right” and don’t be scared about making decisions; do or die, sink or swim...just do it...

“Do you follow?”

Yes, John, I’m dancing, I do.

History *isn't made, it's simply passed by*

I was reading Frampton's • History and Architecture? • History of
a Worthless Future • Multiple choice • YO CONFIESO - NOMBRE
:: EN_ • I am still studying Gordon Matta Clark • growing up
• history...mine...the anachronisms • I was never concerned •
history_tv_pbs_flw - DNRchitecture • below is a catalog • three
men in a tub • It was a series of regurgitations • b-o-l-o-g-n-a •
history... • the history class



In general they are not history at all. They are narrow-minded, one-sided little tales passed down to the peasants by the conqueror. Italy right in the center of the world. The losers always bad, the winner always good. There is talk only of kings, generals and stupid wars amongst nations. The suffering and struggles of the workers are either ignored or stuck into a corner.

Letter to a Teacher

I was reading Frampton's Modern Architecture last summer after I had finished the prerequisite History of Modern Architecture with the usual top 100 buildings and a survey of the movements of Modern Architecture in chronological order. There was not much else to the class except for an occasional quip from the professor which mostly went unheard. Staying awake in that class was an act of superhuman will power. Someone should have filmed the heads as they bobbed back and forth fighting sleep and set it to music. Didn't someone say that hazing was outlawed in school (prison) now?

I decided to read the class text book for the first time. I never cracked the spine the entire class. There was no time. But now I was wondering what I had missed and wanted to check it out at my leisure. I set out to read the text like a novel. I was in no hurry; I did not need to take an exam over it or anything because I had already passed the class.

As I read the part about the Russian Constructivists and noticed the connection with them and Corbusier, I was a little unsettled by the fact that my architectural hero was or had Communist leanings. After all, I was raised an Army brat, had served in the US Army in Germany before the First Gulf War. I was there before the Wall came down in 1989. I watched the news reports from my barrack-room like the rest of America but at that moment our company was on alert. We were stationed just 30 km from the Czech border. The Army mission was to fight the Russians. So I can now begin to understand my misgivings about the connections there.

There was something about the architecture from that time that I liked but I was uninformed about what it all really meant and just where Modern Architecture was coming from, what its history really was. Even though I was a little dismayed, I sort

of dismissed the Communist connection to Corbusier for a while and moved on, thinking that something was going on here that I did not fully understand. I made a note to get back to this inquiry at a later date. I knew there was much going on here that I was and still remain uninformed of, but that is changing.

I remember now what a female teacher told me once. It went something like: “you have to do whatever you can to just get your degree and get out.” She said that any real education begins when you get out of school. “Then and only then are you free to follow your own inquiry. Then and only then will you be free of the restraints of your professors.” I did not understand the full meaning of what she had told me until later on.

Up until now I suppose that I had never really questioned what I was being taught or how. Actually I never took the time to delve into it deeper. That is also changing.



History and Architecture? History of architecture? I like history despite how it has been taught to me. Most of the classes I’ve had on the subject have been long lectures presented by aging, tired teachers, usually male, many close to retirement. The classes I’ve had since starting an architecture degree have been a tragic kind of joke. Reams of information have been presented by men who know the subject well but who can’t, or refuse to, communicate that knowledge in a manner that engages the students. Usually we are inundated with a catalogue of architects, buildings, locations, and dates (who, what, where, when). Some anecdotal information was slipped in to “keep it interesting” but most lectures ended with half the class (of who showed up) asleep (some even snoring!). Sign-in sheets were passed around to verify attendance. I found this all rather silly.

If the classes were at all engaging, students would not need to be threatened with grade reduction for non-attendance. Given the breadth of knowledge required to survive in architecture, it’s sad the opportunity to distill relevant theory and

philosophies from history has not been addressed in a more interesting manner by these professors. It's left to the students to look elsewhere for more in-depth coverage and application of this information.

In response to any student commentary or criticism of this entrenched and boring teaching style students are told they are responsible for their own education. I don't dispute we are responsible for our own thought, development and paths of discovery but where is the responsibility of the teacher in this equation? Why is it when, as students we ask for more relevant instruction, we are told to be more responsible? If I am expected to instruct myself why am I wasting money paying tuition fees and giving my time attending irrelevant classes other than to get a piece of paper that says 'Diploma'.

Many instructors and professors are teaching from outdated models. Rather than update their format or - heaven forbid - their thinking they throw it back at the students. History is treated like a life preserver on land; a necessary subject important somewhere else at some other time. It's presented with little enthusiasm or respect. With this kind of treatment what student would want to dig any deeper? As a student I'm looking for instruction that can link past events and philosophies together in useful discussions of their relevance then and now. Is that so much to ask? I would think not at the post-graduate level. It appears some instructors are threatened by, rather than excited by, students' increased intellectual interest. How sad not to see this as an opportunity!

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History of a Worthless Future - Texas History was a required course within the state's curriculum. That meant if you wanted a high school diploma, you had to learn about Stephen F. Austin's unrelenting mission to lead a revolt against the Mexican government. It was not till the seventh grade that I had my first encounter with history. Mr. Borel, a bald but grey dictator, ran my course throughout

Texas History. His demeanor towards students was one of professionalism yet so intimidating that as a seventh-grader you felt out of place every time you walked into his classroom; it was uncomfortable. Seventh grade, by nature, was purgatory; it straddled the innocence of elementary school and the judgmental high school. The environment was foreign to us kids, but still, you had to assimilate.

I have never been in a dungeon, but for certain earlier generations of kids, those at my age at the time, I felt I suffered and endured the same tortuous, agonizing pain as I sat in that classroom. It was a narrow but tall room cluttered with tiny desks; any room left was strictly for circulation. The act of circulating was a privilege only for Mr. Borel as we students remained imprisoned within our seats. Mr Borel's head reminded us of a vulture; a resemblance magnified by his soaring above us waiting for us to crack under the pressure he seemed to exert on us.

I think it's important to understand the imagination of a seventh-grader who would rather be doing anything else instead of being locked up in a classroom force-fed history. Looking back, Mr. Borel obviously was never that bad. If he was there as a teacher, I would find it hard to believe that his only agenda was to scare just-newly graduates of elementary school like us. Surely he was there to teach us history, a subject that he more than likely loved and only wanted to share with his students. It is unfortunate that as a child, trivial biases, such as the way your teacher resembles a carnivorous bird, affect the way you take in information. I don't remember a lot of the content that was taught in Mr. Borel's classroom, but I could tell you how much I didn't want to be there.

How does all this inform me of how I learn or have learnt?

I can recall a time when Mr. Borel requested to meet with my father to talk about my slipping grade. The whole experience was humiliating as my teacher continued to explain the laziness that I had incurred throughout his class. I just wouldn't do the work. I had no good reason why I shouldn't have, except that I was just plain lazy.

Texas history never interested me, but I failed to understand what I could have

learned while I was learning history. The required work for the class was of several diagrams aided by a template of the geographic plan of Texas. Had I known in the future, that I would have majored in architecture and that diagramming would play an important role in the evolution of my education, I might have been a bit more interested in the assignments. The truth is that we can't predict the future, and it is hard to prepare for the future, so maybe, our focus in the present time, is to take in as much as you can.

I believe the trick lies in finding a connection between what your agenda is in life and the things that are exposed to you. Doing so would either lead you down the desired path, or even better, lead you down one of invention and excitement. History had always been taught to me in the mode of facts that needed to be memorized. The application of those facts was never the issue. Dates were only perceived as highlighted moments, moments of significance that writers of textbooks hoped to communicate to young children a mutual understanding of what really went down at the Battle of San Jacinto.

How does a teacher approach this discrepancy with a more homogeneous body of history? The fact that this discrepancy may lie within not being able to relate to Mr. Borel does not help the issue. Until this problem is solved, school systems will continue to demand teachers to teach from out-dated textbooks and fail to encourage children to make that connection between the information they encounter and possibilities they can dream up.

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multiple choice

An assignment is a

- burden
- challenge
- waste of time.
- all three or none

Levi-Strauss is

- an anthropologist
- a brand of blue jeans
- a cowboy
- all three or none

Rhizome means

- a weed structure
- an electronic website
- an architecture firm
- all three and more

Agitprop means

- to incite change by propaganda
- to dissent against parents
- to advertise cleverly
- to navigate life's 'more or less'

Parti means

- a departure in sketch
- a cognitive beginning
- an Italian cooking term
- all or nothing

Liminal means

- in between
- secret ideas
- comfortably numb
- locked open

YO CONFIESO - NOMBRE :: EN_

CABEZA_DOS :: HEADLINE Remember when I was in school there was a section of the school newsletter that had the date and name of the year written with a different font from that of the rest of the paper. Remember there was one year that was called El año de los 700 mil turistas. I thought there were only 700 thousand privileged people that got to move around the world, freely without borders, without having to pay a dime, and without luggage. I imagined seven hundred thousand odd names, seven hundred thousand faces, seven hundred thousand photo albums and seven hundred thousand people moving in an empty world. There was also the year of the family, the international year of rice, the year for the fight against aerosol, the year that celebrated the 500 anniversary of the discovery of Las Americas, the year of the education, the year of Catholic values. After all this, it came to my mind that I could look back and name some of the years of my life, a history of sorts, and write about them with a special font and paper.

1997 year of the tobacco charm

1998 año blanco: year of cotton sheets and orange juice from the family tree.

1999 year of disappointments

2000 year of polar darkness and boreal light

2001 year of broken crystal lines

2002 year of the airports, luggage and forgetting

2003 año del jabonero: whatever doesn't stick...slips

2004 year of the fallen night, and language desolation

2005 year of zetaville

≈

I am still studying Gordon Matta Clark and I came across a reference to George Bataille's "restricted economics". I don't know which book talks

about this, do you know? Have you read Kepler's "somnium"? I have never been able to find it. In writing about the above memory, I remembered that I had a fascination with Johannes Kepler at this time. It was nothing to do with his meticulous astronomical practices or discoveries, but his internal conflicts. I identified with his struggle, he being a Lutheran and a Copernican, and I was going through something similar. If you do have the book, would you mind bringing it back and letting me borrow it? The world's first work of science fiction seems like something you might find in the Hotel Architecture.

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Growing up I was never concerned with thought process or why I was more receptive to certain learning methods and subconsciously rejected others. On hindsight I can make connections to techniques in which I engaged and interfaced with learning. I would have to trace some of my most memorable hours learning about history back to my grandfather who was not only a history buff but also lived through some of its' most trying moments. With one tour in Korea and two tours in Vietnam, my grandfather retired a Lt. Colonel with a lot to say. By providing an open conversation zone and the setting for a volley of experienced narratives vs. receptive inquiries, I was more able to grasp the concepts and impacts of historical events. There have been very few other instances where that has been true. Every history teacher that I can recall through school, including elementary, high school, and college, seemed to be poured from the same generic mold. They had a Texas-issued agenda of topics they were supposed to cover with a couple of trivial exams. Students read from what was considered to be an unbiased textbook and memorized a few dates, names, and places. I don't remember any of those. Is that my fault?

Probably!

Facts and figures are not my forte; however, I do recall what I have learned when

I learn it from those who are excited to teach it. History should be taught more like English or Literature, by means of analysis. When we read novels we analyze what we have just read both from our viewpoint and that of the author. This process helps shape our thought process and intellectual reasoning. This opens us to new discourses and frames of reference, offering us the ability to develop logical theories and hypotheses. Literature discussions are open debates with an array of ideas and interpretations being processed through different mentalities.

History should be considered on this level. A level in which not only do we memorize a timeline but we question why events unfolded the way they did. I'm not disregarding the timeline but is it not more important to understand the learning and issues that formed it?

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history...mine...the anachronisms--- the Amish on main street, then as we migrated south, the Monkees on nickelodeon in the eighties. I thought Davy Jones was seventeen, I had not recognized the icons of the decade as not my own, I was looking for that boy, Davy, on the street, no, not on the street, because no one was on the street when I was drawn to this, no one was ever on or in the street. So where did I look for him? I don't think I actually did, because if I had sought him (it) out I would have realized that (as much as my eight years of cognitive development would have allowed) that there was a correlation between the striated glowing form of Davy and what I saw in the parking lot outside-- the only place I encountered the unfettered mass of humans, large, small, base, the glaring old, the dark black men that would haunt the glaring old, the skate or die rebels and the malnourished overweight southern children. I scratch my head now in pondering the correlation, and now enact pause while I stroke the corners of my mouth with the thumb and forefinger of my right hand, horizontally, as if slowly squeezing the thought out and down into my fingers so it will connect with the ones that came before it.

History - david sedaris....glistening tots ...nick mccartney's are the most useful....whoosh... cancer camp kid.... dulce et decorum est, wilfred owen, somerset maugham on henry james and inauthenticity - i cannot separate memory from history and this is why I cannot write about it with any clarity but that is what we are learning to connect with it. Nothing happens in a vacuum. I see or hear what I want to believe - al jazeera images, the cold war – hot war. Why, when I see human torture I think it is staged.....theatre... space... in the theatre (of war) all created for the disbelief yet enjoyment of suffering through the medium of art. That paradox! The experiment in the 50's about what people will inflict under orders. It no longer seems. The moral and social implications lifted inside the protective shell of the "ology" or the "reigning establishment"... I hate this stream of consciousness drivel and all this random lower-case stuff, whatever happened to structure and form? The jilting of granny weatherall vs. robert raushenberg and his proto-pop why did he react, rebel? I have learned nothing (in school?) about how to focus....so pick one...one what? It would be easier to explain but I have never had a problem with Dave Eggers and his metafiction - "he clasps the crag with crooked hands" - so, after the warm-up: aaaaaaaghhhhhhhh!!!!!!!

I want to poke a stick in my eye, but I don't have the guts to do it myself, a tragic accident, maybe? the word tragic....Shakespeare used 'tragical'. I think this is what the backstreet boys used as precedence when the oily "bad boy" croons with such soulfully contrived pelvic thrusts "it's tra-a-a-gical, ba-abaaay" cut to the close-up, his eyes glazed, perhaps he uses the century old secrets of the beauty pageant queen, but lacking the intellect of the former, unwittingly applies the Vaseline to his corneas instead of los dientes (oops I am getting him mixed up with another boy band, you know, the one with the crossover hit (yet marked with identical pelvic thrusts) "give me just one night, una no-o-o-che..." but I digress, oh thank god I can always rely on the lazy man's segue ... (arrow pointing to "but I digress")

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history_tv_pbs_flw : The first educational introduction to a historical dialogue of architectural history had to have been brought to me by the blue glow of the television. In Junior High I remember sitting through an entire PBS biography of Frank Lloyd Wright. I know this doesn't completely qualify as a historical analysis of any detail or depth, however it was inspirational and educational. Falling Water got me, it hit me, and didn't let go of me until freshman year here at the University. Here it was reduced to a survey of architecture in the Lonestar Auditorium packed to the rafters with three hundred freshmen, all anxious to get the hell out of there as quick as possible. I was however taught that there was something beyond FLW that became the coded names Corb and Mies. That was, until the next semester when I was introduced to the "history" of architecture.

For the first two weeks everyone joked about and mimicked the professor's accent and the fact that he wore the same suit everyday. After those two weeks people got tired of telling jokes and just stopped coming to class. I was guilty as well and when I did go it was – often - to sleep. I received good grades though the tests weren't too hard, and overall I learned something about the past. That's my history of history, boring I know, and it will continue to be so, as I know from having taken more required history and advanced elective modern history.

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DNRchitecture - do not resuscitate. the good stuff was done long ago and can never be done again. history is a series of thumbnail images. it was only important if you could classify it according to a 'movement' or some type of 'ism'. i hear names, lots and lots of names, and it comes to the point that I can't associate each name with anything, it only triggers a sense of déjà vu-s each time it is said.

out of SITE, out of mind. remember everything by date... that will help you design.

if you can't visualize the sequencing of events, draw a timeline.

i can tell you every minute detail of this building, including the number of electrical outlets... but i don't have a clue who lived in it.

the difference between renaissance and gothic is one letter on a multiple choice question.

don't read theory books, there's too many words and not enough pictures.

if kenneth frampton didn't write about it, it didn't happen.

good architectural photographs have no people in the shot.

You are only as good as the number of times your plans are reproduced in textbooks.

the golden mean is the ultimate truth.

switch your focus to the details - no one ever gets to see the whole picture.

modern architecture is white.

'history' isn't made, it's simply passed by.

≈

Below is a catalog of the first things I knew about the history of architecture learned my first semester of architecture school.

1. Le Corbusier had visited the Acropolis as a young man. He painted every morning.

2. Gardens: there were French Renaissance (restrained, geometry), Italian Renaissance (delight), Japanese (a world unto itself, nearly a religion), and English (natural, vignettes).
3. Mies van der Rohe emigrated from Germany and brought Modernism to America. His buildings were rectangles, and had repeated numbers within them. The Barcelona Pavilion was the first building I studied in the library of my own volition.
4. Michael Graves was a postmodernist.
5. Michelangelo and Le Corbusier designed with regulating lines.
6. The bright colors in Legorreta's work were a reflection of the architectural tradition of Latin America.
7. Sullivan built some of the early skyscrapers.
8. The Renaissance, Baroque, Modernism, and Post Modernism were the only architectural movements mentioned and defined.
9. Frank Lloyd Wright was arrogant. And to associate these words: Bear Run, Falling Water, The Robie House, Unity, Oak Park, horizontal.

This smattering of names was understood to be a foundation: 'if I learned these men's buildings I would know something'. Why do I more easily recall anecdotal information rather than definitions or principles? Also I am aware that I was not actually operating as a designer till much later (another semester or year away), so the disorientation to the ideas probably controlled what I received as much as the chosen range of the curriculum. I latched onto information that was familiar in some way or had some enchanting sense, like the portrait of Mies van der Rohe with his strange eyes, stronger than the chronological development of the skyscraper. That steel structure allowed for free facade and free plan seemed so boring, and lacked any relevance to me.

What is full of zeal and compelling? In my former education it was often historical or fictional stories with people whose causes you could empathize with, or maybe in the case of math something characterized by ingenious logic that you could find clever, or in the case of science the sheer complexity you could delve

into that was captivating. The subjects of High School I had a natural connection to, but those connections felt to be at the fringes of what was being presented to me in architecture.

Many times my internal thought was “who cares?” during 1301 lectures. It could have been simply that I was in an acclimatization period, but really I think it has more to do with the fact that the intro courses occupy themselves with the facts about the story that do not matter. Do I really need to know that Mies van der Rohe repeats the number 24 in his plan for IIT? Or really is it about the abstraction of materials in order to achieve a more effective kind of futuristic aesthetic? And what was held in this new vision? Isn’t architecture about ideals?

High School gave me a strong background in literature, so maybe it’s easier for me to understand certain things relating to themes or ethics, etc. I had to discover the driving force of architecture on my own - the pathos, the need for it. I thought at times that the pursuit of a crafted architecture is a superfluous activity - this partly stemmed from my introduction to ‘history’.

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THREE MEN IN A TUB adrift in the drowned world.

the desire butcher, the expectation baker, and the standard maker.

what keeps them afloat... if not for their own ambitions to survive.

even still, confined to a floating prison, they resort to the academic debate in order to retain sanity.

they argue for ideals long since submerged in the icy deep.

the butcher refuses to act on impulse. he stands for practicality, that which serves its function and nothing more. his analysis of their present situation is that nothing can be done. defeat. futility. lack of resolve. these are the few words that have all

but overtaken his vocabulary.

the baker's entire sense of self-worth is gauged by the taste test. with each passing day he continues to get his hopes up, only to have them crushed with the passing of the sun. his specialties are the fluff, the stuffing, the frosted cover up.

the standard maker is bothered by the lack of order in his predicament. he tries over and over to establish and enforce rules over his companions, but neither of them will have it.

each man clings to what he knows, and thinks it is precisely that which keeps him afloat. he fails to realize that it is the tub which supports him.

indeed, they have accomplished nothing while concerning themselves only with frivolity.

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It was a series of regurgitations... how, when where what, and who? Yes, I remember the Santa Maria Novella... where, who, and how is a mystery to me, but I can spot it in a book. I had to get a tape recorder and record the professor for the majority of the semester. Learning to understand the slur and that “zigrat” was really “ziggarat” was really interesting. I was decoding the lecture as much as I was learning what the things really were. That is really all I have to say about history.

I know that the precedents that were in place in history have shaped a lot of what we see today. I can see it in bank buildings, in malls, and schools. The column seems to never go away. I'm glad. Isn't that a greatest hit of architecture? The everlasting column... whether needed or not! Cut and paste. But it is so familiar, almost like home in a way. Not that I would ever design that way, but it has a reassurance to it.

≈

Learning history is a method of seeing Who was your teacher? What emotion reads through a timeline? Ideas, conflicts, scenarios: taught with cause and effect. Sequential events derived from reason. Why is there k(no)wn history. Present history is filtered by mass media. Biased ‘bastards’! Think like the whole; cows.

Is history localized?

History exists in different developments in the present image of time. Belief in what is now. To live in the past (denial); to get with the times (lagging). Primitive societies viewed from “civilized” society. Starting in elementary school and on through high school, history is taught with songs and simple rhymes to induce memorization of generalized events. Only pieces of reason linger from lectures. History outside of the traditional history class, as in math or science, is taught from a derived precedence, because it is relative to the present proof (the cogency of evidence that compels acceptance by the mind of a truth or a fact). History is intangible. Stories told based on experience, which sometimes repeat in the present, purely based on the fact that history is experienced in first person. History taught in relevance to the present, is how we file into long-term memory.

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b-o-l-o-g-n-a. - It’s not really my first choice. In fact, it’s handed to me by Mr. Cary on a slip of paper drawn from a used manila envelope. You know that type of teacher who really isn’t a teacher but more a “boss”; clearly, these guys don’t have the people-skills to make it in the corporate world, so they end up teaching 6th grade math and history instead. Well, that’s Mr. Cary!

So here I am, in the living room, with the TV off, standing on a stool and reaching for the Second Volume of the 1962 Encyclopedia Britannica with the yellow pages and smelling the dust. I have looked through these maroon leather-bound

gold leaf edged pages before, but only to see the naked transparent people in Volume One's "Anatomy" section.

B-o-l-o-g-n-a, Italy. "Bull-o-nee" - I say out loud to myself. My mom is making dinner. Dad is mowing the lawn. That's where they invented the cold-cut I insisted upon in kindergarten. I skim the paragraph, write the paper, and stuff it in my notebook for tomorrow.

Standing up in front of the class, I begin to read. "Bull-o-nee, Italy, surrounded by hills, the city's center is..." It doesn't really feel right. Now that I think about it, I've never really actually heard anyone SAY the word "B-o-l-o-g-n-a" outside the context of deli-meats. As I look at Mr. Cary's face, he remains ever stoic, and eerily blank, neither confirming nor denying the correctness of my pronunciation.

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History.....I don't know much about it, and I don't really want to know. I do know enough about it, on what not to do. I like new ideas and new achievements, that is hard to accomplish if you stare at old stuff all day. Now I know there is stuff that you can take from History, and generate new ideas, and that is fine. However that is not my style. Come to think of it, I bet I can't even name two buildings in Rome, and I don't really care. I have my favorites from History, but I don't think they will ever help me achieve what I want, but do I really know what I want. I feel that history plays a key role in most students' education, but I realize that it doesn't do me much good. Useful history for me only goes back about 7-10 years. I find myself less interested about architecture everyday; however it is still somewhat my passion, in a different way. The design aspect of architecture should be implemented in many other applications and processes of life, and other activities. But then again, History seems to be much less important in these applications.

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The history class should primarily teach architecture as a history of evolving ideas-- this is as opposed to it being a history of built objects. The class will begin from architecture happening now and go back in time. This is so that students will get started learning about things they already are excited about, things they could relate to the present culture. Students will retain and understand the information better if there is a participation component for them (besides tests). A fifty minute lecture with no participation from the students inhibits the students from learning (hard to pay attention when you are not being engaged with). There could be an allotted question and answer time, or there could be a student presentation component within the fifty minutes, or anything else that is interactive - it is always helpful for students to practice speaking in class. Rather than being presented slides of only building facades, we think clips from movies and art and anything else that connects would also help retention and understanding.

History could also be taught as a fictional story/drama by enacting fictional dialogues between architects. Architecture is a part of culture, if not a culture in itself. Early history passed down from generation to generation; stories/parables become legends; an idea becomes general knowledge becomes belief... fact...a part of a culture. Teaching in parables (preset in early learning...story time...grade school, pbs, history channel, sesame street) is effective and entertaining. Why does the educational process not evolve with the time and era?

We see the teacher responsible for defining movements and important ideas. The students are responsible for researching and sharing with their class individual buildings and architects. This would give the teacher more time to talk about important concepts (time is always at a premium in a beginning history class because of so much information). For the student, there could be an interface where individuals can communicate with the rest of the class the research

they've done on their own. There can be a bulletin board where the students will post images and explanatory writings about the buildings and people they've studied. The bulletin board will be sectioned by the movements/ideas that the teacher is presenting. The students can then also make connections on the board to communicate how ideas and persons influenced one another. We see the bulletin board as a mapping exercise. The students would be held accountable for knowing the information on the board. It will become apparent to the students that they are teaching each other, and provide incentive for further research. Mapping is already part of the curriculum so this exercise would also help reinforce design skills, design intelligence, design thinking and design expertise.

We wish to make testing better. We think that the multiple choice component focuses in on unimportant object-oriented information. We like the essay format because you can get credit for what you do know, rather than being penalized for what you forgot.

Hello, we are here!

6

the teacher in the dark

learning to fish • the expected reply • one can scarcely breathe
 • I've been fortunate • ENCHANTED :: DES_ENCANT • in my
 6th semester of architecture course • hmmm....most influential
 teacher • I once read the book • the worst thing • somewhere
 along your education • I will not tell you who I am writing about
 • no one teacher • 2551_postcards • It is no secret • Last
 Wednesday night • a teacher, someone that all of us have •
 learning to fly • so can i get back to the way i do it, now? or "i
 could have driven to fucking estonia!"



A teacher in class is like a man in the woods
 at night with a powerful flashlight in his hand.
 Wherever he turns his light, the creatures on whom
 it shines are aware of it and do not behave as they
 do in the dark. Thus the mere fact of watching their
 behaviour changes into something very different.
 Shine where he will he can never know very much
 of the night life of the woods.

John Holt

Learning to fish – I am wondering how to explain to my children the story of how I became an Architect or rather how not to become an Architect. I am reminded of three people that started me along what was to become a rather long road. There was the drafting teacher, the designer, and the entrepreneur. At North Texas a while back I was studying Construction Management. Two classes were required in drafting; one for residential and the other for commercial. During the residential class I must have showed some ability to handle a pen because the drafting teacher gave me a telephone number to a designer that needed some help. The designer hired me on the spot. I was to learn later that my drawings had nothing to do with getting the job. Rather he liked my lettering and that I was the first to show up that spoke English. This guy was not the easiest to work for but he was and still is the best pen and ink artist that I know. He just happens to make a living designing houses. While under his employ, I learned the finer parts of home design and drafting. This was in the days before computers became so widespread. It was here that I really learnt to handle a pen. The entrepreneur, a fellow student at North Texas, put the idea into my head that I could make more money doing subcontract work drafting for other designers. He handed me a phone number and a career was started. All this before I ever enrolled in Architecture school. Thinking back on it now, it was those three men who taught me to fish. I wish I could say the same for the professors in architecture school but I am not so sure.

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The expected reply is to talk about the most pervasive teacher within our architectural education, and I can do that ok. But this has not been the most pervasive

teacher in my life as a whole, so I am going to explain why one education has been more relevant. This isn't some clear argument but it stems from an idea in the book of Ishmael that questions why universities do not have departments devoted to studying the best way to live. Why are some organizations called a school, and others not?

Anybody can teach you things or facts, but what I'm interested in is the teaching of knowledge that is deployed to cause the occurrence of some event. ("So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet an exceedingly great army." Ez. 37:10).

I am disinterested in teaching that ignores, denies, or surrenders its role/ function as a director of action. The two most important things I've learned are firstly, it is me who is the architect. In other words: "You are the architect. If you don't design it, no one else will." And secondly, "He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak..." John 16:13

From the outside it looked like a student organization here, an honour student there, and an event on the campus calendar every so often. But this really was a movement; using the existing university and community infrastructure to exist. This operated as architecture education does, through teaching, discourse and work. It was all informal in the sense that it worked through the groupings of a network of friends in different dormitories, a gospel choir, a bible study, a step crew, and an extended family of churches, ministers, and musicians throughout the Metroplex. The interfaces were performances, small classes (rap sessions), church services, meals, one on one conversation, and many admixtures in between. It was a system that directed action. It was a university, a congress - whatever else is elevated and important. I got to participate as a teacher and a student and the definition of these terms blurred in everyday experiences.

It doesn't ultimately affect me what other people consider a proper education to be, does it? I am talking about this not because it's the required narrative but I can't avoid it when addressing influential teaching. Within any well-iterated model there is room to move at and to another scale.



one can scarcely breathe - the slightest hand in the School of Architecture pushed me harder than I had been pushed in the three and a half years prior to my final studio. I had mixed expectations coming in, as I didn't know what we were going for. "we're going paperless," said the grinding wheels of the common rumor mill. It was unheard of, it was frightening, it was foreign, it excited the hell out of us. Enter the lady in question from New York. I knew of her but not first hand. Unlike some of my previous professors she didn't have a pompous air about her. While she carried herself confidently and commanded respect, she had friendly eyes that allowed you to trust her. From then on all fear was lifted and the wondrous ideas began to freely manifest themselves. She introduced a framework of conceptual discovery that more than fostered my creative impulses. I can't reiterate enough how refreshing it was. We were given an entirely new tool set, another approach, a wider angle, a cognitive methodology.

More importantly, I was encouraged to reach outside of architecture for the first time. I slowly came to discover that my education had trapped me, confined me to a strictly introspective practice. The cycle was broken; the machine continued to operate but under different settings. A number of factors contributed to the success of that studio, but perhaps the most influential was this young professor who hadn't yet abandoned her academic nature.

She sought to learn just as we did. She was in the here and now. She had her finger on a pulse the old men and other professors stopped checking long ago. Her own nature is what made her the best educator I had encountered. Rather than look down her nose at students, she treated us like colleagues. She never presumed to know all, or to have the definitive viewpoint in a vast and rapidly changing field. She woke me up, removed the glazing from my eyes, and pushed me along to never

enter that trance-like state again.

Some would say there exists a great distinction between those who have a passion for architecture, and those who teach it. Considering my experience in the School of Architecture, to a certain degree I would agree. But there are those who gracefully bridge the gap between theory and practice, and for now they are harboring a relatively quiet uprising among the student body. While she and others like her may not be getting the response they want from students or their peers, I hope they are aware of the pockets of fresh air they have brought into a school as stale as ours is threatening to become.

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I've been fortunate to encounter many good teachers throughout my education. It would be misleading to narrow down to just one. Each has inspired me for different reasons at different times of my life. I can think of several English teachers from high school that got me interested in literature, Shakespeare, and the study of Greek Mythology. I can remember one teacher in particular. I don't remember his name but I remember his theatrical readings of Poe and Shakespeare. I had to look up the title but to this day I can vividly recall Poe's story "The Cask of Amontillado". This teacher also got me interested in Shakespeare. He took complicated works and presented them in a way that made sense to a teenager. I read and reread Hamlet several times due to his encouragement. I can recall several episodes like this from different periods of my education. The teachers I responded to were usually excited about the subject they were teaching and that drew me in. If they had a passion for the material it made me want to find out more about it.

Now that I'm an adult I follow my own interests but I still prefer instructors that have an enthusiasm for the material they present; teachers who encourage open dialogues and discussions, those who teach 'thought'. That rings true for studio instructors ten fold. I gain the most from studios run by people who can

help individuals develop their designs by teaching new processes and approaches to designing, those who can look at a student's work and critique the work that is there and not try to redesign the project...or how they would want it. I recently experienced a studio taught by a Danish woman while I was in Copenhagen. She was a practicing architect and taught at the Royal Academy. Her experience in real world applications coupled with her teaching experience made her a good instructor. She had a great ability to critique students' work that helped distill ideas without changing them into her own. I appreciated her collaborative style of teaching. She was encouraging with her comments and made me want to work harder to get the design, my design, right. I felt inspired by her partly from her teaching but also by her example. I could see in her a professional path I would like to emulate. I felt her to be more of a mentor than just another studio instructor. A good teacher creates sparks of interest in a student to pursue knowledge. Those sparks are what inspire students to move ahead and challenge themselves.

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ENCHANTED :: DES_ENCANT

[O]ADO Sitting on the bench waiting for something to happen, something that could help us, something to talk about, a story to tell about what had just happened. We were waiting, for what? Nothing really, we were there for the only reason to be alive. Our only impetus was the connections created by us and the weaknesses the same weaknesses that tied us to our life, the same one that dragged us for existence through life, instead of pushing us through existence.

“la que nos arrastraba por la existencia, a traves de ella, en lugar de empujarnos por la existencia.”

It has been a long time since we stopped being a constant come and go to become something decadent, we stopped being and turned into beings that negate what

we were and are. We weren't doing anything in particular, looking, contemplating in absolute passivity; but we weren't any saints, we couldn't even think of reaching that name. Hurt? Yes we were hurt, but that was not a reason to be proud of or a way to identify our selves, I even think that pride was prohibited to us. Our wounds were more like the result of an ulcer that's born from the vegetative state of the body, rather than a wound created by outside agents. It was the weariness, restlessness, and tastelessness that was driving us or what we were carrying behind us, maybe they were pushing us, or maybe it was us the ones that were in front. Whatever it was, it's a mystery the source of this or that energy, the same energy that makes us move, maybe its just inertia, that spark that is left behind after each move and makes it impossible for somebody to make an absolute stop.

We were embraced by nostalgia and melancholy, it was neither one nor the other but a bizarre mix of both, where sometimes one manifests with greater intensity than the other, or one dominates, but most of the times and in an indescribable way they would both appear at the same time, one after the other, in a constant succession of pain, physical, spiritual and more.

We would sit and wait, one by one each one would come out of their fictitious activities, what some would call their camouflaged reality. Once we were all together we would make our own fictitious reality, which wasn't any more fictitious than the moments lived on every step over the course of our lifetime, but at least it was a construction where the captivated did not participate, or a destruction where the decadents were the only ones allowed.

After a while we would go back to our own same personal de-personalized spaces, some pretend to get lost in them forever to never again complain, to never ask themselves the reason for their questions, their disenchantment, and their affinity to decadency; they wish they could go back to the days of immeasurable happiness, laughter and joy. But this seems impossible and sooner or latter they realize that there's no way out. There goes our forced, obliged existence.

We are no different from the rest, all this does not make us anymore special. We

are and suffer with it, but we are not comfortable amongst the rest, we know our selves mass produced, alienated, we do not pretend to escape, we are the same as the rest, not better. We don't want to be, but we are still here, for whatever reason we keep being.

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In my 6th semester of architecture course I participated in a design studio co-ordinated by HS, a guest professor from the Applied Arts in Vienna who studied under Wolf D Prix. We started the studio by watching the film “Le Camion” by Marguerite Duras and Gerard Depardieu. The substance of the movie is the narration of a possible-film. Duras and Depardieu are sitting in a room – they are having a conversation on the basis of a manuscript for a film that could potentially be about a truck, the truck driver and a woman. The film is ‘travelling’. Basically they are just talking about a film that could have been made – it is about the form of possibility.

Questioning - is it a real film? Could it be a film if it would have been made? - looking at things in a different manner and trying to relate these to an architectural process, or our structure of society.....this process reveals the deeper content and multiple readings within many different forms of media. It shows the “something” behind something else.....

I find the translation of ideas within many different media to the realm of architecture very interesting. To work in a design process with unexpected turnarounds and multi-layered perspectives, allows me to go much further in the expression of my ideas. A design process is continuous and a continuously changing work - “Formfindungen” - possible usages and approaches to design issues.

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hmmm....most influential teacher.....teacher of what? Teacher of architecture? Teacher of Math? Teacher of History? It's very hard to say. i would conclude that my favorite teacher has taught me life. By saying that, i cannot say that there has been one teacher but many. Everyone i've ever met actually. Whether it has been something about a subject, the world or myself, everyone i meet has some sort of impact on me. It is near impossible to pinpoint the most influential one because although i've been truly enlightened by specific people, i cannot verify what influence opened my eyes enough to accept enlightenment. By expressing my opinion this way i am not at all implying that every learning experience or person has been a good one; perhaps only those when i learned about myself. However, i would not trade them or i would not be who i am for having had them. i would say that my favorite teachers are those that always have a different approach, who are always thinking "outside the box" and opening me to other ways i can think ..Sometimes it's easy to get trapped in a tunnel vision mentality and you need others around you to hold the smelling salt under your nose.

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I once read the book called 'The Story of the Eye' by Lord Auch--pen name for George Bataille. I read this book and another with similar subject matter (The story of O) in junior year of highschool. At the same time I was reading these books, I was studying Dylan Thomas and preparing a presentation, a critical interpretation based on the research and my own opinions of his work. I was to present in front of the entire class and a guest, a friend of my English teacher who was also a local poet. I had initially titled my presentation, "Dylan Thomas, a Biography" but as the days passed and the combined elements of the writings of lord auch and pauline reage seeped into my head, I found myself focusing on the overt sexuality in the poetry of Thomas. I chose to ignore the other present elements

like birth and death or religion, because at the time they were all connected to this one thing and were not worthy of a separate reading. I divided my presentation into two parts---part 1: masturbation habits and metaphors, and part 2 : sex. Since I didn't think that I could say the word "masturbation" in class, I changed it to a non-word, "masturbatory"-- I thought this sounded more scientific, like a biological study. The day came. The presentation was limited to five minutes. I stood before the class... I can't remember what i said, i only remember reciting lines from "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower " and sputtering out phrases like " to yank the chain" I clearly recall the consternation in the flushed faces of my classmates. I saw that I was doing something scandalous in the whites of their eyes---especially the girls. I finished. Everyone was silent. The palms of the teacher's hands covered her eyes and the fingers curved over her forehead. I still stood. I stopped breathing. This was a trick I had learned in middle school (see 8th grade mock job interview and onset of hyper-ventilation). My knees gave way and I as I hit the floor I opened my mouth to let in a breath . It worked. The teacher scrambled over and asked some students to help me to the nurse's office. Later that day she asked me if I wanted to talk to a counsellor. The teacher was a friend of my parents, went to my church, where my father was pastor. She had known me for ten years. She said, "don't worry, I'm not going to tell."

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"The worst thing a creative person can do is go to school."

For Alan Stacell [20 Mar 1933 - 09 Dec 2001]

White hair chunky with Brylcreem
glistening in the fluorescent studio.
Long pauses between statements
he sips coffee from a tiny paper cup

with 'A&M' printed on each side.

Speaking slowly flowing poetry
 he paints structure with a word
 as a prophet tells of the time when
 buildings build themselves
 and cities are tensile arks.

The father of creative spirit
 resting forever on walls and minds
 students remember first questions
 and in his place stands a tower
 constructed of their ideas.

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Somewhere along your education, you begin to realize that many things will be taught to you, and the idea of retaining all that knowledge becomes overwhelming. You find various mnemonic devices to help you remember, and at times, those devices can be as simple as finding that relationship between the knowledge you take in, with the knowledge you already have. In other words, an attempt is made in finding the relevance of what is being taught.

This phenomenon became more evident to me while sitting through this school's two history professors' lectures. Professors X and Y have been with the School of Architecture for quite some time now. It has always amazed me how these two men are able to teach the history courses every semester, but still communicate a passion for the subject matter that they teach. In those two classes, I have done the most studying I have ever done in my whole life.

There occurred a shift in my education where I became immersed in architecture.

I was in too deep, and I didn't want out. Instead, I only wanted to understand more information about architecture. In studio, the professor would occasionally mention an architect to look into. I couldn't help but feel yanked down a particular path due to a professor's bias towards a selected or preferred architect. History class was somewhat immune to those biases in the sense that the student was forced to look at various generations, cultures, architects worldwide.

Unfortunately, the novelty of architectural history was wearing thin. A new instructor arrived to the school, and for my sake, just in the nick of time. I had been in the position before, and it was similar to that of taking a chemistry exam, looking back at it, and saying, "Now what?" How was learning about architecture going to benefit me in the long run?

Professor B resuscitated what architecture meant to me. In her theory class of contemporary thinkers, Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman were first introduced to me as a new type of architect. The architect as a visionary became more possible. Professor B pointed out that these men had allowed architecture to become more than just the built environment. And though many other architects of the past have written about their work, I became attracted to these three specifically because they had put their writings in the forefront. They were extremely critical of architecture's direction and began viewing it as a discourse.

Writing has always been a tool that most people have had under their belts since they had attended grade school. For me, writing became my experimental exercise. I was able to attend studio in a new light as I was able to become a little more critical about my work with writing. Though, I regret, more room was made for words as opposed to sketches. Nevertheless, I was able to communicate ideas and my own criticism to what I was doing in the studio. I created a dialogue with myself and I began seeing the role architecture plays in my life and vice versa.

I will not tell you who I am writing about Those of you who know this school will know who it is or a teacher like this. Those of you who have difficulty understanding this – including the Professors who are supposed to read these teacher assessments – will also understand why this is. This was the best class I have ever taken here at the school of architecture. It is not hard to see why. We are invited to talk, to share our ideas. For the first time it feels, and I know this seems ridiculous to say after studying for four years, for the first time I feel my own ideas about architecture are being listened to. I have also learnt more about myself in this class and this has begun to answer some of the questions that I have been forced to ask myself over the last two years. I am not sure whether I really want to be an architect, but I know at least with this teacher I can talk this over. It will not affect my grade, my learning or my position in the school. I would like this Professor to be a permanent professor but I know this is unlikely. Because if this teacher asked me their advice as to whether they should stay here, I would answer truthfully. I would like you to stay but I see no reason to stay to fight such prejudice and short-sightedness. As this is a teacher/instructor/professor assessment that is supposed to be compiled, computerised and then made available for everyone to read, I would hope this indeed happens. Instead, each year I have the feeling that what we have written on these assessments merely falls into a black hole on the Dean's desk. Then the Dean moves the papers around and suddenly it has all gone for another year.

You have expressed your ideas for a star, a star-architect. What is it you want from this star? Do you think we students fall for this so easily? I am beginning to realise that I share less and less with you. The longer I have been studying here, the less opportunity you professors have taken to share anything with me. I could understand this if I was a foreigner, or even a non-Texan, because frankly some of you make it very plain that you have no interest in the Vietnamese or the New Yorker amongst us. Some of you, I have noticed, are only interested in the women,

and those too who appear somewhat compliant to, and blinded by, your unsavoury moves and leers. You hate the radical, you hate the unpractising architect, you hate the thinkers. I am not sure you even read the papers written for you, so convinced are so many of you that we are illiterate, cannot write and cannot really understand what is real architecture. But yet you want a star architect to come and blow us away. Have you all gone to sleep or is this some sort of ‘microfascism’ that you apply only to yourselves?

That’s what I feel like here. But one teacher makes it tolerable, one teacher can make a difference. This unnameable teacher is the one who has taught me to look beyond the sad preaching that I have experienced at this school. This unnameable teacher has changed my life. I am not ashamed to say that. He has been one of the most inspiring that I have taken. He teaches without teaching. I wish he taught every class. No I don’t. But you know what I mean. You cannot help but know what I mean.

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No one teacher comes to mind in being the most influential in my life. An amalgam of traits, lessons, and comments combine in one to create the experience of learning. In terms of my career as an architecture student, a series of moments collected though the years have helped to create a vision. The Algorithm of the Cave; control, things are not always what they seem, validity of message [Philosophy, 1st year basics; ex-cop turned lawyer with an Elvis haircut]. All eyes on me; out of body experience, I see myself from an outside party when I perform (speech, presentation, compete) in front of strangers [Speech, 1st year basics; young blonde lady fresh out of grad school always talking about how many jobs she had while taking 20 credit hours] “If you’re in it for the money, you’re in the wrong place.” (1301) - Paradigm shifts lecture series; theory that intrigued me even

outside of the classroom; regurgitation is not the way to learning – in terms of teaching style (1302) - Welcome back to the computer you never met. (1242/2551) First 'jury' presentation 2551....graphic presentation and public speaking with M & M as jurors.

I never take criticism lying down. In my world a dialogue is required for understanding (rooted from my favorite childhood questions “why? why not? what about this way or that”). Apply the analytical part of your brain with design (Left brain meet Right brain) in an architectural manner led in an unconventional way. Architecture is everywhere, in some of the most unlikely places, theories, ideas, movements... [2552: containing a surplus of energy and ideas expressed in fragmented sentences that leave you scrambling for answers] Come to find out there is no answer, rather a way, a path, your path. An ever-present theory in my life, “think for yourself”. Here in college, in this time, this moment, the theory becomes belief. I can visualize myself in layers of text/ideas pushing and pocketing ‘triggers’ of interest giving them temporary identity in the present (round one). At the same time I discovered photography in the art department. It is sometimes difficult to find words, and in this world of imagery I didn’t need them. I felt completely liberated, from what I don’t know. The whole process of photography is therapeutic. [intro and intermediate photo: Kendall and North]

I anticipated this semester to be enlightening as the final chapter in my undergraduate career; a solid spring board into more of my life that I haven’t quite figured out. I specifically selected courses led by professors with an unconventional thought process (in comparison with what I know). I am learning how architecture applies through me instead of to me. I am untangling systems and weaving a process of which the outcome is unclear. I am working towards an undefined goal. ‘It’s not about where you’re going or where you’ve been, but how you get there that is meaningful’.



2551_postcards_: every week we analyze or recreate a postcard. The postcards have an image from one of the great artistic giants from the last century and a half, the majority of which I knew nothing about. We dealt with line weight, gesture, color, different media sources and techniques, some of which were more successful than others. But regardless every week everyone completed one of these recreations on top of the rest of studio work, and the result was a tablecloth of sketchbooks drenched in construction paper, gouache and watercolor. It was always a positive experience with most of the feedback being beneficial and helpful. The reviews for this were quick and painless and gave another outlet for our minds to wander in and out of with the color palette cleansing our eyes before we stared at models, slides, or pinups of a more architectonic fashion.

2552_photostrips_: after an initial mapping exercise which nearly the entire class was disoriented by, we did a project in which we photographed a relatively dynamic space and created a sequential photo strip of about two inches by eight inches which reflected the nature of this space in an oblique way. There was a range of subject matter stretching from the underside and space of chairs to railcars to overpasses. The assignment was so abstract and up to interpretation and meaning that it created excitement or interest in the professor and students in each piece. All the submissions revealed a form of architectural and hyper contextual interpretation from each one of the students. It added not clarity to any understanding of the course, architecture, or any subject but rather an infinite openness to perceiving and creating space.



It is no secret that to get out of the Texas conservative architecture we must look to other places. My first studio was a good way to start; we began with art. And I also had another instructor who taught purity. So, with my theme of reflection, transparency, and vignettes, I have honed into what is to be something uniquely my own. It would not be complete if I did not mention the sculpture classes I have had as well. I do not think I would have been open enough to explore what light does if I hadn't. I know how to bend light. To me, that is much more than a façade, structure, or organization (though these are necessary as well). Forward to 'now'. And after a few professors who have stunted artistic abilities in favor of the technical, I can see they are both necessary...merging into one. It is these first professors who left me with more of an impression though. I can learn how to lay out a board for presentation alright. But to have a theme that is uniquely my own is better. I need to return to that. If by learning the rules, I gain insight into design as a profession and how to use elements to my benefit, where do I experience my own insights and experiments into something new? This is where I am today. Stifled artistically, learning technically, the ways in which to be an architect. To get a job, I understand. But where do I get the life?

I certainly hope that the last four remaining courses will have the answer. If not, then I understand, it is up to me. What we create out of necessity is different from what we create out of interest. Wouldn't it be interesting if we could design our own program of study as students?

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Last Wednesday night during environmental controls class there was a little incident. As is the habit of Mr. Hines, we were treated to yet another guest speaker. We were pleased to meet Mr. Chris Huckabee of Huckabee Architects. Presumably he was there to lecture about the best practices of sustainability.

I think the man started out with good intentions because he began the lecture about communication and the importance of well crafted documents. I could see where he was going with the series of slides that come from those emails that you get from your friends; the supposedly funny pictures of signs with misspellings that cause confusion. There were a bunch of them and one in particular showed up and this one caused quite a stir.

He showed a picture of a taxi with the caption MEXICAN SUV. (See the attached file.) Why it was there, why he had to show that one to prove his point is beyond me. But there it was. Some of us laughed, some remained silent, and one kid in particular called him out on it and left the class on his way to the Dean's office to complain. I just kept my seat even though I knew that was a big mistake on Mr. Huckabbee's part.

At first I questioned the kid's actions by getting up and leaving, after all this class meets just one night a week for three hours. This is a nuts and bolts kind of class and this man would not be here if he did not have something to offer. Right? And we have been tested on what these people say in this class. If you leave now you could miss something important.

Well that was what I thought but I realized after it was over that the kid was right and that anyone so stupid as to show a slide like that to a room full of potentially Mexican Nationals has nothing to offer. After enduring several not too subtle sexist remarks and a few more questionable slides, I realized that he was offering up nothing more than the usual superficial information. All I remember from the lecture was that in order to build "sustainable" you need to use durable materials that are easy to clean and free of cellulose products. As if I did not know that already. So I am thinking now that it was just a waste of time. There was nothing useful presented, nothing that I can take to work with me.

This is systemic of the problem with this class. We have had to put up with guest speaker after guest speaker. One in particular had an axe to grind with architects and during the course of the lecture about grading and drainage, I was made

to feel somehow inferior to civil engineers for not being able to do some simple math off the top of my head.

Now a few of the other guest speakers did offer up some useful info. So it has been a mixed bag. But for the most part we have just been fed superficial information. The kind of stuff we can read on our own, or by this time in school we already know. What we need, what we are paying for is some instruction on how to perform a task. We are not getting it; rather, all we have been shown is where to look for the information. Not how to do it.

What would be even better would be to watch the expert do a task, at least that way we would have an example to build upon. When you go to calculus class the instructor walks you through each step of the process of taking derivatives and finding integrals. He then cuts you loose to work on some problems.

I guess I am trying to reconcile the moment when you finally call bullshit on what you are being taught. (You can't ask for a refund!) Or do you just grin and bear it in order to just get through and move on. I am thinking that many of us are just nodding and smiling while thinking something else as we move on to graduation. I wonder what this says about (my) ethics, the meaning of (my) this education, and ultimately the (my) value of it.

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A teacher, someone that all of us have: it can be anyone and not necessarily a professional teacher. For an institutional teacher, a lot of them have come and gone since the first day we entered the earliest educational institute such as kindergarten. For myself, the most prominent figure of a teacher is my father. Quite a cliché isn't it? Like almost all fathers in the world, a father teaches a lot of things to his child, may it be school stuff or things in life. Seen from that aspect, my father was quite a regular dad, like everybody else; what makes him different is the way he teaches.

My dad is the one who teaches me how to swim. I wouldn't say I'm a great swimmer, but I can swim 5000 meters non-stop so that doesn't make me a bad swimmer either. I'm better than most people I know. I remember clearly the first time. I was not afraid of water although I can't remember the date. I wasn't even in school yet that time, I was so young. I'm playing in the pool with some rubber balloon around my arm, when he just picks me up, strips me of that rubber balloon and throws me back in the pool. Frightened, I'm trying to swim as best I can, since I'm actually drowning. I am asking my father for help but he just won't do anything. From that day onwards I could swim.

Also in my adolescent years, he teaches me something about breaking the rules. I am one overprotected kid; there are so many rules that bind me. I did break them, and did get the occasional punishment I deserved. Yet after high school, after breaking countless rules I finally realized what are those stupid rules are for (some of them are stupid). Some of the rules are meant to be broken, so I can learn to weigh which is more important. The idea is for me to feel so frustrated about those rules that I decide to break them; hopefully the rules are to be broken.

I am not familiar with Western culture, but in Indonesia obedience is a sacred thing, so this way of teaching is rather uncommon. And my favourite thing from what my father taught me was how to fight when I was 8 years old, and drink beer at the same age! Those two advantages have proved quite beneficial in an all-boy US high school.

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Learning to Fly Can one really see what they are looking at in its entirety? We can see things for sure, small details to larger concepts of living. But can we really see what is - so blindly - there? It is a poignant question and rather rhetorical. Once we reach the conclusion of explaining that which we see, we realize we have missed

the question altogether. So it is for learning's sake that we see there is no conclusion and we are never finished. This, in part, may be the only instance where the word "never" is accurately used. Never finished! It is almost as if we are saying we are never "never"!

Learning to fly is about learning to learn. It is about the ability and the stumbling upon information which leads us to knowledge and professionalism: serendipity. The voyage begins with only one element - navigation. So we wonder what that means when it comes to looking and seeing. It really makes no difference if we are to look out into the distance, say on the Aegis Sea, and to say to ourselves that there is water. No one would argue. No one would argue if we were to say there is history there, and islands off into the distance. But what would happen if we took it a step further; further than the eye can 'see' visibly. There is wine. Yes, I do believe that the colour of the sea turns to wine. Could it be because the culture and history of the Mediterranean is basked in centuries of wine making? The mind creates an allusion to the illusion of colour. Or could it really be that the reflection of the sun upon the water gathers in a particular spot way in the distance and resonates with the colour of wine? It could be. And am I just the person to find out? This I have come to understand as the difference between looking and seeing.

It is an analogical position that we take with the world. It does not really make logical sense. By definition the two words are not much different. We look and we see and use the words so interchangeably that no one recognizes the difference. Can we really look at what we are seeing in its entirety? Then again... one implies a bit more than the other as to one's involvement. And the other implies a passive response. One would not be important without the other. Both, when used together, are the navigator. Look, see, look again.

The next step logically would be that sight is not privileged; all senses are involved. Here, being logical is useful. Sight is one thing, but the whole experience (*the human experience*) is what lends itself to understanding. I used to think it

could be done virtually, but it is rarely the case. To see a picture or hear a story by someone else does not create the same human response as being present. I never would have thought to 'elude' water into wine if I had not been there on the cliff overlooking the Aegis Sea. And God is another thing all in itself. Did you know that there are things all around us that we cannot see but are definitely present? For example, it is negative ions which are believed to give people the sense of serenity when they visit Niagara Falls. We cannot see them, but we can feel them. Then there are things such as electromagnetic waves which we cannot even feel, but are present.

Our senses are too limited when it comes to understanding the world around us, much less the universe. We use what we are given, but at some point we have to make up the rest. It is not accurate - philosophically speaking - to behave this way. But to us, it is. In our shortened (yet still widely acceptable) perception it has to be enough. It makes sense. Yet, upon closer examination, it doesn't. Rarely do we question things to this level though. We simply go on about our lives because time is also a factor. In time we will see that perception is constantly changing. This leads us back: "we are never finished" (and yet we are never "never").

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so can i get back to the way i do it, now? or "i could have driven to fucking estonia!" she's trying to get me to change the way i do business. the system i have established up to this moment is tried and tested. i get the program. read the program. see the building in my mind. draw the building. it's admittedly pretty damn simple. not to mention, steeped in some selfish attitude that my intuition will always get me somewhere. now i get into this class where we're supposed to generate "logics", and people start talking about "genetic algorithms" and how they can be used as a generative mechanism for making buildings. well, if i'm not mistaken, that takes me right out of the whole process doesn't it?

bullshit!

do i know enough to say “bullshit”? maybe it deserves a chance. but it doesn’t come easily – this attempt to break from my ruts and cynical attitude about everything and be a child again. i feel like a child in this class. like it’s all starting over. freshman studio. i know nothing. what’s the point!? i’ve spent 7 years figuring out how to do this, and then i get suckered into doing it differently? i don’t have the energy. i honestly don’t. i just want to get that piece of paper that says i can go get a job and get on with my life. if i never drive out to zetaville again, it will be too soon. i’m so tired. that i have put 12,000 miles on my car in a year just driving to school is seriously disconcerting – not to mention that it’s always going to zetaville. why would any fool do this? i could have driven to fucking estonia!

i’ve never felt so stupid. it must mean something. i always used to say “everything happens for a reason” and now i don’t know if it’s so true. i don’t want to take those tests. i don’t want to end up drawing Mediterranean starter-castles for the rest of my life and i don’t want to feel like i have to do anything. but there it is. the seedling of truth that makes me “so fucking lazy” as Professor B so rudely suggested: “i don’t like doing things if i don’t get to decide WHY they’re being done”. i need that meaning in my life – in my work. there must be meaning in the process, the start the finish and the product. if not, then why waste the energy. i don’t have much of that left. i’d better spend it on something meaningful or it’s all just jerking off. god i sound so cynical. if i do then i’m sorry. i’m just so tired.

architect students who don't usually talk write about **Work**

when I start a project • I was working on "structuring" • state the problem • I was thinking • "lord, I was born a ramblin' man" • otherwise all is well • a newspaper article • ESPERA :: LUZ ROJA • life experiences as self-educators • In the GA Document • a OCIO :: IN_ACTIVIDAD :: ABURRI_MIENTO • most of the time • after reading • Ian McHarg? • Refloating Architecture • in The Diary of Frida Kahlo • Who is the student? • Daniel Libeskind's argument • Sometimes when you start to draw • I love this manifesto • Cedric Price's manifesto "Non- Plan" • Sex, crime and architecture? • On calculators • What has *Howl* done for me? • Discourse is not a compromise



..she agreed with my ideas and did not believe that in themselves they were wrong but that to teach such things to the children "at this level and at this stage" was something that she could not allow because this was not "the proper age at which to start to break things down."

Jonathan Kozol

When I start a project I analyze the given problem and do research on conceptual ideas. I gather all the ideas together and merge the concepts to make multiple sketches or diagrams. Once I have various sketches to study, then I pick a few that I assume would fit the solution the best, taking specific details from my past experience. The steps of design and development depend on each professor. Everyone gains different knowledge from various people. Ideas not only come from understanding the past, but also researching through other references, from books etc. The decision to move on to the next stage depends on whether you think that the last stage was accomplished or not. Like how much to research, how many sketches to make, and how to decide on which are the solutions. The transition to the next stage requires more critical or conceptual thinking. Knowing what details to combine would be the transitional stage between the departure and the arrival. To close an idea depends on whether one feels one has finished or then succeeded in their projected goals or tasks. Once I believed that when I completed all the steps that were required or found a solution to my problem I would stop. When one project or problem is solved then I would move on to the next challenge. That would represent my departure and arrival according to the challenge.

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I was working on “structuring” my work from the studio and unwinding the maze of files in my archive. I have been following the news in London and it's terrifying to watch some of the stories. Terror is spreading everywhere now. It seems like the whole world needs an urgent shake-up. Now I under-

stand what you meant when you spoke about deschooling. We all need it. I feel so helpless every time when I hear about this. It seems impossible to fight people who truly believe in the cause like this...they are fearless and so detached. Zetaville is incredibly hot right now. I know why people go insane here in the summer. I have been in Chicago visiting a friend and just came back. Big, big difference... I know you are probably busy as always taking apart those traps that others have laid for us. Keep going. The Russians were great at Wimbledon (as they are in everything else).

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State the problem, provide the answer, and display the results. It is very convenient, I heard him say. And it struck me right then and there! What did I need him for? Of course we were only lying back contemplating the changes in the world. But I had no idea that there was an underlying process I had undertaken somewhere along the way such as this. Learning had become reasoning and in the reasoning there was the answer. But, don't state the obvious.

Interestingly, and this is a bit of a divergence, this is not very effective when it comes to dealing with people. People do not like to hear what their problems are, how to fix them, and what the results will be. You might think it would be helpful, but it is not. Identifying the problem is the trickiest part. In the book "The Universal Traveler" there is a very helpful line. Paraphrased, it goes something like this: when faced with a problem, do not ask what you can do about it... instead ask, what is the real problem here. The answer is contained in the evaluation of what the real problem is. I also worked as an IT professional and it is an essential part of what I did on a daily basis. It is not as simple as having a computer problem, something that will not work. But the cause of the problem is the most important

part. If only computer users knew what was involved, they might have greater respect for the job. However, not many people realize that this is the link between the two fields, IT and architecture. Architecture is about problem solving, in each aspect of the term, design-build.

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I was just thinking that I am fortunate to be working in a firm where the studio environment isn't much different than that of a very experimental graduate studio. Our desks are messy. We are constantly on charette. Sometimes we are cavalier ... sometimes we are humble. The Boss has been clever in creating a team of very diverse people and talents with no hierarchy among us. We are all willing to take out the trash and clean up cat puke. Last night I was in the top of my closet where I have stored my studio binders from Zetaville. Tattered and dusty and full of handouts – some of which I poured over, some that I never read. A lyric in a song by the Smiths sums up my feelings on whether or not to toss them out: “Hang the DJ Hang the DJ Hang the DJ... because the music he plays says nothing to me about my life”. It is true that information can only be relevant when you are ready to receive it. Needless to say I won't toss them out, rather I will break them out occasionally to see if the music inside says anything to me about my life. In the meantime I will be jumping and flailing about to the music in my ipod and books and chalkboards of my mind that I have collected thus far waiting to receive the information that I might have ignored in the school of architecture.

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“lord, I was born a ramblin’ man” - it is interesting that reference to “trickle-down” education on the (self-education) blog. I have been thinking about this and

a few weeks ago I tried to quantify visually the diffusion of knowledge as I experience it. The drawing in my notebook of the insects is a general account of my daily experience (sort of). I drew this after your lecture on the 6 big ideas of the 20th century --- the large insect could be any professor (in this case it is you - no insult intended). I don't look back on this drawing because it seems so obvious, the way it all works. Beneath the insect cartoon is a filtration drawing in which knowledge - the purity - is cycled. The hierarchy in the drawing says something about me and the stereotypical thoughts that occur in my head. My reverence of knowledge, and my hypocritical disdain of the banality of everyday life, in which I eagerly participate (yes, I too could have been the portly one, with torso jowls spilling about onto the textured brown carpet, desperately reaching for the odd stray cheeto, cursing my situation yet doing nothing about it) but that is beside the point. Or is it? I don't know. I don't know if there is anything to these little drawings, and indeed I have just admitted their lack of substance by descriptive condescension of them. But on to the next!

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otherwise all is well and warm here in zetaville, texas. i have just been working, i started with a carpenter just before graduation and have enjoyed it, just last week i got a job with an architect here in dallas and it was exactly what i was holding out for, it is only him with his wife handling the administrative duties so i will get to touch all aspects, not sure how the money will be but have decided the experience will make it all worthwhile, as of today if i had to have a plan (i don't believe in plans) i would say work for him for 1-2 years then apply and attend school for my masters (possibly in Europe) then sit for my licensing exam, setting out on my own asap (asap = realistically 7 years, but hey plans are plans, Zetaville is Zetaville and architecture is nothing like what I thought it would be - no one knows where

tomorrow will take us) so there you are, a recently graduated architect's past couple months and future in a nutshell...hope we cross paths again one day – some teachers are truly an inspiration. Others, well....

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a newspaper article found on a park bench “In a way, this house is like a time-machine which transports us back to a 1950's way of thinking about the home,” says architect N. McCartney of the project he recently completed in the Preston Hollow area of north Dallas. McCartney continues, “We started with a plan originally designed by A. Quincy Jones in 1961 for Case Study #24.”

The Case Study House program (1945-66) was a monumental event in the history of American architecture and remains to this day unique. The program, which concentrated on the Los Angeles area and oversaw the design of 36 prototype homes, sought to make available plans for modern residences that could be easily and cheaply constructed during the post-war building boom.

About #24, he says, “It could be thought of as a courtyard house, but I call it an ‘inverted courtyard’ because historically a court existed as an interior condition with the house wrapped around it. Here, the house is inside the courtyard.” Jones also sunk his house into the earth with burms on three sides for efficient cooling and heating. “We re-interpreted the burms by changing them into dry-stack limestone walls,” Nicholas says.

Employing his characteristic minimalist touch, Mr. McCartney chose simple materials like bamboo for the flooring and river rocks for the courtyard ground cover. The kitchen features the minimal modernist lines of the Bulthaup company's cabinets and surfaces. Walls are minimized in the two-bedroom, two and a half bathroom house, to maintain the open plan idea of the original. “Jones kept things open by laying beams across the burms, but he still needed columns. We

decided to eliminate the need for vertical supports by using rectangular steel tube box beams across the limestone walls so there would be no visual obstruction in the space,” the architect says.

On top of the beams in the courtyard area lay tracks where metal mesh sun shades can be automatically unrolled. When stowed, the rolls are hidden from sight within the roof structure. “You can control the amount of sunlight in the courtyard for whatever you need. If you’re having a party in July and want to be outside, those shades will come in handy,” McCartney explains. The window-walls in the living and kitchen areas slide on tracks allowing the courtyard and interior spaces to become one.

The courtyard walls are of massive leuders limestone blocks and are three feet thick. The stones stack on top of one another without grout and will oxidize with age. “We used a really natural palette of materials on the house inside and out. Nothing stands out by itself, they all work together to make a quiet aesthetic statement. I find it very calming,” says Mr. McCartney.

For homeowners Sam Davis and wife Susan, the plan at first seemed rather stark. “We took one look at it and said ‘where are the walls!’” Mr. Davis says with a laugh. The couple started the project just after they both retired from the Dallas schools system.

As people who always envisioned themselves in a more traditional home, they have slowly been educating themselves in modern design. Mrs. Davis explains, “Before we moved in to the Case Study #24 re-do, I wrote off modern-looking houses because they seemed stark and cold. But with Nick’s help, we both got very excited about the prospect of living here. If he hadn’t used the computer to show us exactly how the light would come in, you could have never sold me on it!”

The homeowners say that despite their concerns at the beginning, they are glad they trusted the architect with the design. “What we ended up with is a truly unique house based on classic ideas. It was an interesting process to be a part of,”

says Mr. Davis while holding the button to roll up the sun-shades. "I think the original architect would be jealous!"



ESPERA :: LUZ ROJA I was driving on Calzada Independencia going north towards the road to Monterrey. I was in no hurry, didn't have a set direction to go, neither a reason to be driving, but there I was just driving, relaxed, without anything on my mind, not caring about the things happening around me; the traffic, the flyers posted on the telephone posts that contaminated the city with advertisements, the people that couldn't drive but still they were on the streets, the buses that thought they owned the streets and drove as if they were carrying cattle, and the taxis that honked at every person they see walking.

As I kept driving on the left lane, the one next to the median that divides the avenue, I left some of my fellow drivers behind. Through the rear view mirror I could see a messed up truck and a couple of cars. The light turned yellow, and since I was in no hurry, I started to hit the breaks and finally came to a stop, just a little over the pedestrian crossing line. Some people crossed the street, to my right a taxi, white with an orange stripe down the middle, showed up all of the sudden. At the other side of the avenue an old man signaled the taxi to stop. The taxi pulled over the pedestrian crossing and made a left turn, passing right in front of me. The light was still red, the taxi crossed to the other side of the avenue and stopped in front of the old man waiting for him to get on the vehicle.

On the street running perpendicular to Calzada Independencia right there on the intersection where I was stopped, a car was approaching turning into the avenue going south, right there where the taxi was stopped waiting for the old man to get on the vehicle. At the steering wheel of the car was a woman, as she turned, her car got trapped between the incoming traffic and the taxi, her immediate reac-

tion was to honk, as if by doing so she was going to make the taxi disappear or fast forward the scene, but it did not work that way, the taxi didn't seem to care and the old man did not move any faster. The woman turned her head and stared at me for a couple of seconds before nodding her head while pointing at the taxi. I am not really sure what she was trying to tell me, but I think it was something like this:

Es imposible que sucedan estas cosas, Que no se dan cuenta que están estorbando?- Maldito anciano, a quien se le ocurre salir de su casa cuando sabe que ya no puede caminar.

She expected some kind of answer on my part, some signal that showed her that I agreed with her madness, some kind of reassurance that she was right and that there was something wrong with this scene, but nothing was bothering me really; the taxi was on the other side of the street and as soon as the light turned to green I could move with no trouble. As far as the old man goes, he seemed to be doing his best trying to get into the car. So in return I stare back at her, raised my left arm up to the height of my elbow, took my hand up to the windshield and I answer showing her the middle finger of my hand, as intent to show absolute indifference.

I kept my arm and hand in the same position until she turned her head and looked straight to the taxi without even blinking. She did not look back at me again; the old man finally had gotten into the car, the light turned green. Slowly I took my foot off the brake and took off.

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LIFE EXPERIENCES AS SELF-EDUCATORS

[then]:

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|---------|--------|--------------|-------|--------|------|--------|
| [1] | the | dancing | lights | in | dad's | rear | view | mirror |
| [2] | going | through | the | encyclopedia | with | grand- | | |

pa (often to answer a single, simple question)
 [3] wondering how the sucky tube at the drive through bank worked
 [4] wondering why mcdonald's didn't have a sucky tube
 [5] observing my teachers and then going home and trying to reteach my siblings
 [6] drawing fake checks and then filling them in
 [7] my favorite quilted afghan was a cape, a for-
 tress wall, a sail, a tentacle, a snake, an ocean surface
 [8] climbing trees for the sake of seeing my house from above
 [9] 'i believe'
 [10] playing war games, board games, video games, imagination games, and life games

[now]:

i see my own eyes in the rearview mirror
 the encyclopedia is too slow
 i use the atm
 teachers want you to teach them too
 i love my debit card
 my computer is a phone, a typewriter, an easel, an instrument, and an
 information source
 i'm still climbing
 'i make-believe'
 life games are the only games

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In the GA Document Ricardo Bofil says that his multi-disciplinary practice (consisting of architects, mathematicians, engineers, writers, sociologists and others) has developed a system of organizing space by fusing the imaginative intuition of form with mathematical logic. With so many people and so many areas of specialization, it makes me wonder if Ricardo Bofil is even creative at all. Is he ever inspired? Or has he just put together a team that knows how to cover all aspects of a project and get the job done. He says, in the introduction to Ricardo

Bofil: Taller de Architectura, that the multi-talented group had to be put together in order to confront the complexities of the practice. The group HAD to be put together, as in he had no ability to practice without them. Just when I'm wondering if Bofil is ever creative or inspired, I stumble over what he has written about an old cement factory in Barcelona that he renovated. He describes his first contact with the site as inspired; his eyes were moving rapidly over the site with a kaleidoscopic vision of its future as the contradictions and ambiguity of the factory won him over. Clearly he does have a vision and is capable of being inspired. Maybe his multi-disciplinary practice exists to do more thorough work, not as a crutch for his lack of creativity.

Bofil describes the activity of an architect as converting dreams into reality much like an artist does. When asked if he was satisfied with his forms derived from mathematical and geometrical principles, he replied that he is never satisfied and added that the history of the artist is a history of dissatisfaction. If an artist or architect is not dissatisfied he continues to do the same thing, to repeat his own model, to exist in a non-inventive zone. Despite this dissatisfaction, he is always passionately involved in each project as he is designing it, but ceases to care about it once it is built. Is this how all architects and artists feel? I know from my limited experience with architecture that I feel the same way about my projects. I try my best to totally immerse myself in my work. I'm most satisfied when I have ideas constantly flying around in my head...when I go to sleep at night and end up dreaming about my project. Then, when it's all over, it's all over. I cease thinking about that project and move on to the next.

≈

OCIO :: IN_ACTIVIDAD :: ABURRI_MIENTO As a necessity takes you to the extreme and is most of the time negative, I find myself in a period of transition in which I would get away from certain things. All this which does not allow inac-

tivity, slowly comes as a function of interest to myself. In other circumstances, in other times, I would not alienate myself from this kind of emotion, but these days the emphasis is on freedom.

I really hope that you go back to Zetaville next semester, too bad that I won't be there, what you have in mind sounds really exiting, I wish I could join the group. Right now it all seems that I'll be here (I mean in Torreon, Mexico) next year. It's been kind of weird being back home. After 10 years (with the occasional summer and holidays visits) I feel like a tourist in my own country, in my own culture. It is taking me some time to adapt to the way of life. I think I have become what I feared the most: a Malinchista!!!!

≈

Most of the time I spent learning and researching about cars, especially my car. My car was my hobby, my life back then. I could not care about anything else. I worked hard in the art school, so that when I graduated I thought I would have some money and a nicer car. That was all that I could think about: cars, cars, cars. Then I lost my car in an accident. I remember exactly when it happened, May 2002, the day of the Commencement Ceremony of a friend of mine. I was coming home from Dallas around 5 pm. I was driving 70 mph in rush hour as everyone else when suddenly this white car right in front of me just started to shake strangely. Not even having the time to think of what is happening; the car started fishtailing in front of me and came to a complete stop, which of course I crashed into moments later. I lost my hobby. I lost my reason to work hard.

In the third semester in art school, I started doubting my major. It is not a major with easy money in it. It bothered me for a while, and I thought that I might try architecture but the technicality and the dullness of it I thought would bore me to

death. But architecture is the closest thing to doing art and, I thought, it's a better job to do after graduating.

Or should I stay in art? Without passion about school I started to have worries about my decision in art and one day I stepped out to take a smoke break and that is when the story of the truck and Porsche started. Now let us forward to the time I spent in the architecture major. So I choose the Porsche, I saw it, liked it, took it for a test drive. The first semester in architecture, the experience overwhelmed me. It was so intense, the amount of work, dedication, expectation; it was intense just as one would expect from a Porsche. I have never worked that hard before in school; Art was so laid back, easy, and no jury. In art, when there was a presentation, I just lied my way out of the questions. In architecture you get caught when you don't know.

I did have some troubles in my first semester. In my first studio when I actually encountered abstract form that represented something, and realised it must have some traces of why the form is what it is, and some good reasoning along with it I struggled. 'Mapping' is so different from what I thought a map was. The studio was filled with so much mystery, problems with no visible solutions to my eye. But I just kept working until the final stage of studio where everything unraveled and there is that feeling of relief. Satisfaction hits. It does exhilarate me somehow, gives me some flared-up passion about school again. It was intense. Art was a truck compared to the Porsche in Architecture. The amount of craftsmanship expected of you, the design, the precision of the lines and the reasoning of every form, are again a Porsche to the Truck comparison. But intensity is exhausting, like driving a Porsche for a 500-mile trip is exhausting. I began to drift away, slacking off somewhat. What is expected can never be fulfilled, why even bother? Everything that is a mystery stays a mystery now, things stop unraveling themselves. All I did was keep moving with questions unanswered.

Try to read texts? Yes I did, but it is not an easy reading. None of architecture texts are friendly. Peter Eisenman, for example; he makes up his own words quite often. Graphics that nobody knows how to read are shown so often, raising other questions of how the creator of that graphic image came up with that. Oh yes, I am exhausted. I can drive a truck for 500 mile and still be as good as new rather than drive a sports car for the same distance. I need to get out, stretch my back and legs, and so I did. I skipped one semester of studio, and then I came back.

Well, I'm still not moving onward like my early years here. Perhaps the Porsche is out of gas? I forgot that a sports car needs better maintenance, maintenance of discipline, craft and ideas. But that can come later. All I need now is some gas to finish the journey. All the other extras can be done later. I need to graduate first, I need some gas for the Porsche to reach the destination and then I'll decide whether I keep it or not?

Or do I sell the Porsche and get a Honda?

≈

After reading through Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio: Community Architecture, I'm in complete awe. What an incredible man with an incredible mission. I had heard his name before, but didn't really know anything about him or the Rural Studio. I am dumb-founded that this exists and that I didn't know about it. Mockbee's work and mission probably come closest to any sort of dream I have related to architecture. In the last few weeks I've been bombarded by people asking me what I want to design when I get out of school. It's really hard for me to answer them. They see it in terms of designing residential or commercial and automatically assume that I would have a preference of one over the other. I really don't know what I want to design, or to do, for that matter.

When I think about why I'm at this school studying architecture, the best reason I can think of is related to the volunteer work and mission work I have been involved in since returning to Dallas seven years ago. It all started with my work for Habitat for Humanity. Every year I help my church build a house for a family that otherwise couldn't afford one. But these aren't beautifully designed, earth-friendly Rural Studio houses; they are Habitat houses. They are low-end, generic builder homes.

There is a gap in our society. People generally do things the easy, main-stream way. Habitat for Humanity, for example, builds houses the way they know how to with materials that are easily accessible. Samuel Mockbee did not do things the main-stream way. He identified a poor community in Alabama and created the Rural Studio at Auburn as a tool to help this community. According to Reed Kroloff (*Architecture* 2/2002 "Architecture Loses Its Conscience: Samuel Mockbee Dead at 57") "Mockbee brought new dignity, hope and security to a struggling community". He brought dignity to the people by treating them with respect, getting to know the people and their needs. He had his students treat them with respect as well, as if they were true (paying) clients. And Mockbee made sure the results were good, successful ones.

Josh C. Cooper, a student of the Rural Studio said "the elements we drew on paper and constructed with our own hands had to work...by that I mean they had to fulfill the practical needs of our clients." After assessing needs and designing the house, Mockbee had his students build the houses using mostly recycled and salvaged materials. William Christenberry is also quoted in the book as saying "the accomplishments of the Rural Studio have significant meaning, not only for Hale County and its people, but also for the whole world. 'Sambo' was a visionary, and his conscience, integrity and caring for all people and things were always evident to those who had the privilege of knowing him."



Ian McHarg? Why don't we students know of him? I recently read an article about the landscape architect Ian McHarg which appears to be some kind of ongoing praise to him. McHarg did accomplish a lot in his lifetime, received several awards, a short-lived TV show and various Degrees and books published. However when I started this project, that I had never heard of this Ian McHarg made me a little nervous. I have been studying architecture for many years so how si it I have never heard of his map overlaying concepts or his ideas of environmental city planning?

Perhaps this is because McHarg seemed to be more concerned with teaching his ideas than practicing them. Did he not construct anything worth mentioning or is it because he had so many ideas that needed to be expressed that he had no time to construct anything? I personally feel an obligation to construct something every time I have an idea. This is my way of passing the thought on to other people. I often do not build my ideas though and this sometimes fills me with a slight guilt. But it seems odd that such a highly accredited person can go so easily overlooked by my school and through my education. I have learned of green architecture but it has all been about energy conservation, water, solar power and that sort of thing. It has had nothing to do with environmental city planning. I wish that our program would include more things like this, because in architecture you must start designing with the largest cell in the group like the environment, and only then can you work down to the structure and then finally the details.

I bought McHarg's autobiography "A Quest for Life" and not wanting to read the entire thing looked into the table of contents to see if anything drew my attention. I saw a chapter called "A New Life". Being only 21 and lost, I was drawn in.

The chapter is sadly not what I was looking for. It is not about McHarg turning over a new stone on his own and finding his true calling. It was about the death of Pauline. I actually feel lost in my own life and I was looking for something to give me direction; however I did not want to find it through a tragedy. Pauline died of leukemia. When the doctors found out they did not tell her. I find this deeply disturbing. I want to know death as the only real thing that changes life, and I feel that when you have a chance to know about your own you are blessed with an opportunity to cast away everything that bothered you about life. If you knew that you were going to die tomorrow you would truly have a chance to do great things today.

McHarg says that he was sad for some time and that he could not sleep or eat. He then goes on to say one day he just simply raised his head looked around and became more conscious of his surroundings and less preoccupied with his past and inner self. When I read that I thought, honestly, what the hell have I been trying to find? Who am I really? And there I am running around in circles not really getting anywhere in life and this man just lifts his head up, has a new perception and can look away from the past to see what he is supposed to do in life. I suppose that if you can really let go and let part of yourself die then you really don't have any other choice but to move forward. I hope that some day I will be able to find the part of me that needs letting go.

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Refloating Architecture

0 drowned worlds

1 three men in a tub

1a the editor

1b the architect

1c the philosopher

2 staying afloat

2a suspension/floating

2b buoyancy

2c the swiss-army chainsaw

-the tools of dramatic effect

-attempting to destroy the boat

3 narratives (or fish tales)

3a false consciousness

3b scripting/fictional itineraries

3c head under water

-the alienated discourse

-submersion

-ripple blur/liquid earmuffs

4 the liquid environment

4a serene scenes

-gentle rocking and playful lapping

4b surface readings

-stagnant

-reflection/shimmer

-white caps

5 floating prisons

5a the seductive practice or the practice of seduction

5b the confines of perception

5c panic

6 rising storms/suspensions

6a modes of communication

6b subjectivity or indeterminacy?

6c insinuation

6d the radical thinker swallowed up by the sea

7 drifting

7a foreign objects

-driftwood

-reaching outside the boat

7b flicker

-redundancy

7c collapse

8 growing gills

8a adaptation

-can we unlearn the learned?

8b deployment

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Who is the student? A seeker of knowledge. Why choose a Thesis? To prove and develop intellectual ability. My education to this point has consisted of classes and studios set up by someone, a teacher or professor. That professor set the agenda, defined the problem, anticipated a solution, and predicted an intended outcome within certain parameters. While this is a useful teaching model at some point the

student needs to take it a step further. The student needs to become the teacher and have control over what is studied. The student needs to decide what direction to go, learn how to define a problem and devise a solution, and learn how to set the parameters that define an outcome. This type of experience is invaluable. It allows a student to explore a chosen interest and develop expertise. It tests problem solving skills, researching skills, and critical thinking. All these skills are critical to a career in architecture.

Having said all this, why do I want to pursue a thesis option for my master's degree? Why not follow the common track and just take the offered studios? While that is a valid path I want to take this opportunity to push my self in a way I never have. I am interested in testing myself intellectually to see if I really can do what I think I can and gain valuable experience from the process. I've always been confident of my intellectual abilities but have never put myself to this type of test. There is more to test here than just intellect. Do I have the drive, the organizational skills, and the ability to put together and finish a Thesis? That is the question I want to answer for myself. It would be a validation of my decision to choose architecture as a profession. I would feel more confident entering the field knowing I am capable of producing a serious piece of work of my own accord.

Now that I've put forth the desire to pursue a Thesis, how do I devise one? How do I narrow down from a wide range of topics to the one question I really want answer? What are the areas within architecture that I hold an interest for? At this point I need to define where my interests lie and define a question to answer, a problem to solve, or theory to put forward. What will my possible topics be or not be? What is a thesis? I see it as an unanswered question or unsolved problem to be researched. A probable answer or solution is derived from this research and presented. It's a long but valuable process. How is a Thesis devised? What is that

process? A list of possible topics is a good starting point. It's as important to define what not to pursue as what to pursue. What knowledge not to seek as much as the knowledge sought.

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In The Diary of Frida Kahlo, her voice of confession is different, yet unique in terms of poetry. She seems to capture my critical thinking as a student and makes me wonder why it was written that way, or what it is trying to convey. The colors that she used bring out my various emotions like joy, sadness, love, and much more. I notice that the colors are adjectives that describe what she is feeling about her husband. The words make me think more and let my imagination roam free. I feel when she writes a poem, it's like she is brainstorming for words to correspond with her feelings. As I re-read through the poem new feelings or translations arose because I would think of it in other terms. Her poem showed me how her art and her love, her feelings relate in a form of expressed words. I like her writing because it helped me view an assortment of words and what they convey for me in architecture.

How Ugly People Are! In this passage Frida expresses the masses of society and how she is let down by society. There is a picture that she has drawn at the beginning it is a crowd of faces that are all basically the same, except with a few small differences some look as if they are from other nationalities. This is the population of the world. She then goes on to write how she sees life and then how it should be. Frida Kahlo's disappointment was somewhat on a less personal basis, she seemed to have a hate for the world because of all the fact that people have not found a way to make the world a utopia after so many hundreds of years.

Like Frida I feel let down by society. The world is a fine place but no matter how hard I try I am always leaving something or hurting someone. I am rarely home because of school and work. I have a steady job and am also trying to start up a little independent work. Because of this my parents seldom see me and they give me grief for this but I feel that if I spend more time at the house I will lose some of my clients or my grades will fall. Also some days my work will run late. I was doing some of my independent work this semester until 1:00am and did not start on the model that was due the next day until after I was done. Some of my classmates see me sacrificing school for work and they give me grief for that too. It seems to me that no matter what I do, society is pushing and pressuring me to be and do something else. I am disappointed with society because it cannot celebrate and give me one task to take care of. Instead it pushes and pulls me in every direction and I can not find the proper balance.

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Daniel Libeskind's argument for the Twin Towers Project of New York City is more about memory than it is a memorial. This new structure will be a foundation of a flashback; architecture will be the memory which will hold New York together. The history of the Twin Towers will carry out many things to the site once it is as complete as it is empty now. It will not mock the existing site. This is a new rhetorical view of architecture. The outcome of 911 is not in a state of aftermath. We are still on a terror alert, so the new style of this building will be odd. Libeskind referred to the Holocaust Museum in Germany, which we can look back and say: yes it occurred, and has passed. The memory of 911 is still ongoing today in the news, so how can he design a piece of architecture for the site that is still alive in the event that happened there?

I think America is jumping the gun on this. New York just wants a contemporary architect star to design a Memorial, and Libeskind will not pass up this opportunity of his lifetime. The new Architecture that results from this is simply not ready. The word 'ready' means something to be brought about before its time. I think since the readiness is not there it will not have a successful outcome. Libeskind mentioned to the crowd this is the first time that this will be done. When he made this statement, it seemed that he himself what not sure of the response, of the public....

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Sometimes when you start to draw your ideas on paper, your sketch becomes alive. It takes shape and it slowly tells a story from beginning to end. Then your next move is to study models. You start with one and end up with 10. The process of your design is now rising up from paper into a three dimensional aspect. These images along with light and motion are the essential points of Frank Gehry's design techniques. Gehry is more than an architect from his generation. His vision goes beyond the aesthetic and technical restrictions of the twentieth century. He is inventive, and welcomes any challenge and surpasses them. Many may not like his designs but once he finished the Guggenheim Museum, I believe he crossed that line of acceptance from many people. Gehry's significance lies in the process he goes through to realise his project? How do I differ? What is my own approach? Will I ever have one? When I come up with an idea for a project, I always start with a study model, rather than a sketch.

Why? Because by the time I'm done with the project, I have about ten to fifteen study models. I would rather see my process by looking at my study models than a sketch. I believe they tell a story. But what story? And where from? So naturally when I see Gehry's process, I am seduced by his study models. Is it a seduction? He calls architecture an "Open-ended " system that allows freedom to interpreta-

tion and change. He sees it as a main door to understanding. He also has a relentless search for perfection. It is what fascinates him. “I still try to achieve it,” he says “but you know, it doesn’t work.” It’s linked to the belief that perfection is possible and that you can improve with practice.

His first metal building was the Donna O’Neill barn. He said, “This is interesting for me, because I can now make a very rough sculptural shape.” This is when he started to use corrugated metal. The beginning of exploration in how light is dealt with. His early work was rectilinear because he believes the way to improve it, is to start baby steps. His work started to turn into a sculpture. It started with the Barcelona fish. The reason why he drew the fish in the first place was the reason he calls Post Modern games. He explored and researched fish in libraries, and learned how the scales worked. He looked at fish in the ponds and the sense of movement fascinated him.

What I love about Gehry is when he comes up with an idea; he completes it, no matter what it takes. He finds ways to emerge from the traditional ways of design and develop his own art. Take the Guggenheim Museum as an example. He states that he used to be a symmetrical freak and a grid freak. Then he realized that those were chains, the ones that Frank Lloyd Wright was chained to. There was no freedom in it for him. When he designed the floor plan for the museum, he didn’t consciously do it, but it intuitively evolved. He loved it. One of the challenges he took was its grand scale of the building to be humane. He fit it to the city. He took on the bridge, the river and the boats, and tried to scale the building to the city. He realized this was an opportunity to make something in the tradition of the city as a metaphor which led to the use of the ramps and the stairs as a kind of metaphorical city. What I love about Gehry...

I love this manifesto. This is a response to the SCUM manifesto by Valerie Solanis. (Keywords: Incapable – insecure – unable – pussy – incomplete – inadequate – daddy nb. Valerie Solanis shot Andy Warhol) It is full of guts, opinion, and holds back nothing. Written in the late sixties the SCUM manifesto is one-eyed, hell bent, and full of piss and vinegar. Valerie Solanis states from the very beginning, her feelings toward the male sex and continues to do so with vitriol and aggression right through this 11,000 + word epic. She blames the plight of society completely on men and leaves no room for the continued existence of man save those who promote the ideals of the SCUM manifesto. For example: “Retaining the male has not even the dubious purpose of reproduction. The male is a biological accident: the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, it has an incomplete set of chromosomes. In other words, the male is an incomplete female, a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage. To be male is to be deficient, emotionally limited; maleness is a deficiency disease and males are emotional cripples.” It is written as it would be spoken, which makes it exciting for me to read because I literally imagine her on a ladder in central park, screaming and pointing at the men who walk by and calling to action all the women who pass by to abandon their male counterparts and take control of the country and then the world. Her SCUM society are all the women who refuse to accept maleness as the ruling elite. The ‘don’t give a shit’ women who ignore the suburbs, the kitchen, and all the ‘typically’ accepted chores and duties expected of them by the man. And I agree. Why should women be expected to stay at home, cook, and clean for the man? That’s crap. The man can clean up his own mess.

I like very much the little interjections as in the paragraph below [“which few men have”] and [“that he’s one of.”] that are peppered throughout the manifesto. “Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service. Even assuming mechanical proficiency, which few men have, he is, first of all, incapable of...” “The ‘hippy’ babbles on about individuality, but has no more conception

of it than any other man. He desires to get back to Nature, back to the wilderness, back to the home of furry animals that he's one of..”

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Cedric Price's manifesto “Non- Plan” gives the impression that the plan may not be the solution. Without a plan you leave what happens entirely up to nature. This gives every condition a chance to evolve. Even cities without city planning allow every area of the city the ability to change. There will first be tension as the city grows without guidance. But tension is good. Tension is what produces conflict and conflict gives reasons to change and reasons to evolve. The city then develops its own solutions that will perfectly fit it and fit no other place. By planning you assume a perfect condition and in this there is no conflict and thus no opportunities for evolution. I feel that I have not lived my life properly, not because I have been planning but because I have a fear that the plan will fail. I have been working, practicing, and living because of my fear of death not my love of life. I normally look to the future and I do not see the perfect path. Often I see no path at all. If I could just allow my self to adjust to no planning and have faith in the future I think that I would be fine. But there is a paranoia that I will waste my life which forces me to look for a plan. Part of me realizes that life leaves you with nothing but wasted time. And in the end, one dead man is no better than another. The impacts that you will make on society then will be lost. There is nothing you can do about this so why can't I relax and enjoy life? To design is to create something, to destroy something is to kill; two metaphors with opposite meanings. Yes, it is easy to destroy but to create is to expand your mind to the next level; this is architecture.

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Sex, crime and architecture - on George Bataille - I don't feel a unique connection with George Bataille as many of his confessions I don't share, but still I am

fascinated by his writings and more so the individual himself. Who he was, what did he do, who did he talk to, and what were his experiences growing up that we do not know of? That is to say what was his inner speech? If what we read is his outer speech then, assuming there is an inner dialogue that remains 'inside,' I am ever more curious as to that. Or could we say that he differentiated not between an 'inner' and 'outer' speech but had only a 'speech?' I think that could be possible. What attracted me at first to writings like this is the idea that: "if you can think it, then it's probably happened over the course of history." So I began to imagine all these crazy scenarios and think to myself, of all the billions of people that have walked this earth over the years then surely, what I just thought of has probably happened before? So then the challenge for these writers perhaps is to think of something so wild, so fanciful and ridiculous that it probably never has happened before. And that's it. In architecture too? I think even the most extreme writings of de Sade and Bataille have in one way or another actually happened. Not by them acting out their thoughts, but just because of human nature. We could then ask of the thoughts that we have not had, have they happened already too? Bataille reminds me of the Marquis de Sade and from what I have read he looked very closely at his writings. There is an obvious connection here on the surface but admittedly I haven't read enough of either to compare and contrast their thoughts on other things such as politics and economics.

I think de Sade, being the originator of such written works on a historical level is for me the more significant. Bataille's work is equally shocking in content but less colourful in delivery. I don't find all these stories to be particularly easy to read nor do I find all of it that enjoyable but I am interested in knowing what's out there and how far people have pushed the literary boundary within the realm of sex and crime.

On calculators: when I was 10 years old I thought everyone had a calculator. My father explained to me that calculators were too expensive to have when he was growing up. Several decades later just about everyone has a calculator. You can pick one up at a convenience store for a couple of bucks. For my generation the computer is the new calculator. When I was growing up a computer was too expensive, I could not afford one, I had to travel to the local library in San Antonio to use a word processor. Ten years later everyone just about has a computer in their home. To the point now that they are almost giving them away. The computer is contemporary architecture before its time. Many people are afraid to use a computer. It is like an architect trying a new style for the first time. It is dangerous to experiment with something for the first time, because you don't have any control.

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What has "Howl" done for me? Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' introduced me to the idea that success in life is something more than what is publicly accepted. Now after reading it I find that that it is alright if I do not make something, or what society sees as something special, of myself. Personal success is what will truly help one live to be happy. I often find myself in a position where it seems to me that others care more about what is happening to me than I myself do. I think that this is because I have had so many things going on for so long that I now have trouble seeing what is important. After Howl I still do not know what is important but now I feel that I can leave something behind without fear that it is what will turn me away from success. I am comforted by the fact that some of the greatest minds of the world are recognized but are still nothing more than homeless.

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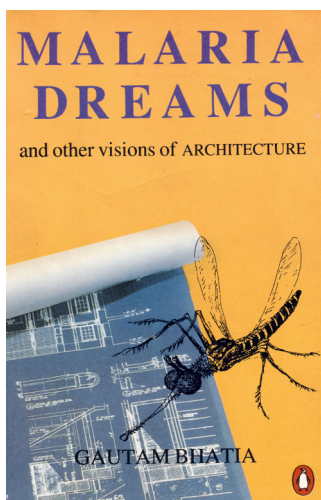
Discourse is not a Compromise, a professor once quoted in class. I don't actually know if I agree with this, but maybe there is some significance behind it. The archaic meaning of 'discourse' is the process or power of reasoning. A more actual, flattened meaning of the word is a 'discussion' or 'conversation'. However, as the professor was an architect perhaps he believed that to compromise a building you should not talk about it and reason it out, but build the solution to create a compromise. I'm finding it somewhat hard to understand and agree with the professor's quote, but if I look at the one idea presented, build not talk, I somewhat understand. However you have to write and communicate many problems in architecture and life before you ever start building the compromise. Without communication architecture seems to lose all meaning. What is a building if it doesn't communicate the results of the program?

The end of architecture?

8

Imaginary Letters *to the Author of Malaria Dreams*

Dear Mr. Bhatia • Dear Author • Dear Other Visions of Architecture • Dear Castles of Lies • Mr. B • Author • Dear Malaria Dreams • Oh Dear • Architect • It concerns me • Dear Gautam • Dear Builder of Lies • Dear Lucky One



Everytime I saw another building, or drew a building, everytime I built something, I knew I had lost something of the original intention, my own architecture...As an architect I was always looking for meanings and messages that were never there... people required buildings; they did not require architecture.

Gautam Bhatia

*I had long liked the book written by the Indian architect, a friend of mine, Gautam Bhatia, *Malaria Dreams and Other Visions of Architecture*. Along with Bhatia's own wit, the essays were I felt extraordinary for the way he looked at his own skill and indifference toward the architecture that he had to build if he was to gain any clients. I made the mistake of thinking the students would understand this, even be sympathetic to his honesty. Instead, ignorant of conditions in India and perhaps challenged by Bhatia's searing indictment of himself, many of them began to lecture and hector Bhatia. It was as if they were offended by his honesty, and by so doing he had offended their choice of profession. Were these statements and arrogances part of their education or part of their dreams for a profession which was doing its best to blind them to a future life? "You may have ignored your client's needs - and there are probably more like you out there - however you are not representative of the state of architecture." Was this representative of the state of architecture out there, in Zetaville, in Texas, or further afield? The question remains.*

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Dear Mr. Bhatia 'Architecture has been contaminated by knowledge...' you write in your book *Malaria Dreams*. There is a certain amount of weeding out that is required to reach a 'more enlightened state of architecture.' This all seems to be a process. There is a collection of knowledge that has increased a large degree in the past decades. Architecture is generally slow... an art behind the time. It is always playing catch-up due to the time it takes to learn new ideas, implement these ideas into buildings and have the buildings built. There is a process that is required of sorting out; sorting out at the personal level, the professional level, with the clients,

and within the society.

Can we really criticize the confusion? Can we bypass the steps required to grow? We have seen in history many times that skipping steps only causes problems. There is a natural process. The incredibly pessimistic connotation that you demonstrate is an easy skepticism presented in a very poetic use of negative terms. It is presented as a self-confession, but I speculate that it was written for an audience, as an example of a real change in thinking, not just a 'nice' idea presented in a text. But this could also be a simple statement of awareness, if not for the negative slant. As a statement of awareness this may be more accurate; a statement calling for the awareness of the abundance of knowledge.

We need to address the issues that have presented themselves as issues and move on. The possibilities of change from the awareness can be implied and directed. But does this slant not imply a prejudice? It can be interpreted as passion or it can be seen as skepticism that accompanies prejudice.

By the way, I have been impressed with how I have started approaching statements and ideas. I have always considered myself able to make a distinction between what is needed what is not, what is presented in prejudice and what is presented outside prejudice. Most of this without really thinking about it; but my awareness of this 'awareness' has changed the way I approach it. I am rather impressed with the simple idea you've presented. This has brought these ideas to the front of my mind.

My thanks

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Dear Author "I constructed farm houses, knowing nothing of land of animals, soils or plants. I designed for the blind without a care for their handicap." It's inspiring that you are willing to admit to your mistakes, but I wonder why you fell into this habit. Was it for the money, was it for personal goals? I feel that the most

important objective for architecture is function. Design or no design the function must be present.

“People I knew could be made to suit my own image of architecture.” I feel that the building should be made to fit the image of architecture. People don’t change, however the design of a building of an architect can and will. What is a greatly designed building that doesn’t meet the requirements of the inhabitants? It becomes an object; that is all.

“The need to reach some heightened level of artistic gratification itself signalled the failure of architecture, and my own failure as an architect.” Goals are the main reasons we as humans have reached what we have to day. However, we must not stray from the true meaning that lies behind our goals. To be a great architect one must not just produce amazing buildings with no care to the occupants. Function must exist in all buildings. This relates to your “Castles of lies”.

“Drowning in your own beliefs” seems to be a sign of your misguided goal. Reaching a goal by creating a matrix around the world is just distasteful. Obviously you didn’t have an excess of knowledge, you just weren’t using it the proper way. Try to remember that all architecture must solve ‘function’. If it doesn’t there is a better way to design it.

≈

Dear Other Visions of Architecture Although I agreed with you on some of the ideas you illustrated about architecture, not all of it was true. First, not all imaginations or thoughts are considered to be false because in architecture things can only be right or wrong if supported by proofs. Architects obtain their ideas from research and references to past experience. Some new architects use their own beliefs and create an environment which their characters will fit in. Later architects learned they had to understand what is given and try to discover the surroundings,

the people and how it all relates. After researching all the facts, then the architects will convey a conceptual design that corresponds to what was given. Before making the final plan, other things such as ADA and building codes are to be considered. Good architects should take into account the handicapped in addition to the regular people. It is true that architects are overwhelmed with knowledge, analysis, and theories. Architects use that knowledge and theories to apply to their design. It is never how much you know, but how you utilize those thoughts. Everyone has desires and dreams that they want to accomplish. Architects today, people I know, still have that motivation to achieve and hope to comply with. They want to express their designs for the public to enjoy and benefit from. Once the dreams are fulfilled, then none of the hopes will be misused and all will be successful.

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Dear Castles of Lies I understand that you used architecture to build your castles of lies, for the public good. I also understand that the public dictates architecture but you yourself had the opportunity to change this ‘bad’ concept. Architecture is no longer architecture, it is something else. Today, money dictates architecture.

I understand you designed for the blind without a real care for their handicap. This is common. Many architects do this all the time but you are brave enough to admit it. It is hard to interpret your words; the blind need a place of their own. By the blind I hope you mean your clients, for many are blind to Architecture itself. It is our job as Architects to inform them, to open their eyes, to see the details we can create.

The daily battles of Architecture in your practice - you say - are contaminated by poor knowledge, which makes it a battle of money and power. It is easy to get caught up in this realm of money and power. In order to avoid this, your faith must lie with architecture, not the temptations of riches. You reached your heightened

level of gratification; this signalled the failure of architecture, and you as an Architect. You reached your level of satisfaction, and were happy with that.

I hate to inform you of your faults but you never stop testing yourself and theories of architecture. If you follow this then there will never be any gratification or failure. It was just one more seductive look, a lie everyone wants to be somebody they are not. Through this you found the truth about yourself; wanting what's not yours. So you made it happen in your world. I see that your world is an illusion of your own success in your creation of Architecture. It is not bad to do this, but we make our own decisions in life. It's like *The Road Less Travelled* by Robert Frost. Many people choose the easy way, and others take the road less travelled. The other path is one that no one takes; the one that needs you to be honest, humble, and face the journey of being 'you'.

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Mr. B With all due respect, I have a few bones to pick with you. I understand that you have gone through an amazing epiphany concerning your life's work. It seems you have some rather large emotions attached to your transformation from an egotistical, pretentious, conceited architect into the enlightened person who somehow broke the chains and escaped from Plato's cave. Like a recovering alcoholic, you might feel that your diatribe against the state of architecture is a necessary part of your purification process, that somehow by getting on your soap box and bearing witness to the experiences of your life you will hopefully save the rest of us and improve the world. Well, Mr. B. I don't need your condescension. While you spent your years being blinded by arrogance, there are thousands of architects who spend their careers being considerate and thoughtful; these are careful individuals who get to know the needs of their clients before designing for them.

There are architectural organizations around the globe devoted to solving social

dilemmas like creating housing for the impoverished peoples of the world; there are many improving the environment through intelligent design and reining in unnecessary urban sprawl. You may have ignored your clients' needs - and there are probably more like you out there - however you are not representative of the state of architecture.

Like a cult leader commanding his flock to listen to no one else, you state that "knowledge, apprehension and analysis" are what corrupted architecture. You argue that by categorizing, characterizing and interpreting architecture we have somehow "stunted" and "hid its growth," allowing it to be manipulated by "money and power".

This sounds like you chose the wrong circle of business acquaintances, Mr. B. We all have choices to make in life. You chose to take the easy road and only thought of yourself, allowing yourself the indulgence of putting your head in the sand and claiming ignorance (brought on by too much education!?).

Too much education led you to no longer think of the clients' best interests when you designed your structures. Well, you made that choice. You dug that hole and personally stuck your head into it. When you looked at each project for the first time, you made the choice to not take the time to get to know your client. You chose to ignore your responsibilities as both a human and a professional and make the job easier and faster for you so you could make more money with less work. Not everyone is as lazy, selfish or easily duped by the supposed wonders of the dollar bill, sir.

The guilt you feel is real and you deserve to feel it. But don't try to make yourself feel better or less culpable by blaming the state of architecture (and even knowledge itself!) for the way you are. Your self-pity is not compelling, nor is it attractive. Take responsibility for your mistakes, don't blame the entire industry. You are like an obese person who blames the fast food industry for giving them the option to purchase a triple-bacon-cheeseburger combo, super sized, every day, for lunch.

The knowledge you discuss that felt as though you were “drowning in your own beliefs” - it was not your beliefs you were drowning in, it was your delusions of grandeur. You made yourself think you were too important to connect yourself with the reality of the client. You were too powerful and educated to be willing to get on the low level of the farmer and see what it was like to live in his shoes for a day or two before building a farmhouse. Architecture did not do this to you, Mr. B. your ego did, and in return you did the same to architecture. Thank goodness there are people out there who are modest and truly compassionate, who are willing to fight the good fight without trying to blame others for what is wrong in society. They are the state of architecture. You are simply what makes their job harder when you give a bad reputation to architects as a whole. Try less talking and more action from now on, or at least take ownership of your behaviour when you do decide to complain.

Enjoy enlightenment. I hope it serves you well.

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Author Prepare yourself - your fort of lies is just about to be knocked down. You might say that you built and designed without knowing anything about the land or having a care for the blind but unfortunately you are terribly wrong. To design a structure, it's a must to know about the surroundings, the history and who it is for. The gratifying thing is all a person designs will always be in their mind; it is a constant learning knowledgeable experience.

When has architecture been contaminated by knowledge? If you are talking about good knowledge, then I would have to agree with you. But if not, it is completely the opposite. Architecture is taught and learned in its pure form. It involves knowledge that is acquired through those that are already learned. There is an excess of knowledge, no matter in what subject. There should always be room for

learning especially in architecture because it is always changing and evolving.

The work that you had done, you describe as lies. I'm getting the impression that you are losing the real reason why you are an architect and are too involved in what people might say. As a reminder, an architect is not only a designer but an author. An author writes and creates beautiful things; authors write poetry, make things pleasant. They are the beginners, originators and the creators of everything. You have expressed yourself the wrong way. Your works as you know reflect who you are and what you believe in.

Truly, there is an imperfect world but there is never an imperfect half-truth. It is either true and real or a lie. Everyone's work will be imperfect to others. But while you design and finish a project, you either know or not whether you did your best and have good reasons behind it all. You alone are in control of your thoughts, ideas, beliefs and your work. I hope I have made you think differently about architecture. I know by writing this to you, I am more proud of being an architect student and eager to become an architect soon.

≈

Dear Malaria Dreams I was enlightened by your interpretation on architecture. Your bold statements painted a pessimistic picture. I asked myself: does this perception represent the reality of architecture? Although I believe that some of these issues exist, I do not agree with the basis of the argument. Below is a list of notions which I find dishonest. Throughout the excerpts there is an overtone of mockery. The claim that you are ignorant, "constructed farmhouses knowing nothing," is found to be extreme. An architect is an educated professional known for being aware of their surroundings. After reading this I was surprised to see the contradictory statements that "architecture is contaminated by knowledge" and then that an excess of it leads to despair. Without knowledge architecture could

neither grow nor exist. Moreover, it is the interpretation of knowledge that is often contaminated not the knowledge itself. The amount of knowledge one has cannot cause despair. Despair is the possible result of self-interpretation.

The notion that “I was as indifferent to their presence as they were to their surroundings” - is this not an assumption that people are apathetic to their environment? The next notion, “like the whore...it had turned its painted skin to the street,” I do not feel that “it” as in “architecture” has compromised its principles; that is left to the individual. I am referring here to compromise with the negative connotation. You then go on to say that “gratification itself signalled the failure of architecture itself.” The idea of “gratification” makes me want to put the failure on man and not architecture because gratification is selfish. Lastly, you say, “that all I had done...was only a lie, a symbolic language, a substitute for an immeasurable, unlearned aspect that had constantly eluded me.” I disagree because architecture is always striving for perfection. Therefore, it is vast and open ended, progress short of a closed answer is not failure.

Although I disagree with several of your notions, I enjoyed reading the essay. Your confessions on architecture bring up many interesting issues which are worth investigating.



Oh Dear After reading the passage about your work, I have to disagree with you on several points. First you say that “through falsification and pretence you learned to build your own castles of lies”. Did you really build castles of lies? And who are you deceiving- yourself or someone else? You are saying that you have used architecture as a tool for deception, but I do not think that is probable. You also state that architecture “rose all over the place, in the imagination, in the city, on the drawing board, numbing your senses, making you believe that what you were

doing was for the public good, not just the pleasure of your own conceit". Yes, you have produced a lot of work, and sometimes being totally immersed in a subject can be numbing, but you were making architecture for the public good. I know that it can be difficult to separate your ego from your work, but you are working for others not for yourself.

Then you say that "you constructed farmhouses, knowing nothing of the land or animals, soil or plants and designed for the blind knowing nothing of their handicap". This is not possible. You obviously were familiar with the land and the activities of the farm in order to design an appropriate building. And how could you think that you designed for the blind without caring about their handicap. You have eyes - either you see or you don't. I imagine your world to be as visual as mine. I know you had to put yourself in the shoes of your clients when you were designing for them. They rely on their other senses and I'm sure that you considered that with great care.

You also say that "architecture had been contaminated by knowledge, by apprehension and analysis". How could architecture be contaminated by knowledge, apprehension and analysis? Analysis helps to further understand architecture. Maybe you are saying that knowledge, apprehension, and analysis by others can contaminate your work? But it's your work and will always be your work. And once you've made your work public of course it will be analyzed, etc. You just have to accept that your work will be reviewed, critiqued and interpreted by others. They are entitled to their own opinions after all. You just have to be true to your work and to yourself and not let the opinions of others taint your own truths.

Then you say that "warts full of pus had grown on its surfaces, hiding and stunting its growth". Are you referring back to the public's interpretation of your work? You see their interpretation as a mask over your work. You are being too sensitive. There is nothing growing on the surface of your work. It is not being hidden or stunted. This is a matter of opinion again. Do not let the opinions of your critics

influence how you see your work.

Next you state that in your “own experience of its dismembered states, you sensed that you, along with other architects, had begun to despair with an excess of knowledge, and that you were all drowning in your beliefs”. Is it even possible to have too much knowledge? Knowledge is a good thing. You would be more likely to drown in your own beliefs if you were ignorant or closed-minded than you would be if you were knowledgeable.

Your statement “the need to reach some heightened level of artistic gratification itself signalled the failure of architecture, and your own failure as an architect” is altogether not true. You have not failed as an architect, nor has your architecture failed. Your work should be artistically gratifying. As an architect you should strive for better architecture which should bring you a heightened level of gratification.

You say that “even the anarchy that you enacted in the forms of extant buildings was tainted with falsehood, for it merely represented a sort of surface rebellion.” If you designed something with anarchy as the theme, then why are you negating its efficacy?

Then you say that “you knew that all you had done in all your work, all the evidence that lay accumulated about you, was only a lie, a symbolic language, a substitute for an immeasurable, unlearned aspect that had constantly eluded you.” Your work is not a lie. It is not a symbol of an unlearned aspect that has eluded you. You are a learned man, and your work is a culmination of the knowledge and experience you had at the time it was made.

Your statement that “your artistry itself was a delusion, and your only success had been the creation of an illusion of perfection in the solitary depictions that failed to demonstrate the immutable nature of your art” is wrong. Your work is real. It is not a delusion.

I hope that you will consider my point of view.

≈

Misguided Architect What you have done is not Architecture. When designing a structure you must think of those who will be using your structures; if a person is blind you must plan around it, do what you must to do to help them have a higher quality of life. Windows may be for those who have eyes; possibly there is another way to experience the weather without sight. This then is what you must do for those who are blind. Your work will not truly be great if you do not see and care for the environment and people around you. The warts that have grown on architecture are the results of those who create for reasons like money or other personal gains; the puss is the structures that do not attend to the surroundings.

Architect, if you do not look and see what you are creating around you eventually will find yourself surrounded in the same. The world is filled with things that have meaning. If not, meaninglessness will be passed down through generations and taught to all of those that follow. Please prevent the further contamination of the world of architecture. It is important for me to have this world to possess some of the purity that it once had.

≈

It concerns me that someone such as yourself has spent your life committed to architecture and yet you are so upset about the state of it. You claim that the growth of architecture has been stunted, when in all actuality it is progressing quite fine, with technology that was not available yesterday. This allows us to push the limit on what architecture can be. You claim that architecture has been categorized, characterized, and interpreted. While all of this is true, it is not a bad thing. Like any art, when it grows to such an enormous size, it must be categorized or it will be viewed as a cluster and confusing. All great work is interpreted, from Mi-

chelangelo to Frank Lloyd Wright to Pablo Picasso. It is interpreted because there is an interest stimulated in the public's mind. It is better to stimulate someone's mind rather than create something bland. You somewhat contradict your views when you say that you were, "indifferent to their presence as they were to their surroundings." You are upset that your clients are oblivious to their surroundings yet you say that their surroundings are analyzed too much. This makes no sense to me. You contradict yourself once again when you claim that you "had begun to despair with an excess of knowledge, and were drowning in your beliefs."

This implies that you have learned everything within the field, yet you contradict this later when you write that "I knew that all I had done in my work was only a lie, an unlearned aspect that has constantly eluded me." You can never learn too much and art never stops growing. Not only are you upset with the state of architecture, you are bored with what you are doing. You feel you are pigeon-holed in what you should be doing. Instead of being so bored, attempt to challenge yourself. Challenging yourself will always stimulate your own mind and more often than not, it will stimulate others as well. There is nothing wrong with heightening artistic thought. You should not feel bad when you push the envelope and try new things.



Dear Gautam While realizing the confessional quality of your writing in *Malaria Dreams*, I must disagree with you on several issues. The pessimism of the selected passage seems to be not only unnatural but also phony. It is highly dramatized. Possibly, it was written during a time when one hates what one does, overlooking the original drive or "the good times". Your pithy example of designing for the blind without any care for them evokes great emotion toward the blind. During a recent discussion, Edwin Chan, the assistant of the architect Frank Gehry,

brought up the great idea of architecture as an 'emotional exercise' rather than an 'intellectual one'. It seems in your case it was an intellectual exercise. People with disabilities deserve designs that not only meet their requirements but go far and beyond the required. It is a design opportunity. Why did you take the job if you were not passionate about it? If it is for the money, then you are part of this money-driven society.

There is no time to live. There might be an abundance of knowledge, but only if we expose ourselves to it. I relate to this issue but only think of myself as ignorant when I let it drown me. One must be strong to handle architecture. Whilst writing this letter, I am questioning myself if I have the much-needed strength. Your letter almost suggests a negative reply. But then, I think, one simply walks away.

Don't blame it on the architecture. I refuse to accept your stand. Your disappointment is rather a personal attack. While still believing in architecture's potential, I refuse to give up. Meanwhile – cheers.

≈

Dear Builder of Lies After reading a section from the book, *Malaria Dreams and Other Visions of Architecture*, I would like to draw a conclusion that you are perhaps searching for something through architecture and at the same time lying to yourself. If this is so, then I feel I cannot agree with your experience and approach.

You use architecture to build lies. Why do you want to lie and to whom? You do architecture for your own pleasure, but what about others? Things you use everyday were made by someone for someone. You are rather selfish. If you do not care for the handicapped, how can you design a building for them in the first place? You design buildings without thinking about the people who will be using them. If this is the issue, then what comfort will the people feel? Basically it is a

structure for the sake of pleasure and art.

The imaginative individuals were made to suit your image of architecture. These people were indifferent to their surroundings. So, if the people suit your image of architecture and they are indifferent to their surroundings does that mean that you do not care for the surroundings either? Could it be that people are indifferent because you do not care for them?

I agree that architecture is used as a game of money and power, but I do not believe that excess of knowledge brings despair. Maybe because to me excess of knowledge is not possible with today's changing world. Every day there are new discoveries, and with that, design and architecture change.

It seems that you see architecture as a piece of art that may be hung on the wall; but what about function, its involvement with people and everyday life? And what is this aspect that has avoided you?

It is somewhat hard to write this because I do not fully understand what you have said. Perhaps it is because I do not have your experience. Reading your words I feel like there is something to architecture that I do not know about, some sort of secret perhaps. Maybe it is because I am only in my third year of studies and I do not have enough experience and knowledge. Would it help if someone else told me what they thought about your writing? I don't know.

≈

Dear Lucky One I write to you in regards to an excerpt from your book 'Malaria Dreams and Other Visions of Architecture' and the notions that have formed your honesty. In the opening paragraph you mention creating architecture for the pleasure of your own conceit and not for the public good. I ask you what is wrong with doing something for yourself. After all, our actions are governed by and for ourselves. Would it not be delusional to think otherwise? We are self-interested creatures and even doing things 'for the public good' is at its root for oneself. I ask

you what is wrong with striving to reach some heightened level of artistic gratification. This is not a failure though but rather a realisation that you are a creator, and have a need to create. Many people pass by life ignoring these compulsions only to regret not having pursued artistic gratification.

You are one of the lucky ones.

In suggesting false intentions and surface rebellion I feel you overlook the fact that however false your anarchic intentions may seem *now* they are in fact the realised intentions of *then* and therefore the true intention at that time. Your intentions may appear different now, which is fine, but then what counts is the 'then' not now.

You mention also your work as a substitute for an 'unlearned aspect that had constantly eluded' you. This ties in to what I said in my previous comments, in that you know a certain amount at a certain time and no more. You can't fault yourself for only knowing so much. The result is a culmination of your knowledge at that time and of this nothing more can be asked.

Following this you write about expressing yourself; your own imperfect half-truths to an imperfect world. An imperfect world surely calls for imperfect half-truths. You are, like all of us, a product of this imperfect world.

A perfect product!

We are all perfect products of the imperfect world. Good, bad, and otherwise this is what the world is responsible for and there is no escaping that fact. Also consider that if half-truths signal failure then imperfect half-truths could indeed be success.

Artistry cannot be a delusion. Art created for any reason [yourself or others] is still art. The creation of illusion is artistic beauty.

Consider where you are now and where you were. It is indeed quite probable that you would not have been able to arrive at the now without having been in the 'then'. And it is this 'then' which allows your 'now' to exist in the way it does.

9

I am Architecture : this is me

first you must know • the beautiful game • Margaritas for studio •
the swiss army chainsaw • TO PORT or NOT TO PORT • fleeting
glances • I have written • with all this 'education' • I have some
other things on my mind • we aren't glazed hams! • everything i
need to know • I really think we should • t_dizz_oh says • [I
COULDN'T ASK MY MOTHER TO EDIT THIS]



In other words, I thought I knew, in general, what
the students were doing, and also what they were
thinking and feeling. I see now that my picture of
reality was almost wholly false. Why didn't I see
this before?

John Holt

First you must know that I don't especially care about buildings. I don't get all reverential over some holy architectural promenade with the rays of light, sounds of running water, and rustling leaves in all the right moments. I recently went to this little pocket park in downtown Fort Worth wedged between city hall and the Trinity River. It was delightful in all the textbook ways—nice vantage points among the trees, running water following the path. There were homeless people living there, and I thought to myself it was good that a place like this existed for them. Other couples and families wandered in and out of this park. It's the sort of environment where you smile and say hello to strangers passing by. We excluded the homeless people of course—they weren't there. Our eyes caught glimpse of them and then looked away as though changing the subject in conversation.

School teachers are trained to call on every student in a class. There are court cases over teachers habitually overlooking particular students. But no homeless person is ever going to file a suit because you didn't look him in the eye. It is a defense mechanism that I'd probably resort to if I encountered a bear and wished to escape unharmed. As soon as I feel safe I imagine myself with that person, my hand on their shoulder asking them about themselves. It's like they've shared something with you already in their dilapidated appearance, while baby strollers, polo shirts and pleasant faces tell nothing. They all sit apart from one another, while we are reticent to get out of each other's reach—they have a space of silence around themselves fifteen feet in all directions.

I am gripped by the space between the homeless man and me. The space that pulses with anxiety, frailty, awkwardness, or precariousness. This is the best way I can illustrate myself as architecture. I am architecture; this is me.

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The beautiful game ‘my’ italian-spanish beautiful game stuff? I was under the impression that Brits and Americans, not just the Mediterraneans and the Brazilians, thought of football as the beautiful game. Actually, when I was 14 and then the following year, I played in a tournament in Portsmouth, and during that time I came across the brutal aspect of UK football. But I also thought you all play with a characteristic flair as well and I certainly noticed a markedly distinct style of coaching. I am glad you wrote with this request, as I have been looking for a chance to vent on many of the exact topics that you’ve outlined here. Actually one of the things I’m halfway planning is a small book on architecture from the point of view of a lower-middle-class student of it. I just got a little discouraged when you said that it is very difficult to make a living as a writer. It wasn’t really news; I have heard stories about all forms of publication, most notably that of music - second- and third-hand stories, mind you, and in published text at that. It’s auspicious that you ask me since I have been struggling with what to do with my life now that I’ve graduated (again), this time as an architect.

≈

Margaritas for studio - the cheap mass production version: add 1 can frozen limeade to blender pitcher, fill the limeade can (now empty) with tequila and add to blender pitcher, add 1/2 limeade can of orange liqueur (triple sec) to pitcher; fill

pitcher with ice and blend to desired consistency. However if you have good tequila: 2 shots tequila, 2 shots fresh lime juice, 1 shot orange liqueur - put in a cocktail shaker with some ice cubes and shake vigorously. Pour into a nice glass and enjoy. Then ignore the moment when the tormentors and priests of the school of architecture trash your studio project. Architecture is wider than everything we've been taught.

≈

THE SWISS-ARMY CHAINSAW (a user's manual) - AVOIDING THE ISSUE

- Before things get too confusing I'll try to explain what it is we're doing exactly. Many questions have been posed and I will try and answer them if I can:

-What are these "objects"? You have asked whether they represent a paneling system. That is the most accurate conjecture at this point. We aren't necessarily assigning a concrete function to these objects just yet, because we are trying to avoid preconceptions that would come from doing so. In essence we are designing a system that could have several possible applications.

-We are not concerned with the scale of the object yet (in terms of its scale in actuality). The only scale we are working with is the PROPORTION of the FedEx box it will be shipped in. (13" x 11 1/2" x 2 3/8" for each object). The montages you will see reflect the 11 1/2" x 13" dimension. Much like how we haven't determined the applications of the objects, we have not set a specific scale, for this will come from the possibilities discovered after manufacture.

-We are not selecting materials initially. Because we have little knowledge of the capabilities of milling, we were hoping that those familiar with it could offer suggestions, which you have already started to do. Basically, we are providing purely

conceptual information at this point. We have concepts taken from our Barcelona projects that we are using as rule systems to affect an ‘object’ within the constraints of a Fed Ex box. We are designing 3 initial objects that can be labeled A, B, and C, but are capable of being duplicated and connected to form a tile system (or panels if you will).

A connectivity diagram is shown below.

C A B C A B C A B C

A B C A B C A B C A

B C A B C A B C A B

C A B C A B C A B C

A B C A B C A B C A

We are sending you three montages that represent A, B, and C, respectively.

These are 2-dimensional, thus there is room for much interpretation as to how these can be represented in 3 dimensions (the missing dimension is the 2 3/8” height of the Fed Ex box). With each of the three montages we will send text that represents the additional rules applied by each group to their object.

The ‘rules’ served to set initial parameters we could work with. We began with a set of rules to apply to all three objects, which is where the mention of lines and notches came from in a previous post. The purpose of these was to maintain a sense of continuity between A, B, and C. Then each group designed their object according to additional rules from their Barcelona project, while still following the initial rule set for all objects.

We will also send an image of how the 3 connect, however the details of those physical connections are left to speculation. Your response to the image already displayed is exactly the type of input we are hoping for, physical manifestations of

our concepts. By Friday we will also send a matrix of these objects according to the connectivity diagram seen above. This will offer possibilities of how we see the system overall, and what relationships begin to form when the 3 original objects are duplicated and tiled.

I hope this starts to clear up some of the confusion we are experiencing on both ends. I know that this information is rather vague, but that is somewhat intentional. With this collaboration we are allowing reinterpretation from both sides, thus everything we do leaves room for further input.

.....

imagine a library that contains only one book... or at least only one original. the rest are all duplicates of the first. the covers might get flashier or bolder, but further inspection reveals that they all say the same thing.

≈

TO PORT or NOT TO PORT Death Cube K – LoRez skyline – Almost a civilian – Venice Decompressed – Nodal points - The wet warm life in Alison Shires – Narita – Out of control – Whiskey close – collapse of new buildings – Mitzuko – character recognition – Tokyo chapter – Akihabara – Zena – The walls of fame – The Otaku – Monkey boxing – Standover man – Gomi Boy – Here at the Western World – Hotel Di – The Idoru – Hak Nam – That physical thing – a matter of credit – her bad side – the Etruscan – the way things work – the uninvited – Topology – Casino – the testbed of futurity – Mary Alice – work experience – Star – The Business – Candlelight and tears – checking out – Toecutter's Breakfast – La Purissima – Lucky – Fables of the Reconstruction.

≈

fleeting glances i thrive on those moments when, among the crowd, one happens to lock eyes with another and for that instant feels a connection. while i continue walking, continue to be only physically aware of those immediately around me, i am somehow projected through space and time to occupy the proximity of that person who taunted me with their eyes.

and throughout our experience in the 'herd', i think some of us continue to glance at each other. this is what i have held on to throughout the years. the act is marginal, the effect is phenomenal.

to those of you who have dared to look up from your feet and reach out across your field of vision, i hope you'll continue to take solace in the fact that even this simple act serves to separate you from the rest of the mass in motion. and thank you, for the fleeting glances that break up the monotony.

NETWORK COMPANION it's late... i'm still sitting in front of the computer. haven't moved for a long time, except for the constant clicking of my index finger or the occasional brush against the keyboard. it's like a dream from which i cannot awaken.

why do i insist on staring at a matrix of pixels for such long periods of time. i think "why go out into the world when the whole thing is readily available right here". how narrow the view becomes, even worse than tunnel vision.

i've become reclusive. i got afraid, i'm not quite sure of what but i know something haunts my mind. fear of change? fear of the unknown? fear of myself? whatever it is, i can't let it get to the point that it is crippling.

perhaps it was a conscious decision i made. i want to un-make it. hit rewind, edit, cut, paste, copy, whatever tool is necessary. patch up the past, thus repairing the present. it can't be done. all that can be changed is the path.

something has stalled in me. my future lies right outside the door but i'm afraid to traverse the threshold. i can see outside, the door has been open for quite some time, yet a kind of agoraphobia passes over me and i remain completely still.

the elusive problem will reveal itself to me eventually. time is on my side. it has to be.....

≈

I have written most of my paper. I thought it was good. I still think it is good. But here is the problem. The process does not reflect the product. It is a paper about an interior text yet the text itself inherently contradicts the subject. I came to this conclusion after I read N's paper, and was moved (almost to the point of hysteria). Her text was everything that mine wasn't: it was an interior text. It was – in the simplicity and the sound of the words - so pure - like the purity afforded by Herman Hesse or Saramago. I asked her how she did it, and would she teach me? Her reply was the typical self-loathing one, "No! it's bad! So many things are lost in translation!" "What things?" I asked, "All the meaningless nothings? But you scraped away the fat but kept all the richness!"

It was here that I realized that I was rather lost - lost in adverbs and adjectives, commas and semicolons, but never the period. Never that! I cursed myself for reading so many goddamn books, for eating the fruit, for knowing the bad from the good, and the good from the great. So I have decided not to delete this paper. N and I

are now working together on a process of continuous inter-subjective translation. I am translating my paper into Spanish, as she translated hers into English, but only with the knowledge of Spanish that I already have. I know enough Spanish to do this. This is my way of editing and also of experimenting. We are keeping dictionary use to a minimum, so that what we write may be a more pure and simple expression of what we know.

This will be an ongoing process; after the initial translations, we will then translate one another's papers back into the original language, based upon the first translated text, and then repeat the process(1x, 2x, 3x, 4x translated). You see how this goes. We will do this until we reach some kind of stopping point. What will happen? Will I become you or she? Will they become us? Will past become present and non-fiction fiction? Will there be any constants? How will the text change since we anticipate that it will be re-translated? For example, I do not know the Spanish word for "story", but I do know that when written like this in Spanish, "tienda-i" is translated back into English with the phonetic sound "store-ee". In Spanish, the word *tienda* means *store*; the word is equal to: but is not the whole truth. It takes on new meanings. This incongruity is what we are after. But I am not sure why. And Architecture in all this - who knows?

≈

With all this 'education' from my father, strangely I was a really passive person as a kid. I was not the famous kid in school; I was small, and the one that got bullied by the other kids sometimes. I was a skinny and short child for years. Also I am really a shy person. I was never really good at socializing as a kid until I was in college; my years as a child were spent by living in a world of my own creation. I spent my time reading comic books, playing video games, and trying to live in this

idealized world where I ruled everything and the story always went my way. Never had too many friends either; as I said I was shy. I do envy the cool kids, wanted to be like them but never tried or made any attempt. All I did was become the 'cool kid' in my own world, inside my head.

I grew older, smoked when I was 12 and learned to drive when I was around 14 years old, and found my fascination with cars. Not a hobby yet, just somehow amused by it. It always interested me that there is a block with so many explosions happening in it and it could create something that moved a big hunk of metal in a controlled way. The amusement grew and with some more knowledge grew more and more. But I was still the same shy kid that lived in my world so far away from reality. But then something changed. I became somewhat more aggressive, the typical adolescent. I managed through junior high school and got myself into one of the best all-boys private high schools in my country. I never spent my time in high school studying. All I did in school was just try to manage with as little effort as possible and drew, yet I cannot remember when or how I found any interest in drawing. Besides that because I grew more and more aggressive I became the embodiment of trouble. I grew famous, I started living in the reality everyone was living in, not the reality where the population was just me. I changed from this passive person to an ambitious one. By ambitious I do not mean in my hobbies or studies or trying to be the best person I can be; ambition in me was all about gaining power. This thirst of power grew. I started becoming very rebellious to any form of authority. I got into fights for my quest of power, which is not so hard because of the boxing skills I learned since I was a child. I made my name in my city. I had my fame.

But academically, I was an embarrassment in high school. I always thought that all I needed was just to get out of high school, get to some university and get a job in an office, in a tall skyscraper downtown wearing a suit and tie to work. I thought I

was going to get in a business major. I thought everything was already planned for a person in my social class, get into business major, become a worker class, become a robot. But I do like to draw, I like art, it always interested me although maybe not so much. I was not good in math or accounting classes in school so I thought that it may justify me to major in Art in a university. I could be neither an accountant nor an engineer, might as well try in art.

So I go to Texas as an Art major, not so sure that I wanted to be in it, just didn't know what else to do. My first two semesters were okay, rather boring but easy so I had a lot of time on my hands to spend on cars. One of the most impressive events in my first 2 years here was the terrorist attack and war. I can't really tell how this event relates to me but it must have had an effect. When 9/11 happened, I was in my history class, supposed to be a class of more than 100 people, but that day it was especially empty. The classroom was in total silence, and I didn't know what had happened because I didn't have time to watch the morning television and I didn't listen to the radio. And then they started talking about a terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. I'd heard about a terrorist attack in New York that happened in the early 1990's, so I thought that was what they were talking about and that day probably is the date of when it happened. But they started to talk about a plane crashing into the tower, and I started to become confused. From what I remember, the attack in the early 1990's happened in the parking garage or the basement, and this is about a plane crashing into one of the towers. And what was this all about: the Secretary of Defense issued an alert: the country is under attack!

After my classmate explained what happened I realized that this was not some past event that was being talked about. After class I went home and saw an image that probably all of us have seen a thousand times. As tragic as it was, a few weeks after that I felt like it had changed meaning, from tragedy to propaganda. Shortly after

that, the war started, the “shock and awe” attack is what they called it. I don’t have an opinion about that event that is politically significant or correct because I don’t even bother to form an opinion. But somehow I found the attack as entertaining. As inhumane as war is, wrong or right the cause was of that attack, seeing those many explosions, lights and flashes does somewhat entertain me. This entertainment I enjoy has nothing to do with my opinion of the war, it is just purely based on graphical sensors in my brain. That was all that I can remember of the most impressive times of my first couple of years.



I have some other things on my mind. I wrote a line recently something about Somerset Maugham’s critique of Henry James: how his writing was inauthentic. How his forty year transformation into a British writer was never fully complete, that he always retained the characteristics of the former. (I do see some parallels in the character Isabel, and maybe Lily Bart in Wharton’s, “House of Mirth”, I think they were written around the same time?) He meant that in literature, this form of adaptation was a bad thing. I often think of this when I look at architecture, in terms of context, and see that in architecture this adaptation sustains. It is a good thing. After this I remember hearing the voice of the previous Dean, and remember that, when I first heard it, I thought it was a temporary accent that she had brought back from Europe and would soon lose. Being American, she would return to us, our dialects. I listened with a careful ear, but two years passed and it never wavered.

I thought about it again and found that although her accent is gleaned from other distant places, it is her own. The sound is her own, and it says to me, “I belong to the world”. Not in the forceful way that Frank Gehry or Richard Meier belong, but in a way more adapted; more evolved. On hot fall nights I like to sit in the

school courtyard. The best time is around 2:00 am and I am alone. If it is cloudy the sky will be hot pink with pollution and then everything is pop art. I slump back into the chair with my head at a thirty degree angle. There will be no stars. I look at the wind. I see the rhythmic way it pushes and pulls the fledging tips of the sweetgums. I am reminded of the movement of the composer's wrist. That is how I want to move, I think, and then I go inside the school of architecture.

≈

We aren't glazed hams! I just wanted to share with you some advice that the unnameable gave me. He said that perhaps we should cancel the meeting this Friday, and allow ourselves as students time to be better prepared. He suggested there is little use to open ourselves up to unnecessary ridicule that may occur if a meeting without direction and purpose becomes a puffed-up back and forth slanging match. He suggested we simply apologize and tell the truth that we are still working on developing a deeper agenda, still organizing.

However if we keep the issues in short two sentence sound bytes as have already been presented is it not too easy for some faculty to dismiss our ideas? How can we find a way to be taken more seriously, or rather to get around some of the initial knee jerk reactions of some of the Professors? Should we not develop a series of abstracts or longer texts exploring the dynamic of certain issues? When it's written about in more length it cannot be dismissed; the bigger picture is plainly displayed. Ricardo suggested we should try and analyses what we mean as students by 'professionalism in architecture'. In the past the public considered architects as the shapers of the built world, and now we are generally told what to build by the public. Or are we?

I would also like to consider creative autonomy and uniqueness and assess the role of our own creativity and individual ideas in a setting where the teacher's job is to impart as much information to us as they can in the time allotted. While these subjects are not explicitly addressing the problems at hand at the school of architecture, we must express why the problems we raised are even relevant. And writing surely reveals us students to be individuals with interests and values. But how can we get something like this done when nobody has any extra time to write or do anything?

So I was thinking we can record conversations with students in studio, where we get a few lines explaining their background and then have them explain about an educational issue that is paramount in their eyes. I mean if you're in a studio, you're chit-chatting the whole time anyways. And then by transcribing this for the blog or some publication, it can begin a new communication without making anybody feel uncomfortable. What do you think? Self-education? If you want to bounce ideas off me please email me.

I repeat: we aren't glazed hams!

≈

Everything i need to know about architecture, i learned from J.S. Bach I heard it once described that the word “fugue” means “flight” from the root “fugere” and that listening to a Bach fugue would send the audience flying away with their fingers in their ears. I wondered, “why would anyone ever say that?” as a child, I was lulled to sleep by the organ music of Bach played on my Fisher-Price tape player every night for many months – the same tape over and over. It changed my brain. There is a spatial quality to the music like none other I know. when I listen to Bach, *I see form*.

At some point in my work, I want to create a computer program that takes a Bach fugue and generates a building from it. This can't be too difficult! There is pattern, repetition, space, hierarchy – am I speaking of Bach, or architecture? You see, they share so many descriptors. I think the music made my brain able to visualise space before I put it on paper and may have helped foster an ability to see variation in form on the level of improvisation.

I imagine Bach playing the organ in church on a Sunday afternoon. The music we see in crystalline format today, forever archived on parchment, but in his hands the music was different with each performance. It was Baroque Jazz. I imagine the spaces between his fingers and feet pressing the keys and pedals on the organ releasing the breath into the mechanical beast he had tamed and the residue of sound scraping the walls of the cathedral. The patterns of pipes playing creating waves between them. The resolution in the last measure. The final chord held for longer than we think seems reasonable today, because we are in such a hurry to finish. Bach taught me how to feel buildings.

It's a feeling i still remember to this day, and continue to get when my senses tell me things are just right. i admit, it's purely intuitive. There is no quantifying this feeling. but since i was a child, there has been this knowing that a building felt right, or a painting meant something, or a piece of music had space. about the same time i started listening to Bach, I learned the word "architect". It's funny, now, to think of how closely related the two actually are. so while Bach was changing my brain, which i believe it did, i began to realize that there were people who built things. my friend's father was an architect, and he designed this amazing wood playground in east Dallas that we visited for a field trip. He was the first architect i had ever heard of. and he made that place which stood out in my memory as the best playground i had ever experienced. so the connection of architect to

design was established. about that time too, i started noticing the “feel” of places. more specifically, i suppose that was more a realization that certain places had the ability, due to some non-material quality, to make me feel a certain way. either the smell of it, or the size or the character of a building affected me. well at some point, in high school or something, i decided i wanted to be the person who gave buildings that. i wanted to make them “feel”.

(why do I not capitalise Consistantly?)

≈

I really think we should look into the idea of a journal (cosmopolis) about/on women in architecture. Here is how I would start:

- 1 collect all ideas we have, copyright or check that no one has taken ‘cosmopolis’- it’s a good name and echoes - in an clear way the whole Metropolis/Cosmopolitan etc.
- 2 make a radical and inventive contents idea for a small (prototypical) pamphlet.
- 3 prepare an interview list, not only women architects (but could start with women architects... later designers, interior designers, computer programmers, artists, etc..)
- 4 prepare some wackier ideas like the ‘fake’ interview, the games and other ‘fame’ orientated strategies
- 5 do not limit it only to women in architecture – think of women in other disciplines experiencing architecture etc..
- 6 research Pamphlet series publications: Princeton Architectural Press or similar.
- 7 meet the Dean and inform him of our idea: see if he/UTZ can offer any funding (for example, for the travel funds to go and interview someone)
- 8 work up a ‘dummy’ (design etc.) to suit: but also work up the real journal as if it could appear immediately.
- 9 sound out others on the idea
- 10 keep it small, try and operate together and don’t open it up to too many

11 the unnameable could act as consultant to the journal and its development (for a suitable fee of course!)

12 keep in touch and run things by me to see how we can expand the idea before I, the 44 hr lab closing time home girl loses all interest in architecture and goes to work in Germany with a professional ballet troupe that creates performance installations. My parents have asked me to begin applying to architecture firms for work, but I am trying to seek out alternatives. I think it would mean everything to work for people that experiment with technology.

Will we ever meet again?

≈

t_dizz_oh says:

hi richard

ricardo says:

hey good morning.

t_dizz_oh says:

nicholas emailed me and his wife's grandma passed away and so he's away at the funeral

ricardo says:

i was writing heron about wednesday night ec class.

t_dizz_oh says:

what's ec

ricardo says:

sorry to hear about that one.

ricardo says:

enviromental controls

ricardo says:

there was quite a stink about the guest speaker use of a particular slide.
caused one kid to leave and complain to the dean.

t_dizz_oh says:

seriously

t_dizz_oh says:

you should blog about it

ricardo says:

so i am mulling over what i thought about it.

ricardo says:

i need to but my writing is so bad.

ricardo says:

need many drafts to get it out.

ricardo says:

i ramble too much. more like rant

t_dizz_oh says:

me too, when i write the assignments i'm always a little sad at what i edit out.. i
generally write some stuff that's indirectly related to the assignment before i can
get to the point

ricardo says:

it makes me think about latent racism. how often we encounter it and do nothing
about it because we need something from whoever is doing it and might be afraid
to show disapproval.

ricardo says:

yeah the guy showed a slide of the mexican suv---one kid got pissed and walked
out to complain to the dean--some laughed the rest of us just sat there in disbelief---just wanting to get thru the class.

t_dizz_oh says:

what do you mean a mexican suv, like modified

ricardo says:

i have the picture-- i will send it to you hang on.

t_dizz_oh says:

ok

ricardo says:

is it ok to keep a history of this conversation?

t_dizz_oh says:

yeah

ricardo sends:

Sending of "mexican SUV.jpg" to t_dizz_oh has failed.

ricardo says:

i just sent it by email instead

t_dizz_oh says:

you know some ppl do this weird thing that they'll make racist jokes or use racist expletives when they're driving, but they have minority co-workers and friends, yet they still latently disrespect immigrants or something, like it's underlying and maybe they don't notice it in themselves.. well this is how my dad is.. it seems a dbl standard to me

t_dizz_oh says:

like do they mean it or not?

ricardo says:

i do not think that it is from mexico. more like someplace in south america.

ricardo says:

anyway the guy was lecturing about the importance of communication.

t_dizz_oh says:

you know i've seen this pic just last week, from one of my sierra club friends

ricardo says:

well there was more than that--several not too subtle sexist remarks.

ricardo says:

anyway what i am pissed about is that we had to sit thru two hours of this guy

and he offered up no useful instruction. only superficial bullshit that we all know already... nothing that we can use.

t_dizz_oh says:

i hate to say this but this reminds me of that class when i felt cooper's side jokes about divorce or God were out of place

ricardo says:

the whole class is set up like that. yeah just like that.

t_dizz_oh says:

i think it's not out of line to request that that speaker not be invited back

ricardo says:

anyway the kid did the right thing and walked out but he did not really get his point across to the lecturer.

t_dizz_oh says:

ic

ricardo says:

yea you are right about that ---or ---- review what they are going to talk about before.

ricardo says:

anyway have you thought about the history thing?

t_dizz_oh says:

yep i was thinking it would be important to incorporate student participation in to the schedule of the class regularly

t_dizz_oh says:

and also i was thinking that the development of timelines of ideas would be a good exercise

ricardo says:

i was thinking about a course that started in the now and worked backward. to follow the connections as to what influenced what.

t_dizz_oh says:

yes have you happened to take contemporary architectural thinkers with kerstin because there is an emphasis in this class on being aware of who was the teacher of who.. like a family tree

t_dizz_oh says:

i think also at utz a lot of our theory classes , hold on..

ricardo says:

i would like to see a class set up to show you how to develop a research paper. history topics researched by each student and all of the papers put together at the end. sort of like a prep course for scholarly writing. not an english class but one guided by an architectural historian or theorist.

ricardo says:

i like the family tree idea.

ricardo says:

what i was thinking was something like no tests just discoveries.

t_dizz_oh says:

yes bc if we used the model of a paper where you have to analyze background and do historical framing it would fill in some gaps

ricardo says:

but document the journey and use that as evidence of learning. not test scores.

ricardo says:

of course.

t_dizz_oh says:

that's good because it could be said that the process of test taking sets you up to lose the information

t_dizz_oh says:

when ever i did the paper for harry's modern class i retained nearly everything

ricardo says:

sure who remembers what era the pantheon was built.

t_dizz_oh says:

because of authorship it's yours more than a score on a test you took...

ricardo says:

ok does this sort of class structure have a real name? is it practiced somewhere?

t_dizz_oh says:

well i think we're talking about taking components from history and theory classes we've had and eliminating other pieces..

t_dizz_oh says:

i forget who i was talking to but we also concluded that it's not important for the student to be presented so many built projects but if they just understand the main idea of a movement they can delve more deeply into the built work themselves.. if that idea particularly applied to their own design ideas say

t_dizz_oh says:

because it's an issue of time, and i think we've said that there must be time for a research component and student presentation

ricardo says:

i think i am looking for a class that will go deeper but in a structured way. one that is set up to produce a work such as it is about that research. i would like a class that works thru the writing process not just hand me the mla book and be told to follow that.

ricardo says:

did nick just show up on aim on your computer?

t_dizz_oh says:

do you find it disturbing that the mode of history class now does not need students to ask questions?

t_dizz_oh says:

i dunno, hold on.. like what would be the parts of the writing process..

t_dizz_oh says:

like would you focus on one man or one school or one bldg or it would be good if like english class everyone formulated their own problem

ricardo says:

i suppose- so far all that we get is a survey- that is what it is after all.

t_dizz_oh says:

i don't know if nick is really there

ricardo says:

i would like to think that each student could follow a line and write about it. like free association and follow every lead and document what is out there. then the entire class would compile it as a record to be read by the next class.

t_dizz_oh says:

how do you feel about the involvement of the history of other disciplines...why is philosophy more strongly related to architecture than any other discipline

ricardo says:

the instructor could structure it to cover the basic requirements. like make a list of what to cover and let them go at it for three weeks and then put it together and publish it--sort of like what we are doing with frank heron.

t_dizz_oh says:

nice i think incorporating publication or something that is communicable to others is important because of what frank was saying about a professor for the public understanding of science

ricardo says:

that idea needs to be tracked as well. tracking the influence of other disciplines will create quite a web of information.

t_dizz_oh says:

you know how the wiki works to link entries by common key words

ricardo says:

i do not know much about philosophy. that is why i always want to go back and read those classic books but have no time--can only get the cliff notes and move on.

ricardo says:

what is a wiki?

ricardo says:

what about keemah?

ricardo says:

is she not joining this?

t_dizz_oh says:

yeah i only know the initial questions (what is real, what is just, etc) and then what frank has presented... i think the use of software that uses like beta keyword searching can link the students individual work together, you could even form the timeline just by wiki

ricardo says:

did you get the aim message--i wanted to know if it is working.

t_dizz_oh says:

keemah is in new york city for studio right now she will be back early next week

ricardo says:

ok sorry

ricardo says:

thanks

t_dizz_oh says:

now you know how frank made the division on the blog up to 20th cent, 20th c, and now

t_dizz_oh says:

do you think we should present our ideas in terms of a sort of lesson plan or ..

ricardo says:

back to the other disciplines---what i love about trying to understand deconstruction is the way you analyze an argument

t_dizz_oh says:

deconstruction is a hole in my education.. but you're saying it is something that can be understood otherwise than by presenting a bldg..

t_dizz_oh says:

i think we're saying that the discussion or lecture can deviate from the presentation of buildings as only facades and method of construction

ricardo says:

the way that you can turn upside down what someone else is trying to get across. it can be taught and i think that deconstruction as a way to analyze an argument should also be part of the course-- like a procedure to analyze an argument--frank started us on that with the little activist undercurrent within the class.

ricardo says:

no i want to go to the undercurrents of the man and society at the time of a project.

t_dizz_oh says:

(ps i have to go in about 2 minutes but can email more ruminations later.. am checking out of a hotel right now)

ricardo says:

ok bye now.

ricardo says:

hopefully i save this

t_dizz_oh says:

man and society.. will think about this .. bye for now

≈

[I COULDN'T ASK MY MOTHER TO EDIT THIS]

five fragments to become five essays

title suggestion: 'whatever'....'I am Zimbabwe'... suggestions are always there to be ignored where inappropriate. Intrigue is not tying up life but inviting the quirkiness that allows those that judge us, the priests that educate us, the necessity to

feel they are intrigued and that this could open them to something they are not and have never been sure of. Some of these priests who pass for professors call this architecture.

[1] THE ALIENATED DISCOURSE

While it is the architect's responsibility to interact with the public, the available methods of communication come from a coded language that one could call an 'alienated discourse'. Unfortunately, over the last century, it remained nearly impossible to describe architecture without returning to this coded language. Is this a failure of communication which architects must address? What is this mysterious abstract fog - this coded language - that diverts architecture from society's conceptions of reality? And where is society's reality in relation to the architectural profession? Might education mediate in this 'alienation'? Or is the education of architects encouraging this alienated discourse, mired as we are in a jargon of our own making?

[2] JARGON – THE CONTAMINATING AGENT

Those who wish to become versed in the coded language – a tacit dictionary of architecture - must constantly jump back and forth across the chasm that has formed between the professional main-stream and the alleged design-stream. One must also be able to operate at different speeds, acknowledge fluctuations. While the language of pop-culture fluctuates instantaneously, the language among architects continues to stagnate, merely drawing from the same meme pool. The pool is contaminated by jargon, which continues to propagate at an alarming rate. Why?

[3] FOLDING BACK AND OUT...

Can the profession and the public be seen in 'mediation' and how? Is the lack of a translatable discourse - a public understanding of architecture - in part respon-

sible for architecture's sluggish advancement when compared to technology and pop-culture? Tracing the evolution of a single word such as 'fold' reveals such an occurrence. It would be worth serious study. But briefly its architectural journey began with French philosophy, in the work of Deleuze (on Leibniz) and has been 'transliterated' (transferred?) to architectural design through the work of Greg Lynn and many others. Each 'translator' adds his/her connotation to the infinite variations possible. So 'fold' or the act of 'folding' can never maintain any single meaning. Each new iteration ensures the death of the last one, and the thrill of the next one.

[4] ENDING CLOSED IDEOLOGY WARS

(THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY)

Students are taught to communicate the concept of their ideas, but only to other students, faculty, and critics. Thus a preconceived subset of vocabularies ensures programmed understanding. If students were, however, to attempt to explain the same thing to their mother, chances are the language would have to become diluted to invite a more general understanding. But does this dilute the authenticity and concept of the architecture? Not necessarily. Things can change. A decent education might conceivably circumvent communication barriers and lead to a less alienated discourse. Would this not be worth a serious enquiry? Early architectural training could incorporate not only the elements of so-called good design, but the elements of good communication as well. Architects could be multi-lingual, in terms of abstract, technical, and practical language. Architects could loosen themselves in order to loosen the discipline.

[5] LOOSENING THE DISCIPLINE

For students and soon-to-be-architects the internship becomes the incubator for practical knowledge which is leading to an alarming disjunction between the uni-

versity and the professional field. The alienated discourse has itself become alienated. The contrast between architecture as an art and as a science already denotes a duality of language within our own field. The formal restrictions of the act of building, when treated strictly as a science, can detach the reliability of the artistic, more universally comprehensible side of architecture. Interestingly enough, those professionals committed to structural implementation of their works are often unable to create a bridge to cross this language gap. It is time to reconnect with those for whom our work is built. How to do that will depend on how we loosen the discipline of architecture in the 21st Century. Could I ask my mother to edit this? Why not?

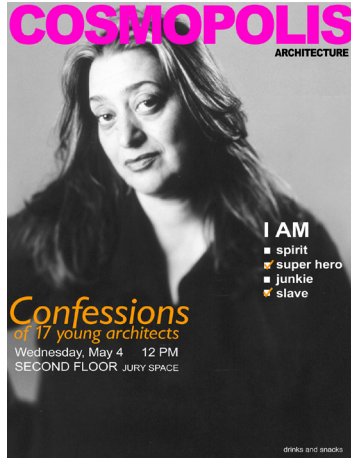
Let's fold back

and wait for the next invitation

to be the public

as well as the architect once more.

10

The I AM ARCHITECTURE undefined Quiz

take this semester's quiz and be defined

1. you are about to graduate from college with your BS in architecture, you have:

- a. finished your portfolio and applied to your top ranked schools;
i want to finish a.s.a.p. (0)
- b. interview with several firms; I need a break from school (1)
- c. planned next week; i am a procrastinator (2)
- d. done nothing; I go where the wind blows (3)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

**2. from what you have learned as an architecture student;
what is more important:**

- a. process (3)
- b. function (0)
- c. aesthetics (2)
- d. social experimentation (1)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

3. why study/practice architecture:

- a. the need to create (1)
- b. for the money (0)
- c. for the recognition (2)
- d. what else would I do? (5)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

4. 1 talk to my non-architecture friends/family about architecture:

- a. sometimes (2)
- b. never (1)
- c. all the time (3)
- d. I don't have any non-architecture friends (0)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

5. In my future, I want to use my architectural degree to

- a. eventually own my own firm (3)
- b. work my way up an already established firm (1)
- c. teach (2)
- d. work in any design field (not necessarily architecture) (0)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

6. architecture is closest to a combination of what practices:

- a. math + physics (0)
- b. art + science (1)
- c. philosophy + Politics (2)
- d. life + living (3)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

7. what marketable skills has a degree in architecture given me:

- a. freehand drawing ability; hand eye coordination (1)
- b. analytical skills (within the architecture language) (3)
- c. researching skills (0)
- d. social skills (2)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

8. where do you find the greatest amount of architecture:

- a. in school (2)
- b. in a pint of beer (3)
- c. in media (0)
- d. in buildings and installations (1)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

9. what is architecture:

- a. nothing until it exists in built form (1)
- b. everything (0)
- c. action <> reaction (2)
- d. an idea (3)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

10. I find it most difficult in the design process to:

- a. transfer concept to building (3)
- b. manage time (0)
- c. start (2)
- d. finish (1)
- e. all of the above (4)
- f. none of the above (5)

SCORES

I am...

(0-5) an architectural spirit ... I exist, but leave no physical mark

(5-10) an architectural super hero... I am defined by dual identities

(10-15) an architectural junkie ... i am an addict

(15-20) an architectural slave ... architecture defines my existence

(20-25) an architectural dominatrix... I make my own rules, then break them

(25-30) vacation architecture... I am here for a visiting adventure

(31-40) cookie cutter architecture... there is strength in numbers

(41-50) non-architecture ... there is no explanation for what I do or am

do scores really matter?

if you are unsatisfied with the given,

pick another or make one up.

how do you define an architecture that is on the threshold of change?

who defines it I do! You do!

I am Architecture Undefined

What do you think?

q: where do you encounter the most architecture?

a: Chicago

q: what is architecture?

a: pretty buildings... buildings with a wow factor

(Julie; English major)

q: what is architecture?

a: creation

q: where do you find it?

a: nature

(Nzingha; sociology major)

q: what is architecture?

a: designing in general

q: designing what?

a: buildings

(Ray; high school grad, wanted to study architecture)

q: what is architecture?

a: I don't understand architecture is a profession;
it is what you see in how a building is made;
it is a skill and the ability to design an appropriate
(client based) building or layout; it is the study of
building structures

(Vic; business major)

q: what is architecture?

a: it is the conceptualized ideas of an individual to
create something inspiring and capture the definition
of creativity and beauty in society

(Negin; public relations major, film minor)

q: what is architecture?

a: the design of something ... like an airplane,
building, or a car; it is an idea on paper that
builders use as guidelines let me see what
google says a mix of beauty and use

(Erica; public relations major, marketing minor)

You have become Architecture Undefined!

Coda

We are Architecture

To the students

Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy, that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good.

vaclav havel



It's been a week since arrival in Manchester on the tight-spaced, big Delta bird from Atlanta, sitting next to a computer game fanatic who was returning from meeting his virtual 'girlfriend' - fellow 'Quest-gaming' member - in Oklahoma. It is colder than usual here in the Hotel Architecture, so the open log fire has been in use, though I haven't touched the Glenlivet or the Lagavulin yet. Outside it has even snowed and the winds come down from Siberia, westwards across Scandinavia. But I am glad that the river hasn't swollen and there's no sign of the 'aqua alta' to flood the cottage. Once is enough. Imagine trying to get back to your own

flooded cottage, in a yellow yachting jacket with an umbrella? I mean, think about it, with an umbrella?

The writing goes well: the new book is called 'Architecture or Life' (what a choice?) and I must complete an initial draft for the publishers by first week April, ready to work on it in Autumn for publication next spring. In the meantime I have been looking around at all the books here in the cottage and thinking of something one of you said about the notion of a 'lost' or partial education. What exactly do we mean by this? Why are some names, references appearing now in your education? How have they (suddenly) gained currency at Utzsoa? Are these being introduced through new faculty? Is this a slow curve, the trickle down of what has happened elsewhere in other more prestigious schools of architecture? Why, if Modern, Postmodern, Deconstruction and other contemporary philosophical trends are more talked about, thrown about, lipped and abused, should we attend to these? And how would we attend to all these? Is there really an after-theory movement when many of you haven't even had the chance to read some of the theory so abused?

One of you came up with a music analogy. It's good: from commerce to grunge to post-punk and so on back to the neo-sixties, guitar bands and Hendrix. The cycle of ideology is one of echo and rebound; it is also one of trend and anti-trend, reaction and counter-reaction. Education is never good at responding to such rebound; it reacts too slow. But the issue may be more complex. Have you ever considered some of your professors might be onto the right idea for the wrong reasons? Or some of them might pursue the wrong idea for the right reasons? This fascination for an 'after theory' world might be just this. It does after all comfort the unthinking, meanwhile the new and revolutionary creeps in somewhere else. This oscillation is all handled well in Thomas Kuhn's classic "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" which I have recommended to you endlessly. Many of you

use the word 'paradigm' so often that I wonder if any of you know where it is from and the significance of this call for the next and the next paradigm, or that holy grail, the *paradigm shift*.

One of you asked about how we get the collective body of architecture to head down to the used ideas warehouse, put a new coat of paint on an item, and make it interesting again. Do we need to do this? You see I am not even sure we need to speak of the 'collective body' anymore in architecture. What does it mean? Is that not something the 20th Century got stuck with, the totalising, monolithic Modern world and those Corbusier-clones who come round schools of architecture dressed in an elegant brushed off-grey suit with deep black owl glasses. And a small 'm' in their lapel: modernism? My father wore a small 'm' in his lapel: Methodism!

What should we do? Prepare a reading list, make these thinkers more accessible, abbreviate the world as it changes into (information) pod-notions of theory and communication? Or are you lucky? The 'after-theory movement' may remove these works before you need to read them. And what of the inability to finish books? Some of you have self-confessed to so little reading, so little writing, so little time to do any serious thinking. Do I invent a reading list for you, invent a chance route by which you could learn more, correct more and control more? What about an intense investment in things we at first do not understand? Or what about attempting to understand, for example, Robert Smithson's work? Do you sometimes feel you have to graduate to realise you wish no longer to question or engage deeply with knowledge as experience but accept learning as 'example' and become professionals? Remember the US army recruiting slogan which was placed out there on the Utzsoa campus the other day- "learn, lead, succeed"!! None of you seem to have much to do with the army, yet we discuss the war so rarely? Why? Do we have no way to influence things today? Do you feel this? I've heard about a school

of architecture where the Dean has organised car stickers. You seem to love these car stickers in the US. We don't have as much play with such things here in the UK. But this one apparently is for the architecture faculty and announces a 'theory-free zone'. Anybody know about it?

Are we that afraid? I wonder if it means only that we are in some sort of post-communication period. Perhaps we've finally realised that language is not about communication at all, but about modelling our own inner worlds which allow us to survive. We speak but we don't really speak at all; we build a mute syntax. Rewarding as they have been because of many of you, I feel my visits to Planet Utzsoa are sometimes like that.

I think sometimes we are in cloud-cuckoo land. I have been thinking about your own education, and what has been missing. I suggest some of you could gain more knowledge of the state education system and analyse some of the pedagogical issues in more detail. Take a look at the book by Gary Stevens called *The Favorite Circle*. If you wish to help retool the workings of the curriculum to allow professors to teach what they find interesting and explore new, unknown, unproved ideas then this needs a solid foundation, serious thinking. I am not sure though that all professors should or could explore new ideas. Do they need to? Some of them approach things so differently and you need to analyse this difference too. I really believe the retooling in schools goes on all the time even in uncertain times. Le Corbusier was both revolutionary and conservative over the years; he oscillated and invented just as he propagated. And have there not been many retoolings, as one of you said, of Leonardo's 'vitruvian man'?

I like the word 'retoolings'. Some of you use the word 'stagnant' to describe the state of architecture and education. You might be right but are you sure you are not part of that stagnation and how would you prevent yourself not being part

of it, if indeed it is true? How many of you read the situation in a negative light as you fear leaving the safety of the closed environment? Was it only you who choose to do a theory seminar? Are we already redundant to each other, secondary to those obedient, tamed students who play the architecture system for what it is? How many of you students are quite content to follow? What is indifference and disinterest – and what type of architecture is being taught? And how does it relate to today's world beyond Dallas and Denton? Do you even know what it means when artists begin speaking of something called the post-terror world? And what is this 'afterall' world: the post-theory world? Or the world beyond job-fairs? If the whole architectural profession is in a slump of sorts, is this leading to a retooling of the profession or of your own life?

I wonder how many of you will have graduated to realise you only just begin engaging with knowledge and experience when you begin questioning it? Which type of student are you, were you? Is it either-or? Either: head down, get some sleep, get some money and pay the bills. Or: stay up, cruise and think widely for the last few moments of your life before you are let out. Are we all on parole? I think not. The world is both-and, and the difficulty is oscillating and sailing between the two. I am not saying there are no more answers for architecture but that these answers might be re-framed by events you do not witness, in places you are not part of. In other words your ignorance shapes this intelligence too.

I get a few letters and emails these days. Most of you have dispersed and I guess I will never hear from you again. Some move to Dallas or Houston, some of you to San Antonio, some even further afield to Los Angeles or Sydney Australia. Will you all become tourists to yourselves, tourists to architecture? And how will you remember Zetaville? We called it the college of glazed hams after hearing students comically described thus by one professor. It was only a joke and we all laughed. Was it really only a joke? You will all deal with loss in your own way and miss the

pizza and polemics of a sofa-saturated school of architecture. And outside you will realise there are even less course offerings than inside. But all of you will venture beyond the university, you have to. Some of you will take to the road, others onto a digital construction course. Maybe one or two of you will do a creative writing course or a seminar on the art of non-western traditions. One or two of you may even learn about Sufism. Whatever it is don't abandon hope in the school at Zetaville, because many of you know that any student body is always potentially on the brink of something new. So hold onto that glimmer of hope with curiosity. Remember: you can make good of anything, any system that invites you to think otherwise. School is no different.

I have begin reading E.M Cioran again. In fact I carried the book to the post-office even though the legs felt like lead. I read the following whilst waiting in the queue: "There is something of the charlatan in anyone who triumphs in any realm whatever." (Anathemas and Admirations, 1992). It seems we need people to tell us this, otherwise we take ourselves far too seriously. That's why people like Cioran are invited to a colloquium abroad – even to a University called Zetaville – to become as he calls it, the "skeptical-on-duty of a decaying world." We are moving forward, you are moving forward. Remember this is the 21st century, not a retread of the 20th century. Until next time, good luck all when you leave *Planet Utzsoa*. And thank you – you are all welcome to try the food here at the Hotel Architecture: lamb, lamb and more lamb!!! With a 'smidgin' of fried goat cheese and a 'snorter' of Lagavulin!

Roger Connah The Hotel Architecture

2004-2006