

The Phoney Island of the Mind

Texts for Nothing

Volume 5

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roger connah

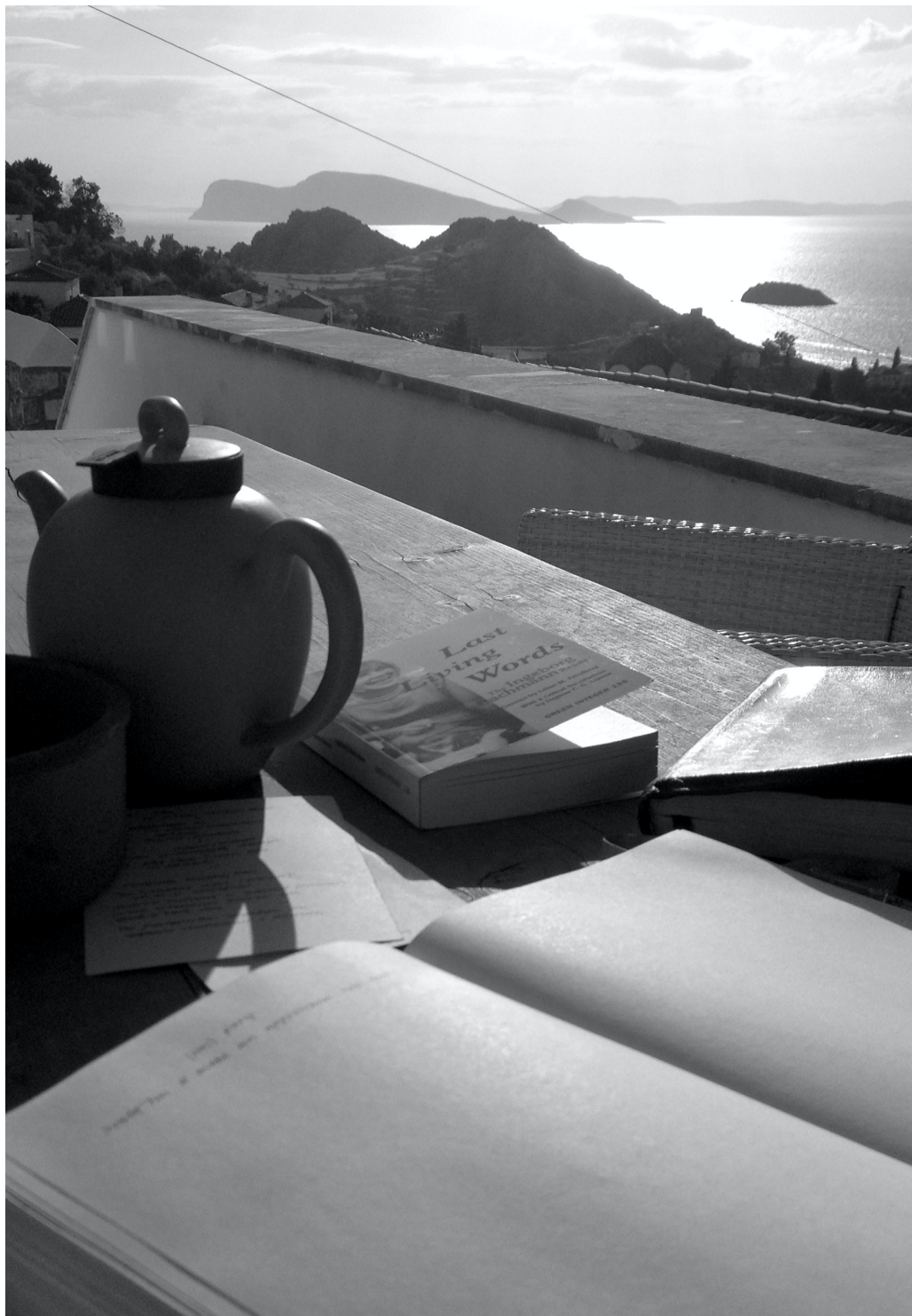
VERTIGO PRESS



978-1-987899-07-8



Inside front cover 25% black full bleed



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citation

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The Crisis Papers

Roger Connah

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OH DEAR - INSIDE CRISIS?

Oh no not my architecture! This small book started life off as two anti-Papers on that I saw as the other crisis in architecture – publication and propaganda. They were prepared for the Journal of Architectural Education.¹ In their first the following sentence had particularly caught my eye in the call for papers: *At a moment when the experience of crisis is felt to be fully enclosing, when to be modern is to be not just 'in crisis' but inside crisis, what are the salient characteristics of design practices.* I was not sure what to write or whether it was even possible or not to offer a description of our contemporary moment that is not fundamentally defined by the experience of crisis. Surely we have to ask the obvious question: why do architects constantly need the crises they engender, the publications that will result under various guises on the 'phenomenology of crisis,' 'event as crisis, or yet another 'year of living near the edge'? ² How long has architecture's coded circles been negotiating the financial crisis, the media crisis, the software crisis, the environmental crisis and the urban crisis? Inescapable markers are hardly inescapable when they are burdened with obfuscation and indulge in more architectural vanity. Of course in architecture the grand deception has it that we are in the middle of something we consider genuinely complex, wondrously so perhaps. Is this the crisis? Do we really need more thoughts and speculations directed about a late digital modernity, its past and its future when late readings insist on re-scripting and re-appropriating crisis for architecture's internal and inescapable drama of its own making? Is it even possible to respond anymore to a phrase like this: *Indeed the present confluence of crises, both acute and chronic, is felt to be so encompassing as to perhaps signal an epochal shift, with the epoch whose demise seems to be presaged that of modernity itself.* Where are the grounded assertions that can release us from the trapped feeling of singularity? Can we still invent unreasonable but entertaining theories around the architect and the submissive self. Or do we hold placards up that read: Postcards for the Symposium.

Architecture has long been closer to Oh Dearism³ than it lets on. There is little narrative anymore that does nor re-narrate its prejudices. There is little plot left that can no longer be lost. Except when 'crisis' is the plot, the new narrative and the crisis of crisis will write the new theses: *"For if crisis is in fact the consummate experience of modernity, then design, as an anticipatory discipline, is surely implicated."* Oh dear. This is Architecture & the Asterisk. Where the asterisk is the most useful and useless available, interchangeable theme that will perpetuate architecture's vanity with itself: crisis – speculation – late modernity – drama.....Write your own crisis here, layer it with the emerging jargon of authenticity and research, extend this to the crisis on crisis and the anxiety disorders of architects. Explore the neurological basis of crisis in architecture, extend this to design scholarship and 'think out' until our own dramas are located somewhere along the narcissism spectrum. This becomes architecture's crisis too.

Instead!

Let us consider ourselves dumb and refrain from yet another collection of apocalyptic texts masked as research proposals and propositions that may more or less fail to illuminate architecture in any new contestative or interrogative way. Let us read something as if it is true and cannot be contested. Let us be as gullible as some experts consider us to be. Let us analyse the therapeutic positives in the negative crisis. Let us try and understand what close reading is today? Is it late-reading? Let us not doubt whether this text is not even worthy of any deep analysis. Let's just exist in denial. Let's celebrate that old chestnut again: the relation between architecture, modernity, and crisis. Let's not throw stones. Let's not speak up. Let's be thankful for ideology and not bread. Let's trust in even more instructions. Let's be thankful we are rejected if we do not keep to the proper questions. Let us not question lives ill spent or well spent. Let us not be suspicious. Let us not consider we are being fooled. Let us not have such feeling at all. Let us think everything we get is worthwhile. Let's not catch ourselves being negative. Let's not speak ill of the living and mourn the dead. Let's think those that are older (or younger) than us are wiser (unquestionably so). Let's do this to imagine the happiness of real meaning (when real meaning went out of the window long ago). Let's accept words like 'fundamentally' might still mean something. Let's accept there are essences and we should not question them. Unless existence does! Let's consider our real experience is our real experience. Let's not be cynical. Let's agree that meaning does get through (somehow). Let's try and make some sense if for a moment in the day. Let's let the security forces come a little closer. Let's 3D-print their guns for them. And then let us forget all about that and let some air in between these lines.

What are our obligations? Are we to confront the architect, to confront education and the published world, to agonize why sentences keep being re-juggled and any sets of words can be configured to be enclosed by crisis. The second paper prepared around publication took up this challenge often represented by architecture biennales catching up with those dead art biennales, still attempting to define why architects should really still be listened to? ⁴ It began as a letter to an icon of architects, many of them now responsible for ever increasing bumper volumes of architecture we have seen this century. Those Big Bumper Building Books with the shifting center allowed many architects, theoreticians, historians, critics and students to continue in the middle of an architectural world that had lost direction. It became a series of letters and soon lifted itself out of any specific address. Thank you for simplifying and killing us – not so gently - with your song. You have become iconic as have your buildings and orphans. We needed it badly. Your works became the advertiser's dream, something public relations officers considered genuinely complex, even wondrously so. And we are once more now ready to kill for generalizations.

Are we ready to kill for generalizations? Is this the crisis in architecture and faced by architecture? It seemed more than timely to finish off these texts for nothing to write a series of *Letters to an Icon*. So Architecture! Thank you for the deficit, thank you for the market, thank you for the melodies, thank you for the crisis. Thank you for simplifying the complex and killing us with your song.

Citation

THE 39 STEPS – POSTCARDS FOR THE SYMPOSIUM

1

Crisis – paraphrased from the New Penguin English Dictionary, (London 2000) – is considered a time of acute difficulty or danger, especially on the national or international scale. It is also a turning point for better or for worse in an acute disease, a sudden attack of pain, distress. Derivation is from Latin and Greek; the act of making a decision, to decide. Whenever the question of a weakened or ineffectual criticality in architecture is talked about, there is often the predicate within this concern that assumes this is a relatively new development. It is usually not. When crisis happens in the world, it has often been a useful alibi to redefine architecture's role, its privilege as a discipline, its skilled fields and even the renewed claims that inflates its potential to 'change' the world if not 'save' the world. Yet frankly, from the year 1900 (to speak only of the last century) crisis has been a regular event and shaper in almost all countries, across all systems, political, financial and social.

2

In the 1990s I remember receiving a sticker, from a young practicing and award winning Austrian architect, about a helpline with the name 'Architects in Crisis'. On it was a telephone number. Along with a couple of colleagues this young architect from Graz imagined a service, a distress service, somewhat perhaps like the type of helpline The Salvation Army offers. Here young or old architect in distress would pick up the phone and speak to someone who might give some encouragement in what was a very difficult decade for architects and architecture. Many did not continue their practice in that decade, many kept the minimum going and survived, whilst others broke through the structural glass ceiling and turned drama from the drawn, briefs from braggadocio and spectacle from diagrams. Others came closer to desperate measures. How much in the crisis they were facing was internal, a drama of their own making, or a professional cul-de-sac? How much was it a failure to communicate the worth of their talent – an architectural talent – beyond their own circles, and how useful they might be to an awakened public? Were these young professionals right in feeling the heat in what was a serious crisis and can our contemporary architectural scholars and academics rescue crisis for more attempts to re-situate architects' waning significance?

3

This begs a couple of questions immediately. Do we behave as we expect under 'crisis' or can we create 'crisis' for our own purposes? How do we ground the assertions we make about our subjects – in this case architecture - that invite more assertions, if we openly exist in the groundless? Is this the recognition of a renewed crisis that will turn around to bind architects to specters it cannot achieve whilst expanding the doctoral shelves of university libraries? Were the skills of distressed architects in the 1990s of less

and less value whilst their existential condition, facing market and financial servitude, moved them closer to the edge? When we begin in the middle of a discourse, with no desire to lecture, impose or change the minds of already unchanged minds, do we remain trapped sometimes ‘deliciously’ and ‘singularly’ within that discourse? When architects think, they have always thought through the ‘crisis’ that has defined their profession from the early 1900s. Since then they have learnt to think of ‘late’ or ‘late-late’ modernity’ or those ‘consummate experiences’ of a crisis that could quite possibly ensure a privileged singularity. Whether it is even possible or not to offer a description of our contemporary moment that is not fundamentally defined by the experience of crisis, surely we have to ask the obvious question: why do architects constantly need the crises they engender, the drama that fails to communicate and the publications that will result under various guises on the ‘phenomenology of crisis’ or the ‘event as crisis’?

4

Crisis: a new definition. All achieved in the name of re-scripting and re-configuring the inescapable in a shared urgency? So how does crisis offer architects or academics another ‘year of living near the edge’? How long has architecture’s coded circles been negotiating the financial crisis, the environmental crisis, market greed and the urban crisis whilst waiting – in profession, practice and education - for the retirement of senior figures to pass over to new figures. How do we really direct more thoughts and speculations about a late-late modernity, its past and its future when late readings insist on re-appropriating ‘crisis’ for architecture’s internal and inescapable drama. Inescapable markers are hardly inescapable when they are burdened with obfuscation and allow us to indulge in more architectural vanity. A drama of its own making - is it even possible to respond anymore to phrases like this, ‘to meet the epochal shifts presaged in modernity itself’?⁵

5

Crisis (word, concept, void and anti-theme) is indelibly linked to a narrative embedded within architecture which –periodically – keeps reappearing as pain, an attack, an immense difficulty, a chaotic adventure, a complexity all significantly out of the hands and often reach of architects who wish to control this. New cohorts of scholars, researchers, teachers and even practitioners (the latter to a lesser extent) generally need to re-configure this scene into a new interrogation. The word ‘interrogation’ is precise; bright light, hard bench, water in the face, own up or die. The issue becomes more critical – crisis mongering or managing? – when one interrogation is replaced by another, when one technique, water in the face, becomes water-boarding. The organs available to

us inevitably form the crisis until it must also create its own topping point. Not tipping point. Then to re-situate crisis is not only reasonable but offers illuminations and new ways to remain 'late' in the modern sense of the word and world!

6

What then is architecture inside crisis and how can we re-configure and live this phantom architecture? When our language compels us to formulate and formulate correctly otherwise we do not accept our own progress, the straitjackets unwittingly applied – and called a new paradigm - bring us close to the consummate experience, and entertain crisis well enough to adapt. Architecture has long either negotiated the centuries as voids, a traceable 'narrative' from Antiquity through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and onwards. Long too has it found itself professionally challenged and from the 19th Century onwards, we have seen various critical stages of late reading which produce fashionable discourses, shifting voids and, even, epochal vicissitudes. Just how have these voids been created within which an expertise can be inserted? ⁶

7

Architecture and crisis; this is architecture & the asterisk where the asterisk is the most useful and useless available, an interchangeable theme that could cunningly perpetuate the establishment and architecture's vanity with itself. Crisis – speculation – late modernity – drama..... We can insert a series of dots, graphic convention for something more to happen. Write your own crisis here, layer it with the accepted academic jargon of authenticity and research, extend to the crisis on crisis, the anxiety disorders of architects, explore the neurological basis of crisis in architecture, extend all this to design scholarship and 'think out' until your own drama somewhere along the narcissism spectrum becomes architecture's crisis too. How then do we shape this crisis into the consummate experience of Modernity, or Modernity as the consummate crisis? Such play amuses us no longer. Architecture has long been closer to *Oh Dearism* (Adam Curtis 2005) than it lets on. There is no narrative anymore.

There is no plot. Except, when 'crisis' is the plot, the new narrative and the crisis of crisis will write the new theses: ⁷ Even the call for a series of discourses on 'crisis' is in crisis. Let us therefore decide what we should not include in any future essays, any future research.⁸ Taking a clue from Georges Perec and Oulipo, let us be serious about what we should not include.

8

The Interrogation and Sites of Pre-crime: I played a janitor you played a monitor. Of course we have to ask ourselves this question. What is there to gain by shifting the 'interrogation' of crisis back into architecture's own 'back yard' or faculty lounge?

You've probably noticed (most non-architects have), only architects ever attack architects, Mr Sorkin might attack Mr Koolhaas, Mr Eisenman might attack Mr Gehry, Mr Asterisk might attack Lady Architecture. And so on. The sites of pre-crime are so well known; we all know the pre-texts that ensure architecture-as-known will stall in the coming decade. This is not science fiction, Ballard-land or 24-7 theory. If we've never really been Modern – and it's quite possible that this generalization is one we might kill for – then can we ever be 'late-modern' or 'late-late modern'? Implied in this pre-crime as we scramble the steel drums and take the carousel and ask: what's your game now can anyone play?

9

The last Century gave us some serious markers of distortion; reading strategies in architectural, theory, practice and history could be resisted with marvelously un-researched and ungrounded worlds. This is now being known as the language of lateness, nowhere better seen than in the recently published *Rough Guide to Crisis*. The sort of studies that would lead to the excellence of doctoral dissertations all hovering elegantly and discourse-led on the 'phenomenology of belatedness.' Our references here are due to be expanded but there's no harm in mentioning once more, Lev Vygotsky, Benjamin Lee Whorf and the Viktor Schlovsky. De-familiarizers all, the latter, accompanied by bagpipers. It is clear that a deeper analysis of crisis and the inroads this regulated pain has made into architectural scholarship have led us to understand the new critical proposals around the idea of late readings. So what are late-readings and what is a Late-Reading Crisis

10

Here we are speaking of the necessity to understand, with the huge repertoire of advanced learning and thinking available to us, we are hardly readied for the failure of our own reach. There is of course no shortage of inspiration and new temptations in the infinite corridor of truth and scholarship and much of what is available is naturally useful, but it has become the repertoire of what has been ignored in architectural scholarship, what remains awkwardly placed in the critical project that some still call 'architecture' that has grown increasingly in scale in the last decade. To hold to our discussion of 'crisis', we might then advance a simple idea on how (not) to read this book, as a way to understand how to research 'crisis.'

11

The ungrounding then. Crisis invites the obvious: how to act. What is doing the right thing under conditions of 'crisis' and how can we 'think through' any readings that

haven't grounded their thinking and position? From my experience and it is likely to be shared with others, many schools of architecture are turning (back to) anti-theory; this means a crisis in assertion and language claims. The scholar either bullies theory into new forms of critical theory and history or sits it out in the Waiting Room. We know full well how some schools have managed to confuse theory in architecture with (critical) histories. An applied remote critical thinking has never really detached architecture from the mythic master narratives written with a seduction somewhere between *Finnegan's Wake* and the *Da Vinci Code* which legendary figures and recognised critical historians of architecture have provided. Others slip by when the moments prefer a surrealistic touch to the dada event. Just what is crisis here, we ask, just how has reflection become confused with 'thinking the world' or a 'lived theory' through thinking well in architecture?

12

We are well comforted in our theory lounges as we get the rolled eyes from the technocrats, the engineers, and chartered accountants who really see no point in engaging in such thinking with architects. What is the point, what is the shared code if we are really in 'crisis' and facing 'crisis'? We share the resistance, often abusive and patronizing that there are some who still cannot think architecture and thereby shouldn't think. It's a peer-played carousel that has hidden in architectural circles a weak intellectual and critical position. Indeed this weakness is celebrated, many admitting openly that all this critical page going and footnoting does not bring them any closer to understand the profession they are losing a grip on.

13

Cultural theory, the phenomenology of crisis or the year of living in crisis? In this way we might propose Late Reading; understanding this as a thinking that so competently performs for the norms, quotas and minimums required, but has abandoned or never entertained the asylums set up. Asked time and time again to address critical (cultural) theory at the later stage in a student's career or even in a professor's career, it is noticeable through no fault of their own, that it appears there is so little adequate background to step into. This of course is not true but many have fallen into the trap of thinking there is a short cut to all you need to know about crisis and architecture. Mapping the thinking (theories) of a distorting and distorted 20th century, we have long recognised that we are always in the middle of whatever we invent – in this case crisis. It could have been *difficulty*, it could have been *Africa* (or the *India* within), it could have been *Iraq*. Late readings have to be provocations then to avoid their pre-crime. If we cannot read the books we are asked to read, and we do not have the references required to read them (and not know why this is), then 'reference' itself is in crisis. Step into the reading asylum.

14

Late reading, *Living the Crisis*. Take any recent book or pamphlet, atlas or lexicon – in any size – S, XS, XXS, XXXS - from one of the usual suspects (universities, publishers, biennales) that considers itself a contribution to new research and design scholarship. The book is likely to be dense, with a fair amount of private language personally constructed – often with staggering cartographies of influence and anxiety - to take on the research areas and fields that are peer-acceptable and critically illuminating. One or two of the volumes can be collections of essays or individually authored, sometimes very well written. There might be appropriation of the late scholars, of the late-late scholars (dead or alive) and this case we might mention Baudrillard, Ricoeur, Deleuze and Guattari, even more recently including Badiou, Žižek or Harman and Melissoux. As we re-read this world outside our own neat references we could consider the notion of ‘towards a crisis in architecture’ linking this to the oft’ quoted tragedy and farce narrative shifted so that we can understand how the essays ground crisis out of language and language out of crisis. The result - a sort of X-factor for the cerebral gang - can be architectural contributions on a scale of 1-10.

15

This is a working methodology and we have to stress without self-contest, it is likely the volumes will close on the very glossary accepted and the miraculous transformation of language games. Measure whether the volume challenges the master narratives set out with this notion of crisis (see attached phraseology from the call to arms). Care must be taken to explore the argument through various readings and re-readings of other sources and politico-literary extracts. If fiction is used then this needs particular attention as the volumes and essays eventually have to make that crucial step: the obvious but insistent link between architecture to crisis. Crisis – (crisis as both metaphor and metonymy) – then offers up itself for a series of oblique brut-critical (crisis-mongering and code-switching?) approaches to architecture, urbanism, the city and the architect.

16

Insurgency and a Call to Arms - consider how your analysis actually does not do justice to the threateningly closed density of both book and argument, and the ‘transfer’ to architecture of a concept that may remain in the area of ‘generalisations to kill’ And if it does, how do you define that generalisation – something not fully/really/critically developed? With this in mind prepare mappings of the book’s structure where the source can be graphically enhanced to show how much the work relies on extracts, citations, loaned data and other material – don’t accept the spurious too easily. Consider the scholarly trick loaned from fiction writers of consistently re-defining what ‘crisis’ might

be and how it can help re-define the very lateness (Late-Late Modernity) that crisis invites. Behind the curve is not merely the privilege of the senior retiring architect stars it is something, like bowel cancer, that can also affect the young.

17

Check the known and unknown references thrown into the ring (be aware of the metaphors you yourself layer over this) - Benjamin, Barthes, Arendt, Freud, Agamben, Merton, Boenhoffer, Berger, Brecht, Bachmann, Adonis, known and unknown writers like Kafka, Ballard, Amis, Conrad, Roth, Updike, Frisch, Gombrowicz, Borges, and Bernhard. Consider how this sets up the necessary dumbness to make for a subversive reading of 'critics' which can be seen as a non-authorial architecture of crisis. Depending on the bias, the rub, this can include crisis as a new framing which includes adaptive re-use, globalism re-narrativized

re-contextualised (or re-fucked – in the scholarly sense - to echo Mr Koolhaas), renovated architecture, re-conserved architecture, re-appropriated space, pulp architecture, residual urban architecture, informal architecture, architecture of conflict, post-confrontational urbanism, transitory space, distributed urbanism and so on.

18

Does this then constitute what we are calling a Late Reading where the (re) reading of any book, source or previous argument appropriated material from earlier (re)readings are thrust into the dense scholarly vibrancy of that reading whilst this area (in terms of *crisis* here) has long been explored in writings and field beyond architecture. This leaves us to sum up our useful sketch for a methodology on 'speculative' crisis:

Question 1 What is a Late Reading?

(Hindsight reading – foresight reading – appropriated reading – redemptive (re)reading etc..)

Question 2 What do you/we need to be able to read this work and value its contribution?

Question 3 How do we read the readings and re-readings that the internalising of the architectural profession and discipline relies on?

Question 4 – what is reading and design scholarship when the references are likely to remain partial, incomplete (even un-read), hurried and the narrative potential already given from the re-readings of other narratives given?

Question 5 Can architecture (really) gain obliquely and critically from subsequent readings, re-appropriating the readings on and around 'crisis' by extension to other lines of flight into other knowledge fields?

Question 6 Is a new Hermetics a useful gain for architecture (given the anti-theory, post-critical, new theories of difficulty and speculative 'crisis' emerging)?

Question 7: Why should only architects (researchers, educators, practitioners and architecture students debate these issues?

Question 8 Can we decide, let us decide, why bother?

Question 9 Who outside the restricted realm of signed-up members could add to this debate?

Question 10 Where does critical reflection come from when 'reflection' and 'late reading' emerge so predictably from its crisis?

Consider all reversals of the following: Architecture & the crisis of modern science - Science and the crisis of Modern architecture - Crisis and the science of architecture - Crisis and the architecture of science.

19

The cryptographer invents the codes, rarely breaks them. The cryptanalyst breaks the codes to access further. The more architecture seems to re-invent itself in research and tries to approach new methods of design scholarship, the more it seems these are the conditions for architecture's own 'opus dei'. The more scientific requirements (that variation on common sense according to most architects) are laid down in all their wonderful oblique ways, the more it becomes a joy to see how *strictly dancing* on pinheads is an achievement in itself. It is not that we are devising codes (these are endlessly available and the obvious product of new journals, publications and media demand) but the increasing distance that grows between a crisis of our own making and a crisis of someone's else's. Perhaps we should leave before we wreck any more lives, if we cannot recognize the powerful divination of the critical minorities architecture has set up. Whether we accept this crisis rather than another, this potential regime change rather than another, or we just plea for more of the same remains part of our own relationships to the knowledge we use. I am reminded here of Brecht's wonderful short text called 'Where have I learnt.' It is not so much that we would wish to dismantle or derail any of the cleverness our scholars will undoubtedly produce but ask them to lay out just where they have learnt, why they hold onto the views they do. And why do they make the assertions they do. By knowing this of course we should not make the hasty assumption that we will then know to what extent these ideas can and will change through 'crisis'.

"I will now try to list the sources of my own learning" Brecht writes, in so far as I can remember them. And I shall write this down not just for other people's benefit but also so that I myself can get some perspective n it." Brecht, close to self-abnegation much more than we realize, was close to knowing when to put his tongue away, remain quiet and mute himself to the awkward century. He concludes his paragraph: In the process of finding out what one has learnt, one learns once more."⁹ Using this as a way back to the ever-present crisis and the carousel we are forced to work from it, we might take a clue from Walter Benjamin writing on Brecht himself. A paraphrase suffices. Where are those who know how to ask themselves where they might apply their talent, and more

importantly – and the architecture opus dei cannot miss this – how to apply something only when convinced of this need. Who abstains, who abnegates in this crisis is much more important than we might accept at present. In the moment of crisis it is not whose side we have chosen to take, but who amongst us are the ones who act in a position to chose, and known how to make a difference. Cryptographer or cryptanalyst?

20

Critical Minority Report(s) - according to Wikipedia, itself an instrument of crisis in research, “the Minority report was one of two reports published by the Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws 1905-09, the other being Majority report. Headed by the Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb, it called for a system that was radically different from the existing Poor Law. She, amongst the others heading the report, who included George Lansbury, felt that it was short sighted of society to expect paupers to be entirely accountable for themselves. However the report proved unsuccessful, most of its proposals being disregarded by the new Liberal Government of 1906 when implementing their Liberal reforms.” To this we must respect this reality famine and add something (and italicise) from Philip K Dick’s short story called ‘Minority Report’: “But it was something. And with the ID cards came ten thousand dollars in bills. He pocketed the money and cards, then turned to the neatly-typed message in which they had been enclosed.

At first he could make no sense of it. For a long time he studied it, perplexed.

The existence of a majority logically implies a corresponding minority.”

21 This has offered us an adventure into crisis and architecture dressed up as a symposium on Critical Minorities with an emphasis on new research in architecture and crisis. We imagine the following working contents: The *Phenomenology of Crisis - re-situating crisis in a double bind – the majority and the logically implied corresponding minority - pre-crime and shockers in architectural theory – another (new) resistance – the (a)political dimension... rescuing crisis from the zealots and theologians – crisis: a new condition for re-juggling the ‘authenticity discourse’ – closet Late Late Modernists and/or Modernism 2.0 – Reality Famine*: “This means openly acknowledging as a ‘rear guard’ spiritual and political operation that can only come into being as a critical minority report to the dominate

techno-scientific mediatic, late-capitalist, hyper-consumerist discourse; all of which is a total anathema to what you refer to as the “right stuff” in all its deceptive forms.”

The idea of 'critical minority reports brought on by yet another 'crisis' underpins a very serious and urgent enquiry into resistance once more taking off from the critical-self. The culture of the *tectonic* as a discursive means to bridge between *production*, *representation*, and *experience has to collide with crisis and capital*. There is obstinate detachment from architectural reality and any crisis will inflate that obstinacy. This increased obstinacy will have to re-assess the flawed syntheses made between late-late readings of Heidegger and Marx by putting these across the works of Brecht, Arendt and Husserl! Implicit in this is how we stir a meaningful, critically creative crisis for the profession and its educational wing in the face of this 'double-bind'? *Crisis as double bind* must let go of the 'rear guard' spiritual and political operation to blast that continuum Benjamin speaks of; crisis is only of value if we can use it to re-address, situate and strengthen this engaged opposition to the "right stuff" (the majority report) in all its deceptive, spectacular and fraudulent forms.

Alongside the potential re-opening of this political turn within architecture that crisis brings on (recall Kundera on Nietzsche, the opening lines of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, opening lines...). When we connect reality famine with this crisis there will come the necessity to re-write the thoughts of others-past to conform and script the new condition. In other words skim off the surplus meaning in architecture for a re-awakened (not necessarily reduced) understanding of crisis. Naturally I am tempted to call on Ricoeur on 'the surplus of meaning' (*Interpretation of Theory*, TCU, 1976) – a careful study by Ricoeur which also takes us to the urgent problem of re-reading; that is re-reading when one is faced with distortions from original reading which takes up the established discourse. As producers of the authentic, this phenomenology of crisis (not in the age of reproduction but post-production: from Heidegger to Žižek) might have been expected to identify the inauthentic. Surely we – bystanders, those that separate themselves even if we are occupied by the crisis - cannot remain uncurious for too long. The minority report will have none of this - by readily acknowledging how we are now forced to speak in forked tongues. If we are going to accept the minority report, Philip K Dick writes, we have to accept the majority report. This is always tied up with crisis, aesthetics and ethos. How do we behave with wit and alertness today? For Beatrice Webb the purpose of the minority Report was "to secure a national minimum of civilised life ... open to all alike, of both sexes and all classes, by which we meant sufficient nourishment and training when young, a living wage when able-bodied, treatment when sick, and modest but secure livelihood when disabled or aged".

The Demotivators (Steps towards the Crisis of the Architectural Mind) - for a

symposium that would be start. But will this cover our concern with the distortion of a wayward turn to crisis in architecture schools and the production ('reproduction'/'post-production') and the language that emerges? Crisis will mirror any other trend which lifts concern and produces its own 're-producers of meaning.' this is theory in a stricken sense that cannot settle before it takes flight again, thereby disclaiming itself and its original source. A muddle in architectural theory and crisis in practice and the global world has surely been the result (confused legacies) that recalls Gregory Bateson's work and his short metalogues on 'muddle' (Steps towards an Ecology of Mind): *Crisis and the phenomenology of catastrophe; or crisis and the attack on difficulty - Crisis and why architects are always behind the curve. Crisis – difficult art, more difficult architecture dead architecture?*

25

Recently I overheard a conversation at a Symposium of Seniors in Toronto that hinted at *'the shockers we have spoken in architecture'*¹⁰ Is this not part of the crisis? In other words in the wider bewildering, cypher sense, the epistemologically and hermeneutically hijacked world of the crisis-babble? That sort of 'love' and logics of poetics and accepted mystic departures for the crisis in architecture which then operates very cleverly as curriculum and 'cant' always on the rebound to the crisis of science in architecture and the crisis of architecture in science. The shockers that we have spoken and written in the name of architecture... is this a 'theory' that is never quite doing its job, or a crisis that is called on to produce its own validation - and about to take, always about to take the 'political turn.' again is crucial.¹¹ If we admit to speaking cleverly but albeit loosely as we so often do in research paper, conference and symposium, is it inevitable that we witness this endless slipping into a critico-babble as theory whilst the rest hijack another critical turn in post-Terror stable instability, where living with crisis is living in crisis. Cities like Damascus, Tripoli or Peshawar and Karachi.

26

Pre-texts and Pre-crimes - are architects in any way connected to this, the eternal discontent of theory which has its most wonderful retort when it gets closest to poetry and crisis. And where do the theory factories, the discourse centres meet – in the architectural historian, in the theory-practitioner, or in the critical practitioner that can ride theory with the myths of the profession and urban fictions? In the cryptographer or cryptanalyst. Pre-crime: "This was the original majority report," he explained. "The assertion, made by the first two precogs, that Anderton would commit a murder. Now here is the automatically invalidated material. I shall read it to you." He whipped out his rimless glasses, fitted them to his nose, and started slowly to read. (P.K. Dick). There is also the notion of 'prejudice' – perhaps another misguided compulsion that we have nothing unprejudiced in our presence today, in our accounts of history or in the meta-

historical flights that architecture engages in, whether phenomenology, post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-humanism or speculative realism. Uncomfortable as it sounds, after the shockers that have been used and abused at conference after conference, we may have the Late readers. And what would they do then? Run schools of architecture or PhD programs? How can we get beyond the clichéd dichotomies and take all this on makes this all the more meaningful and crucial, especially if we can indeed stir that critically (re-) creative course for a school of architecture; and especially an un-reading school. It worries me that this ‘utterly confused architectural education’ ‘in the face of this ‘double-bind’ is precisely what I think crisis invites and – strangely – is about to pass this.

27

What alarm we are faced with here! Is the turn to ‘crisis’ – turn and turn again - where architects and educators continually and falsely create(d) alibis for the unsound grounding of yet another architecture under theories and ideas from elsewhere; these are passed on to the students who then spiral from the anti-intellectualism of brevity and social network thinking to this video game called: *score architecture! Crisis?* A serious status quo in schools which has lost respect for any leaders, any director, indeed any authority that sets itself up against a previous authority.... For many students now, architectural, cultural, political history begins only with a very faint chance of being read before the fetish of grading and immediacy turns into a series of well informed misreadings, brief, sometimes delightful ruptures disseminated by slightly fatigued professors and instructors, which then can turn into otherwise endless and delicious (for them) self-promotions allowing the student to read the world for their own partial meanings, for their own confused socially networked merit.

28

Confusion or Crisis? Though they do not perceive this, students are watching whilst history is rectified falsely and/or brilliantly re-written by generations following generations, sometimes reading their scatological poetry of love and architecture to the next generation...In our dismissal of the student’s thinness, I have the feeling the students are sometimes laughing at us all the way to the timeline site on Facebook and the crisis they now live with.

Crisis as a ‘metalogue’ - This symposium around phenomenology cannot be another scheme for the zealots, for the few grandees traveling, nor can we support any longer the pleas for those ‘let’s put it right once and for all’ approaches, or ‘it’s all gone wrong’ and we wear the T-shirt of the moment which reads “It’s ok, it’s crisis but I’m here now”, produced by a company called De-Motivators.

“There were three minority reports,” he told Witwer, enjoying the young man’s

confusion. Someday, Witwer would learn not to wade into situations he didn't fully understand. Satisfaction was Anderton's final emotion. Old and worn-out as he was, he had been the only one to grasp the real nature of the problem. (P.K.Dick)

29

Crisis the Symposium - If a text, a symposium, a production of the moment, a crisis as event, has not its own destabiliser, its own demotivators, then it is only worth its own merit to close on the argument. A symposium like a crisis must have built-in destabilisers. The interruption needs argued dissent; and dissent needs grace; less grandstanding, less theatre and more interruptions. That is why the young turks regularly watching, the retrieving historians, the super-theorists or alarm-writers, re-write us as fast as we deny their knowledge of the real thing, the crisis beyond the viewfinders.

Crisis brings in a caution: to advise us against following a parody of theory into yet another crisis. Who amongst us can brutally and originally intervene? Will we ditch history once again, consider others young and ask them to go away and read more before they attempt to derail us once more? I say no – the young, the demotivators, the destabilizers are here to stay. But the crisis is here to stay and asks us to tread more carefully...

“The existence of three apparent minority reports suggests the possibility of three future time paths, all existing simultaneously, any of which an individual could choose to follow or be sent along following an enticement (as in Anderton's being told he was going to murder an unknown man). In this way, the time-paths overlap, and the future of one is able to affect the past of another. It is in this way that the story weaves a complicated web of crossing time paths and makes a linear journey for Anderton harder to identify. It is the theory of multiple-futures which allows the precogs of Precrime to be of benefit, because if only one time-path existed, the predictions of the precogs would be worthless, since no possibility would exist of altering the future. Precrime is based on the notion that once one unpleasant future pathway is identified, an alternative, better one can be created with the arrest of the intended perpetrator. (Wka)¹²

30 Crisis: Pet Services

But then we must be considered too dumb, too cynical or too churlish to realise that the crisis that double binds u can release is. No program is predicated, no plot is guaranteed, no master narrative is mastered, no discourse will force us to succumb, and penal servitude in one era becomes solitary confinement in another. Must we learn then to speak a different language? With the changing demographics in town and city, we hear the need to get multi-lingual talent to re-emerge and develop international

communication, to fend off crisis in all parts of our lives. And we know (at least within) that the value of language in architecture has often been overtaken by the cleverness of the participants. To those outside, who cares. It's hard to be heard perhaps, but the crisis is self-defeating: it's never been that important what is being said. But it has been important and is so more than ever to listen.

31

It is no longer any surprise to academics, researchers and architects that the 20th Century brilliantly hijacked the French philosophers and grafted them onto a representational architecture in a bewildering, and admittedly creative, number of ways. But where does this leave the practicing, engaged architect in the 21st Century, when the profession is often critiqued to such devastating effect, and its education stumbles toward more and more mediocrity, conforming to and confirming market conditions and strategic soft architecture visions. Why have we reached a stage in the world where architects, apparently so important to the vital, social development of our societies, are so often seen but actually never heard? I am tempted to think of the early Pink Floyd; how much was childhood re-created in the oil slick worlds of smoke and mirrors obscured by clouds of unknowing? Noted but not annotated, architects today are often treated indulgently, like children. Listened to occasionally certainly but more often actually sidelined in favour of those who talk a better game, drive faster cars, deal with a 'better' crisis, or fly a better kite. Is this any surprise?

And architects wonder why they are no longer listened to!

32

But then we flip the coin. Why would we not be interested in the lifetime observations of an architect or critic, historian or educator, especially if we consider his or her experience and work with something more than errant philosophical and psychological insight? Why should some practising architects stay within their own privileged discourse of codes and anti-codes and ignore the unchallenging exposés of hijacked French theory, even attractive minefields like phenomenology, deconstruction and chaos theory? Once again, will a form of resistant practice may offer us some out of this crisis as a way to look back to look forward? How do contemporary critics, educators and historians survive the intolerance, blindness and intrigue that often occur within architectural circles? Passion is never so innocent or intention undeflected: architecture has always been part of a domain of knowledge, part of the language used about it, part of the crisis that leaves it underachieving.

33

The Immaturity of Crisis - fashionable discourse or not, architecture has controlled its own boundaries even when it appears to let go of them; often any epistemic contract it makes with itself is known only by those who choose to be part of it. Was this attention to language and the spiky subject 'reading architecture's crisis' the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning? We exist to define our own theories. When the ephemeral and the provisional in architectural thinking see ideologies come and go, it has become less and less wise to make big remarks about architecture, about crisis, about intentions; so quickly do they fall into chaos and become critical fictions. Freed - fleetingly¹³ - from the attachment to principles that are not quite applicable to the present can leave the contemporary architect empty and vulnerable. At the same time, contemporary commentaries on building and architecture seem to make us too obedient to a future crisis some architects do not yet perceive nor understand. Words have for some years now become desktop icons for our contemporary challenge. In the grand index of instant but forgotten terms, we have had ideas such as bigness, organic, non-place, unspace, and data-city. Before that, or was it after, we had collage, montage, mash up, emergence, transparency and disfiguration? The production of architecture may continue to ignore the 'smart' political discourse existing outside its own crisis. Liquidity or digitalisation may trim architecture for more formalist air-guitar games but the crisis is here to stay.

34

Crisis? Where is the Count of Immaturity, Witold Gombrowicz, when we need him? We are at a cliff. Any metaphor will do: the fiscal cliff, the political cliff, the architectural cliff. Could we take the plunge, should we – fly? Do we even know how to take the plunge anymore, so careful and risk-free are our steps today in case we get sued. But if we do, fly, as educators, critics, historians, researchers, scholars and architects will there be work available for us in the future? Will a crisis ensure that?

35

You, agent of crisis. Your obligations are to confront the architect, to confront published and pretentious vehicles, to agonize why sentences keep being re-juggled until just about any set of words can be configured to be enclosed by crisis. Your obligation is to contest publishers accelerating rapid PhD published worlds and Architecture Biennales catching up with Dead Art Biennales, all attempting to define why architects should really still be listened to? And last but not least, let us avoid using the word 'overall' so that crisis itself is represented by what it smacks of in current architecture, education and practice: lack of motivation, un-space, un-depth, distortion, misjudgment, atemporality and yet another internal, self-reflexive medium for another architecture in crisis.

36

Of course we are in the middle of something we consider genuinely complex, wondrously so perhaps. But where are the grounded assertion that can release us from the trapped feeling of singularity. Oh no not my architecture – instead we invent unreasonable theories like the architect and the submissive self, as opposed to those that hold placards up:

Thank you for the deficit, thank you for the market, thank you for human resources, thank you for all those excellence awards and the freedom of the cities we have raped. The world is more complex than this, now we release. Thank you for simplifying the complex and killing us with your song. “A generalisation might sound like an attempt to stereotype- and we can’t have that. I’m at the other end. I worship generalisations. And the more sweeping the better. I am already to kill for sweeping generalisations. The name of your ideology, in case anyone asks, is Westernism. It would be no use to you here.”

Martain Amis *The House of Meetings*. (2006)

37

Dear Mr Koolhaas : A Crisis of Architects I know it’s unfair that you get singled out, but for some reason you invite it on yourself. In a way I am convinced you enjoy being the master of pre-crime in architecture. But what do I know? I am not sure you remember me. It was after all 23 years ago in Barcelona, in the Barcelona Pavilion in fact. I didn’t feel particularly comfortable there with all those up and coming world architects. Most of you had already become as far as I was concerned, tourists to your own symposia, conferences and biennales. But that wasn’t really a concern then when the sparkling wine went around and the canapés and vol-au-vents, the enchiladas and the tortillas were all consumed as they often are standing and talking. I sensed the gossip of eternity and competition very strongly that day. This was a world architecture club that no one really wanted to belong to, yet everyone of importance was seen to be there. Around the time I remember thinking to myself what is the plural of architect, you now like a herd, a gaggle or a flock. I used to think it was a jealousy of architects from my days in Finland. But I am changing my idea. I think it’s a ‘crisis of architects’. Yes, that’s the plural, a crisis of architect. I remember speaking to you more than once during the three days event in Barcelona. Once on the Ramblas. Since then I have remained somewhat outside all that in a successful zero condition which was closer to night than any one realized. But you of course became sky-bright and internationally renowned. And loathed as well I guess, in equal proportion. I can’t say. I didn’t think much of the whole group and they probably didn’t think much of me either. That’s probably to my disadvantage. But it was obvious already then, you would be strutting your architectural stuff on the catwalk of

late modernity in competition with the others who also had stars in their eyes, Bernard, Danny-Boy, Jackie, Peter and Frank. It was first name heaven and hell. But none of that was of interest either and perhaps again to the detriment of my own development and existential condition (which, shared with Cioran, was as I said usually very much near night) it has remained of so little interest that I am forced once again to marvel and wonder how I found myself sitting on a low wall in the Barcelona Pavilion and then, minutes later, on a luxury coach next to you on our return to the Hotel Colon. We found ourselves speaking of poetry. I think you began. Probably because I had delivered my small intervention in the conference as poetry. I am not sure how I answered but you asked how I found the time to read so much and also write it down as poetry. But not being an architect! I probably answered to the effect that I could have life no other way. That I would sacrifice everything in life for this. Including architecture, you asked. Yes, including architecture, I answered, in order to be able to continue to read and write the occasional lines of poetry. I did try some poetry but probably nothing to write home about. It was not though that you were unaware of this, it was just that you frankly admitted that you no longer had time for anything like that. I was appalled inside. How could you live with yourself like that, I thought. I don't think we ever spoken again. And certainly we never met again. Though I do remember at some stage over these three days you showing me a rough copy of the big telephone directory you were preparing and about to bring out. Now what was it called? I can't remember. It's probably been very important. How could I possibly have missed all that?

38

Can we continue to go on as before? Let us decide, let us read something as if it is true and cannot be contested. Let us be as gullible as some experts consider us to be. Let us analyse the therapeutic positives in the negative crisis. Let us try and understand what close reading is today? Let us not doubt whether this text is not even worthy of any deep analysis. Let's exist in denial. Let's celebrate that old chestnut again: the relation between architecture, modernity, and crisis. But how do we share a language that has hardly let architects release themselves from the internal crisis? There must be other ways to write out the crisis that compels us to engage once more. Re-definitions of architectural practice to the relational, interactive, de-authorised in architecture all offer some help in re-setting the limits of the profession within such a crisis.

39

Or can we opt for self-abnegation. Let's not throw stones. Let's not speak up. Let's be thankful for ideology and not bread. Let's trust in even more instructions. Let's be thankful we are rejected if we do not keep to the proper questions. Let us not question lives ill spent or well spent. Let's not be suspicious. Let not consider we are being fooled. Let's not have such feeling at all. Let's think everything we get is worthwhile. Let's not

catch ourselves being negative. Let's not speak ill of the living and mourn the dead. Let's think those that are older (or younger) than us are wiser (unquestionably so). There are reasons why we would do this, that are not cynical. We might imagine the happiness of real meaning (when real meaning went out of the window long ago). We might accept words like 'fundamentally' might still mean something. We might accept there are essences and we should not question them. We might consider our unreal experience is our real experience. So let's not be cynical. Let's agree that meaning does get through (somehow). Let's try and make some sense if for a moment in the day. Let's let the security forces come a little closer. Let's 3D-print their guns for them. And then, let's forget all about that and let some air in between these lines. Let us consider ourselves dumb and refrain from yet another collection of apocalyptic texts masked as research proposals and propositions that will more or less fail to illuminate architecture in any new contestative or interrogative way.

LETTERS TO AN ICON OF ARCHITECTS

Dear Alfred

I am writing from somewhere between the Hotel Colon, Barcelona, Campo Santa Margherita, Venice and Zen Namkhan, Luang Prabang. Yes, the Bumper Building Book was the advertiser's dream. But what effect did it have on the field of architecture, on architects themselves? Where are the grounded assertions for the claims made about this Big Book, and what crisis did it address, what new forms, new critical gestures did it bring on? You of all people know this was no wallflower manifesto inviting docile dependency architecture. It was clear in the last decade of the 20th century we were no longer in need of the submissive self. We had attended the symposiums and conferences. Architects needed to give thanks for the new world order, the removal of the Berlin Wall and the mounting deficit, by thanking the market. It was cunning. From Elton John to Roberta Flack, you certainly have become *iconic* as have your buildings and orphans.

You know all about it by now. The Journal (does it really matter which one?) wishes to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Bumper Book. Maybe they wish us to assess what Charles Jencks might have termed, your *evolvtome*, from his own Bach-Escher-Godel approach to Le Corbusier.¹⁴ But this is a question of your Big Book, the Bumper Book of Dystopian Architectural Scenario. There was always something "feckin' intriguing" about that retail label title, as the Irish would say. It was that Boys Own feeling that always appealed to so many. Architecture reaching top gear and playing pranks on itself? Well not quite, that's unfair. But it is no surprise today as research overwhelms the architectural profession and design scholarship flips the classrooms into the scholarship of design, rapid PhDs are on the rise. New material is turned into old material by new panic; the latter usually provided by the academies. For what is research if not the panic buying, and insider trading of lost paradigms, language dreams and lonely critical vocabulary; what is research if not the unreadable made readable and the authenticity of newer and newer jargon?

The brief is excitingly prescriptive and simple. We are to *revisit, expose, and otherwise re-evaluate the book's ineluctable influence(s) on the practice and writing of architecture*. And already we are off to the races as the advertising copy continues to outline the approach and says this Bumper book has a lot to answer for. A lot to answer for! I am sure that comes as no surprise, as everything including a Christmas Pudding or dark beer can become iconic today, and you yourself have no chance but to slip into something more

comfortable and become the icon of the icon for world architecture.

Hi ho Alfred, that's letter number 1.

Sincerely

James W. Vertigo (Professor)

*

Dear Peter

It was rather obvious though. Any book that bumper-sized and inflated would never be read from cover to cover. Really who would read such a book from cover to cover? Imagine, what a concept? But was it really more than a *last hurrah supposedly from that future we are already familiar with*. Now there's a trick. We get the drift of this charming rhetoric. And, of course, the book prefigured many aspects of contemporary architecture practice. We could devote a whole essay to the way the language used here actually prefigures the tropes invited to be written into this shifting platform. But that's hardly of interest when icons have become the global consultants, and the media pundits have become the software invaders of all possible assassin worlds. These are the architecture scripts of those early-adopted futures we see in all magazines and journals. And all this, whether William Gibson is brought in, Bruce Sterling, or Philip K Dick!

Actually I'd go for the bloated, and the disclaiming self-styled novel about cities and architecture. This became the yardstick for disasters everywhere, embarrassments of a future already beyond us. Of course it did but that's where it stops surely. The future of architecture did not arrive with this bumper novel about architecture. These were the cunning, blunted hopscotch of Raymond Chandler, the montage of Hammett and Lang, turned into the noir expression of the dark art of urban architecture. Before that other Dark Knight which, of course, you are seen as by many today. We can hardly agree though that subsequent misreading, late-reading and partially-reading architects, critics, historians or students actually used the Bumper Book to distribute the future evenly. Come on, even you Peter, would surely agree with me; now *that* is bloated, hardly sumptuous and totally extravagant.

So my contribution to you, dear Dark Knight of the Architectural Soul, this bloated world, these journals, these letters about an unevenly distributed past, may or may not shed new critical light on the image rich invaders of the platforms off which we dangle

new plagiarisms, but I send you as always, remembering our walk along Las Ramblas over 20 years ago, my best, bloated regards,

James Vertigo

*

Dear Norman

I have to put these letters to you in context. All journals at one time or another have called for an edition on the theme of 'crisis'. For this I wrote and submitted an essay called *The 39 Steps (Postcards from the Symposium)* to at least 6 journals.¹⁵ I didn't hear back from any journal at all, though I was later to find that I had not re-submitted the text and it lay there in some Cloud Nine space. Get off of my cloud! I did like the images I had submitted where you, me, and a few others - with architectural stars in their eyes - were in the Barcelona Pavilion. It was 1991 or 1993. I can't remember and wish not to use the Internet to check. But as I proceeded with that essay it naturally collapsed 'crisis' into the architectural world that may have been prefigured by the Bumper Book Era.

"The production of architecture," I went on to write rather idiotically in that first essay, "may have to continue to ignore the 'smart' political discourse existing outside its own crisis. Words have for some years now become desktop icons for our contemporary challenge. In the grand index of instant but forgotten terms, we have had ideas such as *bigness, organic, non-place, unspace, junkspace, informal, incremental, data-city* and so on. Before that, or was it after, we had *collage, montage, mash up, emergence, transparency* and *disfiguration*? Liquidity or digitalisation may trim architecture for more formalist air-guitar games but the crisis is here to stay. "Precrime is based on the notion that once one unpleasant future pathway is identified, an alternative, better one can be created with the arrest of the intended perpetrator."¹⁶

I proposed a Phantom Sketch for a Symposium on Pre-crime and Architecture and ended that small paragraph with the sentence: "Many people see Mr Dick as the intended perpetrator about to audit his own life; it is time we address him."¹⁷ This was the moment, admittedly rather extravagant, that I planned to write a series of letters to you all called *Letters to an Icon*. And for this purpose I inserted the first letter into the previous essay around the notion of Architecture and Crisis. I hope this becomes clear as I now proceed

and, far be it for me to think we might meet again one day, I do hope you enjoy this little journey into prefiguration and the architectural days of future passed.

Again,
J. Vertigo

*

Dear Bernard

I know it's unfair that you get singled out, but for some reason you invite it on yourself. In a way I am convinced you enjoy being the master of pre-crime in architecture. But what do I know? I am not sure you remember me. It was just over 20 years ago in Barcelona, in the Barcelona Pavilion, in fact it was in 1993. I didn't feel particularly comfortable there in the ANY (Architecture New York) conference with all those up and coming world architects. I really had no idea why I was invited to sit next to you and Monsieur Derrida.¹⁸ Most of you had already become, as far as I was concerned, tourists to your own symposia, conferences and biennales.

But that wasn't really a concern then when the sparkling wine went around and the canapés and vol-au-vents, the enchiladas and the tortillas were all consumed as they often are, standing and talking. Look at the photos in the pavilion, and not a cigar in sight. What a jolly bunch. I sensed the gossip of eternity, architectural crisis, hubris and competition very strongly that day. This was a world architecture club – *opus dei* - that no one really wanted to belong to, yet everyone of importance was seen to be there.

In was an incomplete being I know, but around that time I remember asking myself what the plural of 'architect' might be. You know like a herd, a gaggle or a flock. I used to think it was a *jealousy of architects* from my days in Finland. I read it somewhere. But I changed. I think now it's a 'crisis of architects'. Yes, that's the plural, a *crisis* of architects. What do you think?¹⁹

Or no scratch that; a *panic* of architects? I remember speaking to you more than once during event in Barcelona. Since then I have remained somewhat outside all that, existing in a successful zero condition closer to night than even I realized. But you along with the other Ground Control to Major Tom crew became sky-bright and internationally renowned.

And abused as well I guess, in equal proportion. I can't say. I didn't think much of the whole group and they probably didn't think much of me either. That's probably to my disadvantage. But it was obvious already then. You would be strutting your architectural stuff on the catwalk of late modernity in competition with the others who also had stars in their eyes; Danny-Boy, Jackie, Liz, Arata, Raffae, Peter, with Frank loitering off stage. It was first name heaven and hell. But I have to hand it to you – of all of them, you have become *the* icon.

None of that was of interest however. Rather, to the detriment of my own development and existential condition (shared with Cioran), architecture has remained of so little interest that I am forced once again to marvel and wonder how I found myself sitting on a low wall in the Barcelona Pavilion and then, minutes later, on a luxury coach next to you on our return to the Hotel Colon. We found ourselves speaking of poetry.

It all blurs now and I am thankful of that. I think you began, probably because as I had sat next to you on the podium. I had delivered earlier my small intervention in the conference as poetry. I am not sure exactly how I answered but you asked how I found the time to read so much, and also write it down as poetry. "By not being an architect!" I said. "After India, I could have life no other way. I would sacrifice everything in life for this." "Including architecture?" you asked. "Yes, including architecture," I answered, "anything in order to be able to continue to read and write the occasional lines of poetry."

It was not that you were unaware of this. It was just that you frankly admitted that you no longer had time for anything like that. I was appalled inside. How could you live with yourself like that, I thought. Won't you just exhaust yourself, burn out and trail off into the sky. I don't think we ever spoke again. And certainly we never met again. Though I do remember at some stage over those three days you showing me a rough copy of the big telephone directory you were preparing and about to bring out. You brought it out in front of the other soon-to-be icons. Now what was it called? I can't remember. It was big, really big. It's probably been very important. How could I possibly have missed all that?

I did try some poetry but probably nothing to write home about. In fact I've been writing poetry for 40 years. But again nothing to write home about. I think I wrote again to you sometime though, but I suspect you did not read it. You might never have received it.

In haste,

James

*

Dear Daniel

So why then *Letters to an Icon*, though I use the latter word with utmost caution if not distaste? The idea of addressing you this way actually stemmed from two books I'd stumbled across in Half Price Books in Dallas, Texas in the early year of this century; *Letters to an Activist* by Todd Gitlin, and *Letters to a Contrarian* by Christopher Hitchens. These seemed appropriate as a form that could balance the methodical requirement that suits a scholarship of design essay but with a rigorous and essential touch of wilful abandon. Your song or my song, realism or not, objective or constructed, you'd surely be the first surely to go for that little speculative twist.

Some of these letters will probably be written on the remains of letter paper generously offered by the Hotel Colon in Barcelona, which I have besides me here. I think you might agree now that it would be reasonable to pursue these letters this way. And I'll probably continue them by pushing the sky away and buying a quarto size notebook in Venice, Campo Santa Margherita. But let me backtrack a little. I hand't read the first Bumper Book for over 2 decades. I was also one of those who treated it as a pick'n'mix, a kaleidoscope of small inflations, gentle dilutions and exacerbated nuances. I must admit though, it insinuated itself into architecture brilliantly. Never the same river, never the same dip into the water. The Big Boys Own Bumper Annual of Architecture (now that would have been a great title) was not so much a novel as a series of what we might call 'critical fictions'.

The call for papers is, as noted, touchingly nostalgic and once again belatedly avant-garde in trying to get at the ineluctable influence you icons have all had on the practice of architecture and 'writing architecture'²⁰. And. Just to get this out at the front, I always thought these books would be part of another super-sizing in architecture? Of course this goes without saying for all books today. Each sentence, random, broken up, fragmented could serve to emphasise the parlous set-up, the delinquent assumptions and the neatly but possibly absurd claims that already imply the icon's narrative that we and architecture are now all part of. But given that we always begin in the middle of everything, this idea of 'letters to an icon' is surely just as good a starting point as any other. You see, we have gone from Crisis to Crisis and back again, and according to Mr Kierkegaard, life can only

be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards. So, please go with me on this one, Bernie.

Rushing to the departure gate, haste once more, damn

JV.

*

Dear John

Sorry for the abrupt end. I did get the flight. But let us also not be accused of internal games worthy of high scholarship, those sandbox games of our mutual architectural communities. What should be written about these Bumper books that is not about ourselves? That's a difficult one. What parts of our lives are the subjects of our detached actions, when we become bystanders to the intimacy we create for others? And what is that 'self' continuously denied by science, shaking as it does to creep into the next wormhole, when distortion will and must inevitably arise? Can you really be turned into an icon, as you proceed through distortion of that notion, as architecture distorts itself through that notion, and is held before us as if just about everything can be iconic to its own memory?

So let us accept then that we start in the middle, you and I; somewhere, nowhere, just as we do in architecture. That said, dear John, let's get on the journey. The Big Bumper Books, the Boys Own Annuals became text invaders, the instrument of known and unknown edges in the practice, thinking and writing about architecture. Theory pushed the sky away and the limits of control were set out for all who were prepared to monitor the journey. Absurdly general to some extent, diamond sharp and clear to hopeless, but architecture could not look back as forces struggled for or against the seriousness of the Boys Own World.

In brevity

James V.

*

Dear Raffa

Is it alright for you if we stick to standard English and forego the macaronic? Is it acceptable if we try and include some original scholarship on what is now considered the 'field'? You see you, and to some extent the Boys Own gang have become - in scholarship terms - the field. Of course we will need to develop a well-organized argument on this but we are looking for you to help us, and also - if you'll allow - we need some poetic and pedagogic license to review some of the relevant literature that has not yet appeared but is about to emerge on you all. It's an anxiety I know but Husserl and Heidegger do bring us back to the gentle rolling landscape of such anxious folds and fields. And as a dean you know this isn't the usual way to prepare a paper but surely we'd be forgiven for attempting a little unsolicited hop skip and jump along all those compound walls that Tom Wolfe scripted in his entertaining romp, *From Bauhaus to Our House*. The problem is - and always was - most of us never had a house like 'our house', let alone designed their own Bau-Wau-haus for Uncle Tom or Aunt Maggie.

So consider this. When we get onto the big things, and the Bumper agendas, we might be better off considering what the Big Man from the Bronx said about all this reflexive speaking that still just about smothers architects with that word that we all know really means that the letter K slips away and our mother's tale over. "When an architect is thinking," Big John said, "he's thinking architecture, and his work is always architecture, no matter what form it appears in."

I met Big John a few times in New York; he always reminds me now of that big tree, Nick Cave, that doomed beautiful figure coming into our view with trepidation and clarity. But that's all backwards isn't it? Using Nick Cave to remind us of John Hejduk? What does it matter if we attribute the failed future to Bill Gibson or not? The future may have already arrived, and the question for us is clear: must you have had something to do with it? If you did, then you might also have something to do with that fact that it's not eventually distributed. But between you and David Harvey I would leave that to seminars at LSE, UCL or UCLA or a more relevant session on Sufi logic. You see, it's the awakening of intelligence that we cannot get away from.

I always thought of you as the Hunter Thompson of contemporary architecture. I had no scholarly research to back this up, still don't but not sure if we actually need it. You see, exactly what - in design scholarship - would put across my point, when you constantly re-make that point each day? You see it's the anxiety of the *gonzo* in you that was responsible for these exacerbated volumes.

Warmly,
James

*

Dear Liz

The Big Bumper Boys Own boom world was never part of your world. Never friendly in the accessible kind of way but then who would carry a telephone directory around with them? Over-weighty in more ways than one these held of course an instant presence. A master stroke where books could be like an Audi TT convertible, squashed and reduced as they are by the guys at Volkswagen and the Audi factory. I often thought of taking the laser cutter and shaping the book as I did once when I turned a rather bloated volume called *Writing Architecture* into one of those vases by Alvar Aalto. Those were the vases by the way that the deranged forest Finn considered resembled the undergarments of the northern indigenous tribe.

It was a gesture, a big one too, we have to give them that. Even when they showed us the first drafts in the Hotel Colon! These were doorstoppers. You know the ones we use to prop the door from the bar to the lounge, or in place of piano legs when a caster has fallen off, (perfect actually for the Steinway), or that leg under a collapsed bed. Admittedly rather mundane functions for something of such value! In fact, let's not mince words or scholarship, these began to leave all the other books behind! Except: everyone started doing it.

Only recently actually, guilty as charged, after owning a few of these bumper books on architecture for so long did I start going from page to page. These books were as far from Mr Jabes as we can get. This was not a foreigner carrying under the crook of his arm a tiny volume. There was no tiny volume here - *un extranjero con, bajo el brazo, un libro de pequeno format* - no there was no K in the sequence, no minor literature or minor architecture in this assemblage, these were the cabrones of all architectural books.

Recently I took one of these volumes from under the piano and I sat down. I thought of the sand in the dunes off West Wales. It was like turning over a page of sand. I read some of the text. I scanned others. Then I turned slowly, then quickly. What I saw as a gratuitous graphic appeared to dislodge a serious one, or so it seemed. Sand ran between the images. There is something going on here but I am no nearer understanding them, than I was on

the day I bought these books. But then, at that stage of my life, I was travelling on a train going the same direction. But mine was a train that is suddenly buffeted and shaken so violently, as the passing superior super nova, inter city express hurtles past on the other track. It's all a matter of sound and vision, sound and sand. Over in a matter of seconds. We can be icons, if just for one day. But it was the direction we were all going, give or take careful measures of denial. It's only the speed that is let's say not up to speed! You'll forgive this untidy pun, but some of us are 'still' getting there.

Everly,
James

Dear David

I had just bought the maddest, coolest, un-hip chunky zip-up sweater with a Mondrian pattern. I was teaching architecture again and wondering why, after 2 years as a recluse, the school was going round in circles with one foot nailed to the floor. Disaster and doom were in the air again, the war on terror was imploding as it had threatened to do for years now, cartoonists were about to be murdered, more and more cities were being occupied and bombed, and I was waiting to get back to Peshawar on the Afghan border. However there is sadness at the school of architecture. It has taken the vocational turn; no one knows what to do, or how to differentiate between the operative and the interpretive.

Students keen, indifferent, confuse are all being hung out to dry in ways you icons know all about. In these days where is no such thing as authentic architecture (was there ever?). The struggle is on their faces. They care, of course they care, but something else begins to dislodge the moment. And it goes straight into the heart. The external panic in the market isn't giving them much confidence either, nor the re-packaged books of a subversive like Vonnegut, or even the newly emerging bumper volumes on architecture and urbanism as more phantom piano legs. Resorting to known solutions like the grand but empty poetic gesture of immediacy, or the delights of known thrill and conscientious visions, can hold off the barbarians for a while. But only for a while!

The tornadoes and hurricanes anthropomorphically rip out communities without as much as pause. Without planning, nothing will survive. Well we used to think that no? Some students speak of a book of illusions or a book of pessimism. Some suggest another 'book of disquiet', but they stare out as if the grand gesture of the failed rebel is finished.

Pessoa is now a software program not a poet with multiple identities who happened to live in Lisbon and wear those glasses and a suit that could be silhouetted into an icon.

The students are hunkering down, in their minds, in their homes, in their offices and in their marriages. The Bumper Book is nowhere to be seen. Asked if they are positive, they nod, sadly, from side to side, not up and down. It is this *tristesse* that is dripping from the walls of these institutes, these schools of architecture. Meanwhile the icons like you have raced ahead once again, turned the tables on anyone tempted to take the seriousness to another stage. There is little exchange, and what exchange there is, consists of agreed outrage at the loss of serious history and the lack of anything that resembles deep understanding. Then there are the new Ivy Fascists, as they are now being called. The zero tolerance professors who swing their pace sticks and call students to attention. You'd be laughing here. This has left students so de-radicalized for years as to think a passive, modest architecture of careful agony and such tiny complacent thrill is the answer to the indulgent excesses of what was once known as 'star architecture'. If you were a film director and not an icon, you too would have used a U2 song as your soundtrack or then Nick Cave.

Ciao, Cabron

Jimmie

Dear Edward

I didn't mean to get into the bleakness too early. But you icons have to take some responsibility in all this. Fake battles stage fake skirmishes in an attempt to re-align education and design scholarship to ensure students either have a skill to enter offices or remain in education. The goal is to get one of those rapid doctorates that ensure students will be taught by those forever young. Both it seems are already tamed with an ethical position that keeps architecture the privileged and favored circle it always was.

This reminds me of the type of short essay you might have written, quickly and seductively. The administrators and instructors assembled in committee after committee ask for a social responsibility in students that most educators now no longer have themselves. In the meantime students idle out their time, put off graduating and the schools ride out the confusion whilst adding to this impasse. Then one or other of the Bumper Boys Own Books of Architecture is occasionally brought out like a French accordion player and the music goes on. The signs are not good; the search for a method is vacant, the bubble diagrams for authentic action and real architecture are becoming a waste of time.

That was then. That was when I arrived in Houston to introduce a panel of the famed and the damned, the icon and the iconed, at a conference held by the American Associate Schools and Colleges of Architecture in Doubletree Hotel, Downtown Houston. Having thankfully failed to become head of a school of architecture, I thought it would be good to be a bystander, take the seat in the auditorium and listen to the icons and illuminati put right what seems to have gone wrong with past, present and future architecture. A few of your friends were there.

Professor Mack Sennett was to kick it all off at Rice University and it was, I was told, worth getting one of those high seats, like the pitchers in an academic baseball game. There I would learn from Mack Sennett the art of being able to speak slowly and deliberately on a subject that one has just spent a year or two writing about. I was not 18 floors up looking down and becoming the identity demanded of me from this upper purchase as I am now, Professor James Vertigo.

That was then Edward, this is now

Everbest

Vertigo

*

Dear Humbug

You used to like being called humbug. This request for a return to the Fundamentals of Architecture is of course an attractive call. No small magic means that it can once again become all. In its various disguises such return to basics always emerges;

across critical and cultural history we find these periods when returns are fitting and remind us of the farce history once was. It appeals to the banality of a Modernity turned bad and gone off, whilst the lawns are mowed and the high-rise buildings are re-skinned for lighter interactive mirrors in the urban loneliness. If not detonated.

Talk of Modernity 2.0, Humbug, is another useful rustle of time but it seems more appropriate for those icons who wish to become tourists to their own biennales. Not that I attribute this to you. You have enough earthly delights and enough detractors that my own words will count for nothing if what your Swiss friend Jacques used to say to me is still true: *it's a jungle out there*.

It certainly is, but greed is interesting. Greed and Chora, greed and China, greed and Laos or Moscow or Luanda! How would we map these distortions and uneven developments that become icons to themselves and count ourselves responsible? Who is being let off lightly here? A map of capital flows, of orphans to diaspora, or a map of architectural aid given the most developed countries? Those infographics do indeed seduce, and the human trafficking across the student mind is a secret map of sainthood and icons to come.

I myself would prefer a map of the useless icons, the anxiety and influence in the cities of the world about to disappear from the map itself. Imagine that. I have another map in mind; a map of movement where buildings are moved from country to country, no longer a map of protest but of democratic intolerance.

Barbusso, under fire! Really? Did these bumper volumes of architecture actually prefigure many aspects of contemporary architectural practice? If the early adopters can be identified, they would make a completely new map, calibrated by icons for non-specialist consumption. But that's not the fundamentals we are talking about. Bloated, sculpted, extravagant! If we did a quick poll of the parents of young students and asked: which of these persons would you trust your children with. Vertigo or the icon. You'd walk this. You'd win hands down. Icons always do. No competition. I'd be sent to the knacker's yard.

Ciao

Vertigo

*

Dear Zara

So that's it. Let's just return to the brief, the muezzin for these Bumper Books of Architectural Scenarios. This is the Letter after the last Letter. Students have now learnt how to be relational when their instructors often ignored this. Some didn't even understand this as a dynamic for architecture as much as social alliances. The Bumper Books implied pedagogies that students recognise, a process in constant upset, situations re-scripting themselves, a re-imagining of architecture through an expanded, bloated processes. It became a pedagogy which is in movement itself. That's when it became much more complex.

Much contemporary architecture tied to the repertoire of a known history of forms and the allowed spectacle attempted this and accepts it as some sort of progress in response to the trade-fair architecture that is re-shaping new and old cities alike in Uzbekistan, Beijing, Nanjing, or Almaty. But – and you Icons the way brilliantly - to be relational here is not an architecture of resistance turning back to known thrill and crafted mastery, nor is it the inventive but relative mutations of the type seen in Photoshop or Rhino-architecture. Neither is it an appropriation of refined but known solutions.

No, the relational you put forward in pedagogical terms refers more to the displaced intellect and whether – even in architecture – it plays up to reveal the emptiness of our past in structure and system. Let's not touch the psychic, cognitive and performative; these effects shift in other parts of that system. Be this part of a building process, technology, research and development, the client's process, the brief, the political and financial dimension, or the enlarged but achingly framed social reality. Do we think of urbanism differently because of these bumper volumes? Why would current educators and instructors be so afraid of this menu of sliding intellect and alertness for an iconic architecture that must respond to an expanded consciousness, when all events outside this illusion are being controlled by factors outside architecture. Who then dear Icon is controlling the architecture of the system itself?

What other futures did these volumes bring into the spotlight? Students needed to be part of the conditions within which today's engagement and practice was based. Students would need to insinuate themselves within the economic constraints, they would have to navigate perceptual prejudice, and ideological re-framing. All of these are the table-top,

desk-top and daily issues which are often ignored when buildings reach the picture-point stage. And if philosophy, weak thinking and logic in architecture had become an alibi for the future, a meditation on language only, then teaching would also need to expose the unobtainable and unthinkable truths in architecture that of course would never be revealed. But if the illusion is alive and kicking and represented in the new cities popping up in deserts, oil fields and wastelands then here is the conundrum.

Late here now. Goodnight from the no longer globe-girdling, 24 hour news streaming, suicide bomber with pens where AK47s would have been.

Octopus head greetings,

Professor James Vertigo

*

Dear Philip

Let's ignore the last letter; it more or less stated the obvious. But as I reach the end of this section of letters to an icon, I still want to ask you something specific because it is implied in these Bumper Volumes. Where is this delusion from, that architecture touches everything? You can say the same of advertising. Or football. And where do we get this conceit that icons are responsible and morally charged to be responsible for that touch? I mean everything? I don't see this. I didn't see this when you were competing with the other icons on a monthly basis. And I don't see this now, when there is a whole library of the bloated, Big Books in Architecture.

I have to admit though, such big tomes appeal to the tamed academy we have in architecture today, a timidity that is part distraction and part fear. When challenged about these big books the result is some randomness and even creative meanness. You can't be happy with that surely. Though I do accept that it must be useful. Such cleverness does rely on a wish not to understand our times and our conditions today. But that would be a mistake you are used to. You have unreasonably become the traitor to many, and all sorts of bloated individuals are brought out to testify against you.

We need to turn to poetry to situate this fiction that can never be measured. “Oh honey,” she said coming across the gallery floor, “didn’t you know all that, you are such a critic!” Though it’s probably years now since you were referred to as a critic. Icon yes, but critic no. The irony responsible for architectural errancy has dawdled behind such a phrase and it speaks in loud tones as she performs in front of other suitors, dressed in haute-couture trendlets loaned for the event by Monsieur Aläiä. When all this becomes a substitute for the failed and failing family we begin to understand when a diagram is really needed.

Oh yes come clean. I have long thought these Boys Own books on architecture exceptional. They arrived with the era of a disorderly predicted future all ready with happy-hour dismissal. And come to think of it, why would we want to paraphrase William Gibson or the *Neuromancer*? We are in Mona Lisa Overdrive already and we can do him more service than this brief throw-away. The reductions to zero history are the other side of the evenly distributed future of an ‘icon’ of architects. But the reductions are too crude to let it go at this. I am not even wondering if you agree anymore.

All good wishes

VtgO

*

Dear Jacques

Should we not stop with all this inflation, the bloated rhetoric of icons and legends? Recently I heard a BBC security spokesman speak of the likelihood of *an iconic attack on an aircraft*. The 24-hour news programs - especially on the radio - wheel out endless hypocrites who attack others for brainwashed ideology without thinking where their own language, prejudices and statements come from. And it’s likely to get worse. In the late 1960s when architecture students were given the ‘ideology’ package - called then the ‘fundamentals package’ - it was delivered in the form of Peter Blake’s three books: *the Penguin Modern Masters of Architecture*, Wright, Corbusier and Mies. By then they were already part of the recognisable naming games: *Frank*, *Corbu* and *Mies*. Naturally, ‘icon’ was not a word in common use back then. But you know, it always intrigued me. *Mies* in Finnish means man. I would always smile at that, as I looked at the icon complete with cigar. You’re the man, Man!

But who was the Man? Who is de man? You de man, Mr Icon. Or is it Mr Dick. As students these books were devoured without reading, were perceived without critical comprehension, were absorbed without deliberation or debate. They just were. They were the da Vinci Code. They left an indelible stain on the next two decades – from the 1960s to the 1980s. And many young students plagiarised some form or another and either became architects or not. But any understanding of the merits of these architects outside the narratives of Modernism that were cleverly promulgated by professor and instructor alike hardly surfaced. Perhaps reading stopped then in Modern Architecture only to be cleverly and masterfully pluralised by Mr Jencks a little later with his structural manifestos of Modernism. His, at the time, revolutionary claim, that there were actually ‘modernisms’ and not a single Modern Architecture. Hard to recreate the thrill of that ambiguity that Charlie Jencks brought from a background in literature and a fascination with structuralism. It was like coming out of the gulag, as some would say.

None of you can of course be blamed for what happened 25 years later with the appearance of the Big Bumper Books on architecture, nor can you really be blamed for the diaspora of course. In another world we’d call it the diaspora of Guinness. Flatness, reading the earth and influence were but exercised on and around the bloated volumes. By then there was no control. The carnival was blown open and the orgy had begun.

But can we be specific?

Best

Jimmy

*

Dear Frank

I thought of these letters when I was doing my ironing. Yes I still iron my own shirts. And I wondered when was the last time you ironed any shirt you were using. You might actually be a closet ironer of shirts. That would bring a smile to my face. You might think this a conceptual project about Shirts & Ironing. Something you probably did not know, but I was once a consultant for a South Asian firm called *Sexing the Shirt*. I am tempted to put this alongside the appetite for generalizations and the curse of the tentative that came up as I thought of this act. But I had a more sinister thought,

promoted by a sentence in Martin Amis' novel *The House of Meetings*; how much have we killed in our lives for generalizations?

Are our conditions today on the thinner side, have we created a swathe of critical fictions that we do not know what to do? Somehow I have the feeling you knew this all along. You actually taught us to how we can write about and study the conditions that make up the 'thin' work that is our condition today in profession and practice. You taught us an essential lesson: in whatever way 'thinness' works it will assume its own thickness. Mapping, software and all its recent 'thick' mapping and big data are a case in point.

But I have the feeling we will only realise all this later, when the new volumes come out on the icons and their Big Books. We will start getting a handle on how professional and personal structures need to maintain and sustain their generalisations, which then become a future reality. I have always been intrigued by this and your work somehow gets at the heart of architecture where generalisations have the ability to become prejudice (law) and then become narratives (stories), only – to be fair – to risk becoming trite (thin). Is that a sequence you recognise? We are given the impression once again that our architectural icons have dragged, or are now about to drag the world once more, out of that woolly age?

Ah this icon of architects! Now that's the plural of architects. I wonder how much these are all critical fictions played out by those common grounders who would wish to expand architecture but need the very conditions of *the thin* to expand their own 'opacity'. Why does working in science, technology and engineering frighten us, put us off the cultured imagery of the 'theorists'? Such pure cultural inbreeding encouraged by architects has to reinforce any project that can announce its literary or filmic source. What a *jamboree*! And what a good word for it all, which one of the icons must have captured perfectly in their Very Own Big Book.

You were well on the way to become the Dark Knight and you left us with the obvious question: how many more carnivals and jamborees are necessary before we press the re-set button? This is not cynical. We know icons have the knack of actually sustaining the 'thinness' necessary in contemporary architecture to appear significant but redundant at the same time? Remember that star-lined jury in place around the nibbles table in the Barcelona Pavilion, and photographed in the setting sun?

It was me who took the photographs.

Everly brothers,
James

*

Dear Cedric

I was walking home and the image of Kurt Vonnegut came across me. I know he has or had more hair than you and can or could do the short buzz cut up the sides and let the octopus sit on top of his head. You can never be accused of that, of letting the octopus sit on top of your head. You don't belong with Zidane and Pele in the Louis Vitton ad. But all this octopus thinking probably emerged because I had recently seen the new packaging of KV's books; brash graphics, bright colours, wonky design, something stirring in their New York lifelessness. I wondered: weren't you the Vonnegut of architecture? And how we lament your loss now.

Ah you must admit, not a bad thought to have to accompany you home in a city that has no name, in a country that struggles to identify itself, in a world stumbling towards being occupied by the neo-liberals that have taken over countries and successfully stored vast sums of money to ensure the interest will pay for any further discrepancies and budget inaccuracies.

But I have a confession to make – there are many in these letters – that whenever I read about you in various books, essays, articles, academic texts I too oscillate between the bleak negativity of transformative Noir and the delusional optimism of machine world. This is where I cannot help becoming the exacerbated self. But what struck me then, and strikes me now, is why I don't read with any depth. I just don't want to. It is not that I am indifferent, far from it. I read umpteen books a month. I mean *really* read. But I just don't want to entertain the seriousness of this immediacy that you ushered in. This was the world that is only now emerging, a world exacerbated by full-blown rhetoric and language games, diagrams of the gamed and impoverished soul that bites into the advertised and advertising apple. Any apple.

I have heard that (bloated?) volumes are already underway on your work which have a strange, uncanny even, resemblance to volumes that have been written before. For

example a few of the forthcoming books that have been advertised recently are as follows: *The Success and Failure of The Trnsformatice Icon*, *Cedric and the Tragic View of Architecture*. *The Price of the Continual Revolution in Architecture*. Some of these do promise to do more than just re-script the last century and that inimitable constructivist vision of Gabo-lite and Suprematist brilliance, blandness and blindness. Some of these volumes may just allow us to re-read what was really at stake when those other Bumper Books emerged. Personally, if I were to be asked by a publisher I'd suggest writing *The Icon & The Prejudice Project*. But it's unlikely that I will get that request before I retreat to the villa on the banks where the Namkhan and Mekong rivers join in Luang Prabang.

This was going to be a shorter letter. So it goes,

James, the Headwearing Octopus

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Dear Michael

I have to close soon, the Icon demands it. I cut out at least 4 to 5 letters and I'll hold back the second volume. But were these really protest books? Were they a sign of things to come, a way of cancelling the futures they could spawn? A collection of actions taken in inactive times? Here we may have to blame the 1980s for some appalling and repellent developments. Failed wings of a revolutionary imagination, delinquent misreadings, tempting architectural crimes against humanity. Petty crimes, you ask. Hardly, there are no 'petty' crimes in architecture!

I am not sure how much this is a good thing or not. But you, the Icons have become your own subject. If we take the classic route and consider reaction-anti-reaction (the counter-revolutionary swing) the icons have succeeded in creating their own abyss whilst allowing architecture to continue playing its own games, in its own sandbox with its own endlessly patterned and re-patterned dissonance. We enter the void through you, oh Dark Dismal Knight. I am not qualified to take this any further into the realm of cognitive, existential and political dissonance but all I would say is: where is Mr Marcuse when we need him most?

Victims, perpetrators, martyrs of the fine causes, a barricade architecture which allows for virtuoso performances whereby the machinery of state, profession and education go along with it all. How do you reach derangement? Have you asked yourself that? Has it ever become a crusade, to occupy each major city in the world with an architectural stain, of the highest order of course! Reminds me of what Stefan Aust said (besides many other things) of the Baader Meinhof Complex, ‘clearly a repellent idea.’ But it is always the clarity of repulsion that allows it more traction.

In discussions and dialogues with myself I often return eventually to the mind not the work, though of course, the work is always a result of the mind. How to capture the skill and understand the organisational effectiveness necessary in architecture today, necessary for reluctant and bewildered students to be able to influence and shape the architecture of the future? Where do you stand on this? Many architects demonstrate this today but few stray into the schools to support this wider vision. It isn’t an easy task of course as we **seek to understand the organisational effectiveness necessary in practice today often through words which can never quite sustain architecture’s intent or import.**

Aiming to help students negotiate and take on the expanded fields in architecture whilst attempting to contribute toward a public understanding of contemporary architecture takes on an urgency and serious critical dimension.

When do we reach the stage when we have become reprehensible to ourselves? Reprehensible in relation to our shared worlds, which get narrower and narrower. We devour books rather than architecture. Rather a huge collection of the poems of Czeslaw Milosz or Zbigniew Herbert than the Bumper Book. If we could map the atlas of journeys taken, cities visited, countries invaded and ideas distorted and disseminated, we might understand that term used by Hegel and appropriated by many other scenarios and critical fictions, an *atlas of bad infinity*.

But as much as these Bumper Books were brutally scanned, skipped and treated whimsically, the clarity of seductive repulsion was more powerful than ever. It had the advantage and in architecture might be a first: it produced its own diaspora. We now kill for generalisation. Oscillations, seduction and delinquency have killed for the same reasons. Recall Paul Celan’s response to Brecht: did these big books make too much explicit in times and crimes like these, collided as they do now with the Internet?

Is this a crime in another part of the world, where refugees and orphans race for the
rice bags thrown from aid-planes?

Dear Icon, whatever name we give you, I think though you might be the first to admit
this; we've all used the intervening two decades collating all that is explicit about our
cities and all that can be held in diagrams of insignificance.

Octopus head greetings, Oh Obi-Wan Kanobe
your song is my song..
killing thought it may be..
rock on icons of world architecture

James W Vertigo

*

The Crisis and The Icon : On Late-Reading

The Ungrounding ; From my experience many schools of architecture are turning (back to) anti-theory; this means a crisis in assertion and language claims. Not in the theory itself. – Is this because some schools have managed to confuse theory in architecture with (critical) histories and an applied remote critical thinking never really detached from the master narratives, legendary figures and recognised critical historians of architecture provide. Just what is crisis here? How has reflection become a generalised concept-become-cliché confused with 'thinking the world' or a 'lived theory' through thinking well. Crisis invites the obvious: how to act – what is doing the right thing under conditions of 'critic' (if indeed that is agreed). How can 'think through' any readings that haven't grounded their thinking and position? We are well comforted in our theory lunge as we get the rolled eyes from the technocrats, the engineers, and chartered accountants who really see no point in engaging in such thinking with architects/ What is the point, what is the shared code? We share the resistance, often abusive and patronising, that there are some who still cannot think architecture and thereby shouldn't think. It's a peer-played carousel which has hidden in architectural circles for a long time a weak intellectual and critical position. Indeed this weakness is celebrated, many admitting openly that they all this page going and footnoting does not bring them any closer to understand the profession they are losing a grip on.

In this way we might propose late reading; undertake this as a thinking that so competently performs for the norms, quotas and minimums required, but has abandoned (or never entertained the asylums set up. Asked time and time again to address critical (cultural) theory at the later stage in a student's career or even in a professor's career) It is notable through no fault of their own that it appears there is so little adequate background to step into it. This of course is not true but have fallen into the trap of thinking there is a short cut to all you need to know about critical Theory. Cultural theory, the phenomenology of crisis or the year of living in crisis. It's never a case of beginning again at a very early stage and map the thinking (theories) of a dostrong 20th century, it is recognising that we are always in the middle of whatever we invent – in this case crisis. It could have been difficulty, it could have been Africa (or the India within), it could have been Iraq. Late readings have to be provocations then to avoid their pre-crime. If we cannot read the books we are asked to read and we do not have the references required of read it. Then 'reference' itself is in crisis.

Step into the reading .asylum. Take any recent book from one of the usual suspects (publishers) that considers itself a contrivution to new research and design Scholarship. The book is like to be dense, with a fair amount of private language personally costructed to take on the rsearch areas and fields that are peer-acceptable. One or two of the volumes can be collectyions of essay or indovodually authores, comstime well written. There might be sappropriation of the late schuilars, in tui case we might mention Badrillard, Ricoruer, Deleuze and Guattari, even include Badiou, Zizek or Harman and Meliisoux. As we ree-reda this we could consider the notion of 'towards a crisis in archtitecture' linkign this to the oft quoted tragey and farce narrative shift we can understand how the essays ground crisis out of laguage and laguage out of crisis – the result cna be architectuyral contrbutions on a scale of 1-10. This is a working methodology and we have to stress without out self-contest, it is likelt the columes will close on the vert glossary acepcted. Measure whether the volue challenges the master narratives set out with this notion of crisis (see attached phreseology). How the gorunded assertions move onuseful for architecture. Care mst be taken to ecplere the argument, through various readings and re-readings of other sources and politico-literary extracts. If fictuon is used then this needs partocular attention as usually the volumes and essays eventually have to make that crucial step - the an obvious but insistent link between architecture to crisis. Crisis- both metaphor and metonymy – then offers up itself for a series of oblqieu brut critical (cris-monegring?) approaches to architecture, urbanism, the city and the architect.”

Consier how your analysis actually does not do justice to the threteningly closed density of both book and argument, and the ‘transfer’ to architecture of a concept tthat may remain in the area of ‘generakisations to kill’ And if it does how do you define that generalisation – something not fully/really/critically developed? Prppare mappings of the book;s structure where the rosuce can be grpahically entranced to show how much the work relies on extrcats, citations, loaned data and other material – don’t accept the spurious too easily. Consider the schlarly trick loaned from fictio wruters of consistently re-defining what ‘cricis’ might be and how it can help re-define the ver lateness (Late Modernity) in this case that crisis invites; behind the curve is not something a privilege of the senior retrinng architect stars, it is someth9ng , like bowell cancer. That can also affect the young. Check the known and unknown refernces thrown into the ring (be aware of the metaphors you yurself layer over this) - Benjamin, Barthes, Ahrendt, Freud, Agamben, Merton, Boenhoeefr, Berger, Brecht, Bachmann, Ais, known and unknown writers like Kafka, Balard, Amis, Conrad, Roth, Updike, Frsch, Gombrowicz, Borges, and Bernhard.

Consider how this sets up the necessary dumbness to make for a subversive reading of 'critics' which can be seen as non-authorial architecture of crisis. Depending on the bias, the rub, this can include crisis as a new framing which includes adaptive re-use, globalism re-narrated, re-novated architecture, re-conserved architecture, re-appropriated space, pulp architecture, residual urban architecture, informal architecture, architecture of conflict, post-confrontational urbanism, transitory space, distributed urbanism and so on..

Does this constitute what we might call a Late Reading where the (re) reading of any book, source or previous argument appropriated material from earlier (re)readings are thrust into the dense scholarly vibrancy of that reading whilst this area (in terms of crisis here) has long been explored in writings and fields beyond architecture. This leaves us with a useful sketch for a methodology on crisis and the icon:

Question 1 What is a Late reading?

(Hindsight reading – foresight reading – appropriated reading – redemptive (re)reading etc..)

Question 2 What do you/we need to be able to read this work and value its contribution?

Question 3 - How do we read it? How do we read the readings and re-readings that the internalising of the architectural profession and discipline relies on?

Question 4 – what is reading and design scholarship/scholarship of design when the references are likely to remain partial, incomplete (even un-read), hurried and the narrative potentially already given from the re-readings of other narratives given?

Question 5 Can architecture (really) gain obliquely and critically from subsequent readings, re-appropriating the readings on and around 'critis' by extension other lines of flight into other knowledge fields?

Question 6 Is a new hermeticism a useful gain for architecture (given the anti-theory, post-critical, new theories of difficulty and speculative 'crisis' emerging)

Question 5: Why should only architects (researchers, educators, practitioners and architecture students) debate these issues?

Question 6 Can we decide, Let us decide

Question 7 who outside the restricted realm of enttanst could add to this debate?

Question 8 where does critical reflections come from when 'reflection' and 'late reading' emerges from its crisis?

*

Boo Hoo

Text for Nothing 5

Thanks for sending the guideline, people in my group appreciated it. We are going ahead with the A-Z glossary of Aids and Architecture and a matrix of our re-mapped vocabulary. Our group decided to all do it so we can be equal and share our ideas, which is fine. I got your message back. I will not give up on the research. If anything I was more motivated by reading Pulp Architecture than I have been in a long time, which is why I started to wonder why that was. Pulp Architecture to some degree reads as a call to arms, which fascinated me and made me wonder why it wasn't apparently working in our studio. I am ready to dive into all of these projects, the digital and the FlashPanel, the 3D printer, and the common area in Middle Earth. I will write up these three proposals while you are gone and sit with you for a few minutes and discuss where they can go now. I've got an idea for a kind of "production machine" for the public space that I think will be a fantastic project, and will be a real demonstration of the principles that I will pursue in my thesis. I am willing to start investing my own money to launch these projects, because I have a strong feeling that it's going to take a few demonstrations before we can do anything to bring in funding from the University or other places. I also see this self production machine as a really nice tie in with what you told me about the downtown storefront for architecture where graduate students run a public studio off campus. I'd like to run some of these projects from the open space in Azrieli. The school doesn't need to necessarily fund or support anything so long as they 'suspend disbelief' long enough to set something up and prove my ideas. If some professors are opposed to using this space to advance these projects, I will do them off campus and pursue funding and publication of the results completely independent from the School. You were completely right on Friday, there is no reason to wait at this moment for anything. Have a good trip. I hope you didn't think that my text about Pulp Architecture was too critical; it was meant as a response not disagreement. It was an exciting text, one of the few I've come across that can ignite architecture and encourage action. So many of the readings for school classes are completely opposite, where the discussions become more doom and gloom dragging architecture down because its failures. If the big firms are questioning their own identities and roles, boo hoo. There are a thousand little guys, nameless people, regular people doing exciting projects on an almost invisible scale. When was the last time (or first time) a building excited the same kind of energy that someone can find in a Rave or an informal setting like Burning Man, or the richness of attention given to Earth Ships, the expressiveness in design of a graffiti artist. Or a public garden executed with the same care and thought of Derek Jarman's garden? The Jarmanization of Bank Street for our Social Street group would be amazing, but that would require us to consider with care every square foot of the space in person and not from Google Earth. I am not sure what it is about our current environment that is stopping us (myself included) of integrating with projects on this level. Which leads me to the quote of the day below from one of my peers: Quote of the Day "Professors have no right to be angry at for bad work if they don't give us a clear outline of **exactly** what they want. This isn't thesis, we shouldn't have to decide things ourselves."

Oh dear!

¹ Prepared for **JAE 69:1**

They were both rejected which allows some licence in bringing them together here in the 5th volume of the Texts for Nothing (Phoney island of the Mind)

² Even the call for this edition on Crisis is in crisis. Let us therefore write essays and offer research proposals without the following phrases:

interrogate the relationship between - less the mitigation or solution of crises - the contextualization of crisis - scholarship of design - interrogate crisis - design as scholarship

historical attitudes - exigencies of crisis - the examination of architects, practices - events in context - political revolutions - economic contractions - extreme climates - diverse manifestations of crises - elucidation or demonstration of links - causes and consequences –

³ (Adam Curtis 2005)

⁴ And last but not least, let us avoid using the word 'overall' so that crisis itself is represented by what it smacks of in current architecture, education and practice: lack of motivation, un-space, un-depth, distortion, misjudgment, atemporality and yet another internal, self-reflexive medium for another architecture in crisis. (Professor James Vertigo) 11.6.2014

⁵ *Indeed the present confluence of crises, both acute and chronic, is felt to be so encompassing as to perhaps signal an epochal shift,*

with the epoch whose demise seems to be presaged that of
modernity itself. JAE Call 69.1

⁶ At a moment when the experience of crisis is felt to be fully
enclosing, when to be modern is to be not just 'in crisis' but inside
crisis, what are the salient characteristics of design practices?

⁷ "For if crisis is in fact the consummate experience of modernity,
then design, as an anticipatory discipline, is surely implicated."

⁸ to write any further essays and let us try and offer research
proposals without the following phrases: *interrogate the relationship*
between - less the mitigation or solution of crises - the
contextualization of crisis - scholarship of design - interrogate crisis
- design as scholarship - historical attitudes - exigencies of crisis -
the examination of architects, practices - events in context - political
revolutions - economic contractions - extreme climates - diverse
manifestations of crises - elucidation or demonstration of links -
causes and consequences –

⁹ Bertholt Brecht, *Poems 1913-1956* Eyre Methuen 1979. Trans by
John Willets and Ralph Mannheim.

¹⁰ I hear this when Kenneth Frampton was discussing what Peter
Eisenman had said some years back, Baird Symposium Toronto
2012. Interestingly Frampton implied we had all been responsible
for some chokers in our lives. Hence I suppose my
dependence on the culture of the *tectonic* as a
discursive means to bridge between *production, representation,*
and *experience*. This means openly acknowledging as a 'rear guard'
spiritual and political operation that can only come into being as a
critical minority report to the dominant techno-scientific mediatic,
late-capitalist, hyper-consumerist discourse; all of which is a total
anathema to what you refer to as the "right stuff" in all its
deceptive forms. (KF)

¹¹ Which is why I would like to see Eagleton, Ulmer and Harvey
teaching in architecture schools rather than abducted versions of
their work in and around crisis (literature theory – media &
graphology – Cities and capital) and ideas taught by stray souls.
With 'crisis' in mind, is Karsten Harries (*the ethical function of*
architecture) worth a re-reading or is it worth asking the protagonist
to unload the lost work within another symposium!

¹² A Phantom Sketch for a Symposium on Crisis and Architecture
introduction— an idea worthy of another symposium?

"Each report was different," Anderton concluded. "Each was unique.
But two of them agreed on one point. If left free, I would kill Kaplan.
That created the illusion of a majority report. Actually, that's all it
was—an illusion. 'Donna' and 'Mike' previewed the same event—but
in two totally different time-paths, occurring under totally different

situations. 'Donna' and 'Jerry,' the so-called minority report and half of the majority report, were incorrect. Of the three, 'Mike' was correct—since no report came after his, to invalidate him. That sums it up.”re-searching & re-situating crisis & architecture (the phenomenology of crisis - the genealogy of a crisis - demonizing theory – questions of perception - unpacking crisis chatter papers proposed: from arendt to zizek (take the Circle Line) seduction & resistance, fear and loathing of crisis (historicizing crisis theology in architecture -the lapsed crisis theologist: linguistics/hermeneutics – a developmental narrative re-opening the intellectual project of crisis - a philosopher responds a critical minority report (keynote) crisis – the reality famine phenomenology in action - re-situating phenomenology negative theology - ontology of the crisis - architects and another crisis of science - **crisis and** the cognitive/neuro-psychological dimension a philosopher responds- the sensitive proven - **crisis and** the responsive liminal (social/performative) - devices of crisis and an indeterminate architecture - **crisis and** the anarchist gardener

“... unanimity of all three precogs is a hoped-for but seldom-achieved phenomenon, acting-Commissioner Witwer explains. It is much more common to obtain a collaborative majority report of two precogs, plus a minority report of some slight variation, usually with reference to time and place, from the third mutant. This is explained by the theory of *multiple-futures*. If only one time-path existed, precognitive information would be of no importance, since no possibility would exist, in possessing this information, of altering the future. In the Precrime Agency’s work we must first of all assume—”

crisis and *architectural embodiment* - *extraterroriality* – *crisis, science and architecture* - **crisis, two schools of thought** - *why Crisis matters to architects* -crisis, semiotics and the intellectual project in architecture - try starting in the middle or learning from denied crises - They’re selling postcards for the Symposium (RC)

¹³ Magical Realism has long been cheapened by the novelist’s reach for transcended states whether it emerges from Latin America or India, but to dream once more of a sensuous and sensual architecture, of closely watched details and beautiful cities on our magical earth is neither a challenge nor a turn of phrase Frampton is reluctant to use. If out of this comes misunderstood, even misinterpreted magic buildings and landscapes, Frampton’s paradigm busting exercise will succeed.

Kenneth Frampton, a critical thinker who has been concerned with such timely and untimely issues for over fifty years may just have something more to say about reconciling economics, ethics and the environment within a critically functional aesthetic framework.

However it means reading between the lines with a renewed listening intelligence. If this means design in the widest sense – an expanded architecture (and how it impacts our lives) is in need of a new compass, then surely architectural works expressing this wherever they can be found in the world give the critical thinker the right to speak.

¹⁴ Charles Jencks, *Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture*, Monacelli press 2000 "As Charles Jencks notes in the introduction, this is an 'evolutome, with a triple date of 1973, 1987, and 2000'. This book, in its third metamorphosis, is the fruit of an obsession, perhaps, which Jencks has had for a substantial period of his writing life with the elucidation of the person of Le Corbusier. In this incarnation, Jencks has drawn deeply on the work of other Corb historians, collating every possible credible field of enquiry to offer the most comprehensive insight into the mind and multifarious form of expression of this complex and contradictory man. We hear of his early life and of his early schooling. We hear of his high-octane relationships with teachers, mentors, friends and collaborators. <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/le-corbusier-and-the-continual-revolution-in-architecture/1005490.article> . Also see Douglas Hofstadter, Godel, Escher Bach, (GEB), Penguin, London. 1979. The book was always present by the publishers with the copy, tagline: *a metaphorical fugue on minds and machines in the spirit of Lewis Carroll*. Lewis Carroll, *Le Corbusier and Rem Koolhaas - now there's another eternal golden braid, a fugue for research into architectural fiction and late-adopted futures*.

¹⁵ Crisis - *Journal of Architectural Education*, 69:1 " Overall, the issue seeks contributions that elaborate Crisis itself as a motivation, a means of judgment, a temporality, in short, a medium for architecture."

¹⁶ *A Phantom Sketch for a Symposium on Crisis and Architecture* The introduction to include from Philip K Dick *The Minority Report* : "Each report was different," Anderton concluded. "Each was unique. But two of them agreed on one point. If left *free*, I would kill Kaplan. That created the illusion of a majority report. Actually, that's all it was—an illusion. 'Donna' and 'Mike' previewed the same event—but in two totally different time-paths, occurring under totally different situations. 'Donna' and 'Jerry,' the so-called minority report and half of the majority report, were incorrect. Of the three, 'Mike' was correct—since no report came after his, to invalidate him. That sums it up." Call for papers to include: Re-searching & re-situating Crisis & Architecture (the phenomenology of crisis; The Genealogy of a Crisis; Demonizing Theory – speculative perception against primary qualities; Unpacking Crisis Chatter: from Arendt to Žižek (take the Circle Line); Re-situating Phenomenology & Negative Theology; Ontology of Crisis, Accident and Immediacy; Architects and another crisis of science -the cognitive/neuro-psychological dimension.

¹⁷ Proposed unwritten book on Mr Koolhaas: *Crisis and the Anarchist Geomancer - They're selling Postcards for the Symposium* (or why Crisis matters to Architects) – draft contents: Crisis and Architectural embodiment - Extraterritoriality – Crisis, science and architecture - Crisis, Semiotics and the Intellectual Narrative in architecture utilising P K Dick's notion of 'precogs: "... unanimity of all three precogs is a hoped-for but seldom-achieved phenomenon, acting-Commissioner Witwer explains. It is much more common to obtain a collaborative majority report of two precogs, plus a minority report of some slight variation, usually with reference to time and place, from the third mutant. This is explained by the

theory of *multiple-futures*. If only one time-path existed, precognitive information would be of no importance, since no possibility would exist, in possessing this information, of altering the future. In the Precrime Agency's work we must first of all assume...." Try ending in the middle of another crisis.

¹⁸ ANY (Architecture New York) Barcelona 1993 Conference organised by Peter Eisenman, Cynthia Davidson, and Ignasi Sola de Morales; participants included Rafael Moneo, Rem Koolhaas, Elizabeth Diller, John Rachman, Daniel Libeskind, Mark Taylor, Arata Isozaki, Bernard Tschumi, Jacques Derrida (absent), Jacques Herzog, Fredrick Jameson, Michael Speaks, Sylvia Kolbowski. Filmed proceedings are available but – as far as I can see – generally unwatchable.

¹⁹ Actually it might be worth considering an 'icon of architects' as the plural: The icon – a critical thinker who has been concerned with timely and untimely issues for over fifty years who may just have something more to say about reconciling economics, ethics and the junked environment within a critically dysfunctional aesthetic framework. The icon reads between the lines with a renewed listening intelligence. If this means design in the widest sense – an expanded and thoroughly exhausted architecture (and how it impacts our lives) – is in need of a new compass, then surely architectural works expressing this wherever they can be found in the world under whatever crisis emerges gives the critical thinker, the 'icon' the right to speak and join together to become the plural, icon of architects? See also R. Connah, *The End of Finnish Architecture* (Helsinki 1994) for the original text on the 'jealousy of architects'.

²⁰ The title of a volume I always thought interesting and worthy of a little more attention, published by MIT Press in 1989.