

the brautigan

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roger connah

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the brautigan

a sufi in texas

Roger Connah

dear frank

just wondering if you made it back to the hotel all right.
i found myself a bit intoxicated with nostalgia as i assembled and printed
all the chapters from “The Brautigan” and read them in reverse
order during my lunch break today.
it seemed like you were reading them to me,
as if we were having lunch together there at the fruit stand.
things won’t be the same in Zetaville University without pulp architecture
but maybe, just maybe, some of the dregs got through the filter
even if they just settle at the bottom

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part one

The Brautigan

If you happen to turn to the blurb on the back cover of any novel by the American author Richard Brautigan, you will probably come across the following sentence. We never really know who wrote it but it seems to turn up time and time again: "There is nothing like Richard Brautigan anywhere. Perhaps when we are very old, people will write 'Brautigans', just as now write novels.' The unnameable at the San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle continues to tickle our future fancy: 'This man has invented a genre, a whole new shot, a thing needed, delightful and right.'

It was time to have another go at this new shot. Modern Architecture in the 21st Century was becoming the architecture it had threatened to become for the whole of the last century. Buildings were lying around, abandoned, legs up in the air. Cathedrals were back in vogue. Rumours, of the sort that had become reality, were exchanged as fast as they could be invented.

I don't recall arriving in Barcelona. Was there an airport recently built, a museum recently published, a star architect I was doomed to meet? I couldn't tell. The roller-bladers bruised me, the sun hurt the sidewalk. Architecture could curtain the soul. I stepped into the Hotel Colon. Could it be, was it, why was he here? He looked up as if awaiting a foreign agent, 'Hello!' I greeted Frank but didn't know him well

enough - except in poetry - to call him Frank. He was on his way to Bilbao and just happened to be in Barcelona. Funny that, I thought, just as I wanted to have a new shot at unreality I should collide with the world's most renowned architect. 'What's going on?'

Beats me, Frank said. There was architecture even in his smile. I got up out of the huge leather chair as Daniel rushed in. Last thing I remember I was rushing toward the door again.

From 30,000 feet up in the air it seemed appropriate to try and take revenge on all the asphalt down there in Bigtown, in Mesquite just outside Dallas. It was one of the deadmalls in urgent need of resuscitation! New exchanges for retail, community and security were necessary but unexciting. Nothing much to be done, except either let the corpse go on dying or resuscitate it in some unknown way. Outside the window, the serenity of the clouds could not fail to suggest the idea of an Airwalk. Contemporary architecture needed a new shot. It was necessary to play with a new genre, invent a new rumour: Pulp Architecture for example. This would be an architecture unstable but not uncomfortably so, a partial architecture, stable instability. And up there, in a building that had already died snipers sat, not with AK47s or Kalashnikovs, but with consoles and Firewire connections.

The Brautigan was taking shape.

Interface and animall

I had decided to work on a competition project on the theme of Deadmalls for the Los Angeles Forum of Architects. I wasn't an architect. I was an apology for one. Architecture was an existential alibi. Too near darkness to succeed. The project was carried out by two of us, one in Fort Worth, the Groundhog, the other, me - the apology for an architect - on the move, trawling around the world in Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Stockholm, Helsinki, Lahore, Karachi, Terezin and North Wales.

I began to think of some ideas and started by emailing these to the Groundhog from any available Yahoo lounge in Narita, Nagoya or Arlanda, Stockholm. Porting anywhere and everywhere to exchange jpeg files, i-movie ideas, Flash sequences and Photoshop documents, the idea to re-animate a deadspace seemed like something out of a novel. A Richard Brautigan novel! The interface offered itself up.

Our assistant back at Ground Control was a young architect, one of those Generation Xers who was taking a break from detailing foyer partitioning for a high-rise office block in Dallas. He had been educated at the University of Zetaville and was one of those fondly referred to by the professors as a 'glazed ham'. Particularly suited for this project he was specialised in skateboarding. Long legged, he looked like those wire toys you can buy at any merchandising outlet in any art museum. I bought mine at the Kimbell Museum in Fort

Worth. Wind it up and it proceeds to cross surfaces in small shudders. Like an 'animall', I suppose.

Simple language

Up at 30,000 feet it seemed there was little doubt that architecture was showing signs of operating as an interface. Instead of being detached, what used to be called architecture was now offering itself up as a discipline that could start recombining itself. Some spoke of an augmented reality. This, according to the Professor of Night, was neither a Mixed nor Virtual Reality. Instead architecture was threatening to embody space like never before. Queer as that might be to some, architecture was about to return to what it had always been, something in between.

But what did this mean? And just how was contemporary architecture beginning to operate as an interface? It was time to pulp a few of these ideas back down there to Ground Control where the new glazed ham was struggling with plan, section, elevation and those dreaded 'partis'.

In the meantime, the JAL stewardess handed me a gin and tonic with a tasty seaweed rice roll and I opened my first edition of the long lost Richard Brautigan novel, *Sombrero Fallout*.

Interestingly, as media theorists and scholars see an interface as an encounter which opens up complex options, an encounter which invites multiple experiences, shifts between human constants and the constant change within machines and systems, the new pulp attitude would prefer to see architecture re-occupying its own metaphor. In simple language, I took this to mean that architecture was about to

become the architecture of its own structured thinking and linkage.

Simple language, did I say?

Pulp in the high pulp sense of the word? I was caught between the Brautigan, the film and Pulp Architecture. The latter was a lecture I didn't know I was preparing to deliver at Yale University. I was flying back to the University of Zetaville in Texas, to the school of architecture known fondly as the College of Glazed Hams.

Murmurs

In Zetaville, in the College of Glazed Hams, you can hear murmurs all around. All architects are called Frank, after a little known Finnish film Calamari Union which named its 18 actors all Frank.

"Frank, what do you do when the money runs out?"

"Well," Frank replies, "I'll probably go back to what I did at the beginning, something minimal."

"And those shoes, Frank, are they really as comfortable as your theories suggest?"

"Oh yes, and functional too, you see the stride they offer means I can get to the other side of the lobby quicker and with more bounce."

Interesting!

"I went to Bilbao," one Glazed Ham said, "Got up close and the place was a studied mess. Could not see what all the fuss was about."

"Oh no, me too," the Vegas Ham chipped in."

"You know, whenever I hear talk about liquid architecture," the San Antone Ham said, "I think of Bruce Lee. Take the shape of water, go with it and alter yourself as it too takes shape. That's how I see it."

Interesting! Bruce Lee as the future of architecture hadn't quite reached the curriculum at the University of Zetaville. But it was about to be taken seriously by everyone but the Professors.

"You know," the neon-striped Professor stopped at the open door with a copy of the New York Times Style section in his hand, "look, listen to me, I wish I'd thought of wearing cowboy boots like this, I might have built more buildings."

"Not so, Sir," The Professor of Glazed Hams answered, "not unless you happen to be able to talk about them as if trying to reach the other side of the lobby."

At this point the murmurs ceased. The money to build the new spectacles of the new millennium was temporarily coming to a halt. The unspeakable reared its head once more. War was in the air. Legal proceedings were, well, proceeding. All around the world in universities, colleges and cafes something was happening that would put a stop to this fame academy. But was anyone sure just what this was? Back in Zetaville there was a lawsuit in progress. Men and professors behaving badly were being taken to court by women who seemed to have decided to behave just as badly. About time! Now there's a stalemate!

Meanwhile in New York

Meanwhile in New York, memorial architecture was running on empty and students hit Form Z faster than they did five years ago and read Ionesco to learn about digital wizardry. Graduates graduate with a shaky grasp of a future the sophomores can already see but have difficulty describing. Asked if they understand why Jack Kerouac took to the road and the 'it' of it all, they stuttered. Asked if they knew where the beatniks were going, they paused and said: what's a beatnik?

All that road going was never easy.

Now all that screen-going begins to choke minds.

"We need heroes," the Professor of Glazed Hams said, "real heroes. Just like the one we followed last century. Even" – and no one knows why this should come into his mind – "if just for one day!"

But it seems we have one. The architect, one of those Franks so keen on the hand-stitched and handcrafted cowboy boots from Bozeman, Montana was on the road, we were told, for at least 200 days in the year. Work it out. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to calculate just how much time the architect was in his office in Berlin, Toronto, Tel Aviv or New York.

Clearly the profession of architecture was changing.

All architects called Frank

If you knew who I was, how famous I am, you won't believe what I am about to tell you, so you'll understand why I prefer to remain anonymous. Buildings from the last century are beginning to disappear. Don't be fooled by this. Modern Architecture has always been a sham, run by the few for the many who still do not understand.

It was only when I started to get a chance to build my architecture that self-destruction offered itself. Feted for an architecture that disgusted me, I wanted to create nothing, communicate nothing, assert nothing.

The more famous I became the more I felt like an endangered species. From this point onwards I decided to rectify the immense dishonesty perpetrated by modern architecture by organising a network. With great deliberation and the utmost cunning, we have decided to remove any record of our work as architects. All Franks together will do this. This not only includes the destruction of all drawings and records but a far more chilling plan of removing the actual buildings designed; even those which are still standing.

Like one of Max Frisch's 'fire raisers' we, the Franks of this world, now sit in on the world of our own architecture, with our own drums of petrol, laying elaborate plans for setting them all alight. Voids will appear overnight in cities.

Deconstruction, in the literal sense of the word, will occur at the dead of night.

In the morning there will be nothing left.

Don't go so fast you'll crash into Jacques Derrida

In December 1985 I installed an exhibition in the Helsinki Art Hall - a collaborative, Performance Art exhibition, as it was then called. I took a brown raincoat that had been part of an exhibition experiment I had called "7 Famous Raincoats and a Moygashel" and decided to end this experiment which had travelled from Helsinki to Paris; for this I chose to bury the raincoat under a catafalque of salt.

On the thick impressive wooden doors to the art hall built in the 1920s, I applied white Christmas-snow 'graffiti' for the title of the exhibition. These were repeated in mirrors in both toilets in the gallery. The director, a man I knew well, came out. "This is art," he said, "but please let's not take it too far. I have to clean that door."

"I know," I said, "Don't fret, it's Christmas decoration spray, it's snow, it's fake, it's bad art. It can be scraped off."

"Oh, that's ok then, please continue," he said and left me outside in the real December snow.

In the small space given me in the gallery, amongst the other art installations and performance pieces, I placed a table and two deckchairs. I decided to use the reviews of the original exhibition (which had mostly been favourable). Four of the main reviews were framed and placed as dinner plates, complete with wine glass, cutlery and serviette. One framed image above the table was suspended like a low chandelier with salt all over it. Upon this chandelier one text

had the words 'the wrong raincoat' repeated endlessly. On top of this there was a children's toy, a dinky JCB earth mover. In anyone's world, a child's, an artist's, a professor's or an anaesthetist's, the digger was pouring salt over the edge into the wound.

All words were disappearing.

Inside the gallery, laid out on an exquisitely shaped catafalque of salt, the arm of the brown raincoat was all that was left. The rest of the coat was disappearing. On the wall, white on white, there was a row of framed, photo-copied plates all similar with the word 'Derrida' on.

The title of the exhibition was various and interchangeable: 'Don't go so Fast, you will crash into Jacques Derrida', was one title. In the toilets, the title changed to 'Don't go so Fast, You'll Crash into Jean Baudrillard'. In another part of the gallery, it changed again: 'Don't go so fast, you'll crash into Roland Barthes'. And so on around the gallery. There was a lot of crashing going on at the time.

I forgot to see the future though. I forgot to consult the world spinning on. I should have also put: 'Don't go so fast, you'll crash into Richard Brautigan'. I didn't. It was a mistake. My imperfection drags me back. But there on the wall, in the framed texts, Derrida's family name included the most important lesson: dERRida. In his name, the word ERR peeped out.

This was the end of 1985. This was an exciting time, though no one has much good to say about that decade now. Three years back Richard Brautigan would publish his last 'Brautigan' So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away. A year or so back from when this raincoat lay under a catafalque of salt, when all the words were washed away, the body of Richard Brautigan would be found on October 25, 1984. This was the

day the narrator not me began the idea of burying the exhibition about raincoats.

It had taken over a year. It takes a long time to destroy words and ideas you distrust. It had taken several weeks before the 49-year-old body of the author was found next to a bottle of alcohol and a .44 caliber gun.

Uncanny isn't it. But on that brown raincoat there was evidence of a gunshot wound. By the end of Christmas, all blown away, the art was finished, the gallery closed, and the raincoats returned to the people who owned them. The exhibition was published, the TV interview done with the narrator in a slot next to Yevtushenko, the houhaa over. This particular raincoat was worn until it disappeared in the flood at the Hotel Architecture a few years ago.

To 'err' is human and irrepressible. There is little trace of this exhibition now. Am I no longer an instant artist, or a bad artist? Have I been saved? Or have I become a diagram of someone's else's life?

Ask the narrator!

Pulp Architecture and Frank Heron

Pulp Architecture was only a distant dream, not even a character in a Brautigan, when it encountered Mr Frank Heron. It was one of those fine cloudless days in Barcelona when even Antonio Gaudi had been forgiven his anxieties. No aeroplane was invading space, no intention of turning the world into a video game had been thought about. The world was still on remote control. There was a decade left to get things right before the end of the 20th Century.

That of course was soon to change.

Wandering around the plaza of wind, someway back from the leading pack led by one Frank or another, two smaller figures walked. One dressed in white, the other in black. Mr Frank Heron was in white, Mr Heron Frank was in black.

Mr Heron could have been mistaken for a Tunisian tailor of some repute now living in Paris. Glancing up at a construction that looked like a needle had penetrated a doughnut, Mr Heron turned to Mr Frank: "What do we have here?"

Mr Heron usually kept all his questions to himself but this time, amongst the world's leading architects, he could not resist himself. There was no real response, though certainly enough of a little chuckle from Mr Frank for Mr Heron to continue.

"Ground Control to Major Tom, is what I think we have here."

"Certainly!" Mr Heron responded, and the smile stretched across the floor of the plaza of wind just as fired kerosene

would have spread. Then up the needle tower went the smile until it reached the doughnut. And there grinning from the world's biggest doughnut was the future of architecture.

Only no one recognised it for what it was at that time. No one thought it pulp, no one imagined the chaos of the world turned into a video game, and no one thought architects could play hardball as much as they would do when the century was out.

Just to give you a clue to the future at that moment. Frank Koolhaas and Frank Herzog were not smiling from the biggest doughnut in the world. Instead they were at the Camp Nou, watching Barca once again show the world how to play football, the beautiful game. Led by a Dutch coach, players like Bergkamp, Kohman, De Boer and De Boer showed ground control like no other.

Certainly their circuits weren't dead and these total footballers like the architects had twelve years to rule the world before the video game took over.

The Professor of Glazed Hams

I like the Professor of Glazed Hams: a Texan certainly but a man who needs not the hand-stitched boots from Boze-man nor need he indulge in spot-the-cowboy in the Land of the Brave Diner off Diner Square. After Frank Corbusier, this Professor's favourites were Frank van der Rohe, Frank Behrens, Frank Terragni, Frank Slutzky and Frank Rowe.

Whenever visiting from Old Europe, I was always on the look out for a present for the Professor of Glazed Hams. It was one of those random acts of kindness, for I had nothing to do with this Professor at all. I knew he taught students how to put the L in Le Corbusier and the glaze back in ham thinking. Dressed in a black silk DKNY jacket of some taste, you had to hand it to him, he attempted in admirable ways to keep the dream alive.

The Professor of Glazed Hams certainly knew his Tectonics from his Tequila his Transparency from his Tonic. He also knew when to use more contemporary notions of architectural thinking and blur the boundaries between one and the other.

I liked the Professor of Glazed Hams. Usually I bought him a half bottle of whisky. That was only after my first trip to the Big Sky country. Then I tried an alternative strategy. I tried to give him a present of a jar of Marmite. Imagining every Texan keen to understand the delights of this pulpy British foodstuff, I wedged it into the mail slot of the Professor of Glazed Hams. I didn't know about glazed

hams then, though I did imagine this might have been the type of yeasty, petroleum glue that could have been applied to a pre-glazed ham.

Pulpy certainly! But not high pulp. How could I know that Marmite was unsuitable for glazing hams? So I was somewhat taken aback when the marmite jar began to appear in different pigeon holes at the mail room of the School of Architecture. It went from The Professor of Glazed Hams to the Professor of Night to the Professor of Urgent Renewal. From there it passed onto the Professor of Tumbleweed Connections to the Professor of Weak Structures and Eternally Fraught Representation and found itself wedged snug, back inside the mail slot of the Professor of Night.

The Professor of Night was aghast. Skinned alive, architecture was coming apart at the seams. The Powerbook was talking back. The jar of Marmite clearly should have been in the mail slot of the Professor of Piranesi Software. The writing was on the wall so to speak. The staircases were in rock and roll mode; twisting and shouting. It was time to sketch-up the future. Again!

Actually, it was not on the wall at all. The future was written with disappearing ink on the glazed partition.

But there was a dilemma. And I liked dilemmas. If Pulp Architecture was to be taken seriously, if those young glazed hams looking right through the eyes of their professors and the glazed partitions were to understand anything about architecture, urgent action was needed.

It was only after a return from Town Talk Salvaged Foods Inc. in Fort Worth that I realised what a chance I had missed. I had noticed a jar of 'glazed ham sauce'.

The perfect present for the Professor of Glazed Hams!

Flying the Contemporary Minds

Outside on the street, the feeling is cold. All architecture was not about all other architecture. Architecture out there on the street no longer mattered, unless it was wearable, spectacular and grand.

"The most important influence on us as schoolboys in the 1980s," the San Antone Ham said, "was the film 'War Games'. Ever since then we knew the world was alterable."

"And forget the Flying Dutchmen and Ground Zero," the Vegas Ham said, "I remember Pnom Penh as a child."

The sale of hand-stitched cowboy boots suddenly shot through the glass ceiling. Shards fell across the new outlet village, designed much like the old outlet village, only distorted.

"These boots are really going to do some walking," The Neon-striped Professor said. He'd just bought his own pair and was trying to walk them in.

The Professor had a tough time herding his students. Ranching didn't come easy. The rodeo was not part of his bio-data.

"There are many fine studies of new architecture," he said, "and many of them suggest ways of understanding how architecture is attempting to incorporate change."

"Speak English," the Hams said, "we do nothing else but incorporate change in our lives today."

"Isn't that what we've always done? Longing to find an architectural expression in step with our time?"

"Imagine living with advanced developments of the epoch and see what you'd come up with!"

No one was listening. Aerodynamic form and nature theory were the last things in their heads as they began to fly the contemporary mind.

This is what they called it: flying the contemporary mind. What was it to them that they could be responsible for a representation of contemporary fascination?

The First Pulp Architecture Book

If I am not mistaken, the first Pulp Architecture book was written by Frankie Muschamp. I call him Frankie as if I know him. Of course I don't know the architectural critic for the New York Times called Bert Muschamp, but I imagine I know this Frank.

Frankie Muschamp was responsible in 1974 for lines which I think rightly fit the title of the First Pulp Architecture book. Take this example:

"My buildings wear Mona Lisa cufflinks. I don't know any laws about what a window wants to be, I know nothing about the greater reality of the doorknob. Most of what I know of the reflective qualities of glass come from watching my reflection in shop windows as I walk up fancy streets.'

Now there are doubtless some out there who think Frankie M. should just have thrown his pen away and got right back to architecture school and learnt the greater reality of the doorknob. Actually that would not have done Frankie much good. But waiting at least twenty years before another New Yorker appeared, and Frankie would have had his perfect mentor. Nicholson Baker would have taught Frankie more than the greater reality of the doorknob.

In fact in the future, sometime later, if there is ever likely to be a new dean search at the College of Glazed Hams, I think it worthy of recommending Nicholson Baker. I really don't know why I didn't think about this earlier. But just in case you don't believe me take a look at Baker's book *The*

Mezzanine whilst a few more sentences from Bertie's book called 'File under Architecture' should convince you:

'The serious architect has spent many years in training and feels entitled to his traditional aura. He borrows images and slogans from technology, politics, and fashion but is appalled at the notion of having to equate his work with these sources.'

I think you can see where Frankie was going with this.

"Thus it is fortunate that relatively few buildings are built by serious architects and that we have a large number of props other than buildings to choose from in articulating the space we inhabit."

With that phrase Frankie capped it. Pulp Architecture surely is that number of props other than buildings we have to choose from. But Frankie didn't leave it there. In the year 2003, people in New York would look back and wonder why architecture suddenly took its turn. Two years earlier somebody had come up with a rather unusual way of altering, re-engineering if you like, the skyline. They would do well reading these lines: 'The experience of architecture requires no training, no special knowledge, no trips to galleries, no admission tickets.....in a system designed to answer the wants of millions of separately evolving people, the emphasis is not on permanent solutions but on the routes of access to potential realities and the means with which to shape them.'

And if you haven't got enough, go google Frankie at bookfinder.com or halfpricebooks.com and sniff out an original, a rare copy, of the first pulp architecture book.

You might enjoy it.

Forget flying your Cessna through the Golden Gate. Too easy!

The Professor of Tumbleweed Connections

The Professor of Tumbleweed Connections looked at the new boots on his colleague. He looked back down at his own nifty Prada slip-ons. No one could really see the little red tag and they had started to look a touch scruffy. He really wished he had bought a similar pair. He could now be sitting in the Style Section of the New York Times Sunday Supplement rather than trying to convince his graduates of an architecture he no longer really believed in.

"I agree," he spoke quietly as if he knew there would be uproar. "I agree that CAD modelling has helped us imagine architecture from anything. And metaphorical translation of these ideas can be seen everywhere. But this does not lead to architecture of nothing! And as for Pulp Architecture. It's a scam! We should go back to Vitruvius."

'I didn't come into architecture for any of that,' the San Antonio student said, 'I came here because of what I couldn't get elsewhere. I want Pulp and I want it now.'

'Ground control to Major Tom,' the Professor interjected hoping his wit would win over his students.

'Yes sir and my circuit's dead,' Vegas replied. 'And you know Sir, I don't really care.'

On the shoulders of giants, forget it. Under the armpits of the new giants lay interesting ideas. Attractive notions about an architecture refusing to take on its own convention became an attitude. There was street fighting only no one filmed it. Mediation became its own exercise. Publications

continued to carnivalise the expectations of architecture as it was then known. Whilst some were pumping iron, others pulped the living daylight out of each other.

Architecture at the University of Glazed Hams had to be denied, resisted. Huge budgets could allow subversive innovation. The predictable could be altered in front of their eyes. But the seduction of the new giants lay in their vagueness. The hams seemed to go on slipping their works in the spaces between radical discomfort and a momentary retreat to quite another comfort zone.

This encouraged an architectural search for the blind point.

Impossible, of course, but once again something to get us beyond that plane of the feasible! Something to get us further than the script we already recognize.

Is it naïve to want, more and less at the same time, to see this as an authenticity only to be shot down at the crossing for getting out of the car, approaching the other driver just to inform them that their back tyre appears flat?

Too late! Blasted out of existence just as you turn into Main Street!

Oblivious to the blind spot, the Professor of Tumbleweed Connections continued buffing his new cowboy boots.

Under the Armpits of Giants

Suddenly at the University of Glazed Hams, Pulp Architecture starting flying with the Z boys: Dogday became Dogtown became Dogbowl. Architecture crawled along the street. The shared excitement with those already on the street began to put, at greater risk, life itself. This did not always mean resisting the architecture that's possible. But it did mean having the knack of altering it as it appeared.

Under the armpits of these giants, the Pulp Architects become programmers of mixed realities. Trans-programming became a manual always about to be written; a kind of pulp practice. A few attempted new names, called themselves trans-architects or 'trannies'.

Under the armpits of these giants, no more the luxury of spectacle. Life was a garage, a VW Polo run as an office, a computer on the run, or a shack in the foothills of the Himalayas or Arctic Canada. Replace entertainment with passion and dedication. The hacker ethic was never the exclusive preserve of the hackers.

Under the armpits of these new giants, new Form-z boys and Rhino-horn fanciers fulfilled a long history of joyful intervention; a dogday atavism always about to go too far, seduced as they were by constant upset.

There was a tendency in the last century to see architecture as a social service to greater mankind. Family and loved ones were neglected. Life itself suffered. Throughout the country, in all the Universities of Glazed Hams, on the shoul-

ders of those giants, life had become far too comfortable. But no one was listening. Everyone mouthed the answers before the questions were out.

"Under the armpits, we work differently," the San Antone student said, "we use our families, we use our close ones. We use our kitchens and other people's kitchens. We live this upset to the extent that it replaces life with a constant re-programming."

Getting the hang of this, Vegas chimed in: "Sure! Architecture or life is not a question asked anymore. Architecture is life. The street is all that matters. It is in constant labour. It has become a calling. We share with the monk and the fugitive spontaneity. We share ability. We share the eagerness to participate at an angle to another life."

The applause was deafening.

Dogbowl was Worried

Responsible and devout were not attributes immediately identifiable but the glazed hams began questioning the very hold architects had over their professional discipline. Saturated and standardised, emancipation was a question of activism and animation.

They would rather go by Bruce Lee or that relentless and brilliant delinquent Nadim Karam who saw the 'hapsitus' in all this. Pulp Architecture was not architecture in the way they knew it. No built-up structure to contemplate. No performance to applaud. It was a concentrated energy, high pulp fibre juice. 'A distribution network,' Karam says, 'that can never become a city.'

Under the armpits of these giants, the intense play park in architecture becomes both hobby and the purpose of life, inseparable today from the challenges on and off the street.

Dogbowl was worried.

If these glazed hams could break established orders, how would they avoid settling on the new ones that so eagerly step in their place?

It is necessary to leave this as the shortest chapter so far, if we were to keep up with what was happening with Pulp Architecture.

Architecture on Parole

I arrived back at the University of Texas at Zetaville after a week as a fugitive. I always returned to the school of architecture as if architecture could start over again, as if the history of everything that had gone before could be wiped away. This included the pettiness, the gossip, the conspiracies and the flattery that ultimately led to more and more conservatism.

I heard immediately of the shenanigans that had gone on. An assistant of the Great Frank O had been visiting the school of architecture. By all accounts he had delivered an exciting lecture about the work of this now famous late 20th early 21st Century master. So much so, this Frank was now called great and maestro. Even if, as some cruelly suggested, there was a hint of replication about his architecture. As cloning had not quite reached the debate here in Zetaville, the slight passed and dropped to the polished concrete floor like a dead leaf.

So much conversation ended up like this in Zetaville that discussion began to be a novelty. You could catch yourself falling like the dead leaf and just before hitting the ground wondering if conversation might just break out again once more and echo its once-claimed status.

To celebrate the great master, the Professor of Tumbleweed Connections (as he is known) had designed with his

students a clever cardboard installation using the face the New Maestro with the upper torso of the New Maestro's assistant, Mr Chan. The students had been assembling it when I last left the university and travelled back to Europe for a week. Apparently this act had compelled a response by others to install a large image of their own Master, the Great El Cee.

In the corridors of Pentonville, the panopticon of Zetaville, this all seeing, all structured school of architecture, the games continue being played out, every minute, every hour, every day. Nothing changed, generosity was slim. The Great Frank O against the Great and Omniscient El Cee. The sharp pettiness disguised other, less obvious battles, other less obvious but alarming developments.

Was it really the work of Frank O (he uses the O for effect, they said - for the Irish effect!) that was about to scupper this school of architecture? Could the fame of one person so easily challenge the schooling of decades of design thinking? Was the code of an unimaginative but normative architecture so lightly held that it had to protect itself from the invasions of those with a fake Irish Zero in the middle of their name?

Was Zetaville really teetering?

It wasn't hard to recognise. The confusion around the prison was paralysing exchange, controlling behaviour and flattening the ideas of a lost century. The world outside Texas was reflected within, reduced to the battle of two competing cardboard effigies. Life became life. Thinking was on parole.

For me however, the narrator I mean (let's be clear about this) I was never more than a multiple-choice question - the visitor, the monk or the fugitive. There was only one option to remain sane. I became the Sufi in Texas.

The Professor of Night

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

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

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

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

The last twenty years of the Century presented a slightly different version of this. It was ruder, harsher than any of us imagined. Architects played hardball. No one was safe. Students began happily jumping off the shoulders of the giants. Many of them took up living under the armpits of the new giants.

He knew the names of these new giants, all these franks. He even had to teach them to the Glazed Hams. Koolhaas, Nouvel, Ito, Holl, Perrault, Herzog, Lynn, Eisenman, Maas, Houben, Nox, Tschumi, Mayne, Rotondi, Dinari, ...he could reel off the names like a litany.

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

But the glazed hams loved it.

Everyone proceeded as a team today, inviting different and at times unexpected practices to join forces with them. Inside the Academy, there was a growing feeling that all architecture was increasingly about all other architecture. Further, there was a growing feeling that the 20th Century was about to be realised in the 21st Century.

"This is no longer a paradox beyond any of us," The Professor of Night stated with some aplomb. The audience stared back. Fire up the barbecue, he laughed to himself recalling a joke doing the electronic rounds during the mad cow disease.

Pulp Architecture Spiked

I happen to think a more timely way of looking at how Pulp Architecture works would be to consider the film *Amelie* of Montmartre. Things fall out of the sky, events happen far away that happen nearby. Influence is random but of great consequence, directing and scripting the chances life has. A mixture of both long term and short term memory allows *Amelie* to flirt with the idea of detachment, whilst getting intimately involved with the very mechanics of her own day.

You see, and the Hams started to pick up on this, Pulp thinking spreads by talk-shops not workshops, smaller publications, web-sites and net-exchange. It resembles the ruptures D & G spoke about in *Rhizome*. Short term rather than long term: 'Short-term memory is in no way subject to a law of contiguity or immediacy in relation to its object; it can exist at a distance, coming back or returning much later, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity.'

Short-term thinking does not necessarily lead to short-term processes or short-term impacts on the environment. This is the kind of thinking that shows no sign of institutionalising itself, no sign of creating a new world congress of architects for the 21st Century. Such institutions belong elsewhere.

If we write with short-term memory, does this assume short-term ideas? If we read and re-read with a long-term memory, does it assume we have long-term concepts; family,

race, society, history, civilisation? As D & G put it: 'the two types of memory are not distinguishable as two temporal modes of apprehension of the same thing: what is grasped by the two is not the same, neither same memory, nor even the same idea.'

There is of course the splendour, the triumph of a short-term idea. But what is this triumph? That it turns into a longer achievement? That a hunch becomes a theory, that an accident unravels the DNA, that a random act invents the Microwave? That two gaping holes become the footprint-void of a new world in Manhattan?

On the ubiquitous Powerbook an email was doing the rounds. Sent by the Professor of Night, it had taken all night to get this far: "Attention all faculty at Zetaville. Is this what it means to be modern today: to translate once more a contemporary yearning into an articulated present? In the very triumph of this new spectacle, a huge sadness will continue to create a distance to the present. Ultimately this architectural grandeur may not be the vital, timeless form so required by the New Yorkers. A simulacrum of promise, certainly but this might be untimely and un-instantaneous. Architecture can no longer support the long term memory of the profession."

Shallow thinking, deep architecture? Or the other way around. Things fall out of the sky? I think Amelie is better for this.

Pulp Architecture and William Gass

I like William Gass.

He amuses and he consoles. He also has a few things to tell us.

When Pulp Architecture was just beginning, I once attended a lecture at the Dallas Modern Art Museum that slightly irritated me. Gass' language was fierce and precise. It needed no images to support the words, and no words to support the images. So when he mentioned a cat and a bicycle and then showed a cat and a bicycle I must admit, I yawned. I was suddenly thrown off. He probably had good reason to do it, but I left the lecture thinking I would go back to what Mr Gass did best: insinuation, precise insinuation.

The lead essay in his collection *The Test of Time* would I fancy offer us a few timely warnings about talking the notions of Pulp Architecture too seriously. For, if we interpret some of the resistance within many of the attitudes we might call Pulp, many of them are hardly popular in the popular, across the board, meaning. Like Pulp Fiction itself, genre and film, it is often the seediness of the undercurrent that attracts. It is the non-popular side of the popular culture which invites repetition and makeover.

Look at Gass on Gertrude (Stein) and this will be explained.

But it is we who read the expression on the clock, Gass notes, and we who utter the immortal phrase 'time will tell'.

Gass indicates why and how so much of the present architecture will languish, like Presidents out of office, produce after its sell-by date: “we must remember too (so that we can discount them) that there are works which so adore their era and wrinkle their age that you can’t study the period without studying their role in it, although outside their beloved period they languish as immediately as a wild flower from its meadow.”

But you cannot help liking William Gass

The question Pulp Architecture poses is not how to be contemporary, survive vicissitudes and fashion, but how to delay any acceptance, if acceptance means integration. Of course mass culture may be what it is because masses prefer it. But then so too, in the established communities of architecture. The pleasure unusually accessible in the video game is a pleasure unusually accessible in the easier, publicly-controlled architectural spectacle, like the recent ideas for the new World Trade Organisation in Manhattan.

“In the layers, Proust will outplease pushpin, pinball, pachinko and indoor soccer.” Gass is right but today I wager there are people who will remain passionate about pushpin and Fank Proust, pinball and Puskin, pachinko and Frank Pynchon. Bring the public in, by all means but schlock, greed, stubborn convictions result.

Surprise when anything excellent survives! The Pulp practitioner yawns at this. If there are no fans around for the sort of work you are doing, you either disappear never to test time itself, or then re-appear in different guises, acceptable to those who wish to travel with you.

Pulp practitioners look likely to avoid the opportunistic fads and architectural fashion. But how? Get close to them and what do they do?

It is often lovelier to be so close to failure as to be never part of your own time, only tantalisingly worked in, knowing how to exist when not to exist. Naive perhaps, but should

we be so hard on ourselves? Aware of the contemporary, we resort to the contemporary all around us. We wish not to dwell in the imperative of theory, nor do we desire the stable dwelling. If we have done so much, mixed with so many, achieved so much, is this enough to find us condemned as confused, unclear in our thoughts?

The narrator could not decide who he was or which gun to use.

We are on the street always without ever being part of the street. Pulp practitioners know one thing too well. Many want to remain travelling and the 21st Century will be the one for us. Never arriving we are learning no longer to be blamed for living only a partial life. Especially when it's the only life we have.

But you cannot help liking William Gass.

The Crane

I have to introduce you to the Dean of the University of Glazed Hams. Not from these parts, not from Zetaville, Ottoville or Notropicana, I am at an obvious disadvantage. Being from Old Europe, I cannot say exactly what a Dean should look like. This dean was the dean after the one before who rescued the situation after the one before was invited to resign after the one before stepped down and the one before that was pushed out. Deans then are an amalgam and this one no less.

To me he looked like a banker on his day off. There was a hint about the loosened neck-tie that was never quite right. And the gum he often chewed seemed to have lost any taste it had. There was an uncomfortable rhythm in the mouth that moved the gum from the left to the right.

I first met the Dean at Zetaville because frankly as a visitor I had no choice. I was invited back one last time, just as he had taken over and was to consolidate the College of Glazed Hams. I wasn't sure he really knew about the glazed hams but I had the feeling that every other professor was about to tell him.

Frankly I expected a little more civility from the off-duty banker but it was days, no weeks before he really introduced himself. You can't really call it that either; it was like a collision.

One prison officer bumping into the warden! Nothing to be said; there was a winding road in between his eyes; one it seems he had already taken with his Turbo Humvee.

The Dean walked a touch ungainly. It has to be said, there is a style to be learnt from the Siberian crane, especially one which might have flown over, stopped and decided to become Dean at Zetaville. The walk was all think-technology but with no consideration of the joints necessary to keep standing. He was called Big Bird. I called him The Crane.

Nothing occurred for weeks so I decided to make my own appointment with The Crane. You can always tell if anyone is really interested in you at the College. Most usually stop what they are doing the moment you enter their office and at least come and sit next to you at the table where they might have invited you to sit, or in this case assumed you would just find the seat. The Crane was different. The Crane didn't do this. The Crane proceeded to re-organise just about everything else that was loose on his desks including all those visiting cards Deans get when they meet so many people. The situation was clear, glazed-ham clear. The Crane preferred filing to speaking about teaching, pulp architecture and the pedagogy of resistance. Deans like this really know how to relay their messages I thought as I left and slipped a visiting card under his mouse pad. The only thing that concerned me, admittedly not very elegant: do Deans poop like Big Birds?

The Home and Country Diner

Had I been The Crane I wondered what I would have done.

Had I been the Dean of Glazed Hams is this how I would have fulfilled my duty, by filing my contacts into a plastic folder, ready to download them onto my sony-eriksson-organisier-phone-camera? Would I have been interested in this odd-ball from Old Europe? Or, not involved in the appointment of this visiting professor, would I hang loose and throw the gum across the badminton court of my upper mouth?

I can't say what I would have done. But anyway the result was obvious. The Crane didn't know anything about why I was at Zetaville and made no attempt to learn.

Looking around the Home and Country Diner a few weeks later, it was the Cowboy Vernacular that interested The Crane. Where else but Zetaville would you see such cow-boys, he said to me, as we began the chicken fried steak in white sauce.

The big idea I learnt later was the property deal. A ranch. A spread somewhere outside Zetaville where the boys could hang with the visiting faculty and moan about the lack of skirt and the new students looking more and more like glazed hams (if you can look more and more like a glazed ham?). Sitting back in diner-fashion, The Crane was Jeff Bridges, building a new world for Zetaville out of the Home Cooking Ranch headquarters.

I was doomed. Old Europe was doomed. I grew to like The Crane.

Carefully, teflon-fashion.

Chicken Cacciatore

We sat down to Chicken cacciatore, apparently a favoured dish around here. The boneless, skinless pieces of chicken breast were sauteed in a light marinade with white wine. This is then mixed with artichokes, olives, mushrooms with green peppers and onions and served over pasta.

The walls of the Texan dining room were the colours you would have found in Kensington, London. Perhaps a bar-rister's home; deep burgundy in the dining room and deep green in the living room, where the gaggle of children was dwarfed by the biggest combo plasma screen all-surround television I had ever seen. This was lodged inside quite the biggest television cabinet, one which would not fit in those Kensington rooms.

Long before sub-prime sub-primed, McMansions spawn Mcplasmas!

As I looked on after helping myself to the cacciatore chicken I noticed the huge Easy-chair which housed at least four children as they rocked back and forth. Costco, I was informed, as if this let me into the secrets of yet another wall-to-wall mart.

Perhaps it was something in my English dress, for I was addressed immediately: "Do you know where I might find some books on Tudor Style Houses?"

It was one of the guests. He was way off at the other end of the table. I mean he sensed my horror. "Real details, from

real houses. You do have some like that in England don't you? Still!"

He spoke as if his host's house, a sprawling Tudor-look-alike pocket English baronial hall, all timber-framed and paint-balled, was not quite what he had in mind.

I suggest you go on the Internet, I replied, and look at any site of any well-known book supplier in England. He appeared content with this and returned to debate, with the neighbour's wife, the pros and cons of flooring against fittings.

"I'll spend on flooring any day," he was saying looking at her neck, "but fittings, hell no, they can change and will every year."

"That's right," the lady appeared to agree with him touching her neck in Texan agony, "but me, no I want my fittings, I don't care what my floor is."

The sprawling baronial mock-Tudor hall about to be built is of the open type. The three-SUV garage would give anyone the idea of the scale of everything else in the house. Not big particularly, just normal for the overreach of things and life around here. Come here at Christmas and you won't find one set of Christmas roof lights hanging off imitating ice-dropping off the eaves, you will discover whole grottos covered in 20 or 30 packs of external Christmas fake-ice lights.

I hesitated to offer any sort of professional advice. I noticed there are no side doors or windows in this 3-SUV garage and suggest one or two, even just to let the John Deere lawn-cutting mini tractor a way in and out. A reasonable suggestion, reasonably noted.

The John Deere Mowing Tractor

There's uglycute laziness in Texas which makes money easily and perpetuates even more laziness. It did not take a genius to realise there was no other role to play. The cardboard exterior, the timber frame, finished with plywood and then rendered as a mock Tudor stone fortress had enough precedents in this part of the world to be indisputable. Design here was emulation; Mansion Mannerism. The journal cuttings book would be the catalogue of effects and finishes. There's not a lot an architect or indeed anyone else could do. Certainly you could tinker here or there with the door position and the bath, cloaks cupboard etc. Reasonable suggestions would be reasonably noted until they became too different from the neighbour's house. Then advice was put on hold.

The image is set. The metal roof falls down to the romance of stucco and applied surface. The papier-mache quality of the exterior will of course increase the image. The rest is measured by the fittings. The best stainless steel double sink, double fridge, freezer, with digital temperature controls, dishwasher self loading and self-operating, and the Belfast sink.

The Belfast sink ordered on the internet will come and immediately require a no-expense spared alteration to fit a waste disposal system.

An exam at Zetaville School of Architecture

Multiple-choice seminars have been arranged. The new breed of half-life is the webinar. The drawings of the new mansion will be completed soon. They are called the footprint. None of these types of drawings will ever be seen inside the school of architecture. A plan like this will never appear on the question paper for the Open Elective in History at the School of architecture. Draw three plans types:

- 1 *Mock Tudor Mansion*
- 2 *1920s Functional Modern*
- 3 *1950s Lyrical Moderne*

Indicate which is the preferred architecture at Zetaville School of Architecture.

A little more tinkering may be required before the contractor will begin. If not already a software programme will draw this mock Tudor house, just as it will draw a 1920s Functional Moderne or a 1950s low-slung Moderne bungalow.

It's February now. In April they will begin on site. By September the family will move in along with the three SUVs, the John Deere Mowing Tractor, the full-size billiard table, the combo TV/DVD and wall-to-wall plasma screens. The Mansion will be complete.

In September the guests will sit down to Cacciatore Chicken again. The Belfast sink and AGA cooker will be the talking points of the evening.

I couldn't bring myself to buy the red one.

The neighbour who is a magazine junkie will put away her cuttings folder for a brief moment in solidarity. For the lady of the mansion, there will be no need to check on new ideas, new materials and new fittings. Not unless, that is, the host interjects, we wish to test the re-sale potential.

No one would hear the gun shot.

If all else fails

If all else fails, there is an anger management program you can really shock with.

It is fairly obvious that life doesn't always stick it to architects the way they think it should. At least this was the view of the Neon-Shirted Professor known for his Voodoo strategies. As the school of architecture in the University of Glazed Hams fragmented, it was obvious too that more vengeful tactics were necessary. In fact voodoo became such a normal practice that it soon proved possible to use on any architect, student, critic, writer, bartender who not only irritates but aggravates.

"Ready for some serious vengeance," the Professor said twisting a particularly stubborn piece of rubber. He was dressed in a neon lemon-green shirt. "Try voodoo!"

It was his first class of the new year! 25 students looked at him like glazed hams.

Is this for real? they all thought.

"Imagine your desire to do what you want to do? Then why did you choose architecture?"

His comment landed like a lead balloon. Even humour was no longer the same.

"Ok, we will go on to study various forms of the curse. Some of you may prefer to use the traditional spell. Silent, cunning, this is often deadly."

No response.

"Others may have more use for the jinx. Inventive ways of jinxing other students, then your own professors might prove useful."

The glazed hams stared in disbelief. Was this the first lecture? Was this their introduction to the World According to Pulp which it had announced on the electronic notice-board?

The Professor paid little attention and continued: "Now some of you will no doubt prefer the chant. Those little mantras that can upset all but the very stubborn are a useful way to adapt your Eastern methods of meditation with our more contemporary ways. We are, after all, not in Texas, the land of the Big Sky, by accident. Just down there in West Legacy Park," he went to the window which couldn't be opened, "the Indians were there long before any of us. So try and tell the planners and politicians it's not haunted. No, you'll need some para-architectural tactics if you want to survive today."

With that he took out the largest needle the students had ever seen.

The glazed hams started to run.

Voodoo for First Years continued

The glazed hams had been rounded up and were back in their studio.

"Of course you can all curse. This is the easiest form of voodoo, though I don't personally recommend it much today. We've overused it in this country."

"Cast a spell, stick a pin in the little black devil," the professor began to hand out the mandatory doll kit. "Beginning with this doll, you can literally put a spell on any architecture and architect you like. You can take revenge on your colleagues or on your faculty. You can see it as a useful revenge on just about everything that has been promised."

The doll was cute. The students lifted them slowly out of their box. After all they'd paid good money for these educational kits. None of them wanted to damage it. And out they came, one after the other. A little army of dolls, all a mere 5 inches high, stuffed adequately, and finished in black cotton.

"Let's call them all FRANK," the professor said.

An Indian student looked a little shocked. She looked under the doll and found a set of assorted pins.

"Of course we all know architects will come up with their own supply of pins," the professor noticed the Indian student's concern, "so I have only arranged a kind of starter kit."

Though this kit resembled other Voodoo kits on the market, nobody would go as far as thinking this was the best way to get even with anyone who hates you. The students were

unfamiliar with the way mighty wrath could be transferred. The professor felt they would soon learn.

"Listen," he said. "The snobs, the New Yorkers, the selfish, the critics and historians, the professional clever-dick star-architects can all be cursed by a little imaginative voodoo play. And naturally the pins are only a suggested form of torture. The more imagination you bring to this kit, the more spells possible. Envy not only helps this tactic but you will see how quickly it increases the general demonic terror of the whole strategy. Now do you see why you chose to study architecture?"

The Purpose of Education

The glazed hams sparkled. Soon whole schools of architecture would be wiped out. Anyone who disagreed with your opinion or school of thought could be agonized into a benign future. The plan was childish, fiendish and brilliant. It was possible to apply all those gleeful rituals from more conventional voodoo kits and go for increased vengeance.

Isn't this what they came to architecture school for?

The Professor recognized the fiendish idea behind his own plan. The glazed hams had never seen someone laugh so willingly, without prompting.

"Just imagine all those insufferable architects who have just done that project you had just dreamt of. Just imagine the professor who had walked all over your ideas. And not to mention the critic who trashed your building as nostalgia and kitsch of the untimely utopia. Imagine!" the Professor moved into a rather crazed position.

"Stick them with it," he said, "stick them with it, he shouted. Goddamn it, stick them with it. See how they crumple."

By the time the echo settled, the whole school had heard this. Glazed hams came running from everywhere. Others slipped on the glazing, went flying into the transparent walls of the school of architecture.

"Ready for some vengeance, try Voodoo," the Mesquite Professor was still shouting to the students as he was carried out, holding up an example of the small black devil that would receive all those pins.

Later, some time after all had settled, the Indian girl from San Antone looked at the box. There was a caution written on the side of the kit. Written just like a warning against tobacco: 'If the doll looks a lot like you do or your best friend, there are assorted clothes within the kit to alter the cursed image.'

In a smaller print, barely legible:

'Caution: this kit contains sharp needles and other instruments of torture. Faculty supervision is advised.'

All that's wrong about Pulp Architecture

It is entirely possible that I have given a picture of an architecture sub-culture, a group of practitioners sick with the fatigue and gossip of contemporary, professional architecture. It is also possible that this offers a picture of the new saints, architects and designers prepared to call for more from a profession that has already settled for less. The naivety is thick with kerosene some of you will say.

But is there any hope in such a picture?

Who will use Le Cricket lighter and flame the new narrative?

To go by the events surrounding the New York Twin Towers competition I am not sure whether to laugh or cry. I would like to speak to Mr Bhatia about all this but he is far away in Delhi. In the University of Glazed Hams where I still work, there has been very little talk but much murmuring. Not about the six projects in New York but about the gossip, the games and the public relations exercise. Murmuring has in fact taken over as the major dynamic in a general culture, dieted as it is on conspiracy and suspicion.

'Ground control to Major Tom my circuit's dead' has certainly been on everyone's lips.

There is of course much envy. Professional architects always encourage the useful dream. It is impossible for faculty, educators and other architects, whatever stage they are in life, to imagine them not in possession of the talent to do a project like the Twin Towers. Deception is powerful, the ar-

chitect a great leveller. All doors have been opened. Anyone could build the new addition to Manhattan's living room. Dreams are equal, democratic.

"I could have been that architect," the Professor of Night said, looking at the jar of Marmite wedged into his mail box, "if only I'd had a bit of luck. Who put this there?"

It was hard not to agree with him. But is luck the issue here? Does luck control the public relations exercise and the hardball game? Has it always done throughout the modern era? Does luck structure the image and the nostalgia?

In fact it does. We'd have to agree with Richard Brautigan here. Luck buys the cowboy boots, the designer glasses and the red scarf. Luck has everything to do with all this. Luck shoots the duck, loads the gun again and fires. Luck shoots out the time on the clock on the living room wall. Luck finishes the bottle and begins another. Luck comes early, makes its presence felt and then leaves. The rest is engineering.

Aerosol engineering. And suicide.

The First Pulp Architecture Book (again)

Some weeks later I had just come back from the University of Glazed Hams and was wondering why there was once again such murmuring. There was an obvious tinge of disappointment that the Twin Towers winning architect had proved so successful at the public relations game. The winner had been the same Frank whom Pulp Architecture had already met a decade ago in Barcelona.

Envy, like the kerosene that has spread from the plaza of wind in Barcelona right through the doughnut, right through this book, spread like Marmite everywhere. This particular Frank, the one in cowboy boots, had just been awarded first prize in the addition to Manhattan's living room. Obviously it seemed, the mayor Mr Bloomberg and others responsible for such a prestigious award, felt the same as the award-winning architect. 'Think,' he had joked about the remaining competition project by another architect called Frank and his gang, 'isn't that somehow Orwellian? Does it remind you of a person or a system?'

Pulp Architecture was not so surprised. The 1920s if we are to believe the critical histories that keep coming out operated in the same way. They played Hardball in Ciam, in Berlin, in Geneva, in Brazil and in Barcelona. The Swiss watchmaker El Cee, like the Z-boys in Dogtown, learnt how to alter the world. He did what all good architects did. He jumped scale from the minutiae of clock-making into a precision architecture.

There was no quartz battery then, so the world was of course a little unsteadier than the man who invented Modern Architecture would have liked. But how he could play the public relations game!

So if Frank, who has suddenly become to his friends and colleagues Big Frank, has been so adept at the political game, why should this so burn? The Finnish cad and architect Frank Aalto may have begun on the shoulders of giants but he learnt well enough that his success depended not only on talent but on luck. He was as much under the armpits as he was there perched on their shoulders.

And in every architect's desire to build the big spectacle is the desire for the next wonder of the world.

The clues to all this envy and desire were however elsewhere in a little known pulp volume from thirty years ago called 'File Under Architecture'. If you want to know why to some Frank's project is kitsch and to others the utopia and articulated longing of the greatest profession on earth, just take another look at that small pulp book written in 1974 by Frankie Muschamp. Pulpy to the core, thick brown rough to the hand card pages, all wrapped in a dirty brown card cover.

The font is courier, that type of all typewriter types.

In this book you will once more find the triggers of architectural disappointment and hope. Once again architecture's promise was flying high in 1974 and coming down somewhere in a back garden in Texas in 2003. 'Nasa visits is in our dreams, Frank' Big Frank said thinking he really was from a Richard Brautigan novel, 'and for the unforeseeable future it will go on doing so.'

New Courses for the Glazed Hams

Out along the Legacy West Park fence the politicians suggested to the planners the idea for a Weather Centre. Visitors from all over the United States would come in to visit the world's weather on a fence that separated us from them, and them from us. The architecture consisted of nothing more than screens running the whole length of the park's boundary.

In one of those deadmalls near Six Flags off the Interstate the students put back the noir and pulp into the city. Everyone had to orientate themselves by knowing how to move in the shadows. Survival depended only on moving then, at that time. Nothing happened in daylight anymore, it was all too dangerous.

A new course at the University of Texas introduced the science of personal surveillance and shadows. There are now new courses on Margin Management and Comfort Zone Planning. Just off I-20 at Collins there is the biggest urban corridor you will ever come across. Going from nowhere to nowhere, it is a celebration of the highest pulp possible in the non-city.

None of this could of course succeed without learning the art of political ingenuity and public relations. Architecture courses have begun in Local Rhetorics and Conflict Planning. If the students are to learn how to put the by product of lost architectures into the centre, they need to learn the tongue of the car user as well as the tongue of the merchant banker.

The Conman and the Garfield

"What are you doing here?" the conman asked one of the graduate students out in the desert between Zetaville and Arlington on his field trip in Pulp Architecture.

"Looking for Pulp," he replied. "We're glazed hams."

This was said with some authority.

The Conman looked as disgusted as he could. Glazed hams were the underclass of students, below car thieves, below even Arlington's car dealers. Glazed hams went to bars, played 'fussball', shot pool and generally slouched out. The Cons weren't impressed.

"You Garfields are all the same," the Conman said with dismissive scorn. "You come here dressed dirty, loosely jacking our ladies, pretend to be cooler than cool with a two day beard and you expect us to give you all the information necessary to educate you. And what do you do with it? You can go away and plan your investments, insurance and make enough money to keep you away from places like this."

"Garfields?" The Glazed Ham asked.

"Garfields yes! Cheats in a suit, well-dressed conmen. Elvis-attractors, happy hour wierdoes, skirt-sniffers. Never heard of them, losers?"

"No!"

"You're the scum, man. You know the language, you know the scam. We don't stand a chance when you come into town. And you call yourself students. What did you say you were studying?"

"Pulp architecture!"

"You know shit!?"

Deathwatch

There was no stopping it. Pulp Architecture persisted its attempts to undo conventions; to de-stabilise a stability already so fragile.

There was a rumour going around the school of architecture. There's no need to study anymore. Anyone, just anyone, the Professor of Weak Structures said, can take a design studio. He would throw his hands up like a margarita blender.

This is having an effect. The world is going backwards and the School of Glazed Hams is in the vanguard of this retreat. It's a privileged position.

Meanwhile the President in Ralph Lauren Executive Khakis and multi-coloured braces is about to brain any engineer who cannot stop the mechanical brise soleil on the exterior of the school of architecture from wheezing.

The professors are worried about their retirement, its rollover capacity and the increasingly alarming news coming from the stockmarket.

Elsewhere in the panopticon they call a school, the pulp studio was putting the final touches to their film production. Dressed in black, they were scurrying to get the production ready for the arrival of the Mayor.

However when the Mayor did arrive, after viewing the Pulp Architecture film, he announced with some glumness that there was not much chance that the city would be an-

nexing any land in the near future. In fact the city was dead, though the Mayor could not quite use those words.

He did say however – and everyone got the paradox – that if nothing is pulped in the next few years this city will not only be known for its deadmalls in dead spaces, this would be a city known for its dead neighbourhoods along dead highways and dead parks.

Architecture was going through its worst press for years. But no one put one and one and made three: a dead city. Which is probably what we had already. If the city was trying to house people in environments they cannot dwell in, if it was so against architecture, then the only consequence was an architecture of cruelty. The Mayor had been mistaken: the hooligan act forces architecture to transgress the law, every law.

The pulse was low. Was anyone getting this? Anonymous, yes, displaced, yes, deferred, yes. Pulp Architecture was placing itself outside of architecture, outside writing, outside language, especially its own.

Pulp Architecture had made it into film.

There's a hooker in the budget

"But there's a hooker in the budget," the President was saying and looked around at the passive aggressive faculty of the College of Glazed Hams.

The wheezing of the brise soleil was eerie. Did anyone understand what was happening? Pulp Architecture was playing in the auditorium whilst the Professors were worrying about their retirement pensions.

The President had a suggestion. We'd better cut back on the graduates and concentrate on the glazed hams.

He wasn't sure whether he should really be using those words.

There was a moment of utter shock. Had he mentioned them, had he called them glazed hams? Dressed in blue blazer, a State of the Union pin in his lapel, could he possibly think the same?

Only then, he said, can we go back and concentrate on the graduates whom I understand are right now doing something called the Pulp Studio.

The Professors looked around at each other. They'd heard of the studio, they'd heard of Pulp Architecture, they'd saw it creep around, they'd even heard Pulp Architecture went to Yale. But no one knew anything about it. Perhaps if you didn't enquire about it, it would eventually go away.

The Professors had one thing going for them: they knew everything returned eventually as something else entirely. Wait long enough and it would all come round again.

Crushed just like those melons in Bangalore, when they are thrown out to be mashed under the wheels of those decorated Indian trucks.

Anyone can teach studio, the Melonfoot Professor, so nicknamed for crushing melon between his toes, announced. The crisp oxford shirt itched at the neck. The bottoms of the executive chinos betrayed more fraying, and the woollen sock interior of a third and fourth world peeked out from a pair of creatively-worn loafers.

The President could hold it no more. He threw a book down on the table. "What's this? What's this Architecture for Nothing? Is anyone here responsible for this?"

Architecture for Nothing

'Architecture For Nothing' was a little known underground collection of essays brought together as a critique of redundancy. Beyond philosophy's pull on architecture, this was another subject entirely, a book that had urged itself to be written, and had finally found an author who had not quite died yet.

It had lines like this in it: 'Architecture for nothing, architecture being a dead language, will always live. Not only must we know what this means for architecture, but we must sense more than the chilly comforts of its punishing thought. Is this a vision too bleak even for the 'bull' that attempts to rescue it? Draw here what, if you could deconstruct it, would be called architecture and then forget it!'

The question this little known set of essays asked: 'are we just drip-feeding the patient or should all this convince us to stop once and for all?'

The President continued to read from the back of the book: "The contemporary sick condition of architecture is the base for an exploration of improbable and drastic architecture. We are in a condition of stable instability. What does that mean? Can anyone of you sitting here tell me what this means and are we still here in Texas?"

There was a silence. Oh for the wheezing of the brise soleil. Anything to carry the moment forward, anything to get the professors and faculty into a future they understood.

The President continued: "Well? What the hell does this mean? 'No longer settling for a critical juggling, no longer

searching for another critical movement after Modernism or Deconstruction, this book takes this one step further and considers not only the implications of the contemporary turn of the millennium architectural thinking, but an architecture of drastic action. A cruel, unsettling and eventually sharper architecture than anything previously seen in the last century. Something that can only be good for nothing.' What the Country Diner off main Street does this fuckin' mean?"

The President threw the book down with some force. He stood up, his fingers behind his braces, and he threw his head back and his stomach out:

"We don't need a set of texts that devote themselves solely to an architecture that remains without identity. We don't need anything that may bring forth an improbable architecture. Am I making myself clear? I want none of this mentioned to the glazed hams. If I hear anyone is talking this way, I will be forced to look into your Retirement plans and pensions with a little more urgency.

Flight paths

Pulp architecture took a break and decided to lie out on the thick St Augustine grass. Just as the narrator dozed with the New York Times Sunday edition under the pecan tree, so Pulp Architecture dozed.

An F14 fighter plane passed overhead.

"That's not usual," the neighbour said from his wrap-around-barbecue-jacuzzi veranda, "they don't usually take that flight path."

He knew. His father, decorated in Korea, had flown supply missions into Pnom Penh.

So were they on their way back, or had they not even started the war?

Pulp Architecture lay there discarded. It began to suffer. Nothing much had happened in the last few months. And months had a habit of turning into years. The fear of litigation ruled everyone's mind there in Texas. Few wanted to leave their own comfort zone.

The New York Times spoke about the French artist Pierre Huyghe, pronounced Hew-ig they explained. A script, 'scenario in French,' Huyghe said, 'is just another way of designating not the finished object, not the finished film, but the state just before. It is the idea that things are still potential, still possible; scenarios are structures with which we can speculate. Things can be crossed out, changed, reinterpreted. They are not fixed representations.'

That would be the end of Pulp Architecture. Surely. Or one of them.

part three

Orange Alert

But Pulp wasn't finished.

American Airlines 320 was on its way up to New Haven. The Sufi had a lecture to deliver. Pulp Architecture felt tired. Waking up in the middle of a war, being told by the administration that this is still the beginning but it is also the end was confusing. People had begun lying in protest on the steps of important buildings in New York. It was getting difficult to take Pulp Architecture anywhere. As if that wasn't enough, Pulp Architecture had to walk from gate L29 to gate A22 at DFW airport. It was orange alert and America was not feeling so good about itself.

Texas, as usual seemed to flick it off like a fly. By the time I arrived at gate A22 I looked around. Pulp Architecture was nowhere to be seen. If it didn't come quick, I thought, it wouldn't make the plane. The AA 320 was due to leave for Hartford Connecticut at 1301. I was due in Yale that evening.

What would I do if Pulp Architecture couldn't keep up? It approached 12.30. The announcement to board came through.

"We are taking First Class passengers first. And invite them to board now."

Still no sign.

"Now we are ready for other passengers to board. Can you have your boarding slips ready?"

I approached the checkpoint. Suddenly, somewhere off, a moody, rushing Pulp Architecture came into sight. A double cheeseburger in a brown paper bag.

"There," Pulp Architecture said to me, "there's no snack on the flight for 3 hours."

High Pulp, Low Pulp or No Pulp. Three types of premium calcium, home squeezed style, be hearty, be healthy, get some potassium in your diet, I looked at Pulp Architecture: "What a loser!"

"Forget it," Pulp Architecture said, "when there's so much to do, when the terrorists start taking down the buildings we'll have more work. And let me tell you, we need the ego. Always have, always will."

I recalled the sadness that had developed with Pulp Architecture. I wondered why it had not contemplated suicide. At first I wanted to keep this sadness away, as something apart. I imagined it making no real difference to architect, theory, text or building, whether divorce was looming or not.

Pulp Architecture and Mr Bhatia

It was inevitable that if it was to survive Pulp Architecture would finally return to India. Mr Bhatia is an architect and writer. He lives in Delhi. In fact he writes like a dream. The only problem is, being from India, sometimes the dream is a bad one.

Consider just how much of the world has been pulped through India. Consider how much of the Modern Movement's dream for the chosen few has been remaindered, only to be pulped later. In Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore or Calcutta, it is not surprising that the dreams are barren.

Mr Bhatia's fatigue is like a dream too. He sees through architecture to the other side and often can't help describing how ugly and how personal it has been. In order to survive and live well, Mr Bhatia writes: "it was important not to believe in anything – never letting yourself plunge below the shadows and sounds that occupied the surfaces."

It was also inevitable we would come to that pulpiest of fruits, the high pulp of the mango. "When the mangoes ripened and fell to the ground," Mr Bhatia continued, "I saw them decaying and rotting in the monsoon mud; I could not see the potential of their seed for yet another ripening."

For Mr Bhatia it had to get worse before it could get better, and architecture had a lot to do with it. "Through falsification and pretence I learnt to use architecture to build my own castles of lies. It rose all over the place, in the imagina-

tion, in the city, on the drawing board, numbing my senses, making me believe that what I was doing was for the public good, not just the pleasure of my own conceit.”

At first I thought I could help Mr Bhatia. I really wanted to help him, though I had no idea how. I imagined various panaceas; malt whisky, a trip to the Himalayas, the Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, Pulp Architecture or a good detective novel. But none would help. You can't help someone who feels the same shortcomings as you. The indifference was so strong, so familiar.

“I designed for the blind without a care for their handicap. I learnt to make up the individuals that inhabited my architecture like the characters in a Piranesi fantasy, the subjects of an English novel. People I knew could be made to suit my own image of architecture.”

It is difficult indeed when everything is tainted with falsehood; artistry a delusion, success an illusion, sophistication relentless and sickening. Mr Bhatia was right. Badly constructed walls could be covered with stone or granite. Mud could be applied to imitate itself instead of build in a traditional way. The cover-up was the accepted view of the profession, as Mr Bhatia said, and it was now the view of the world.

Mr Bhatia withdrew from the world to make another world. Irreverence and cynicism had to find other more positive views of architecture. In Mr Bhatia's world it has.

There, there

I have to admit I think I have come to the end of the usefulness of Pulp Architecture. It can't go on like this. The Voodoo is over. I think I have over-forced a touch. Admittedly we could trudge on, supported by a few of the more useful Franks and even entertain a useful inclusive strategy for architecture. It wouldn't be too difficult to collect those Pulp practices resisting the architecture of the expected. Some dislike prescriptive architecture and do their best to disrupt it. The architecture of the blueprint merchants, the professors who brief in order to make life so brief we really need not worry about.

As Pulp Architecture moved to Texas for a few months, living simply in a small cabin in Fort Worth, it had seemed a good idea to try it out one last time in Studio. It didn't seem too far fetched to ask students to come up with a few pulp strategies. Faced with the expectation of their own education many were able to put forward ideas. Given a little more tolerance than usual for directionless ideas and thinking, it was possible to agree on some of the conditions that make up Pulp Architecture.

Scoffing wasn't avoided but it was however played down. That the world had become a video game of course helped. The Professor of Glazed Hams and the Professor of Night were constantly searching for the new paradigms, the new heroes to re-enthuse the students.

But glazed hams the students did not remain. They learnt from Tarantino. They learnt from Flash. They went back to Venturi and onto the new giants. They excavated huge loops on I-30 to become the graveyard of those 18-wheelers driving between Dallas and Fort Worth. The glazed hams surprised everyone. They insinuated architecture into Downtown Zetaville and erected a huge sign that read THERE. It was the sign stolen from Oakland, California some time back. This time it was animated and sparkled anew.

Out along the Legacy West Park fence in the Metroplex they finished the Weather Centre. Visitors from all over the United States would come in to monitor the world's weather on a Fence that, according to the brochure, separated us from them, and them from us. The architecture consisted of nothing more, nothing less, than screens running the whole length of the park's boundary.

Southpoint

Contrary to the rumours, there was no stopping it. Pulp Architecture persisted its attempts to undo conventions; to destabilise a stability already so fragile. There was also a rumour going around the school of architecture that repetition made no difference anymore. The world would continue going backwards and retreat would become the eternal agenda in the Faculty meeting. "In fact, we're already thinking," The President said in one Faculty meeting, this school and department would be better as a War College called Southpoint! The President stood up again, repeating his gestures, fingers behind his braces, and threw his head back and his stomach out: "Plans to turn the school into a War College will be continued." This time, the President left, the brise-soleil groaned, and the Professors checked their voodoo dolls.

Whether Zetaville was ready for Pulp Architecture was no longer important. It was coming whether the College liked it or not, whether it commits suicide, walks into the sea off the North Wales coast or jumps into the wake of a monster ferry travelling between Helsinki and Stockholm.

Pulp Architecture has changed since its arrival in Dallas Fort Worth Airport. It had gone through a series of transformations. How could it not? It lived in a white up-and-over the double garage cabin off Huntington Lane in Fort Worth. I like to think of the little cabin in Texas as a Sufi hermitage. Probably the only hermitage with a basketball hoop fixed to its side.

Then Pulp Architecture packed its field-and-stream bag and went up to Yale. There in Yale it discovered one of the best collections of insects this side of the British Museum. Reluctant to stand up in front of an audience where Frank Rudolph, Frank Saarinen and Frank Venturi must have rubbed shoulders, it finally did. Pulp Architecture then returned to Texas and became part of the students' life.

By reading various books in the white cabin in Texas I decided to try and set Pulp Architecture free. In three weeks it went through a crash course: Larry MacMurtry's *Duane's Depressed*; *Hawklime Monster* and *In Watermelon Sugar* by Richard Brautigan, *Silk* by Baricco, *Walden* by Thoreau and two more books by Larry McMurty, *Walter Benjamin* at the *Dairy Queen*, and *Roads*.

You have to read McMurtry's book on roads to know what it feels like. Taken on the Interstate 30 from the airport right along to Fort Worth, the eighteen wheelers thunder by sometimes close sometimes not so close. It is impossible not to think of the film by Elia Kazan, *The Arrangement* with Kirk Douglas. Should one take that turn and head under the 18 wheeler - everything would be over in an instant. Then the others cars: the SUVs, the Lexuses, the Lincolns, the Cadillacacs and the BMWs all cream by. It's not difficult to think of these interstates as roads eternal in their directionless pull.

Just like America.

Thomas Merton & Pulp Architecture

But I wished not though for the present to drive down these roads in Texas in search of something there, wherever it is, that is not here. It is possible I will probably take to the road at another time with Pulp Architecture. We might even take along my daughter but that will be the future. Right now there was everything here in this white cabin where the hurricanes sometimes pass close.

The first time they did I ignored the siren thinking it was a call to the nearby Baptist Church. I had no knowledge the weather system was so near. Yet Sufis, I was told, should have such knowledge. How was I to glean this knowledge?

At first it seemed there were few books about this that dare not speak their name. But I couldn't have been more wrong. For those who wish to turn Pulp Architecture into a sustainable and substantial theory I refer them to the Book Cover appendix. There you will find books looked at, books read, books fingered, scanned or just plain ignored by the students in Zetaville. Many of these books however deserve a second or even third look.

Have you ever been more wrong in your life? It was question the Sufi in Texas had to ask himself. If not, you should try it. There is something satisfying about not being more wrong that ever before. Suddenly you realise your whole life can be emptied, that it must have begun at the wrong point

and become one of those alternative histories science fiction writers talk about when they meet in conferences.

There was a time when I thought I would just end Pulp Architecture when I left Texas and headed up to Yale via Hartford Connecticut. I'd do anything to stop thinking about Architecture. For this purpose I bought a book by the Trappist monk Thomas Merton. I buy a lot of books by this monk. In fact if you ever come to stay with Pulp Architecture and me at The Hotel Architecture in North Wales, you will discover the Thomas Merton Room. You can relax there, forget architecture, read about Sufism, Marxism and monasticism and drink Lagavulin.

Anyway Thomas Merton journeyed to the Alaskan Conference. In this book he talked about God, stewards and stewardesses. I imagined him 30,000 feet up, with his gin and tonic, looking out at the clouds, those clouds in trousers thinking: Hey, what an airwalk!

Nagoya Flower Hotel

I would forget all about Pulp Architecture eventually. Meanwhile the narrator would be reading William Gibson's Idoru and I would be in Akihabara. Then I would leave for the Nagoya Flower Hotel at Nagoya Station. In my head I was writing all this and thinking about a lecture called Pulp Architecture which would have to be delivered at Yale University.

I had just visited the JR Plaza Tower Restaurant street in the air with my Sony Cyber-shot 3.2 mega pixels digital camera where I was onto image no 635 out of a possible 941 and going down if you see what I mean. I had just resisted purchasing a Wing Gundam full set but succumbed to the plastic credit-card push-out models of tanks, fighter planes and motor-bikes. I think I begin to understand the mania for collecting and assembling that has long since taken over our lives.

I felt an anxious vision. I was the modern subject caught in spatial systems beyond my control. And who was attempting to make representational and architectural sense of this predicament for me? I thought of the 'Blur' construction, architecture as clouds or drizzle. Was this not another articulated longing to represent blur? Or was it the need to see through to the other cloud, that cloud of unknowing permanently brought into architecture?

Dinner was a slow walk from Lawson's family mart store across into the concourse of the Nagoya Station. There, a myriad trains arrived and departed whilst shopping arcades shoot off in all directions for at least 3 floors beneath the tracks.

9:45pm. and the station is finally throwing out, the floor as pristine as it would have been at the beginning of the day. No detritus, no dirt, no high, low or medium pulp. Not a speck of dirt, not a garbage container in sight to dispose of the wrappers of the kebab, the sculptured triangles of rice, the chocolate marron cake slice, and the Georgia flavoured blended little drink can of hot espresso.

Tomorrow I would leave Nagoya for Kyoto. It is the end of 2 days at the Institute for Science, Electronic Art Conference down in Nagoya Port. I am breathless with nowhere to port home and remind the loved ones that if I am the author of this nonsense, then at least I am not dead.

I am not dead, I think!

Nor am I thinking of suicide or blowing the clock to smithereens.

It is essential now to dispose of the garbage from the meal eaten in passing through the emptying Nagoya Station concourse. Finding no receptacle I noticed a sign to the sky shuttle. Pressing digits on instant glee-light, the stainless steel tube rises rapidly to the 12th floor. Outside I enter a panorama passage, a wide viewing boulevard where young Japanese stand in wild postures of evening cooing. Outside Coca-Cola and Samsung flash on and off for attention in the digital dark. Inside I take the elevator ever more skywards. Noting the sign for Man and Woman I locate myself inside the beast, as the academics love to say.

In the corner of the Men's Restroom is a perfectly formed stainless steel rectangle container. I imagine the top to swivel as it indeed does to the gentlest of all touches. I drop the wrappers into the container. The Georgia coffee tin clunks down, its fall signalled by the lining of clean, unsullied, taut yellow plastic.

Satisfied that I am the first to sully this container, I can now invent the architecture to come. I head for the glass cubicle shuttle that changes into a chameleon and ports me with some smoothness back down to the JR concourse. Few people are about now. It is closing time.

Closing Time in Nagoya Railway Station

Swarms of thick-gloved cleaners dressed in space-suit, chemical-attack yellow are swabbing out the cafes. Though this surely cannot be the right word for the surgical way they proceed to clean the station. Nothing of the café looked dirty before they began, and nothing looks cleaner after they have finished. Satisfied the cafe is ready for morning, they move on and I count the digital images so far.

Down to 580.

I exit low right out of the concourse near the taxi rank and head for the Nagoya Flower Hotel and its remarkable simulacrum of London's Soho circa 1950. From Akihabara to Nagoya Railway Station, on the way to Kyoto, just as Chiia does in Gibson's novel *Idoru*; Kyoto tomorrow, the final frontier, pulp architecture and Akihabara. It is surely worth walking off the exaggeration of the Final Fantasy and close the chapter on the architecture of the 20th century. Where else but Akihabara to open up the twilight world of Pulp Architecture in this new millennium? It is time to invent again. Or jump?

There is nowhere else to go but into the future. The narrator has to decide. Do I live or do I die?

The Old Neighborhood Grill

I remember once I'd been kicking around Cowtown to pass the time. The Brautigan was nearly finished. I had recently picked up the Edna Webster Richard Brautigan collection and took it into my local, The Old Neighborhood Grill. When in walked the ghost of Richard Brautigan himself.

White Texan hat, red kerchief, braid falling down the back of the neck, tie-died waistcoat, hands-free phone connection installed on the body, white canvas trousers tucked into the snazziest two tone cowboy boots I had ever seen this side of Nashville. Reading Brautigan!

I began to believe in the Alchemist himself and thought I should give more time to the theory that he was the last of the magicians not the first of a new race.

The cowboy ordered his omelette and potato balls. I looked over and he was checking the working of two fountain pens. One did, one didn't.

Flow.

The omen was staring me in the face.

Who had sent this cowboy?

Were these the last words needed before I left Texas? I thought Pulp Architecture was doomed.

"Cartright Twogood Johnson" he held out his hand, 'Psychiatrist, hyper-realist artist. Run therapy classes across the cattle yard using the finest pens you'll ever see."

"So I can see," I replied.

Perhaps this was it.

"So real," the waitress said as she passed the table, "I thought they were photographs when I first saw them. Is the book good?" she asked me.

The Edna Webster Richard Brautigan Collection lay on the table.

"Not as good as the other Brautigan."

She looked aghast. "The other Brautigan? I have no idea what you mean."

I took out the most wonderful pen in the word, the retractable one, to write this chapter.

"I've just ordered one of those, the Namiki," Cartright Twogood said, "where did you get yours?"

"In Tokyo," I replied, "or was it Nagoya?"

'Goddam tootin, dude, the fallout is sombrero accurate and toyota expressed." Cartright Twogood said.

Do people still talk like that? He didn't use those words. I swear his lips didn't move. But they might have done. I caught a glimpse of the gun in the holster.

"I run therapy classes for lost souls, confused souls, those who think they are someone else..." he looked at me, saw a clock behind my shoulder, "you know...you might...ah Willard.."

"You know," I said as I packed up to leave him to his omelette and potato balls, "you're a dead ringer for Richard Brautigan. The hair, your size, the lankiness and such talented awkwardness, know what I mean? Know him?"

"I think I've heard of him, seen him on the TV."

"You probably haven't, shot himself in 1980."

"Well," and the cowboy Twogood brushed his hand through his grey hair, flowing, "I've got a collection of last words on my bookshelf. Perhaps he's in that. Do you know

what were his last words?" Cartright Twogood Johnson asked.

"I should never have ended with the mayonnaise," I said, "What?"

"His last words, I should never have ended with the mayonnaise."

"Really?"

"Yes really!"

"Damn, that's clever."

Texan fiction

There were times, I must admit, when I came out of Zetaville thinking I had just about come to the end of my ability to see anything in the future. I felt more than a fake, a mimic man and had nothing more to say. We attempted to map what we called Pulp strategies. We attempted to apply these to the delinquent urban sites in this town which if anything is as near as a non-town as you can get. It is so easy to be rude about Arlington Texas that it is scary.

You see Arlington is not Zetaville. Twogood was not a cowboy. And the Dean was not a Crane.

The Texan writer Larry McMurtry felt somewhat the same, though he managed to be elegant and rude about it at the same time. As the students journeyed out, trekked more like, into the non-city we should have seen it in advance.

America was in a state of Orange alert. Police were jittery and vigilance was seeping out of used-car salesman like out of ketchup container. The Lone Star State was jumpy, very jumpy. Country stars' records and compact discs were trashed and burned for dissent. No one told you directly what they thought about the eternal war their President had started. But you got the message anyway. The American army looked about to turn war and especially Baghdad into pulp, but not a lot could be done to deflect the administration.

Downtown Arlington the police had received a call.

Someone had noticed two middle-eastern looking individuals taking photographs of the main street, the courthouse, the library and the post-office.

Suspicion mounted.

Suspicion has only one direction today.

With three-day beards, these two characters looked like those in the deck of cards of the world's most-wanted terrorists and freedom fighters.

The two were approached and taken off for questioning. Names were given. One from Michigan, the other from Lund, Sweden. Both of them looked foreign, the police said, and one of them was, they stressed, actually foreign.

Orange Alert gave the police the right to do whatever they liked.

Unshaven, fresh from a hangover and lack of sleep because of their work on Pulp Architecture, the two architecture students yawned and cursed. How could they not be suspected of being terrorists?

As Professors we were hauled in.

One chews gum, the other doesn't

"What is it that the students are doing?" Me and Groundhog were asked by the cops. One chewed gum, the other didn't.

They are mapping the city.

"What?"

They are photographing the city.

"Oh...yeah...don't be fuckin' clever, what the fuck were they doing?"

They are studying the city that is not a city

"What the Christ for?"

To come up with some Pulp strategies!

"To what...hey just watch your mouth there or I'll put this back where the sun don't...."

The two Texan policemen were clearly having trouble recognising the educational merit of this study. I tried again, Groundhog was quiet:

"They are photographing buildings in the hope that they can bring something to this city that it definitely doesn't have right now."

"Oh yeah," the cop chewing gum said, "and what's that?"

"Life, identity, excitement, thrill, you name it, terror even..."

I knew it. I shouldn't have said the last word. I definitely should not have said the last word.

All hell let loose. The cops cowered. They pushed back their jackets to reveal hand-held rocket launchers and gre-

nades. Looking like the SAS in a film studio they were ready. Though what for, neither of them realised.

"Identity, this town's got fuckin' plenty of fuckin' identity, so what the fuck are you fuckin' professors talkin' about?"

"Get the fuck outta here," the cop not chewing gum said, relaxing his finger on the rocket launcher.

We left by the back door. It was not worth trying to explain Pulp Architecture, the Brautigan and its anti-theory to the cops. The two students would not be charged for suspicion of terrorist activities but it was close.

Any moment I thought they would ask me for my identity and realise that I too was a fuckin' foreigner. If they glanced through the passport they'd notice a visa to Pakistan and a trip to Peshawar and the Northern Frontier of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They'd find more evidence that I was in charge of a new Pulp terrorist movement modelled on the Guerrilla fighting in Vietnam. They'd see my picture riding along the Khyber Pass in a jeep, dressed in a Chitral hat and Afghan clothes, a cigar in my mouth, a Kalashnikov in my hands. I'd be taken off for questioning, never to be seen again. Ending up in Guantanamo Bay, I realised, I'd never finish the Brautigan. Fuck it, I'd never get to the Mayonnaise.

Would you like to see the photographs? I asked.

"No, that'll not be fuckin' necessary. Just don't go messing with our fuckin' heads again," the cop chewing gum said, "otherwise it's you who will be pulp and not the students."

It probably wasn't an accident that he used the word 'pulp' to imagine what he'd do to our heads.

Outside the evening air was clammy. Summer was approaching. A flare shot across the sky and everyone ducked, just in case another shuttle had gone astray. Pulp Architecture was due out of Zetaville at the weekend. We'd not saved

the world again. We'd not rebuilt the city. We'd not even thought of another identity.

"Architects. Fuck it, Frank, you know shit."

Ms Gabriella

It was on the Ms Gabriella, one of those endless night journeys from Helsinki to Stockholm, that I could not have been sadder. It was impossible to keep this from Pulp Architecture. Perhaps this explains the tardiness now, the moodiness. If I had attempted to trace its effect, it could have been smoked out of me. Instead I decided to relax as best I could, abandon Pulp Architecture to the narrator and save what was left of my small family.

Don't architects go through the same? Had they not traveled the world's cities, the world's railways and airways only to be feted in the world's capitals whilst their wives and husbands desire them in another?

I know Pulp Architecture was supposed to have done the decent thing and like Virginia Woolf walked into the water. But I'd be lying to you if I said this was the end. The limousine we had picked up on its way out of Llandudno on the far west coast of North Wales heading toward the Hotel Architecture had, within it, none other than Van Morrison and Pulp Architecture. How they got on we'll never know. Van had drunk enough of the juniper berry to see paradise under the stars and instead of doing the decent thing and heading out to sea, they arrived back at the Hotel for fireworks amidst the screaming of the peacocks in the Castle grounds.

Van slept. Into the mystic, fuck it man, pour me another.

Pulp Architecture tried to sleep. No guru, no method, no teacher. No good!

'Le Refus' had taken hold. It was time to find out more about the guerrilla strategies possible in architecture after the twin towers attack began the whole movement about destroying buildings that have outlived their usefulness. The theory was alright on this, approved in the major cities, but we needed some advice on the practice. Demolition techniques were little known. The cry of the toad had shifted to the cry of the peacock and was now returning to the war of the flea. Architecture and resistance: it was time to say 'no'. The architects of the 21st Century would be those who refused to arrive.

Annoyed with the Ms Gabriella management for canceling the film's showing in the auditorium on board, I decided to go upstairs with my Brautigan, a small flask adequately supplied with a fresh gin and tonic and a wild Havana cigar. From there looking over the wake of the huge monster ferry, I would say goodbye to Pulp Architecture and all that it wasn't prepared to risk.

The narrator could then smile, drink and begin reading, all over again, the Brautigan. Just then I remembered, I had almost forgotten once more, that I had got it all wrong. I wanted to end the book with the word Brautigan. And I was about to fail!

Letter from America

Pulp Architecture left the Hotel Architecture in North Wales and had been on its way to Yale University. I began the Sombrero Fallout by Brautigan sitting in a white cabin in Fort Worth, Texas. One morning, as luck would have it, some hundred of miles to the east, debris fell out of the sky and landed in the back garden of houses in east Texas. The hunt was on for the parts of the puzzle that would put back together the story of how the Columbia space shuttle disintegrated. Now somewhere in Houston, all the collected fragments of the shuttle lie in a huge hangar.

My mother, hundreds of miles to the east of Fort Worth, back in Old Europe in North Wales naturally imagined the space shuttle had come down right in this garden and that her son who she struggled to see as an author was already dead. In fact, though she didn't know it, she was obviously thinking along the lines of Richard Brautigan. She saw me not only in Watermelon Sugar but in iDeath. Others ill-minded and optimistic thought the shuttle debris might have come down on a ranch in Crawford, Texas.

No such luck, they cried, the world must go on.

I had in fact escaped the debris by the skin of my teeth and could get on finishing this book ready in fact to take Pulp Architecture to Yale. In the abstract I had to send to Yale University for the Brendan Gill Invited Lecture some months before I had invented what I must speak about. I had no idea what I would talk about. I wrote the following:

Pulp Architecture already exists. There are no books yet, no theory, no critical discourse, no analysis, no anxiety, no critics, no brautigans, no champions which, I continued, might be the suitable contemporary triumph for such pulp architecture. We will see!

Was I wrong?

I couldn't have been more wrong.

There were books, there are symposiums, there are new interactive practices, there are new monographs called Play, new magazines called Verb, new practices salvaging architecture, there are new video conferences, new concepts like Performative Architecture, Versioning, Cloning, Eversion, Prototyping and new anthologies of these new urban and trans-programmed practices, and what's more they have all come as fast as the war now being fought, and the next war down the road!

A Sufi in Texas

Much of the architecture of the last modern century had the knack of appearing to conform to what was written about it, thereby confirming the intentions of those that designed it. Modernism appeared highly controllable, always in service of the required solution. Those required solutions do not seem so required any more, suggesting we may just need to start over once more, in the middle. Many of those working on the edge of pulp architecture today are happy to be relieved of such methodology. They may go on being relieved as encounters are everywhere.

Meanwhile software bleeds into reality. Interferences, like film, interactive media, dance, cuisine, fashion or sound compositions, all begin altering the process that goes up to shape pulp architecture as we know it. Responding to New Media is no longer the privilege of computer scientists and enlightened conceptual artists with a smattering of technical know-how. And even though scientists may continue to be incensed at the way architecture lifts and appropriates domains, they are unlikely to stop this crossover traffic.

The search for hybrid spaces and forms may catch up with our hybrid existence. But don't bank on it. In the world according to pulp, money is only a strategy to learn how not to avoid it. At the same time it is the chance to turn capital into something else entirely.

The narrator finished the book once more lying on harsh, rough Texan grass called St. Augustine. What would it be

called? The name had to be appropriate. On its back, in a garden in Fort Worth Pulp Architecture would look up to the sky as if parts of the Columbia shuttle could still fall and would go on falling long after it had left the State of Texas.

'Don't mess with Texas' the saying goes. As it lay there the narrator realised why another resonance exists to Alastair Cooke. Though years apart we attended the same College in Cambridge, Jesus College, as did Laurence Sterne, the writer of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*.

"In France, Sir," Sterne has it, "they order these things better." Did Larry Sterne know something we didn't know? The French artist Hew-ig spoke about encounters. Ideas, he said, come from people, books, films, artistic collaborations. The polyphony is all around. Interference today is easier to acknowledge, so usual has it become. But we choose the word carefully.

This then is also Pulp Architecture; something passing through, reduced to pulp, removed from the core of the city or literature and reproduced somewhere else, at all times, at all moments. From the analytical limitations of an Anglo-Saxon, from someone who watched melons in Bangalore thrown into the road and crushed by wild trucks, from the grubby linen-covered canary-yellow wingchair in the Digital Lounge in The Hotel Architecture, from this Sufi in Texas, I think Laurence Sterne may still be right.

And, I almost forgot, I had always wanted the narrator to end a book with the word 'Brautigan'.

All books and people interweave, this is the Brautigan.

the brautigan

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