Trading between
Architecture and Art
Editors
Wouter Davidts
Susan Holden
Ashley Paine

With contributions by
Angélique Campens
Guy Léon Châtel
Wouter Davidts
Mark Dorrian
Susan Holden
John Körmeling
Maarten Lefooghe
Mark Linder
John Macarthur
Philip Metten
Sarah Oppenheimer
Ashley Paine
Léa-Catherine Szacka
Annalise Varghese
Stefaan Vervoort
Stephen Walker
Rosemary Willink

vis-à-vis
Valiz
Trading between Architecture and Art

Strategies and Practices of Exchange

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An artist appears in a photograph. On the pavement of 52nd Street in New York, just around the corner from the Museum of Modern Art, he is balancing a makeshift tower on his left hand, not unlike a circus juggler. The tower, made of eighteen square plates supported by drinking glasses at the four corners, resonates with the assorted skyscrapers that flank both sides of the Manhattan street. Anxious but determined, the artist keeps control of the precarious construction, bending his knees slightly. Passers-by seem unconcerned and pay no attention, while the artist, Job Koelewijn, remains deeply engrossed in his own perilous pursuit. We do not know what happens next.  

Koelewijn performed his *A Balancing Act* in 1998, during a long-term artist’s residency at PS1. The work gives expression to the uncertainty the artist experienced during his time in New York, intimidated by both the scale and intensity of the city. Steadying the delicate edifice on the palm of his hand, the work points to Koelewijn’s daily efforts to hold his ground as an artist, while maintaining a balance between private possibilities and public demands. Here,  

architecture serves as a means to reflect on the fate of the artist, and becomes a medium of self-reflection. Koelewijn’s work is demonstrative of just some of the ways in which architecture, building, and the city have become materials for art today. That is, for Koelewijn and many of his contemporaries, architecture is not so much a subject, but a vehicle for practice—a means through which to mobilize thoughts and articulate ideas.

In this light, art and architecture can be seen coming together not in new hybrid or amalgam forms, but as taking part in a process of trade and exchange that, like Koelewijn’s own balancing act, produces particular and often unstable scenarios with unpredictable outcomes. Indeed, it is this exchange of disciplinary concepts and tools that establishes the dynamic scene in which art and architecture meet, intersect, clash or pull away. On this veritable trading floor of culture, artists and architects negotiate that which is of value or at stake: transactions that add up to the ‘terms of trade’ for architecture and art today. And, in much the same way as a nation’s economic terms of trade provide a measure of future financial prospects—not to mention something of the very character of those nations, defined by that which is imported and exported—interrogating the trade between art and architecture can offer unique insights into the opportunities and potentials of contemporary practice.

This practice of trade begins largely in the 1960s, a time marked by many radical and canonical exchanges between artists and architects. Artists took on the conventions, language, and scale of architecture as an integral part of their work, utilizing plans and models, building structures and pavilions, or intervening in urban and public spaces, as a way of critiquing the traditional terms and limits of art. With a similar intensity, architects adopted strategies from the visual
arts, planting ‘artistic’ installations in art galleries, making exhibitions, and joining biennales and art events. Through such explorations, architects attempted to break free from functionalist and formalist conventions. Art galleries and museums became accomplices in this trafficking and, by bringing together exemplary practices from both sides of the venture, have redefined the role of the institution in staging and administering disciplinary difference. Since then, architecture and art have become robust trading partners with a great richness and diversity of interaction. Whereas architecture has become a commonplace instrument for artistic research and production, art has in turn offered a rich source for theoretical and formal expansion in architecture. Moreover, many of the resulting projects purposefully suspend the traditional distinctions drawn between the respective disciplines. As Anthony Vidler has argued, such works confront us with a remarkable challenge: “This intersection has engendered a kind of “intermediary art”, comprised of objects that, while situated ostensibly in one practice, require the interpretive terms of another for their explication.”

Hence, as artists and architects exchange means and strategies, the inherited theoretical frames of reference, and our critical vocabularies to describe them, increasingly fall short. In particular, there is a tendency to characterize this proliferation of practices and projects as an ever-expanding field. However, such generalized summations tell us little about the nature of the field itself, its points of intensity and unevenness, or of the specific contests and traits such practices and projects deploy: those frictions that disciplinary distinctions—like differences between close friends—entail.

This book Trading between Architecture and Art contends with the complexity of those dealings between architecture
and art, exploring how such transactions have shaped, and at times dislodged, our faith in disciplinary concepts and categories. Indeed, it aims to interrogate the terms and conditions of exchange, and what is at stake in the idea of disciplinary difference, historically and in the present. To this end, the book proceeds via concrete cases. Each contribution focuses on a specific instance of the two-way transaction between architecture and art: artists adopting architectural means on the one hand, and architects adopting artistic strategies on the other. Each essay is conceived as an in-depth examination of those situations where traditional distinctions and disciplinary conventions become interestingly opaque, and meanings provocatively uncertain.

We argue that to start from the cases themselves, on their own terms, is paramount to this endeavor. As such, the general aim of this book is not to approach the cases with pre-established principles and set schemes, but to try to distill original insights from the chosen works as they present themselves to us. As a result, the cases are wide-ranging: some are iconic, others relatively obscure. Certainly, they make an idiosyncratic constellation in the expanding field of practices, spanning a period from the 1930s to the present, albeit with telling concentrations around the 1990s and in the 2000s. Again, this is not meant to propagate the notion of a pluralist fusion that has haunted the exchange between architecture and art ever since the advent of postmodernism. On the contrary, this book is driven by the thought that the most interesting cases in the past decades surpass the historical dream of a symbiosis between both disciplines. Most if not all of the cases discussed in this book pertain to projects within which the differences between architecture and art are put at stake: distinctions here are regarded as generative, rather than as problems to be solved.5 The works examined also reveal that

the trade between architecture and art is rarely reciprocal. Rather, it is fundamentally uneven, and frequently unstable.

In granting these objects—whether artifacts, projects or events—pride of place, we lean heavily on Yve-Alain Bois’ diatribe against what he terms theoreticism:

In fact, the first lesson to be learned from one of the theoreticians most likely to be invoked by theoreticians, Roland Barthes, is that one does not ‘apply’ a theory; that concepts must be forged from the object of one’s inquiry or imported according to that object’s specific exigency; and that the main theoretical act is to define this object, not the other way around.⁶

In many academic spheres today, a truly detailed reading of the actuality and specificity of artifacts has become rare. The prevailing urge to jump straight to the ‘meaning’ of a work makes many miss the critical resonance that a sincere reading might proffer. To this end, each essay in this book begins with a description of its object of scrutiny, whether it is an art exhibition, a pavilion, an installation, a scale model, or a set of collages. Indeed, the variety of these objects, and the singularity of the essays—both written and visual—is key to the conception of the collection. This idea is reinforced by the table of contents wherein all the contributions are listed without hierarchy, headings or other imposed structural articulations—not unlike an old-fashioned mixtape.

Still, in the great variety and richness of examples, some specific insights are revealed by this focused examination of architecture and art’s terms of trade—insights that emerge across and between individual essays. For example, the notion of utility is recognizable as a recurrent topic for a number of authors and artists. Once invoked to draw a line
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between disciplines (architecture has routinely been described as just ‘sculpture with plumbing’), utility is exposed here as a more complex, sometimes spurious, but often unavoidable topos of contemporary practice, which plays out through the various social, formal, and aesthetic dimensions of both architecture and art. It also complicates the repertoire of how art and architecture are increasingly accounted for and valued in administrative and institutional settings. Ambiguity also arises in relation to the changing institutional and physical contexts of exhibition and display, and a number of contributions to the book examine episodes in the recent resurgence of interest in exhibitions of architecture, whether used as a means to frame and represent specific works and practices, or to create novel works or bodies of original research in their own right. In this context, architecture can be seen as reclaiming ground, in both a literal and metaphorical sense, within and beyond the institutions of art. Tellingly, issues such as utility and display can be seen as some of the common denominators of art and architectural practice today—the very currency of their trade. They are, after all, the kind of concepts and practices that, as one of the authors in this book insists, ‘have no disciplinary home base’.7 As a compendium, Trading between Architecture and Art aims to enrich an understanding of the potential openings, and possible deadlocks, of such exchanges—to articulate in a specific way what is contested and what is transformed, as means and strategies are displaced, concepts shared, and contexts appropriated. On purpose it abstains from presenting an overarching theory, or an all-embracing diagram that is intended to map, define, or eventually retrace the expanded field of art and architecture as if it were a contiguous whole. It avoids this task in favor of a lively discussion of the terms of such trade. In the end we find that the question of whether a

7 Maarten Liefooghe, ‘On the Art/Architecture of Reframing an Industrial Site: Rotor’s “Grindbakken” Exhibition’, see pp. 207ff.
project is either art or non-art, architecture or non-architecture, is not as illuminating as the pattern of disciplinary rivalries that become apparent through an examination of specific cases. The interest, we might say, lies less in how means and strategies mobilize disciplines than the other way around: how disciplinarity is articulated by the contest of concepts and through the trading of practices.

As this book shows, the terms of trade of architecture and art are necessarily worked through in practice, and on a case-by-case basis. Incidentally, in the particularity of this collection of focused studies, we are reminded of another work by Job Koelewijn—a giant wooden stamp made in 2003. With Vicks Vaporub, an ointment rubbed onto children’s chests to cure them of a cough, one can imprint a giant text on the wall of a gallery or art institution. Retrospectively the text serves as a leitmotif, or catchphrase, for every contribution: it reads, ‘Be More Specific’.
In January 1975, a two-day symposium titled *Conceptual Architecture* was held at Art Net, a gallery and event space founded by Peter Cook in London. Its proceedings survive in the form of a series of videos, shot by Dennis Crompton and accessible—on account of the standard videotape format of the time—as a sequence of one-hour long episodes that are viewable on the website of the Architectural Association and also on the school’s YouTube channel. Seen through the optic of the videos the event unfolds within a putrid yellowish-green miasma, its audience slouched in deck-chairs while listening to speakers who deliver their presentations from behind what looks unnervingly like a front-loading washing machine surrounded by tropical pot plants. Toward the close of the first session, proceedings are interrupted by the appearance of three people in gorilla costumes, who wander around the room, growling. One of them begins to groom the hair of Charles Jencks, who is taking questions at the time. Oh it’s easy to protest, Peter Eisenman is heard to protest, when you are in disguise.
The symposium was chaired by Robert Maxwell, although I gather that it was Peter Cook who convened the event and invited the speakers. At the outset, in his introductory remarks, Maxwell makes clear that this is a symposium to do with thinking about the relations—or the possibility of a new kind of relation—between art and architecture. The explicit context for this—marked in the event’s title—was Conceptual Art, whose ‘organized onset’, as it has been described, had taken place seven years earlier, although its characteristic tendencies and preoccupations had been visible from at least the beginning of the 1960s—and before, from Duchamp. Reflecting this, the advertised list of speakers included the curator Roselee Goldberg and the artists John Stezaker and Victor Burgin, although the latter did not in the end attend. On the side of architecture, besides Jencks, Cook and Eisenman, there was Will Alsop, Cedric Price, Colin Rowe, Dalibor Vesely, Joseph Rykwert, and Bernard Tschumi. Watching the recordings, we at times see James Stirling in the audience, as well as the former compatriots from the Institute of Contemporary Arts’ Independent Group, Richard Hamilton and Reyner Banham, to whom I will shortly return.

This 1975 happening was certainly not the first time that the idea of conceptual architecture had been explicitly addressed. Five years earlier, in 1970, the critic and curator John Margolies had, on the invitation of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, guest-edited a double-issue of *Design Quarterly* on the topic. Focusing on—as Margolies put it in his letter to contributors that was reproduced in edited form at the start of the issue—‘the communications environment; the psychological environment; the entertainment environment,’ the special issue included contributions from, amongst others, Ant Farm, Archizoom, François Dallegret, 3 Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 527.
Haus-Rucker-Company, and Ed Ruscha. It was opened by Eisenman’s ‘Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition’, which consisted of four almost blank pages—almost blank because they were patterned by constellations of footnote references, presumably positioned in relation to an invisible article that ran below them. As it was published, the only continuous and legible text was that of the footnotes themselves at the bottom of each page and Eisenman’s own biography at the end.

My aim here, then, is to use the 1975 symposium as a case study in order to test an argument about the relations between art and architecture, recognizing that this is a thought experiment which may appear overly speculative and schematic to many—perhaps most—readers. It begins with the bald generalization that architecture has characteristically described what it is—that is, what makes it architecture—through an appeal to some idea of ‘art.’ This is not the only way that architecture has narrated how it comes to be itself, but it is an important one and persistent enough to remark upon. How would we historicize this? Evasively, I would say it occurs within the ‘modern period’, by which I mean from the eighteenth century onward—but it is difficult to draw very clear boundaries here. The idea is that architecture is building that surpasses building by virtue of the addition of art in some way. This has various expressions, such as architecture as ‘building with art’ or ‘the art of building’ (and these are not necessarily the same thing, although at times they might be). A perhaps overly-familiar example is Nikolaus Pevsner’s declaration at the beginning of his 1943 Outline of European Architecture that:

A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on

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a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.\(^5\)

Here, it is the presence of art as it is actualized in the aesthetic status of the construction that makes architecture architecture. This is a longstanding and still current idea. Consider, for example, Steven Holl’s short text from 2013, ‘What is Architecture? (Art?)’. Organized under four headings—‘Abstract’, ‘Use’, ‘Space’, and ‘Idea’—the article constantly asserts, sometimes explicitly and sometimes by implication, the centrality and necessity of art to architecture while at the same time taking care to distance and differentiate it. So, architecture has to deal with ‘constraints of engineering safety, function, climate, responsibility, and economy’, yet these it ‘transcends to inspire us with ideas in space and light—qualities achieved in the abstract’.

Architecture might be useful, but mere function is surpassed in what Holl calls ‘its highest “use”’, which is ‘to deeply move us’; again, ‘Drawing us from one location to the next, architecture is the art of space’.\(^6\)

This tension, which is compulsively played out in the various formulations of architecture’s self-definition via the appeal to art, suggests that art has played the role of a supplement—in its Rousseau-esque/Derridean sense—to architecture: that is, the understanding of the supplement as the external, alien, thing that is required to be added, in this case to architecture, in order to complete it and confer its full identity and meaning. The logic of the supplement is characterized by precisely this kind of tension—that between, on one hand, appeal and deferral, and on the other, refusal and disavowal. And typically the latter has, at least since the eighteenth century, been enacted on the grounds of utility as


the basis for the differentiation of architecture from art. From the point of view of the theory of the supplement, the answer to the inside/outside question is therefore that the outside (art) is the inside (architecture), insofar as it is the foreign, non-identical presence whose addition constitutes the identity of the thing that it is differentiated from.

Going on from this, what I want to suggest is that this relation begins to be restructured in the years prior to the Conceptual Architecture event, and that this has as much to do with transformations in discourses of art as it does with architecture — and moreover, that this maps on to, and indeed perhaps impels, what we have learned to call architecture’s turn toward theory from the late 1960s on. On the side of art, the factors that seem important to emphasize because they are consequential to this shift include: Conceptual Art’s interrogation of the relations between art and language; its exploration of the institutional conditions of production and related exposure of the repressions necessary to secure claims of autonomy; and the dis-identification of the artwork with its material realization.

As one might expect, at the 1975 symposium there are various positions in evidence in relation to the notion of conceptual architecture. The presentations fall broadly into two types—those concerned to assert that architecture has always been conceptual and that therefore what we might mean by conceptual architecture can be illustrated by historical examples; and those that argue that conceptual architecture, by implicit or explicit comparison with Conceptual Art, should mean something quite different from historical forms of architecture understood to be driven by concepts. What is striking about all this, in relation to what we have just observed, is that although—as Maxwell noted in his introduction—the symposium was concerned with the relations between art and
architecture, art or the aesthetic are rarely explicitly mentioned or appealed to. Instead what happens in this discourse is that architecture now is understood to become determined—to become possible—to the extent that it has a concept, and this in turn allows it to merge into art, the art of conceptualism, without declaring that it is doing so. In short, the reconfiguration of the practices of art and architecture under the impetus of the conceptual turn—with the foregrounding of the concept—makes them newly porous to one another and maybe even indistinguishable. In his presentation, John Stezaker went so far as to enumerate six ideas or concerns related to conceptual art and then illustrated how they could be worked through in architecture.

The new emphasis on the centrality of the concept to the definition of architecture is very clear in Bernard Tschumi’s presentation, which is developed around Étienne-Louis Boullée’s insistence that architecture is a product of the mind. What gives architecture its status is its ideational content, and this means that architecture can exist as much in the form of a drawing or text as in a physical construction. Indeed, returning to our architecture/building opposition, we could say that—from this point of view—what turns out to ultimately differentiate the two is the non-necessity of realizing architecture in constructed form. Compare this with a much later comment of Eisenman’s, from 2013, in which he is responding to a question about his early houses: ‘The “real architecture” only exists in the drawings. The “real building” exists outside the drawings. The difference here is that “architecture” and “building” are not the same.’ This, while sharing the same logic, escalates it to the point where architecture is now understood to be negated by the act of building.

These considerations bring us to a situation in which it appears that art and architecture are at the point of collapsing...
into one another. Art, post-conceptual art, is no longer in the position of a supplement as there is no longer any disavowal based on the criterion of utility, for this has been displaced by the new insistence on the conceptual basis of architecture. Utility is no longer what it was when architecture can be a drawing or a text. However, what is interesting is the way in which it comes to return. My claim here is that utility, which hitherto had been fully interior to architecture, shifts to take up the position of supplementarity that had previously been occupied by art, and that this comes to motivate contemporary architectural discourse’s particular regard for pavilions, follies, and ruins, insofar as they are understood as constructions of contingent, indeterminate or suspended use.

Let’s then briefly consider utility and look at how it was discussed at the 1975 symposium. Following Cedric Price’s talk, there was an interesting intervention from the floor by Reyner Banham that, it seems to me, illustrates the transformation we have just described. Banham recalls that the phrase ‘conceptual architecture’ was used in England in the mid-1950s by Jim Richards and Robert Furneaux Jordan to characterize work that they saw as putting ‘... the expression and idea over and above, or as more important than, the service to the expressed needs of the client, etc. etc. etc.’

Examples of this impulse he cites are the Smithsons’ school at Hunstanton in Norfolk and the early housing projects of Stirling and Gowan. Banham observes that much he has heard at the symposium repeats this, but that the polarity has changed. What was for Richards and Furneaux Jordan ‘extremely naughty, naughty and suspect’ is now, 20 years later, ‘regarded as something of “potential value”’. And while it was clearly far from the case that utility had become a non-determinant for all the speakers—Price himself being a case in point—watching the talks again, it does look like a kind of
generational shift, with both Tschumi and Eisenman speaking for an architecture released from service to functional concerns.

By the lights of the usual understandings, it becomes hard to tell architecture and art apart. But now, as I have already indicated, it is very striking how, as this discourse played out, use—which had been expelled—returned as supplement in order to permit a secondary, perhaps weaker, differentiation to take place between art and architecture. This is very evident in Eisenman’s work, because it was thematized in it, but it is also there in the red follies of Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette, objects whose accompanying rhetoric regarding the free play of form met a limit with their need to accommodate programme. In Eisenman’s case, by the time of the 1987 essay ‘Misreading’ he had come to define architecture as ‘the investigation of new possibilities of occupiable form’.11 Here use, having been estranged, now re-entered as supplement in order to make possible and secure architecture. Certainly this was no longer function, if we mean by that culturally prescribed or ideologically determined use (Eisenman had railed against functionalism as a late form of anthropocentrism in his well-known ‘Post-Functionalism’ editorial for *Oppositions*).12 Instead, the condition for use’s reappearance as a determinant for architecture was that it should be emptied of all determinations—that is to say, defunctionalized—in order to be posited as an open field of possibilities. And this, insofar as it was a way of maintaining or guaranteeing architecture at its point of disappearance, might be understood as a conservative gesture. Robin Evans seems to say as much in his skeptical review of Eisenman’s exhibition held at the Architectural Association in Spring 1985, in which he noted a compulsive and strategic limitation of the effects of the processes and allusions that Eisenman repeatedly

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introduced into his architecture in order to ‘disrupt’ it. The verdict delivered by Evans was that ‘Eisenman is in fact a jealous guardian of the stable and fundamental features of architecture’. Comparing the mathematical understanding of the term ‘transformation’ with Eisenman’s enactment of it, Evans found only one example in the work that matched the total shifting of relations implied in the mathematical idea—and this is in the unoccupiable transformation of House X, as depicted in the well-known pseudo-anamorphic model. Evans again: ‘If these foreign mathematical terms had been allowed to invade the work they would almost certainly have destroyed its quintessential architectural properties. They may just possibly have replaced them eventually… their permanent corruption and obliteration. A dangerous business.’

Ultimately, here, use-as-supplement—which is to say occupiability as distinct from functionality—turns out to be protective and prophylactic. Expelled from architecture, now ‘outside’ it, use returns in order to produce a distancing effect that maintains and guarantees architecture by warding off the threat of its collapse, dissolution, disappearance, death. And this ultimately returns us in a striking way to Jacques Derrida’s theorization of the supplement, closely tied as it was to Rousseau’s confessions of onanism:

But one stroke must still be added to this system, to this strange economy of the supplement. In a certain way, it was already legible. A terrifying menace, the supplement is also the first and surest protection; against that very menace. This is why it cannot be given up.
The artist Jorge Pardo’s 2014 exhibition at the neugerriemschneider gallery, Berlin, included two bathrooms that were plumbed and sewered. The function, equipage, and the working water supply and drainage make these bathrooms works of architecture, but their exhibition in a visual arts gallery names them as art, and the many ambiguities of Pardo’s installation are laid over this paradox of disciplinary nominalism. My interest is not in Pardo’s work per se, but rather with the functionality of so-called ‘relational art’ where the aesthetic experience of a work lies in the interpersonal relations that are momentarily formed around some scenario of utility. This relation between the artwork and utility seems the perfect mirror to the phenomenon of architectural pavilions exhibited in visual arts institutions, such as those commissioned annually since 2000 by the Serpentine Galleries where the ‘artiness’ of architecture is expressed in eschewing utility.¹

The bathrooms are steel-framed and sheeted in glass that, while screen-printed in decorative patterns, remains transparent. They were shown with the doors open and could

be entered. The ceilings are patterned like the glass, as are the floors, which are designed to drain below the shower head. They contain some lovely artisanal pipe plumbing, timber sinks, proprietary ceramic toilet pedestals, and are hung with some of the decorative lamps that are a signature of Pardo’s practice. They are quite attractive in a pop baroque way that is suggestive of the expressiveness demanded of bespoke interior design, and indeed of bathrooms as a site of conspicuous expenditure in domestic architecture.² There are two rooms with the same sanitary equipment; one has a high ceiling, one low; one is in a blue color-way, one in red. These are not so much a pair or a series, but options of the kind typically offered in display of kitchen and bathroom appliances and fittings. But this reference to interior design is complicated by the sewer pipes that proceed from the cabinets across the gallery floor until they meet the wall which they follow to the exterior. On enquiry, neugerriemschneider gallery confirmed that the bathrooms were connected to Berlin’s sewage system, and, looking closely at the photographs, it indeed appears that the pipes are laid with sufficient fall so as to function, should that be required.

The works are more than a critical discourse on design by an artist. The insistence on their functioning is somehow vital to what otherwise might be a familiar transgression of disciplinary boundaries and media specificity. We can read in Pardo’s bathrooms a claim that: as comfort, need, and discomfort tumble one over another, the hierarchy of art and design is undone, and with that something of the opposition of aesthetic feeling to discursivity in art. But my interest in this work is that such a reading relies on aesthetic ideas being pushed up against categorical distinctions of institutions and professions—here is a not-architecture that is nevertheless in charge of its plumbing.

² Barbara Penner, Bathroom (London: Reaktion, 2013).
Pardo is prominent among the numerous artists who take the disciplinary distinction of architecture from sculpture as a topic or pretext. It is as if, after Rosalind Krauss’ semiotic square has been taught in art and architecture schools for four decades, the concept of the differential specificity of disciplines has itself become an art medium. What interests me in relational art, and in Pardo’s plumbing in particular, is how the concept of utility and the facts of use make a particular kind of trichotomy between art, architecture and the aesthetic concept of purposiveness. To perceive the purposiveness of an object is to apprehend a formal finality and closure that results from a purpose without thinking on how that purpose is performed. An example of Immanuel Kant’s is the judgment of the beauty of a horse without thinking of the uses to which we typically put horses. The traditional distinction between the disciplines is that a concept of utility precedes and governs the design of a building, limiting its aestheticiation to an extent, but that artworks are free and self-determining. It is the complications around the definition of functionality that make fruitful opportunities for artists and architects. Architecture is said to be an art when it somehow exceeds its functional determination, and artworks themselves have social and economic uses which are usually considered to be extraneous. Hence there are close relations between the phenomenon of relatively functionless architecture, such as the architectural pavilions exhibited in visual art venues, and contemporary artworks that rely on participation and social utility, particularly those that have the appearance of building and interior design.

It is not recorded if anyone took their ablutions in Pardo’s bathrooms, but that is surely not the point. Any designer bathroom is a paradox—what counts as aesthetic pleasure when engaged in the most fundamental functions?
But in the case of Pardo’s plush and eager-to-please designs, the plumbing insists that the bathrooms could actually be used, in the gallery space, where their semi-transparent walls make them into something of a vitrine, underscoring the problematic of need and pleasure. Pardo was one of the first artists said to be practicing relational art, where the participation of an audience is required to complete a work, typically some task which puts the art object or scenario to use.⁶ Pardo’s earlier work *Pier* of 1997 placed a cigarette vending machine at the end of a pier in the lake at Munster. The aesthetics of such works suppose an audience that has become a part of the work’s function, and where individuals experience their part in the social contracts required by that task. But here, in Pardo’s bathrooms there is a contract for participation that cannot be taken up, an audience unable to witness itself. Firstly, the threshold is too high for individuals to leave their safe role in contemplating the artwork and to participate. Secondly, even if they were prepared to piss and shit in public, it is not sociability that would be being performed. We could compare Pardo’s bathrooms with a work of Rirkrit Tiravanija *Untitled (Tomorrow is Another Day)* in which he rebuilt his New York apartment in the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 1996. Visitors to the museum made meals, lay in his bed and took a bath.⁷ Descriptions of the work do not mention if the toilet was used though we might suppose it was, given the length of occupation and because the work faithfully reproduced the apartment’s doors and thus met the normal expectations of the privacy of ablutions. Standing in the way of such participation is the presentation of Pardo’s bathrooms as objects of high design to be admired, and also, more significantly, the transparency of the rooms and the visibility of the pipes. Pardo’s installation is a fully realized functionality that can only be contemplated.
Pardo’s wider body of work, and his statements about architecture suggest that he aims for an actual interdisciplinarity or post-disciplinarity. The house he designed on Sea View Lane (1998) in Los Angeles and the adaptive re-use of the seventeenth-century hacienda Tecoh in Yucatán are unambiguously works of architecture. However, what interests me about the neugerriemschner bathrooms—in the gallery space but connected to the sewer—is that they suggest not a merging of disciplines, but rather one laid over the other so that differences and similarities are laid bare. That Pardo is an artist who says he makes architecture is unusual because the disciplinary distinctions have, for much of the twentieth century, in many nations, been written into legislation that made architecture a ‘closed’ profession restricting the use of the word architect. The categorical distinction of the architect from the artist has increased the earlier more fluid distinction of architectural works from sculpture and painting. Around 1900, on the issue of professional registration, plumbing was a point of debate. The argument that won the debate in favour of registration, against the idea that architecture was an art and could not be legislated for, was that the public required assurance as to the technical competence of architects in sanitation. It is these disciplinary differentiations which are at play in Pardo’s plumbing, as much as any transgressive scatology. Perhaps Pardo had read the interview where Gordon Matta-Clark said:

One of my favourite definitions of the difference between architecture and sculpture is whether there is plumbing or not. So, although it is an incomplete definition, it puts the functionalist aspect of ... Machine Age Moralism where it belongs—down some well executed drain.
Plumbing pulls the conceptual issues around function and autonomy back down to a matter of historical categories.

Making plumbing a definition of architecture pulls aesthetic theories of the hierarchy of the arts back into the stew of professional self-interest, technical development, and administrative convenience.

Functionality in general, and even plumbing in particular has been a recurring theme in commentary on the Serpentine Pavilions. The hackneyed questions ‘is it architecture?’ and ‘is it art?’ both arise out of the very light and even trivial uses ascribed to the pavilions, and their frequent failings. The Serpentine Pavilions have all had some function. They began as marquees for drinks receptions, have been tea and coffee vending sites, discos, and venues for the Serpentine Marathon of talks and debates. In general, they perform these functions very poorly. They drip rain water and heat the champagne while providing uncomfortable seating. In the reception of the buildings in the popular press, there is a trope of complaining about their functional failings. The few that have offered some weather protection have often leaked, such as Selgascano’s 2016 pavilion which not only leaked, but flooded, due to its drainage having been overlooked. The Times critic wrote of Jean Nouvel’s 2010 pavilion ‘I would have thought that the last place you’d want to chill out on a scorching summer’s day in a park is a giant blazing-red tent slathered in plastic. And I would be right’, describing the experience as ‘like a wedding in hell’. Marina Otero Verzier has documented the difficulties and the ingenuity of Fortnum & Mason’s staff in what she sees as an ongoing struggle between experimental design and coffee. It is as if the architects deliberately chose an occasion to be negligent of utility in order that the conceptual difficulties of appreciating advanced architecture would be matched by a
degree of physical demandingness, and that the prosaic uses of the structure should be in some way trivialized in order to direct attention to the conceptual and aesthetic agenda of the project. Perhaps the most extreme version of a pavilion evading its function was that of Peter Zumthor in 2011, which functioned as a café/tea-house without plumbing, electricity or a barista, but merely by parking a mobile coffee cart nearby. Silvia Lavin has claimed that the pavilions are symptoms of the enervation of architectural culture ‘as the economic collapse has meant that few can afford more than a tiny building (and are glad not to have to pay for the plumbing)’.

I have argued elsewhere that the negligent or incidental treatment of building functions in the Serpentine Pavilions relates them to the longer history of ornamental buildings in gardens, and in particular, to Kant’s claim that landscape gardens could be objects of aesthetic judgment in that they had merely ‘the semblance of use’. To briefly recall the relevant part of Kant’s theory: if we judge an object with regard to a determinate concept, then we are not judging its beauty but its perfection; and we have engaged our powers of reason rather than those of the aesthetic faculty and the imagination. Thus, even if we are properly disinterested in the use of one of the Serpentine Pavilions in obtaining coffee, listening to a talk and so on, we should also not judge the architecture against some pre-existing concept which has determined what the building should be. The pavilions are thus what Kant calls dependent or adherent beauties, like the horse mentioned earlier, a concept of what the building should be is necessary to understand its purposiveness, but this concept, somehow, falls short of determining our aesthetic judgment. Function is such a concept, and the epitome of a building concept in Modernism. Rather than such determinate
concepts, Kant thinks that we should discern the aesthetic ideas that an artwork presents. The unfolding of these ideas that have no determinate concept or use, entwine our faculty of reason in the free play of the imagination. I argue, then, that the Serpentine Pavilions, like ornamental park structures of old, need to produce a kind of distance from whatever functional uses they have. So Fortnum & Mason’s wet clients, the sore-arsed listeners and sweaty reception goers; each of them plays a double role. Their use of the structure enlivens a scene of which they are also disinterested observers. The inadequacy of the functional arrangements of the pavilion are what is required to regard the use one is making of the building as a matter of semblance or appearance rather than purpose.

Kant’s distinction of free and adherent beauty would help us distinguish Pardo’s bathrooms from architecture if we could agree that the sewer connection was mere semblance, a representation or image. But such an explanation would be greatly at odds with the usual discussion of Pardo’s work as consistent with a post-Kantian relational aesthetics. Pavilion architecture has strong parallels with the relational art mentioned earlier. Just as in relational art, but by under-statement rather than over-statement, a particular use is made to be indexical of an idea of utility. Relational art according to Nicholas Bourriaud is political in the sense that the art engages a disparate audience in a common task, and thus a real, if transient, micro-utopia. For Bourriaud the immediate social and participatory aspects of relational art—such as Tiravanija’s *Soup/No Soup* (2012) in which a communal public banquet was held in the Grand Palais in Paris, are also a rejection of the austerity of avant-gardism which critiqued the present in the name of a future.19 This claim to a kind of social freedom produced by art can be also contrasted with

the freedom of the self that Kant and Friedrich Schiller thought individual aesthetic contemplation provided, and which formalist modernism thought to be the aim of art. However, it can be argued that what Bourriaud proposes is nothing more than a projection of the split subjectivity of a person observing themselves onto the social, and thus no more political than Schiller’s idea that aesthetics could be the basis of civics.  

The claims for a relational aesthetic that would refute, succeed, or even merely differ from, the Kantian aesthetics of art, raises questions for architecture. What would a relational architecture be when architects imagine that their profession already does much of what Bourriaud claims for relational art? What would the claim of aesthetics to explain art be if it did not apply to architecture? It is usual to think (following Walter Benjamin) that buildings form the infrastructure for the immediate experience of the social, and are political at the level of the body; and that this distinguishes a work of architecture from the contemplation said to be required by a work of the visual arts. At one level drinking coffee in one of the Serpentine Pavilions is the same as sipping Tiravanija’s soup. Claire Bishop writes that relational art privileges ‘function over contemplation’, but this was already the formula of modern architecture, so from an architectural viewpoint, relational art then looks like the contemplation of function. But their categorization, one as art, the other as architecture has conceptual effects.  

For most of the past since the eighteenth century, architecture was ‘art’, or one of ‘the arts’ just as the ‘performing arts’ still are, and just as a contemporary ‘Arts’ Policy aims to govern a wide gamut of cultural disciplines. The use of the contraction ‘art’ to describe the ‘visual arts’ is quite recent, and although the distinction of architecture from ‘art’ is


inescapable in common discourse today, the presentation of architecture as art is not quite the same as other category-busting Art Museum practices such as exhibiting motorcycles or couture. It is a memory of the recent past when Wölfflinian definitions of art as 'the visual arts' was made up of painting, sculpture and architecture.\textsuperscript{22} The not-art status of architecture today is a part of what allows its play with art institutions, but the paradox of this is that the dialogue works because of a history where architecture was 'art'.

The Serpentine Galleries say that the pavilion program makes the Galleries more accessible to a wider public. In part, this is achieved spatially by the pavilions standing free of the Galleries’ thresholds in the space of Kensington Gardens, but there is also an idea at stake, an assumption that the aesthetic experience of architecture is less intellectually demanding than that of the visual arts. Architecture is typically seen as more accessible than contemporary art, making it more immediately aesthetic, more present, and more like traditional ideas of the appreciation of art objects which assume a passage from sensory pleasure to intellectual contemplation. The Serpentine Pavilions thus suppose an aesthetic subject that has been under erasure in art since Minimalism critiqued the dialectic of perception and cognition and the Anti-aesthetic critiqued the value of pleasure in art. Architecture provides a simpler, more familiar model of the relation of aesthetic experience to a work, but this is a model that, from the point of view of contemporary art discourse, is superseded.

This distance from art is reinforced in the Serpentine Pavilions by their frequent quotations of canonical works of contemporary art. The Koolhaas-Balmond pavilion of 2006 was an attempt to build Yves Klein’s proposed \textit{Air Architecture} (1961). Sou Fujimoto’s 2013 pavilion refers to Sol

LeWitt’s white cubic spatial constructions, while Smiljan Radic’ 2014 structure was conspicuous not only for its formal resemblance to Frederick Kiesler’s *Endless House* (1947–1960) but also to the sculpture *Rock on Top of Another Rock* by Fischli/Weiss that was simultaneously exhibited on the lawn of the Gallery. Selagascano’s 2015 pavilion seems something of an *hommage* to Pardo’s *Oliver, Oliver, Oliver* of 2004 (which, apart from the formal similarities, must have been equally hot and leaky). Whether these relations to artworks are genuine homage, or some trickle down of 1990s appropriation art into architecture, their effect is to reference a sphere of art that is elsewhere. Like Pardo’s plumbing, the experience of the Serpentine Pavilions as artworks is not an imitation but an index of another discipline that is not present. The sewer pipes leading from Pardo’s bathrooms are indexical in the same way. Their non-functioning functionality refers to what is not present—architecture and the idea that building could be aesthetic and not be conceptually determined by its use. Pardo’s plumbing is real in order to give the semblance of being architecture so as to critique the supposed autonomy of art from life. The Serpentine Pavilions have real uses but poor plumbing so that they can produce the semblance of being the kind of artwork that much contemporary art stands in critique of.

Claire Bishop has critiqued Bourriaud’s claims for the emancipative politics of relational art, which seems to value communication and sociability. She writes that relational artworks rely on the pre-existing commonality of an audience of gallery goers who can easily agree to experience themselves completing the artwork and who are obliged to be complicit by the social and spatial structures of the gallery and the art world. Of works such as those of Tiravanija she writes that the ‘...works are political only in the loosest sense of
advocating dialogue over monologue . . . . The content of this dialogue is not in itself democratic, since all questions return to the hackneyed nonissue of "is it art?" I agree with Bishop's critique of the putative politics of relational art, but what is more relevant here is the nominalism into which she claims this collapses. 'Is it art?' might indeed be a hackneyed nonissue if we understand this to be a question of whether a particular art work is an instance of a general concept of art. Pardo's bathrooms and the Serpentine Pavilions ask a more specific question: 'is architecture art?' This too is a hackneyed question, but it is a much less metaphysical one, mixing aesthetic issues with historically developed disciplinary categories and revealing something of the unstable history on which contemporary practice is built. The symmetry of relational art's utility and the token functionality of architecture presented as art is as much an historical artefact as a conceptual difference. The use of art may be an inevitable horizon to any discourse on art and architecture, but it is a distant horizon to the view of Pardo's plumbing.
John Körmeling

Visual column, *Eindhovens Dagblad*

*Nieuw (New)*, 1992, Diepenheim Kunstvereniging, BE

*Drive-in Wheel, reuzenrad voor auto’s (ferris wheel for cars)*, Panorama 2000, Utrecht, NL
Open Drive-in Wheel, reuzenrad voor auto’s (ferris wheel for cars), Panorama 2000, Utrecht, NL

Open Gat in de wolken (Hole in the cloud), 1989, Madurodam, NL
Drive-in Wheel, reuzenrad voor auto’s (ferris wheel for cars), Panorama 2000, Utrecht, NL

Verboden te roken (No smoking), 1995, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, NL

Gat in de wolk (Hole in the cloud), 1989, Madurodam, NL
Happy Street, World Expo 2010, Shanghai, CN

Parkeerkleed (parking carpet), 1991

De vierkante auto (The square car), Happy Street, World Expo 2010, Shanghai, CN
Happy Street, World Expo 2010, Shanghai, CN

De vierkante auto as part of the interior, Happy Street, World Expo 2010, Shanghai, CN
Draaend Huis (Turning house, model)

Sociale weg (Social road), 2001

Den Ophef, 2013, Tilburg, NL
John Körmeling

Den Ophef (2013), Tilburg, NL

Draaiend Huis (Turning house) (2007), Tilburg, NL

Sociale weg met kruisingen (Social road with junctions) (2001)
Artiesteningang (Artist’s entrance), 2004–2012, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp, BE
Museum Austrittskarte, 1990, Landesmuseum Bonn, DE

HI HA socks
The Turner Prize is no stranger to controversy. Established in 1984, it was set up precisely to challenge conservative aspects of the institutional art scene in Britain. While its reputation for controversy has most famously been around questions of taste—think of Damian Hirst’s bisected cow and calf (Mother and Child [Divided], 1995) and Chris Ofili’s poo painting (No Woman, No Cry, 1998)—in 2015, with the award going to architecture collective Assemble, the controversy played out around the question of categories and a debate about whether architecture was indeed an art. Assemble were nominated for their involvement in the Granby Four Streets housing regeneration project in Liverpool, which centered on the renovation of a group of derelict Victorian terraces as affordable housing. The project evolved from this initial commission to include a community arts component in which residents made interior fixtures for the terraces, such as mantles and doorknobs, using reclaimed building waste. This initiative has since evolved into the Granby Workshop social enterprise that has commercialized the small-scale manufacture of ceramics.
The criteria of the Turner Prize have varied in its history, with the emphasis shifting over time from a focus on the artist and their oeuvre to being more about the quality and impact of a particular exhibition. While architecture-like works have featured in the Turner Prize in the past—notably Rachel Whiteread’s *House* in 1993, but also Simon Starling’s *Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No. 2)* in 2005—Assemble’s win appeared to be a more categorical claim for architecture in the realm of art. It was a catalyst for *The Guardian* to analyze the categories of past award winners. However, their analysis, which classified Whiteread’s *House* as a sculpture and Starling’s *Shedboatshed* as an installation, did as much to highlight the inherent difficulty in classifying the inter-disciplinary practices of contemporary art, as it did in calling attention to architecture as an interloper in the art world.

In the wake of the announcement of Assemble’s win, the question of whether architecture should be considered art was an easy one for the media to grab hold of. *Daily Telegraph* art critic Mark Hudson said:

> Art is a hideously pompous word, and when you start going around saying ‘this is not art’ it makes you look a bit of an arse. But I think in this case it isn’t. It works very well as architecture. Why bring it in as art?

Morgan Quaintance was more scathing in his critique on *e-flux*, saying: ‘It was a decision that could have seriously detrimental ramifications for British contemporary art.’ Both of these critics were taking issue with what they perceived to be the underlying agenda of one of the Turner Prize jurists, Alistair Hudson, and his campaign for Arte Útil or ‘useful art’, which was taken as a rather blunt way to counteract the perennial criticism of ‘art for art’s sake’ and the Turner Prize’s
role in fueling a perception of the art world as esoteric and inaccessible.

At the time of the award, Alistair Hudson had not long taken up the Directorship of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) and was busy promoting his vision for a ‘useful museum’. In this, he was following the tenets of the Asociación de Arte Útil, an organization he co-directs with artist Tania Bruguera, and its ambition to reinstate the value of art in society by emphasizing its ritual, practical, and educational role. The selection of Assemble for the Turner Prize certainly worked in support of his campaign for useful art, in that architecture has at various times been distinguished amongst the arts because of its utility. Assemble were perhaps inevitably drawn into this debate. While they were somewhat dismissive of the controversy over categories, saying: ‘it’s not that important: it’s an academic discussion’ they nonetheless emphasized the practical dimension of their work: ‘We are more interested in doing good projects. Sometimes that’s about doing really good plumbing’.

In the architecture world, the announcement was generally celebrated, and recognized as an example of ‘the diversification, adaptability, and permeability of the profession at large’. However, the Granby Four Streets project is by no means a typical architectural project, and also one that has involved many stakeholders who equally deserved credit, and could justifiably have been recipients of the award. It works as architecture not only because it involved the renovation of terrace housing, but also because it follows a tradition of participatory design practices that gained currency in the profession in the 1970s in reaction to the perceived failures of modernist housing and urbanization. The participatory aspect of the project is also what resonated most strongly with Hudson’s concept of Arte Útil, fulfilling its fifth tenet to

7 ‘Asociación de Arte Útil’ (www.arte-util.org, last accessed on 19 April 2017).
9 Charlotte Higgins, ‘Turner Prize Winners, Assemble: “Art? We’re more interested in plumbing”’, The Guardian, 9 December 2015 (www.theguardian.com/arthanddesign/2015/dec/08/assemble-turner-prize-architects-are-we-artists). Whether consciously or not, this comment recalls Gordon Matta-Clark’s method of distinguishing between architecture and sculpture by the presence or absence of plumbing: ‘One of my favorite definitions of the difference between architecture and sculpture is whether there is plumbing or not. So although it is an incomplete definition, it puts the functionalist aspect of... Machine Age Moralists where it belongs—down some well executed drain.’ Matta-Clark quoted in Donald Wall, ‘Gordon Matta-Clark’s Building Dissections’, *Arts Magazine* 50, no. 9 (May 1976), pp. 74–79, reprinted in Re-tracing the Expanded Field: Encounters between Art and Architecture, ed. Spyros Papapetrou and Julian Rose (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), p. 27. John Macarthur’s essay in this collection, ‘Pardo’s Plumbing: Relational Art and Architectural Pavilions’, explores the extent to which this distinction holds in the bathroom works of Jorge Pardo and the Serpentine Pavilions, and what this says of the relationship between art and architecture in the contemporary scene.
11 Morgan Quaintance also posed the question as to whether the Granby Community Land Trust should have won the award. Quaintance, ‘Teleology and the Turner Prize’.
replace authors with initiators and spectators with users.’¹² The currency of participation as a mode of practice in both architecture and art certainly played into the productive ambiguity around whether the work was art or architecture, and made a suitable controversy for the Turner Prize.¹³ But can this controversy be dismissed as merely academic?

This essay analyses the slippage between categories that arises from Assemble’s Turner Prize award, and considers the wider significance of the recognition of the Granby Four Streets project as both art and architecture in the award. It explores the attention given to the utility of the work that underpinned this slippage—the functional utility of the renovated housing and the interior furnishing, as well as the utility of the social exchange through which they were realized—and its resonance with an instrumental understanding of the concept of value that has become increasingly influential in the government of culture. It also explores how the emphasis on the creative dimension of the social exchange relates to the rise of creative work as a framework for social participation, and as a category in cultural policy that is impacting on art and architecture alike.

The Granby Four Streets terraces are located in the suburb of Toxteth in Liverpool, an area marked by decades of neglect that came in the wake of controversial demolitions associated with citywide urban renewal and unsuccessful gentrification in the 1960s and 1970s; and rioting associated with the economic downturn of the 1980s. In 1993 the Granby Residents Association was formed with the view to stopping demolition of the remaining terraces resulting from Compulsory Acquisition Orders. In 2011 the Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust (CLT) was established, following a model for community-owned social housing developed in
the USA, and took charge of ten ‘two-up two-down’ terraces on Cairns Street. In 2013, with support from Plus Dane, Liverpool Mutual Homes and Steinbeck Studio, the Granby Four Streets CLT commissioned Assemble to develop plans for the renovation of the terraces as affordable housing.\textsuperscript{14}

Beyond the necessary structural repairs that the terraces required Assemble undertook minimal refurbishments that focused on introducing a series of handmade architectural furnishings as interior features.\textsuperscript{15} They saw an opportunity to involve local residents in the process of making these appurtenances, following a tradition of housing support services being linked to community capacity building. This resulted in the Homework project (commissioned by the Crafts Council and FACT gallery) through which Assemble and the artist Will Shannon set up a concrete casting workshop in one of the houses, and involved local residents in making mantelpieces, lightshades, doorknobs and other items using reclaimed building waste from the site.\textsuperscript{16}

Being shortlisted for the Turner Prize provided the impetus to establish the Granby Workshop, a social enterprise that extended and diversified this small-scale fabrication project to generate funds to continue the renovation work on the terraces, and support a local youth program. It also solved the problem of how the project would be exhibited for the announcement of the Turner Prize award, with the Granby Workshop producing a range of homewares for the exhibition. As described by a member of the collective: ‘It was definitely a challenge to think about how we would put something in an exhibition space. We’ve never made work to exhibit before.’\textsuperscript{17}

The presentation of the project at Tramway in Glasgow was, however, more than an exhibition. It took the form of a 1:1 mock-up of a room that referred to, but did not exactly
Assemble’s Turner Prize

Assemble’s Turner Prize
replicate the interior of one of the terrace houses, and included references to the actual renovation project through a series of construction site photographs. More than a simple staging of the various aspects of the project, the exhibition was conceived as a launch pad for the Granby Workshop, and was set up as a showroom for the products that were also available for sale. In addition to the cast concrete objects, such as mantelpieces and doorknobs produced for the renovation project; this now included block-printed fabric made into tea towels and chair slings.\textsuperscript{18} An integral part of the Granby Workshop ethos was a resistance to the notion that their wares were art, through the concept of utility, and at the same time a claim for the place of creativity in daily life. As stated by Assemble’s Lewis Jones: ‘Where do we see the value of creativity in our society? Is it inside the gallery or can it be embedded in everyday life? We definitely believe in the latter.’\textsuperscript{19}

For Hudson, the utility of the work resided less with the functionality of the individual objects, and more in the way their production made a social exchange. In this respect, Hudson’s Arte Útil is indebted to Nicolas Bourriaud’s concept of relational aesthetics, which he developed to explain new modes of art practice that emerged in the 1990s based on the active participation of the audience and the desire to enact new modes of sociability.\textsuperscript{20} As noted by Claire Bishop, such works were often ‘installation art in format, but … rather than forming a coherent and distinctive transformation of space … insist[ed instead] upon use.’\textsuperscript{21} Arte Útil might even be understood as an instrumentalization of relational aesthetics, in the way that it manifests primarily as a curatorial project and debate.\textsuperscript{22} As identified by Bishop: the ‘effect of the insistent promotion of the ideas of artist-as-designer, function over contemplation, and open-endedness over aesthetic resolution is often ultimately to enhance the status of the curator, who

\textsuperscript{18} Granby Workshop Catalogue 2015 (https://granbyworkshop.co.uk).

\textsuperscript{19} Lewis Jones, quoted in ‘Turner Prize won by Assemble… you saw them here first!’, BBC Newsnight, 3 December 2015 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAIfF16Q7pg).


\textsuperscript{22} Many of the Arte Útil initiatives are curatorial, from their website cataloguing of existing artworks that fit the definition of useful art, to their exploration of the ways in which the art museum can be made into a useful institution.
gains credit for stage-managing the overall laboratory experience’. However, by presenting the Granby Four Streets project as a showroom for the Turner Prize exhibition, a further emphasis was placed on the social dimension of economic exchange, something that is of particular interest to Hudson, and evident in his reverence towards John Ruskin as a key influence. The ethos of the Granby Workshop certainly recalls the principles of high-quality design and craftsmanship combined with fulfilling labor that were integral to Ruskin’s philosophy, and in his friend William Morris’ attempts to bridge the decorative and fine arts in the wares produced by Morris & Co. As noted in the Granby Workshop product catalogue:

Although Granby Workshop is being launched in a gallery, these products are not what we’d consider works of art in the sense that they are valued in a more abstract way than their material components. We are selling useful objects that are priced according to their material and labor costs.

In his advocacy of the concept of Arte Útil, Hudson often refers to formative projects he initiated as director of Grizedale Arts—a position he held prior to his time at MIMA—including The Shop at Howgill, and The Honest Shop, which adopted the format of a shop not only to facilitate social exchange, but also as a way of highlighting the connection between economic and social value. In these projects, and also in the Granby Workshop as exhibited for the Turner Prize, the shop format serves a double function: it links Arte Útil with critiques of the commodification of art that arose in the 1970s in conceptual and performance art practices, and at the same time introduces a further political
Assemble’s Turner Prize

question to the discourse around relational aesthetics—that of the value of labor and expertise in the contemporary creative economy.27

One of the main critiques of Bourriaud’s political claims for relational aesthetics, is that the projects rely on the provisional creation of convivial communities or ‘microtopias’, as described by Toni Ross: ‘where relational symmetries between people and systems are momentarily realized’ but which do not necessarily recognize the antagonism of democracy and rarely escape the systems of global capitalism.28

Such critiques mirror those that have arisen against participatory design, in relation to the perception that such processes have lost their effectivity in serving communities because they have become absorbed in a weakened form into mainstream planning processes, in which community consultation becomes merely a tool of consensus-building exploited by both private developers and governments.29 This sentiment underpins Morgan Quaintance’s critique of Assemble’s work at Granby Four Streets as being ‘an acritical almost completely depoliticized response to a highly politicized social situation’ precisely because it is orchestrated by architects and not artists.30

If Quaintance’s criticism privileges the criticality of art, it is also the case that Assemble’s ‘expanded’ mode of practice signals a real shift in an understanding of disciplinary expertise. While it follows the legacy of participatory design practices that arose in architecture in the 1970s, and were revived as a mode of inter-disciplinary practice by groups such as Common Ground and MUF in the 1990s (Assemble’s Lewis Jones worked as a student for MUF), it is also representative of a new kind of opportunistic and entrepreneurial practice, which may open up new avenues for the profession, but also reflects a new precariousness of creative labor and the

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30 ‘It’s a programme of social cleansing dressed up as “gentrification” designed to satisfy the profit driven bottom lines of property developers and the local councils selling their assets to them. This is the social context that Assemble have been silent about, or unable to articulate, which may have something to do with the fact that they are not artists. … Because Assemble are not and do not claim to come from this discipline [art], because they are not critically engaged, and because they are a firm of architects employed to fulfill a design brief, however open, theirs is an acritical almost completely depoliticised response to a highly politicised social situation.’ Quaintance, ‘Teleology and the Turner Prize’.
‘No Collar’ workforce of the post-industrial knowledge and cultural economy. Bishop has noted that ‘artists provide a useful model for precarious labour since they have a work mentality based on flexibility … honed by the idea of sacrificial labour (i.e. being predisposed to accept less money in return for relative freedom)’. In these terms the objects on display, and for sale, in the Turner Prize exhibition of the Granby Workshop, are then also a foil for the creative work and expertise of Assemble, which is no longer predominantly in spatial planning, or even in facilitating empowerment through participation, but in demonstrating and instilling an entrepreneurial comportment in the community.

The underlying question of what constitutes Assemble’s Turner Prize work also complicates its evaluation, and while the aesthetic dimension of the objects produced by the Granby Workshop is integral to the creative transaction at stake in Hudson’s Arte Útil, it is a dimension of the work that has often been downplayed in its reception, which has otherwise focused on discussion of its economic and social utility. As much as the Granby Four Streets project and Granby Workshop recalls the philosophy of Ruskin and Morris, the designs themselves reference the work of Eduardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson, in particular their applied art enterprise Hammer Prints (1954–1975) that produced textiles, ceramics, and furniture, and ‘merged the ethos of early 20th-century modernist design studios, such as the Omega Workshops (1913–1919), with the Independent Group’s post-war discourse’ and brutalist aesthetic. The anti-gestalt, all-over patterns and rough, as-found compositions employed by Hammer Prints were intended to challenge an appreciation of form in the visual arts developed through connoisseurship, but at the same time aspired to propagate a visual vocabulary appropriate to the times. The Granby Workshop similarly...
utilize techniques that produce all-over patterns, like the herringbone brick-like pattern of their wood-block printed tea towels, the marbling patterns transferred onto FC table-tops, and the scattered compositions of rough-torn shapes used for their ceramic tile designs.\textsuperscript{36} For Assemble these process-driven designs ‘that involve either an element of chance or creative decision making on the part of their maker’ become a means to demonstrate and enact creativity to the community.\textsuperscript{37}

Many commentators have called attention to the rise of ‘creativity’ and its impact on the way that culture is valued in the contemporary scene. Bishop has described “‘creativity’ as one of the major buzz words in the “new economy” that replaced heavy industry and commodity production’ as a strategy of New Labour to cultivate a creative and mobile sector in order to minimize dependency on state welfare.\textsuperscript{38} It became the cornerstone of New Labour’s cultural policy after they reclaimed government in 1997, which appeared to elevate the arts as a concern of government, but which according to Robert Hewison exploited the ‘rhetorical power of the creative industries’—an emergent category of the economy that identified areas of cultural production which had a measurable economic impact, including architecture, craft, and design.\textsuperscript{39}

According to Hewison, the creative industries as a category arose in part from the entrenched dichotomy between popular and high culture and the perceived conflict between the goals of access and excellence as frameworks through which to measure its value to society: ‘creativity would resolve the ancient problem for the left that hierarchies of taste—even when reframed as “excellence”—are built on unevenly distributed cultural capital’.\textsuperscript{40} In Creative Britain—the book outlining New Labour’s cultural policy by Chris Smith,
Minister of the newly created Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)—the concept of creativity was elevated as a way to realize the policy’s four pillars: access, excellence, education, and economic value. It is telling that in this book Smith also described the creative industries as producing ‘useful beauty’.41

*Creative Britain* also signaled the broader policy direction of New Labour to align policy across all areas of society as noted by Hewison:

> The state has long supported aspects of the arts and heritage for reasons of national prestige, but more recently these have also been expected to produce social and economic outcomes, and this instrumentalism has changed the relationship between culture and the state.42

Several of Assemble’s early projects accessed funding initiatives implemented through the DCMS, as did MIMA and Hudson’s Office of Useful Art when it was based there, providing a tangible demonstration of how art and architecture now meet in the realm of cultural policy, and are both beholden to new measures of the cultural economy.43

One way to understand Hudson’s advocacy of Arte Útil, then, and his promotion of the Granby Four Streets project in the Turner Prize, is as a riposte to the instrumentalism of the creative industries and its wider impact on cultural policy that puts pressure on the arts to increasingly account for their value in economic terms. It is certainly the case that creativity has become a ubiquitous term in describing the value of contemporary culture—appearing in the title of many cultural policy documents of recent years—just as creative practices have become a popular conduit through which to engage communities in civic and urban life.


MIMA receives funding from Arts Council England (ACE), as did the Office of Useful Art, an initiative of Asociación de Arte Útil hosted at MIMA during Hudson’s directorship. Assemble’s Sugarhouse Studios (2012), a collaborative studio and workshop that occupied an empty light industrial building, and Yardhouse (2014), a modular building containing leasable workspaces in which Assemble based their studio, both resulted from opportunities that arose through the development of an area of East London that resulted from the construction work associated with the London Olympics, 2012. Yardhouse was located in Sugarhouse Yard, Stratford, one of the large-scale development sites adjacent to the Olympic Park and not far from Anish Kapoor’s sculpture *ArcelorMittal Orbit* (2012), and received funding from the London Legacy Development Corporation set up by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to run the post games Olympic Park. It has since been put up for sale by The Modern House, the boutique real-estate agency that also arranges the sale of the Serpentine Pavilions. So, while the Turner Prize money functioned as a kind of micro-credit for the Granby Workshop, the award has also allowed Assemble to access an art market for their work. The Granby Workshop received some support from Arts Council England, as has The Granby Winter Garden, a subsequent stage of the project that is intended to host an artist residency program. Angelika Fitz and Katharina Ritter, *Assemble: How We Build* (Vienna and Zurich: Architekturzentrum Wien and Park Books, 2017) (http://assemblestudio.co.uk/?page_id=212).
However, the focus on utility in Assemble’s Turner Prize and the relative silence on its aesthetic qualities also have the effect of highlighting how this continues to be an unresolved aspect in the evaluation of contemporary culture, brought forth in participatory art, and symptomatic of Jacques Rancière’s so-called ‘aesthetic regime of art’ in which there is ‘a tension and confusion between autonomy (the desire for art to be at one remove from means-ends relationships) and heteronomy (that is, the blurring of art and life)—a confusion that also seems to underpin Hudson’s attempt to recall an older definition of art as knowhow applied in the everyday, as a way to overcome the commodification of contemporary art. Assemble’s Turner Prize thus returns the award to the difficult question of the qualitative evaluation of culture after all, and shows how, in the government of culture, older debates about connoisseurship and taste, are now further complicated by a transactional conceptualization of cultural value that dominates the cultural economy.
In Groot-Bijgaarden, alongside one of the busiest highways in Belgium connecting Brussels with the seaside town of Ostend, stands *Signal* (1963), a monumental concrete sculpture by the Belgian artist and architect Jacques Moeschal (1913–2004). Its form—an open tapered curl, like an unfurled spiral, sitting atop a 23 meter high column—frequently appears in Moeschal’s oeuvre, as he often used elementary shapes to make abstract compositions. Its materiality as well is typical of Moeschal’s use of off-form concrete where the imprint of the formwork boards are visible. In this case, the formwork was made with a slightly wider board than was typically employed to shape concrete, and like most of Moeschal’s concrete sculptures its surface was left raw and unfinished. Its scale and constructional complexity required architectural skills as well as precision engineering, and in order to reduce the overall weight of the construction but still use reinforced concrete as the material of choice, Moeschal worked with the engineer Gustave Moussiaux to devise a hollow form for the column, which added a level of complexity to the constructional process. Moeschal also abandoned
the use of a plinth, which revealed itself as an outdated sculptural device, in the context of such a large-scale monumental sculpture along the highway.³

The sculpture was named Signal to communicate the idea of entering or leaving Brussels. However it also alluded to Moeschal’s larger vision to incorporate concrete sculptures at regular intervals along highways as symbolic markers and moments of aesthetic interest. In its scale and materiality it thus signaled a larger ambition to realize a form of public art that was not only integrated into the infrastructure of the modern world, but constructed through collaborative processes. In this essay, Signal is analysed as an example of how Moeschal’s ideas about sculpture were shaped through his encounter with the highway as a new context for art, in a way that brought the disciplinary conventions of architecture and art into dialogue around questions of form, materiality, and construction processes.

The commission for Signal came from the Ministry of Public Works in 1959. Signal was the first work realized in the spirit of his text ‘La Route des hommes’: it embodies his quest to place sculptures on important access routes near the entrances to cities, border crossings, and bifurcations of roads in order to break up the monotony of highway views.⁴ For Moeschal it was an opportunity to advance the ideas expressed in his 1959 text.⁵ Although barely two pages long, ‘La Route des hommes’ was also a statement on the social and aesthetic benefits of the integration of sculpture with the built environment—a manifesto of sorts on the place of art in modern life:

The question that arises, therefore, is the following: can we call on Art to come and humanize the motorways? But what we are addressing here is a very particular case,
the very problem of the integration of Art, and while this research has been the subject of a great deal of effort in a large number of countries, very few solutions have been proposed so far.\textsuperscript{6}

Moeschal saw the highway as a particular condition of the modern built environment that would benefit from aesthetic consideration. The 1960s witnessed an intense celebration of modernity and its imagined potential. The car, increasingly available to larger segments of the population, became one of the most popular symbols of the freedom afforded by technological innovation. Moeschal’s vision was to incorporate sculptures in this new public-private space of modernity. Placed at regular intervals along highways, they would operate like other architectural structures such as field chapels, monuments or signposts. In this way they would be something to look out for, to break up the perceived monotony of the highway environment, creating a new kind of highway experience. In their abstract forms and common use of concrete—that modern material par excellence—they would also be a celebration of the collective enterprise of road building and of the symbolic role of roads as the connective tissue of the modern world.\textsuperscript{7}

The title of \textit{Signal} indicates Moeschal may have been influenced by the French artist André Bloc, who in 1949 made his first monumental sculpture at Place d’Iéna in Paris, also called \textit{Signal}, for the occasion of the centenary of the invention of reinforced concrete.\textsuperscript{8} This work established his reputation amongst the first to experiment with concrete as a material for monumental, architecturally-scaled sculpture. Bloc was also a significant figure on the question of the integration of art. As the founder of Groupe Espace (1951), Bloc took a leading role in exploring how the major arts of

\textsuperscript{6} Moeschal, ‘La Route des hommes’.


\textsuperscript{8} André Bloc (1896–1966) was the founder of the magazine \textit{L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui} (1930–present) and its spin offs, \textit{Art d’aujourd’hui} (1949–54) and \textit{Aujourd’hui, art et architecture} (1955–1967). See ‘Sculpture abstraite dans Paris’, \textit{Art d’aujourd’hui} 1, no. 5 (December 1949): n.p. Sadly, it was demolished in 1953 and survives only as a model that was shown, also in 1953, at the Galerie Apollo in Brussels. It may be assumed that Bloc had an impact on Moeschal when he showed the model there. The gallery was founded by the art critic Robert L. Delevoy and ran until 1955. It served as an important site for the Belgian art scene during and after the war. Jo Delahaut, ‘Exposition André Bloc à Bruxelles’, \textit{Art d’aujourd’hui} 4, no. 3 (January 1953), p. 25. A decade later, Moeschal also called his concrete sculptures \textit{Signal}. André Bloc, \textit{Signal}, 1949, Place d’Iéna, concrete.
Jacques Moeschal, *Signal*

painting, sculpture, and architecture could be integrated into the built environment. Groupe Espace was one of several forums in Europe for this evolving discourse, which was also shaped by shifts in the theorization of modern architecture in CIAM, and the emergence of programs to incorporate art into the built environment as part of the reconstruction process in the years after World War II. A key text expressing this vision was ‘Nine Points on Monumentality’ from 1943, by Josep Lluís Sert, Sigfried Giedion and Fernand Léger, declaring an ambition for an expressive and symbolic role for the built environment in modern democratic society.9 These ideas were later translated into more specific descriptions of how the integration of painting, sculpture, and architecture could shape urban ‘cores’ or city centers, particularly by Sert.10 Moeschal was somewhat unique in taking up the highway as a site for the integration of art, and *Signal* sits in contrast to the urbanized visions of public art expounded through CIAM. However, Moeschal adopted a similar tone to that of Giedion and Sert in his text ‘La Route des hommes’ in highlighting both the enduring function and the modernity of the road:

In the modern age, certainly, it is the routes of communication—the railways, the airways, and the waterways—that contribute to the development of a nation, but the most essential of all these routes, the one that makes human movement possible, even, at a pinch, without the assistance of an engine, is the road.11

More than this, Moeschal saw his artworks as a part of the highway, not as separate objects, and he sought to integrate not only the sculpture, but also the road itself into the surrounding area, emphasizing the aesthetic potential of the highway as part of the built environment.12

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11 Moeschal, ‘La Route des hommes’.

12 Despite his intention to install as many of these sculptures along the highway as possible, Moeschal only realized four such works: at Groot-Bijgaarden, Aalbeke, Hensies and Mexico City.
Although Moeschal was one of the first to actually place a sculpture beside a highway, there were other artists who were also dealing with the issue of how to utilize the road as a place to exhibit art, such as German sculptor Otto Freundlich (1878–1943) and Austrian-American graphic artist and photographer Herbert Bayer (1900–1985), among others. Freundlich created sculptures that he called *Sculpture Architecturales* (1934) that he wanted to execute on a giant scale; he called these *Sculpture-Mountains*. As early as 1936, he thought about situating these sculptures along roadways to create a kind of *Straße des Friedens* (which he translated as Road of Peace). Freundlich’s approach was much more about working with the wider landscape as a context for his art, prefiguring the tendencies of land art that emerged in the 1960s. His sculptures, which were 20 to 30 meters tall, stood on vast plains that were intended to give them a vertical accent and imbue them with the power of primeval monoliths. However, his ideas were not fully realized until decades later.

Bayer, who had trained as an architect at the Bauhaus prior to settling in the United States, also engaged with the possibility of integrating art into the public space of roads. His vision likewise took the form of large sculptures placed beside main roads, to enhance the motorist’s experience and facilitate his driving by stimulating his interest. Taking this attitude towards the shaping of the built-environment constituted for Bayer an urgent and essential task—one that fell not to planners but to artists, and that artists, therefore, ‘had not the right to neglect’. However, his sculptural interventions on roadways were never built.

Beyond these examples of the idea of integrating sculpture with the infrastructural environment of modern roadways, Moeschal’s ideas were also very much in line with other architects and critics of the time, who thought that...
roads had an aesthetic value, and the experience of high speed car travel changed our perception of the built environment demanding a specific aesthetic and formal response. The text ‘Mobility’ by Alison and Peter Smithson declared that ‘roads are also places’ with ‘the same power as any big topographical feature, such as a hill or a river, to create geographical, and in consequence social, divisions’. The question of the integration of art with the modern built environment, was, however, not only a matter of a new sculptural scale and materiality, but also of new forms that could be appreciated at speed. The urban theorist Donald Appleyard discussed the importance of visual signals to provide a physical indicator of motion:

The man [sic] on the freeway depends more on visual cues to sense and estimate his own motion. … his apparent speed will be accentuated by the passing of foreground objects, diminished if only the far landscape is seen.

Moeschal also thought about how the sculptures would be seen differently—through a windshield, at high speeds—and his use of elementary and constructive compositions was partly about creating forms that could be apprehended at speed. Moeschal’s sculptures were designed to be viewed from cars and were shaped with car windows in mind. They broke with the concept of the perfect, stationary viewer, and opened art up to the perceptual excitement made possible by the automobile, which enabled viewing at an accelerated speed.

For Moeschal the question of the integration of art and the built environment was also one of collaboration afforded in the constructional processes of making large-scale concrete sculpture. From ‘La Route des hommes’ we can deduce much
about Moeschal’s thoughts on this, particularly his ideas about the role of the constructions workers. For Moeschal the workers who built the sculpture were as important as the architect:

Here in the case we are considering, the integration of sculpture in the building of a road, the sculptor, with a close feeling of comradeship with all those who have worked on it, must symbolize, in an original work, both the spirit and the effort of the men. It might even be considered that every road built should be lined by several sculptures with a link between them, to mark the main stretches, either by their very position (beginning, middle, end), or by the beauty of the setting. These sculptures should be carried out in durable materials—stone, concrete, stainless steel, copper, etc., and on their plinth should bear the names of their builders, of those who liked the idea of them, thought them up and brought them into being, then the date the work was begun, and the date of the inauguration. These forms, with their modern conception and their finish, planned for those who will use the road, by those who have built it, should, by integrating themselves into the landscape, express not only the value of the artist as a translator, but also the technical perfection of the concerns involved.21

*Signal* was the first sculpture realized by Moeschal of this larger vision for an international network of highway sculptures.22 It played an important role in establishing his reputation as a sculptor and the wider influence of his ideas. Over time, and through his connections at International Sculpture Symposia,23 Moeschal’s ideas spread to France, where they were taken up by Pierre Székely, and to Mexico through the work of Mathias Goeritz. ‘La Route des hommes’ was
Jacques Moeschal, Signal

extensively discussed during the symposium held on the topic of sculpture and public space at the cultural center of Royaumont in France in October 1962. ‘La Route des hommes’ was then adopted and renamed ‘La Voie des Arts’ (The Way of the Arts) with the Hungarian artist Pierre Székely (1923–2001) as its driving force.24 Besides Moeschal’s ideas from ‘La Route des hommes’, Székely’s proposal also adopted Freundlich’s ideas for a ‘Road of Peace’.25 Both men had argued that monumental sculptures should be spread along various roads around the world in a series of monuments that would then form a kind of secular pilgrimage of linked sites in different countries.26

Indeed, in spite of the fact that it was never built, ‘La Voie des Arts’ did have discernible after-effects in the creation of future sculptures. Most importantly, it was the trigger for La Ruta de la Amistad (the Road of Friendship), a project developed in Mexico in 1968 for the Mexican Olympic Games. La Ruta de la Amistad was the brainchild of German-born Mexican artist Mathias Goeritz (1915–1990), a sculptor who was experienced in the field of art in the public sphere. Goeritz, who had met Székely and Moeschal and had remained in contact with them, conceived a similar idea of populating a highway route with monumental concrete sculptures as a natural development and furthering of his existing work on public art.27 For La Ruta, all works had to be made in concrete. Goeritz invited eighteen sculptors from sixteen countries, including Moeschal and Székely, who were at the very basis of these ideas. Like Moeschal, Goeritz believed that works of art should be accessible. Making them visible from the car was thus a way to bring art closer to a community who would not normally go to museums.

The commissioned works were to be spread over 17 kilometers along the ring road surrounding Mexico City’s
southern edge at the border of the Olympic Village in El Pedregal, an area filled with lava formations. The sculptures were built within approximately 1 to 1.5 kilometers from one another, the intervals becoming shorter only in areas close to the centers of interest as, for example, in the case of the Olympic Village. The height of the proposed works varied between 5.7 and 18 m. The final height was ultimately determined by Goeritz, which shows his strong hand in what was still a very collaborative effort.

Moeschal was one of the only artists who was able to stick to his original proposal, making a 17-meter-high reinforced concrete sculpture entitled *Solar Disc*. As with many of his sculptures, this was an abstract composition, in this case made up of a large circular disc with a hollowed center positioned on a cube-like base. It was similar to Moeschal’s Belgian-based works and reflected a consistent view about abstract forms, scale, and materiality.

Moeschal’s highway sculptures took their form from the fact that they would be seen at high speeds from car windows, and thus needed to be at once monumental, abstract, durable, and expressive. Concrete proved to be the best material to comply with these requirements and Moeschal’s architectural expertise allowed him to work freely with this material. *Signal* stands as an artifact of Moeschal’s ideas about integrating sculpture along the highway. But more than this, it is a beacon to Moeschal’s larger vision to reconceive the road as a public and communal space of modernity.
Frederick Kiesler’s Vision Machine project (1937–1942) was the second and final project he proposed for his short-lived Laboratory of Design Correlation at Columbia University (1937–1942) and the most extreme and outlandish effort among the series of related investigations, interests, and essays that, looking back, constitute his failed and fantastic pursuit of imaging practices within and beyond architecture. The aims of the laboratory were outlined in his 1939 article, ‘On Correalism and Biotechnique’, which polemically claimed that architecture must develop and be guided by ‘a science dealing with the fundamental laws which seem to govern man as a nucleus of forces’.¹ Kiesler imagined that the Vision Machine, if it had been constructed, would not only demonstrate the latest knowledge about how ‘networks of nerves correlate visual and tactile information between the mind, eye, body and the environment’,² but could ‘portray the origin and flow of visionary images’³ and thereby ‘enable us to classify the plastic creations of man [and] facilitate the

1 Frederick Kiesler, ‘On Correalism and Biotechnique: A Definition and Test of a New Approach to Building Design’, Architectural Record 86 (September 1939), pp. 60–75, p. 60.
analysis and understanding of the various physio-psychological sources which are the origin of the plastic arts.\textsuperscript{4} Predictably, Kiesler achieved none of these sophisticated and grandiose ambitions. His major tangible achievement was that he managed to articulate them as a believable scientific enterprise for his laboratory, and succeeded in assembling a team of respected advisors and curious students to participate in the project. Yet it is an important project, because it coalesced aspects of his own visionary imagination and provided the richly potent but ultimately deficient rationale for prior and subsequent work. In that way, a wildly speculative endeavor which never quite existed except as a seriously intriguing academic ruse in the form of sketches, half-baked proposals and a collection of scientific advisors, is an obvious but imperfect historical subject for a general research question: what would architectural practice become if its primary means and ends were imaging?\textsuperscript{5}

Two documents offer the most factual account of the \textit{Vision Machine} that Kiesler hoped to build. A drawing in soft pencil on tattered paper illustrates the components of the machine which are listed as item ‘A’ in a two-page typewritten text, ‘Brief Description of the Vision Machine’.

The Vision Machine consists of: (1) the object, (2) the eye, (3) the dividing partition between the outside and the inside, (4) a cycle system of man’s physiology, and (5) a base upon which the machine rests and which contains the built-in talking apparatus.\textsuperscript{5}

‘The object’ is an internally illuminated glass apple and ‘the eye’ is a lens which focuses light from the apple through the partition into the ‘cycle system’: a tangle of glass tubes filled with liquid and bubbles. The tubes glow in neon colors and diffuse the light from ‘electric spark-unit[s]’.\textsuperscript{6} Light—an
‘image’ of what the machine has ‘seen’—is also projected out from the lens back onto the object and ‘a transparent screen that is suspended close to the real object (the apple) acts as the receiver of this ejected picture’. There is no evidence to suggest that Kiesler ever developed the technical design for the Vision Machine and it is unclear whether he believed it might actually function as an elaborate, accurate, and generative simulation of human vision and imagination which could demonstrate that

neither light, nor eye, nor brain, alone or in association, can see. But rather, we see only through the total coordination of human experiences; and even then, it is our own conceived image, and not really the actual object which we perceive. We learn, therefore, that we see by creative ability and not by mechanical reproduction.

Kiesler’s diverse imaging practices had begun as early as 1913 with his Galaxies: portrait drawings and paintings made up of compilations of framed close-ups which he continued to produce into the 1950s. They continued in three important early architectural projects that investigated the environmental implications of the imaging capacities of human consciousness and memory: his proposal of a Telemuseum (1926) for Katherine Dreier with ‘sensitized [wall] panels’ that could function as ‘receiving surfaces for broadcast pictures’, his unbuilt theater for the radio station WGN (1934) with projection screens integrated into the ceiling and his innovative Film Guild Cinema (1928–1929) with ‘sidewalls [transformed] into black screen[s] on which the motion picture or

7 Kiesler, ‘Brief Description’.
8 Ibid.
other projected pictures’ would alter the space. But it is a series of projects and essays from 1937 to 1945, inspired by both surrealism and his friend Marcel Duchamp, that initiated Kiesler’s most serious and original investigations into the technical means and spatial effects of all manners of a ‘photographic’ architectural apparatus that, like the Vision Machine, could operate simultaneously as camera, projector and environment. The first inklings of these ideas appeared in three brilliant essays in his short-lived ‘Design Correlation’ series in Architectural Record (February-August, 1937) about ‘photo-graphy’ and Duchamp’s Large Glass. They culminate in his wonderful and inspired photomontage of Duchamp’s studio in the surrealist magazine View (1945). By the mid-1930s, Kiesler had begun to swerve and stumble toward the edges of a kind of image architecture that went beyond cinematic or theatrical projections. His interests shifted distinctly toward the ‘tectonic’ problem of constructing imaging environments that achieve what he called a ‘heterogeneous unity’ of ‘environment-elements’ or a ‘primordial unity ... between man’s creative consciousness and his daily environment’ and of the ‘worlds of vision and of fact’. Kiesler was looking for practical and marvelous ways to integrate imaging into the material assemblies of buildings, and to achieve a modern equivalent of stained glass or ‘mural painting buono al fresco [which] sucks the painting into the wet wall ground and interbinds it with the building structure while swallowing it’. Even as early as 1936, in his one-page article, ‘Walls Are Made into Pictures’ in the ‘Technical News and Research’ section of Architectural Record, he reported on a simple and remarkable solution for the ‘development of designs impossible to achieve otherwise’ called the ‘Mallo photospray’.
Gas-masked men, working at night or in a darkened space, spray the surface which is to be decorated with a patented light-sensitized emulsion. A photographic image is then projected on the surface by means of an ordinary enlarger, and subsequently developed and fixed, again by means of spraying. Sheets carry the fixing solution off into tanks and protect the rest of the wall. The result is a photographic enlargement of any selected size, printed directly onto the wall, or any other surface, at a comparatively low cost and in a comparatively short time.\textsuperscript{14}

The following year his ‘Design Correlation’ articles offered more complex and specific examples of architectural imaging. His idiosyncratic and explicitly architectural history of photography, titled ‘Certain Data Pertaining to the Genesis of Design by Light’, is a two-part graphic essay tracking ‘an inevitable chain of chance discoveries’ from the \textit{camera obscura} to the various technologies leading to television.\textsuperscript{15} He illustrates and describes both obscure and well-known events ranging from when ‘Danielo Barbaro proposed, in his “Practice of Perspective” of 1568, to put a lens into the aperture of a \textit{camera obscura} room’, to Thomas Skaife’s construction in 1860 of a ‘miniature camera for candid shots’ called a ‘Pistol-graph’, to Röntgen’s discovery of x-rays in 1895. But television was Kiesler’s ultimate photo-graphic subject:

\textbf{When television will be technically and economically ready to be released for service, it will then reach the profession of architects and industrial designers. They in turn will incorporate in their design for individual and group shelters control of the most efficient optical and phonetical factors of telecasting. Photography will then constitute an integral part of the architectural scheme}
and not be a mere wall ornament as has been the framed Daguerreotype photo and its up-to-date successors.\textsuperscript{16} It is odd that Kiesler’s history of design by light, with its central claim that photo-graphic imaging would enable new kinds of ‘light integration with shelter-structures’,\textsuperscript{17} does not even mention Duchamp’s \textit{Large Glass} because his earlier Design Correlation essay explicitly argues that the ‘structural way of painting’ of this ‘the first x-ray painting of space’ is a photo-graphic and material model for architectural and spatial imagination that, like television, moved beyond easel painting’s static ‘illusion of Space-Reality’.\textsuperscript{18}

To create such an X-ray painting of space, materiae and psychic, one needs as a lens (a) oneself, well focused and dusted off, (b) the subconscious as camera obscura, (c) a super-consciousness as sensitizer, and (d) the clash of this trinity to illuminate the scene.\textsuperscript{19}

For Kiesler, the \textit{Large Glass} was a revolutionary \textit{camera-projector-environment imaging apparatus} that incorporated spatial aspects of the \textit{camera obscura}, the ‘darkened space’ in which an enlargement is projected onto emulsion-infused plaster or even the vacuum inside a television’s cathode ray tube. The most fascinating aspect of his analysis of the \textit{Large Glass} is how his speculation on its architectural implications not only can be transposed to the operation and aspirations of his \textit{Vision Machine} but also are integrated into the folded, die-cut pop-out photomontage in \textit{View}. The latter’s configurations, overlaps and apertures slyly reimagine Duchamp’s studio as the spatial correlate of the \textit{Large Glass}. Both the \textit{Vision Machine} and the photomontage supersede the optical effects and illusions of the more famous viewing devices he installed in the Art of this Century Gallery (1941–1942):
... the shadow boxes focused conscious perception on a series of successive images—set to motion—to create a sense of illusionary space. One shadow box device set up between the Abstract and Daylight galleries used an ocular diaphragm surrounded by a series of fisheye mirrors. Opening the lens, one saw Klee’s *Magic Garden*, superimposed against the mirror image of the spectator and the Abstract Gallery behind. ... Perception fluctuated between these successive images unfolding through time, creating the sense of an elastic spatial continuum between the rooms. 20

More specifically, the actual operations of the *Vision Machine* attempted to convey and simulate the human process of imagination as a complex *interplay between optical devices and imaging practices*. Its central effect, or focal point, is the overlay of light on a transparent screen of reflections from a physical object and projected images that simulate those produced in the brain. That overlay constructs imaging as instances of double exposure—between perception and imagination, light-rays and memories or sense-impressions and after-effects—and subtly but overtly asserts montage as the very basis of visual experience. The *Vision Machine* attempted to convey a calibrated relationship between object, perceiving eye, projection device, and produced image. In effect, it was a conceptual model or schema of imagination in which architectural space is the medium. Its architectural character and potential are intensified through its explicit reconfiguration of familiar devices such as perspective diagrams, drawing machines and the *camera obscura*. As such, Kiesler’s *Vision Machine* is the best evidence of his persistent and peculiar striving to develop and pursue an architectural version of Duchampian ‘non-retinal’ imagination.
The *Vision Machine* was intended to show how the mind is neither passively receptive nor secondary to objects. It aimed to generate images based on environmental stimuli, but also to generate projection environments that simulate creative acts of imaging. For Kiesler, imaging was a way to recuperate the immersive character of earlier art, from the first cave paintings to Renaissance frescos, but which has been lost since, especially in the modernist convention of easel painting. Kiesler’s expansive take on photography as a camera-projection-environment imaging machine is both an analog for the architectural imagination and a speculation on architectural imaging practices that emulate and utilize photo- graphic technologies.

Today we can reconsider Kiesler, not as an avant-garde artist-architect, but as an early imaging innovator who experimented with modes of transdisciplinary montage and aesthetic production that, as recently theorized by Jacques Rancière, engender the ‘transformation of the forms of sensible experience, of ways of perceiving and being affected’. Like many early twentieth-century artists whom Rancière has discussed, from Peter Behrens to Loie Fuller to Charlie Chaplin to Walker Evans and James Agee, Kiesler seems to have understood, and was actively participating in, a moment in history when ambitious and adventurous architects, artists and others—driven by necessity and desire—began to see and act in ways that might be called imaging practices: ‘operations … that couple and uncouple the visible and its signification or speech and its effect, which create and frustrate expectations.’ Certainly Kiesler was aware of many of
architecture’s earliest imaging practices that emerged in the 1920s—Mies van der Rohe’s photomontages, Moholy-Nagy’s *From Material to Architecture* or Mallet-Stevens’ film sets—and it is possible now to see affinities with Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* and André Malraux’s *Musée Imaginaire*, even if he was not aware of the work of those more famous and influential contemporaries.

There are simultaneously three distinct levels or modes of operation in the *Vision Machine*. This multiplicity is evidence of the complexity of images and imaging as a subject of research or the stuff of architectural production. The simplest and most didactic mode is its function as a kind of science exhibit that displays or represents the physiological operations of visualization and imagination. Second, it served as a prototype for conceiving imaging inventions with distinct relationships to a *camera obscura*, the perspective devices of Brunelleschi and Dürer, cinema projection and television. The third mode is a purely conceptual and utopian conceit that claims the machine could be used to attain a new quasi-scientific understanding of the entire history of art, from prehistoric cave drawings to Marcel Duchamp’s ‘integration of visionary realities with realities of the environment’.

While the science exhibit mode is banal and the utopian science mode is farcical, each offers intriguing insights into Kiesler’s ideas about his intellectual and aesthetic motivations. But the second mode—a prototype of unprecedented imaging devices—is the most fascinating and credible. Presumably, if the project had persisted, he and his trans-
disciplinary team of experts, including a biophysicist, a neurologist, a chemist and engineers from several corporations, would have developed experimental devices with unexpected applications in science and architecture. In that sense, the Vision Machine can serve as a diagram that is manifest, partially or in altered forms, in his contemporaneous projects and in the work of others that he admired and discussed.

This might also inform and inspire us today when variations and advances of technologies have made imaging machines inarguably ubiquitous in general public use, yet, just as Kiesler lamented about photography in his time, imaging is scarcely understood or explored in architecture. That is the irony: while imaging practices have become ridiculously easy, the puzzles of imaging have become no less perplexing, and not only in architecture.

Kiesler may have been a failed imaging architect, but his groundbreaking and progressive projects are exemplary instances in the history of imaging practices. His inadequacy is a useful and wonderful realization: as adventurous as he was and as intriguing as he still is, Kiesler serves as a negative or deficient example of the potential of imaging in architecture. Figuring out why Kiesler comes close but fails as the kind of imaging practitioner we are looking for today remains a crucial research problem.

For architecture, the challenges and questions are as daunting as they are obvious. How are imaging technologies and practices altering our customs of discourse, inhabitation, exchange and production? How might imaging operate in architectural practice or architectural effects? How does architecture provoke and enable peculiar aspects of imaging? What is the history of imaging practices in architecture? How have imaging techniques and image culture altered the operational protocols and perceptual habits of architecture?
Imaging is increasingly a productive way to understand the kinds of thinking architects do as well as the kinds of thinking that permeate our broader culture today. Perhaps most important, any understanding of imaging today must engage neuroscientific research on the partitioned and networked anatomy of the brain as well as the burgeoning advances in imaging technology and in image production, distribution, storage, and reception.

That is why, again, we turn to Kiesler, or perhaps Kiesler returns to us, as a revealing representative of a historical moment, both his and ours. The speculative incompleteness and sheer ambition of Frederick Kiesler’s diverse projects and interests makes him both a peculiar exemplar of his own time and a perpetually contemporary subject. Looking back nearly a century from today’s world of instagrammatic culture, selfie politics and pinterestic theory, Kiesler reappears in a new guise as a case study in the emergence of image culture, and an innovator who explored architecture as a technologically driven imaging practice.
153 Stanton, 2015, Kai Matsumiya, New York, US
'The Corner Show', 2015, Extra City Kunsthalle, Antwerp, BE
Projects 2013–2015

‘The Corner Show’, 2015, Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp, BE
Projects 2013–2015

Bar, 2013, Antwerp, BE
In 2007, the art/architecture collaborative practice Warren & Mosley\(^1\) set out *Proposition No. 17 (Rogue Game).*\(^2\)

Seek out an indoor sports hall with markings of at least three different game courts or pitches overlaid.
Enlist teams of players for each game.
Assemble the players on court dressed to indicate team and game.
At the whistle, simultaneously all games begin.
Each game is played for its duration.\(^3\)

Although these instructions were directed at anyone who might be interested and motivated to take them up and implement them, Warren & Mosley have subsequently followed their own instructions in a variety of locations (including London and Utrecht), in collaboration with Can Altay.\(^4\) For an iteration of *Rogue Game* that was installed and played at the Spike Island gallery in Bristol, UK (2012), the instructions of the original *Proposition* were altered. Rather than ‘seek[ing] out an indoor sports hall with markings of at least three different game courts or pitches overlaid’, a multi-court

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1. Sophie Warren (artist) and Jonathan Mosley (architect) have been practicing since 2000. Based in Bristol, UK, they produce a variety of projects, including buildings, urban games, instruction-based art, performative pieces, gallery-based work, residencies, and so on. Their work frequently involves other collaborators (artists, architects, writers and so on), repetition and iteration, and closely relayed and delayed links within ‘families’ of projects.


5 Details and participants of the four games are as follows: 


**Event 3**: Saturday 22 September. Players: El Rincon and Spike Island football teams; South Gloucestershire touch rugby; mixed two-on-two basketball. Commentator: Tom Ketteringham, Rod Maclachlan. 


7 Out of organized game play the court always appeared poised for play with four balls [scattered] around. There was also a lot of unscheduled play informally arranged by the public. Warren & Mosley, email correspondence with the author, Friday, 9 February 2018.


**Warren & Mosley: Within and Beyond Rogue Game**

A sports hall of sorts was constructed within this art gallery setting. (Although earlier Rogue Games staged by Warren & Mosley did operate with associated gallery-based exhibitions, these were not physically proximate to the sports hall used for the game.) Four separate Rogue Games were played at Spike Island, each of which featured three sports from basketball, five-a-side football, touch rugby and volleyball. 5 Within the Spike Island gallery space around the specially constructed sports hall (which took up less than 20 percent of the gallery floor-space) other events were organized, generated and replayed, other work was exhibited, and monochromatic, fragmented quasi-pitch markings were applied to the floor. 6 The activities, or more often the inactivity 7 within the sports hall were projected beyond, into the remaining space. Although spectators were physically adjacent to the sports hall during the four organized Rogue Games, they had to follow the action via a number of relays, including a live commentary, and various live and delayed video feeds projected onto a multifaceted arrangement of screens within the gallery. 8

In this essay, I want to examine some of the relations that Rogue Game set up ‘within’ and ‘beyond’ the sports hall. These include the role played by architectural drawing and model-making, and the conventional modes of behavior that are expected (and usually adopted) within certain spaces (particularly the sports hall and the art gallery). Rogue Game sets up a number of operations that cause such conventions of both representation and behavior to exceed the domains within which they are normally bound.

When visiting Warren & Mosley’s studio in March 2017, I was struck by a little row of objects hanging from the wall over their desk. 9 These were development studies made in preparation for the Spike Island Rogue Game, modeling...
the possible layout of court markings on the sports hall space that would be installed in the gallery. They were a kind of hybrid architectural drawings and scale-models, each with a plan and four elevations of the sports hall arranged on a composite surface 'net' that was clearly marked by the process of folding the two-dimensional surface up to make a three-dimensional representation of the sports hall.

These nets enjoy a serendipitous, superficial similarity with projects illustrated in Robin Evans’ essay ‘The Developed Surface: An Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth-Century Drawing Technique’. The ‘developed surface’ drawings of the title refer to a technique that combines plan and internal elevation drawings into one composite representation of (usually) an interior space, such that each wall elevation is positioned adjacent to and adjoining its location on plan. The resulting cruciform arrangement announces their kinship to the Rogue Game nets. Notwithstanding Evans’ announcement that developed surface drawings have long since died out as a drawing technique (rumors of their death are surely somewhat exaggerated), there is some mileage in exploring various similarities and differences between Warren & Mosley’s Rogue Game nets and the examples that Evans discusses, particularly around the issues this raises concerning the relationship between drawing convention, space and social activity.

In his essay, Evans discusses a range of developed surface drawings including those by Robert Adam, John Soane, and Thomas Sheraton. His concern is with the drawing technique (if not an artistic technique then a representational one that is shared beyond architecture) more than with the spaces themselves or the experience therein. Evans argues that

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10 In her recent discussion of the Japanese drawing practice of okoshi-ezu, or ‘folded drawing’, which emerged historically alongside an interest in small interior spaces influenced by the tea-house, Marian Macken describes how these three-dimensional drawings present a form of architectural documentation which is a hybrid: both drawing and model operate within the book format. Marian Macken, ‘Folded Drawings and Collapsible Models’, in Binding Space: The Book as Social Practice (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 86.


12 For example, Benjamin Buchloh’s discussion of El Lissitzky’s First Demonstration Room (1926) and Second Demonstration Room (1928) is illustrated by El Lissitzky’s developed-surface-cum-axonometric drawing: see Benjamin Buchloh, ‘The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers’, [1983] in Museums by Artists, ed. A.A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), pp. 43–56. The ‘brief life’ that Evans observes has more to do with the particular development of aristocratic architecture in England than the drawing technique itself.


14 Nevertheless, Evans’ examples are, in their own way, games spaces: designed for the English upper classes to engage in highly formal social intercourse. As Evans observes, the emergence of the drawing convention he studies, and the architectural arrangements it accompanied, were coincident with changes in the format of social intercourse, which moved away from a formal holding forth, directed by a speaker towards an audience, with strong social hierarchical as well as spatial dynamics, toward a more even in-the-round kind of conversation. The latter would have been highly formalized too, with its own (new) rules.
...developed surface representation obliterates the connection between an interior and its surroundings. With its exclusiveness accentuated, an interior so drawn can flourish on its own identity and need receive none of its attributes from its relationship to anything that impinges upon it from outside... The developed surface interior makes it much easier to contrive these differences by detaching the room from its situation.  

In other words, there was no ‘beyond’ to the interior so described. Moreover, as Evans goes on to discuss, this mode of drawing also attempted to remove the ‘within’ from its remit. What interested him was how the developed drawing promotes the ‘total design of an enveloping surface, [but] the empty space contained within was left undescribed and untouched’.  

Furniture is pushed back to the wall and dwindles into a series of modest extrusions out of the mural surface. It is a painterly architecture that compares with the developed surface, intent on illusion, but it is not the illusion of depth that is sought, it is the illusion of flatness.

There are also rules that delimit and condition the role of the developed drawing and its audience. Evans describes how, for this audience ‘[t]o read the room as an enclosed space it is necessary to mentally fold the walls up out of the paper’. As so often with Evans, the story is not straightforward: ‘if one difficulty was in seeing across the discontinuities opened up by the drawing technique, another was in seeing through the continuities apparent in the drawing but not transferable to the space it represented’. Nevertheless, these various
modalities of difficulty remained with the drawing, and with the architect or designer who was deploying it, and were not passed on to the actualized space.

There are two cues from Evans that I want to pick up and relate to Rogue Game: one concerns the (preparatory) process of drawing and folding, and which involves the contradictory quest for flatness along with the ‘mental’ folding formation of three-dimensional space; the second concerns the interrelationships between codes and behaviors, specifically the ways in which Rogue Game can be understood to deliberately blur the accepted remit of particular representational techniques, and the ways in which ‘we’ are expected to behave in the particular spaces of the sports hall and gallery.

To return to the Rogue Game nets, I want to suggest that their folded surface is not only emblematic of that project, but also instructive regarding the ways in which spatial and behavioral complexity are juggled with there. To state this more forcefully, the folded surface nets are not simply a planning tool, but an experience that is passed on more or less directly to the various players and viewers taking part. Indeed, in contrast to the situation that Evans described, where the complexity of the developed surface drawing remained exclusively within the architect’s experience during the designing of the space, Warren & Mosley’s particular play with the flatness of the drawing plane not only prior to but also during and after its (mental or physical) folding sets up a more complex version of these difficulties. Their developed nets, at once two-dimensional drawings and three-dimensional scale-models, involve a double play, such that the material flatness of the drawing accommodates the deliberate mis-scaled, mis-aligned and forced application of court lines that becomes more apparent when the drawing is folded up into a three-dimensional model.\footnote{It should be noted in passing that Sheraton’s and other developed surface interiors operated by pushing back depth towards the illusory flatness of the walls, whereas Warren & Mosley’s flatness is projected downward onto the drawing (or floor) surface, and which is subsequently distorted when the walls are folded up and seen to support codes and markings proper to a horizontal plane.}
Unlike the developed drawings of Sheraton and others discussed by Evans, the Rogue Game nets (and even the setting out plan prepared for the installation of the sports hall itself)\textsuperscript{22} deploy the fold line as one line among many rather than as a qualitatively different instruction, effectively introducing further difficulties into the mix. Blurring the conventional separation and sequencing of the design and construction process, this displacement of court markings—allowing the ‘plan’ of a court partially to slide onto the elevation of the sports hall—foretells of the performative clash of different codes belonging to different sports during the Games, anticipates and records this on-court interference in the dis- or mis-placement of the surface markings to the folded walls (and floor) that produce the empty space of the court. In the move from the found sports halls mentioned in Proposition No. 17 to the purpose (mis-)built sports hall in the gallery space, it is notable how most of Warren & Mosley’s initially anticipated ‘Characteristics of Rogue Game’ become relevant descriptions of the architectural environment (as well as the Games), involving: ‘negotiation|collision|fracturing of order|feinting|swapping|non-accidentals|contra-action’.\textsuperscript{23}

The Rogue Game net exceeds the spatial-architectural codification associated with the developed surface drawing technique it resembles, resulting in a key obstacle to the conventions of the respective games for which courts were drawn on the walls and the floor. Hence, the actualized Spike Island sports hall introduced an extra complexity for the players of the games. For example, where they were close to the walls of the sports hall, the players’ assumed orientation and location provided by the familiar court markings were challenged as the latter were folded up the wall.\textsuperscript{24} These distortions were rapidly accommodated by an alteration in players’ techniques and trajectories: for example, the basketball teams
quickly worked out how to shoot hoops into a net mounted at a 90 degree orientation to normal;²⁵ or how to play new passes off that part of the court ‘floor’ that was now situated on the wall, thus adapting well-practiced techniques for playing their game to the court’s distortion, isolated defamiliarization and the challenges of localized changes to the influence of gravity.

Notwithstanding the organized chaos of the Rogue Games, these more localized accommodations defy the categorical distinction that Dennis Atkinson suggests occur there. Atkinson is Professor (Emeritus) of Art in Education at Goldsmiths University of London, and his interest in Rogue Game sprang from how it provides an example of ‘haecceity’ or ‘thisness’, of relationships that he believes can develop without prior codes or boundaries (and which perhaps coincidentally he relates to infra-relationships, enfolding and refolding). On Atkinson’s account, Rogue Game offers a situation that is explicitly ‘beyond’ the codes of behavior and court space of each game. He argued that

In order to play the Rogue Game there are no rules. All the individual games have rules but in the Rogue Game, relations occur with no prior subjectivities. These relationships have to develop on the spot: a praxis that deals with the ‘thisness’ of experience.²⁶

The behavioral, sport-based codification that is embodied and followed by the various players undoubtedly undergoes severe interference from the other bodies, codes, and courts in play simultaneously during the Rogue Games. Even so, the ‘thisness’ of Rogue Game relations also calls upon and plays with, or frustrates, all the rules of the individual sports. With different frames of reference, this tense and awkward interdependence draws attention to institutionally-governed


²⁶ Dennis Atkinson, speaking at the [In]visible Spaces of Equality event, The Showroom, 2 July 2012, in Practice of Place, ed. Emma Smith (London: Bedford Press, 2015), p. 261. Atkinson made his observations with reference to the London Rogue Game (2010), which took place in an urban multi-use sports court space. The actual circumstances of this space were complex: it had football and basketball goals but lacked any court markings, and had experienced mis-use and then dis-use leading to its closure. It was reopened, and court markings added, for the performance of Rogue Game. For further details of this, see ‘Conversation between Can Altay, Sophie Warren, Jonathan Mosley and Emily Pethick’, in Practice of Place, pp. 256–260. Notwithstanding the additional difficulties introduced by the folded courts just discussed, the ‘praxis of “thisness”’ must involve a constant interplay between the practiced and embodied rules of constituent sports with the new on-court situation.
modes of behavior and fair play by putting them under pressure from other codes and from marginally distorted physical surroundings. Rather than having ‘no rules’, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that Rogue Game is played out in a situation where there exist an overplus of rules, which does require relationships ‘to develop on the spot’ but not exactly for the reasons Atkinson suggests.

A further overplus develops beyond the sports hall, where spectators in the gallery space followed the Rogue Game action on various live and delayed video feeds and commentary. The effect of this complex spectacle, along with the adjacency of the game(s) and the display of the mechanics of its mediation, not only communicated something of the complex play that was taking place, but also passed on something of the complications of Warren & Mosley’s developed net to the spectators who were following the action. A number of different views were available to them on different screens, including a live ‘plan view’ from an overhead camera, and from in-play cameras positioned just above head-height. The former clearly showed the (deliberately) poor fit of court markings onto the floor of the sports hall, while the latter showed players running around in elevation against a backdrop whose court markings belonged to the logic of the floor plan. These had to be ‘folded back up’ if a fuller spatiality of the games was to be grasped, effectively passing on for a second time Warren & Mosley’s play with the rules of the developed surface net to the viewers in the gallery, both in terms of the number of different views available, and the simultaneity of viewpoints. This also markedly contrasts with the ‘obliteration’ of the connection between inside and beyond that Evans notes in the examples he discusses, offering instead two, three or more stages of surface and spatial development and connection within one
experience (and which is further complicated by the viewer’s own ‘normal’ experience of these familiar places).

To position these particular aspects of Rogue Game more explicitly according to the notions of Within/Beyond that frame the present collection, it is instructive to recall Wouter Davidts’ reading of Daniel Buren’s Within and Beyond the Frame (1973—).29 Davidts suggests that Buren’s art practice draws attention to the situations and locations in which art exists, because the ‘art’ itself (Buren’s l’outil visuel) remains characteristically consistent. It operates ‘between the discourses, institutions, and conventions that grant art its legitimacy’.30 By remaining in play within and beyond these sites, it produces a thoroughgoing ambiguity; the best we can say is that Buren’s work is ‘operative “somewhere”’.31 I want to suggest that Rogue Game shares, even extends, this complex dynamic of placing, akin to the ‘somewhere else’ that Buren identified in the complex ‘intersection or point of rupture … between a work and its place’.32 Rogue Game, particularly in its Spike Island playing/showing, did not address the institutions of art or architecture directly in the way Buren’s œuvre did. Nevertheless, it can be understood to operate in various ‘somewheres else’ within and beyond the conventions, strictures, and spaces of its disciplinary ingredients.

Reflecting on the complexity of this situating, Warren & Mosley note how

Rogue Game might be about multiple ‘withins’—within the game space which is almost a conceptual space, within the mediated space, within the narrative space, within the physical and imaginary. So it might refer less to what lies ‘beyond’ these structures and more about slippage between them.33
Accommodating the very immediate physicality and complexity of the Rogue Game play, the compound effect of these multiple withins is to allow attention to be drawn to the various other places (the ‘somewheres else’) involved in the work and its places. Rogue Game over-spilled certain conventions of architectural representation (muddying distinctions between two-dimensional drawing space, three-dimensional model space, as well as between design and realization); it called the conditions of reception into question (was it sports or art, with their differing expectations of comportment?); and it challenged the conventions of institutional display (what or where was the art work—in the initial Proposition No. 17? In the making of the sports hall and the rules of the game? The playing or mediation of Rogue Game? The ensemble of projects that formed part of the whole exhibition?) According to Warren & Mosley,

[w]e considered the spatial excess of the multi-use sports hall that we pursued through Rogue Game as going ‘beyond’ the parameters of what was intended as an occupation of the space. In some ways this slippage between and beyond roles, rules and spatial practices creates the complexity of the work, because the slippage is constantly oscillating between the beyond and the within in its conceptual interpretation and contexts.³⁴

Emerging from within a doubled discourse and practice of art and architecture, Warren & Mosley’s work here (and elsewhere, but that’s another story) was excessive rather than supplementary. Rogue Game overflowed the constraints put upon its circumscription by any one of its constituent discourses, operating both within and beyond the domains of art, architecture, and sport.
The Follies of Conceptual Architecture at Osaka’s Expo ’90

Biwako Otsu Folly, Bolles + Wilson

Annalise Varghese

The Forgotten Life and Afterlife of the Biwako Otsu Folly

The Biwako Otsu Folly, designed by architectural practice Bolles+Wilson, was one of thirteen ‘Osaka Follies’ at Expo ’90, the world’s first International Garden and Greenery Exhibition.¹ Sparked by an international exchange between Alvin Boyarsky, Chairman of the widely-acclaimed Architectural Association (AA), and prominent Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, the Expo’s General Commissioner, these structures were positioned at various ‘crossroads plazas’ throughout the Expo in order to bring interest and activity to these public spaces. Although modest in scale and a relatively small part of the nature-themed master plan, the ‘Osaka Follies’ fulfilled wider roles for the key players who commissioned them. For Boyarsky, the project indexed the AA’s interest in Japan in the 1990s as well as the talent of architects affiliated with the architecture school.² Boyarsky and Isozaki handpicked Bolles+Wilson, Zaha Hadid, Macdonald and Salter, and other architects, to each design an Osaka Folly.³

¹ Expo ’90, Osaka, Japan: Official Guidebook (Osaka: Japan Association for the International Garden and Greenery Exposition, 1990).
² From the 1970s onwards, the AA and Japanese architects such as Isozaki had a healthy working relationship. Exhibitions at the AA for Japanese architects and for students who had entered Japanese design competitions include; Shin Takamatsu et al., Shin Takamatsu: The Killing Moon and Other Projects (London: Architectural Association, 1988); David Dunster, ‘Western Objects Eastern Fields: Recent Projects by the Architekturburo Bolles Wilson: AA Exhibition Gallery 4–28 October 1989’, AA Files no. 20 (1990), pp. 63–68.
For Isozaki, inviting both emerging and established designers to build with local architects, engineers, and commercial stakeholders would not only continue his legacy as Japan’s unofficial ‘cultural commissioner’, but also allow him to explore how these structures might activate the cross-roads plazas. With Boyarsky he tested out, as early as 1990, the various possibilities building follies offered, which can now be witnessed in popular contemporary projects—where today follies and pavilions frequently operate as exhibition models, urban catalysts, commissioning strategies, and experimental prototypes.

In these festival surroundings, the enigmatic Biwako Otsu Folly stood out. Comprised of a dark steel sandwich-panel body, vertical screens of laminated timber, and sails of tent fabric, Bolles+Wilson’s design rose upward like the prow of a ship. Expo visitors entered the semi-enclosed shell via a timber gangway ramp over a small pool where hydraulic machines dripped water, and a suspended video display encouraged onlookers to linger before continuing to attractions beyond. Many visitors must have struggled to understand the motivations behind this structure. Whereas the use of water and timber elements could be read as oblique references to the Expo’s theme of garden and greenery, the name ‘Biwako Otsu’ which crowned the top of the Folly clearly referenced a commercial sponsor. The Official Expo Guidebook did not provide many other clues, simply listing the designers and their country of origin, identifying its location in the master plan, and providing a brief description. In the case of Bolles+Wilson’s folly, the Guidebook features a cartoon sketch of the folly alongside its description, yet neither bearing the architects’ signature.

The Guidebook frames the Biwako Otsu Folly as an elaborate showpiece that represents a corporate stakeholder in a semi-competitive
atmosphere where international architects ‘compete in an arena of ideas’. Beyond this, its purpose at Expo ’90 remained unclear. It is possible that this somewhat confusing structure would have even slipped past the attention of festival goers within a nature-themed Expo of flower gardens, exhibition halls, amusement rides, and other competing attractions. Despite the commissioner’s broad agenda for the Osaka Follies, for a typical visitor to Expo ’90 the resulting avant-garde structures may have appeared ambiguous and out of place.

The Biwako Otsu Folly also slipped past the attention of architectural media of its time and broader architectural histories, in that today, very little is left to find out about the Osaka Follies in general. Perhaps this was due to the busy context of the Expo, and the minor role the Osaka Follies played within it. Moreover, not unlike the other structures, Bolles+Wilson’s intricate design was dismantled after the Expo’s six-month duration and over time the practice’s grander, permanent projects have overshadowed its memory—presently, the structure is not listed in their oeuvre on their website. It is also remarkable that the Osaka Follies have not been re-examined since 1990, considering that they represent an early instance of the now popular phenomenon of building follies and pavilions today in contemporary design culture. Revisiting the Osaka Follies sheds light on the architectural folly’s emerging presence in the late twentieth century, and importantly, reveals how at the time of its inception, the potential of the Biwako Otsu Folly as a physical structure and a conceptual project was still very much being negotiated—with regards to how follies may bring to life abstract architectural concepts, or may be engaged with physically. Notwithstanding its brief, and for the most part, unacknowledged existence, it merits to be historicized.
The Follies of Conceptual Architecture at Osaka’s Expo ‘90

‘An Autonomous Hermetic Environment, A Submarine’—
the Drawings of Bolles+Wilson

The Biwako Otsu Folly deserves a place within the early and more speculative work Bolles+Wilson produced in the era preceding the effective construction of their designs. In 1980, Peter Wilson and Julia Bolles, both AA graduates and studio leaders, formed a design practice. Together they embarked on a fruitful career of paper proposals for international design competitions, eventually winning their first major commission in 1987, the Münster City Library.\(^{10}\) Parallel to their joint practice, Wilson also individually entered design competitions, particularly in Japan, and became well-known with his successes in the *Japan Architect* (JA) Magazine’s Shinkenchiku Residential Design Competition. In 1988, Wilson won first place in Shinkenchiku with a proposal for speculative housing for which the Submarine acted as the principal formal device.\(^{14}\)

In addition to the Ninja, Bolles+Wilson incorporate another, even more dominant image in their design, the Submarine. A year after ‘Comfort in the Metropolis’, Wilson won second place in the Shinkenchiku with a proposal for speculative housing for which the Submarine acted as the principal formal device.\(^{14}\) In the drawings for the Biwako
Otsu Folly, the Submarine manifests as a series of sketches of the marine vessel multiplying, elongating, stretching to the point of collapse, and eventually breaking into pieces.\textsuperscript{15} These fragments then assume the shape of a floor plan, shells of a façade, and other elements of the Folly’s structure.\textsuperscript{16} Although the Submarine’s transformations are a strong formal strategy on paper (and a fascinating procedure), the Submarine as a concept is completely beyond the comprehension of any visitor to the structure. Developing the form of the Folly relies on the abstract process of deconstructing the image of the Submarine, an idea that only exists in drawings. This literally seals the Submarine away from engagement, that is, hermetically removing it from the reality of the built Folly at Expo ’90. Beyond the Biwako Otsu Folly, Bolles+Wilson effectively developed a metaphor for the highly conceptual nature of the Osaka Follies themselves. Being able to perceive the Submarine, the Ninja, or other latent images and metaphors in the remaining structures, would require dipping beneath the surface of the Folly’s physical manifestation and to enter a submerged world of abstract ideas and themes. Although sited in a highly public space that invites engagement and interpretation, in essence, the Biwako Otsu Folly is not unlike a submarine—it is indifferent to its context and operates in a private world of images that literally cannot be experienced through physical engagement alone.

The Conflict of Representation and Experience—
the AA’s Osaka Follies Exhibition in 1991

Bolles+Wilson’s metaphor for the Biwako Otsu Folly highlights the tension between representing the conceptual content of the Osaka Follies, and experiencing it simultaneously.
The Follies of Conceptual Architecture at Osaka’s Expo ’90

Additionally, the busy festival environment may not have been the best location to contemplate or attempt to understand the Follies as conceptual projects. Perhaps in response to their reception at Expo ’90, the Architectural Association in London held an exhibition for the Osaka Follies in 1991, in order to give these structures the praise they deserve as unique, experimental projects. Beyond any of the possible physical experiences at Expo ’90 in Osaka, the AA exhibition in London however successfully showcased the abstract ideas and conceptual processes behind each of the Osaka Follies by exhibiting drawings, models, and photographs of the structures. The accompanying exhibition catalogue serves as a most valuable historical document to explore the Osaka Follies project today. If not for the 1991 exhibition and catalogue, The Biwako Otsu Folly would have disappeared from architectural discourse entirely.

Within the exhibition catalogue, it becomes apparent that the AA used these drawings, models, and photographs to frame the Osaka Follies as purely conceptual works of architecture. This strategy aligns with other exhibitions the AA was renowned for, where it frequently showcased speculative projects of its students and alumni. The Osaka Follies catalogue enshrines these structures’ afterlife in the form of textual descriptions, drawings, models, and photographs: however, these varied representations omit the realities of Expo ’90 altogether. There are limited references of the wider environment of the Expo master plan, and no descriptions of how visitors actually engaged with the structures. It appears as if the core aim of the exhibition at the AA and its subsequent documentation in the catalogue was to convince the public of the conceptual richness and pedagogical value inherent in representations of the Osaka Follies—an experience most if not all of the visitors to the Osaka Expo ’90 most likely failed to register.
The AA exhibition in London set out to achieve what the Osaka Follies at the Osaka could not. Rather than illuminating the Follies’ context at the Expo in relation to visitors, commercial interests or the Expo’s nature-based theme, it gave these structures context and meaning by communicating their conceptual foundations and generative formal procedures.

The AA’s agenda to secure the Osaka Follies not as built structures but as drawings, models, and descriptive texts, resonates with exhibition strategies and prevailing critical attitudes of the era that position the architectural folly as a mode of conceptual architectural practice. From the early 1980s onwards, the folly had begun to represent emerging trends in postmodern reinvention and experimentation, a shift from the notion of the picturesque, ruin-like eighteenth-century ‘garden folly’. In 1983, the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York held the exhibition ‘Follies: Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape’. The exhibition invited architects known for their abstract work—such as Arata Isozaki, Peter Cook, Peter Eisenman, and Bernard Tschumi—to propose entirely speculative projects that frame the folly as an experimental and conceptual typology for architecture. At the end of the 1980s, MoMA’s landmark exhibition ‘Deconstructivist Architecture’— which included Osaka Follies architects’ Coop Himmelb(l)au, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Libeskind—featured Tschumi’s project for architectural follies at Parc de la Villette in Paris. The physical manifestation of a highly theoretical ethos while staging points of activity in urban space, exemplary of Tschumi’s scheme,Isozaki claims inspired the Osaka Follies. By reflecting prevailing themes of the past decade, the Osaka Follies invite prominent experimental architects of the era to commit to physically building their ideas. Yet, as some of the first built projects of emerging architects like Bolles+Wilson, the AA’s 1991 exhibition some-
what downplays the physical efforts of building and locating these structures in the real space of an Expo, by historicizing them as primarily conceptual architectural practices.

This move to bring the absent Osaka Follies into a world of representations in the AA’s exhibition challenges historical attitudes towards the architectural folly that suggest that its sole purpose is to elicit private and poetic experiences for visitors in person.22 The exhibition catalogue contains various essays by architectural theorists which comment on the types of experiences these structures offer.23 In his essay ‘The Folly’, British architectural writer and critic Cedric Price highlights the importance of directly engaging with traditional follies, typically sited in hidden gardens or forests. Ironically, going against the grain of the aims of the AA’s 1991 exhibition, Price lists a set of rules that outline how the folly should be experienced: ‘Folly viewing is not an indoor activity. The folly should not be contemplated through glass.’24 Physical interaction is required: ‘Under no circumstances, try to draw or photograph one.’25 Price underscores the folly’s subjective capacities and implies that attempting to study or historicize it would diminish its affective potential. In a subsequent essay in the catalogue, entitled ‘Imagination and Excess’, Japanese architectural critic Koji Taki assumes an almost antithetical position. Due to their position at the Expo’s crowded crossroads and the many competing attractions, Taki claims it is likely visitors might not even remember the Osaka Follies at all. The AA exhibition in London by contrast, he suggests, will offer visitors a much better opportunity to experience the Follies deeper ‘poetic architectural expression’.26 Notwithstanding their conflicting arguments, Price and Taki register the difficult reality of experiencing the Osaka Follies. They both rightfully hint at the tension that exists between experiencing the folly in an immanent way

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24 Ibid., p. 7.
and as a conceptual project. At the Osaka Expo '90 it would seem these two modes of experience were incompatible.

‘Under no circumstances, try to draw or photograph one’—
the Photographs of Hélène Binet

Alongside sketches and models of the assorted designs shown at the AA in London in 1991, the exhibition photographically documented each Folly. Almost all of the photographs were taken by Hélène Binet. Emerging as an architectural photographer in 1990, Binet had already worked for several AA-bred designers, including John Hejduk, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Libeskind.27 Binet’s photographic style focuses on particular details, the effects of light and shadow within the structure, and silhouetted profiles of the Biwako Otsu Folly against the sky.28 Binet zooms in on individual parts, framing the work in an abstract and highly subjective light. Although her artistic approach is unique, it resonates with other photographic practices of the era—depicting architecture as a pristine object, and the photograph becoming something more than just a document of the architecture, in its own artistic right.29

With the knowledge of the busy crossroads plazas the Biwako Otsu Folly, and the crossroads the other Follies occupied, it is outstanding that Binet managed to exclude as much context as possible from her photographs. Instead of points of activity, Binet’s photographs develop private spaces inside and immediately around the Follies, resulting in photographs that are almost completely devoid of visitors or glimpses of the site beyond.30 Only one panoramic photograph of the Biwako Otsu Folly in its crossroads plaza allows a reader to register its scale in relation to visitors and surrounding trees. Apart from this, the photographic technique is fragmented.31

28 Architectural writer Mark Pimlott, author of Composing Space, describes these qualities particular to Binet’s practice which ‘consisted of making highly individualized studies of parts, which, when assembled as a series, constructed a virtual experience of the whole.’ See Hélène Binet and Mark Pimlott, Composing Space: The Photographs of Hélène Binet.

Overall, the photographs of the Osaka Follies have an undeniably virtual quality, evidencing the designers’ formal expertise yet striving to omit the real-life context of the Expo altogether. Paradoxically enough, even though Binet’s photographs are some of the few in existence that capture the fleeting life of the built Osaka Follies, they seal the identity of these intricate structures primarily as conceptual projects rather than the real objects that Expo visitors engaged with.

For the Biwako Otsu Folly, the insular quality of Binet’s photographs is further amplified by the positioning of the photographs alongside drawings and photographs of the project’s models in the AA’s exhibition catalogue. The monochromatic treatment of the photographs, visually continuous with the curated drawings, reduces the depth of the Folly’s structure and gives the construction materials a nondescript quality. Along with the absence of human figures, the gradient used for the background of the model and the sky in the photographs of the Folly at Expo ’90 are so closely matched, that at times a reader cannot be entirely sure if they are looking at a photograph of the built work, or at a photograph of the model. For photographs of other Follies in the AA catalogue, such as the projects of Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind, this confusion is even more palpable. Binet’s photographic direction appears to frame them as directly indexical to their origins as speculative drawings and models rather than to their physical existence at Expo ’90. In the AA’s exhibition, it could be argued that Binet’s photographs constitute another form of ‘paper architecture’, due to their position in the AA exhibition, which creates uncanny similarities with conceptual models and drawings, eliminating any sense of place and human engagement. From this perspective, the conceptual drawings, photographs of models, and photographs of the Biwako Otsu Folly perform a representational
loop. The Folly begins as an abstract and acontextual paper proposal which migrates within Wilson’s conceptual oeuvre. After briefly materializing as a built object at Expo ’90, it is then brought back to a conceptual realm through the AA’s exhibition and publication.

Beyond Fragment and Abstraction—the ‘Follies’ of Conceptual Architecture at Expo ’90

It is clear that since Expo ’90, the role of the architectural folly today has expanded from solely representing conceptual ideas and procedures. The emphasis that the AA’s catalogue places on this conceptual content makes it incomplete as a historical document. Like Binet’s photographs, the AA’s exhibition’s narrow, but intense viewpoint blurs out external influences and events, construction procedures, and user engagement. These real-life conditions that the AA exhibition omits may indeed be of value when considering the expanded roles follies and pavilions play today, where it is the once-lived peripheral conditions and context of the Osaka Follies that might warrant a wider focus. Yet for this early iteration of architectural follies, it would appear that the true ‘follies’ of the project result from trying to see them as anything other than conceptual works. As built structures, trying to perceive their conceptual content, or contemplate them appropriately was near impossible, and as a series of photographs, they appear almost as if they never existed at the Expo at all. These ideological ‘follies’ stem directly from the uncertain identity of the folly itself, where, like their placement at Expo ’90, they occupy another form of crossroads—somewhere between architecture and sculpture, and between a building and a conceptual project.
Massimo Scolari’s *Ali* and the Institutional Reframing of the Venice Biennale

Léa-Catherine Szacka

This object has flown over my landscapes for years, slowly crossing my representations.
—Massimo Scolari

*Ali* (*Wings*), one of the most important works by the Italian architect Massimo Scolari, was first presented at the 5th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 1991.¹ *Ali* consists of a pair of outspread wings—each measuring 15.4 m in length, 5.2 m at the base and 1.7 m at the tip, and with a wing opening of 25 m.² The structure, made of golden-brown laminated wood and steel, is divided into three sections, each thinner and shorter than the preceding one. At once soaring and grounded, the wooden wings originally hovered just above the ground on the Fondamenta, anchored on a low brick wall and reaching a height that echoed that of the surrounding constructions—such as the tower of the Arsenale or the Circolo Ufficiali Maritima Militare. Later, both the wings and the brick pedestal were transported and permanently installed on the roof corner of the lower of

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¹ The V. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura della Biennale di Venezia took place from 8 September to 6 October 1991.

the former industrial buildings making the Cotonificio Veneziano, now home to Venice’s Architecture School (the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, Iuav).\(^3\)

Standing on a building next to the water, the wings almost touch the top of the adjacent and higher one. In its monumental yet singular interaction with both human bodies and surrounding edifices, *Ali* questions the sense of scale and the relation between sculptural form and functional architectural containers: the installation has the size of a pavilion or folly, yet the structure lacks an accessible interior.

**1970s Italy**

If, on the one hand, the art/architecture complex is framed by artists adopting architectural means, it is equally defined, on the other hand, by architects embracing artistic strategies prior to, or in place of building. Starting in the 1970s, a group of Italian architects who gravitated around Aldo Rossi aimed to overcome the crisis of the Modern Movement and rethink the discipline of architecture and its cultural affect.\(^4\) As they primarily used drawing as a means to question the relation between modern and traditional, between form and arche-type, between technic and *poiesis*, and, ultimately, between real and imaginary, they came to be admired as much for their artistic abilities as for their architectural design skills.\(^5\)

In the 1970s the Italian architecture community established a context in which theory took over professional design and in which paper architecture, as well as writing were seen as equally important to the built project or its intellectual frame.

Massimo Scolari, an important figure within this development, entered the Milan Polytechnic Architecture School
in 1963. After graduating in 1969, the young architect served as assistant to Aldo Rossi, both in the architect’s design studio at the University in Venice and in his Milan office. At the same time, Scolari worked with Paolo Portoghesi as part of the editorial team of Controspazio, a magazine then based in Milan that paid great attention to the role of drawing and representation within the discipline of architecture. Yet it was under the influence of Ernesto Nathan Rogers that Scolari started to see architecture in terms of a strong commitment to the idea of historical continuity. Later, this would bring him to consider architecture as ‘nothing but symbols that have withstood centuries’.

But whilst other ‘postmodern’ Italian architects such as Rossi ‘turned away from industrial models and towards the building types of the traditional city’, Scolari was first and foremost fascinated by machines. Born in a well-off Piedmontese family, he was already at an early age, while helping his father in his coffee-roasting factory, interested in machines and patents. At the Milan Polytechnic, Scolari discovered Le Corbusier, with whom he shared a boundless love for flying machines. However Scolari once indicated that his admiration for the Swiss-French architect was primarily based on the latter’s particular design method: ‘I was immediately drawn to the fact that he seemed to use the experimental activity of painting as the poetic starting point for his urbanism and architecture.’

The Wings: Historical Genesis

Ali did not just land on the Rio dell’Arsenale: its wings had a previous life and existed first as mere idea, represented in drawings, watercolors and paintings. In fact, Ali’s genealogy started as a figure in the 1979–1980 painting Gateway for a
Maritime City. In this painting, the wooden wings waft over a brick gate sunk in water and through which one can see a sort of primitive house. And, from 1979 onwards, the motif of the wings keeps reappearing in Scolari’s paintings and drawings: in 1981, in The Return of the Argonaut; and, again, in various studies for The Buried Tower; in 1985, in Aetos; and, in 1986, in Passages of the Flood, to name just a few. The effective sculptural shape of Ali, Scolari once indicated, is composed of two identical architectural elements subtracted from Arca (The Ark), an oblique architectural installation realized by the architect in 1986, for the xviith Milan Triennale. Taking the form of the Ark of the Deluge with, inside, The Collector’s Room, the installation referred to the active cause of incompleteness: oblivion. In Ali, the two subtracted architectural elements ‘have been joined together’, Scolari rather enigmatically stated, ‘without any change in their individual meaning.’ Finally, in 1991, Scolari produced a study for the installation, a watercolor on cardboard on which the wings appear on a pile of brick rubbles, set on a beach with, in the background, the tower of the Arsenale, and, in the foreground, a disproportionate bee and a tiny man.

While the wings in most of the abovementioned works are depicted as they fly over imaginary landscapes, the glider wings landed and entered in contact with two important architectures, both containers of the (architectural) imaginary. Initially Ali dialogued with the Arsenale, a complex of former shipyards and armories and a symbol of the past economic, political, and military power of the Serenissima that hosts, every year, part of the art or architecture Biennale. Today it enters into a permanent rapport with the Cotonificio, a former cotton factory now serving as learning and creative environment for generations of future architects.
An ode to imagination, Ali referred to Greek mythology and more particularly the story of Icarus, son of Daedalus. While trying to escape from Crete, Icarus burned his feathers and waxwings by flying too close to the sun. Referring to this well-known myth, Scolari wrote:

We can fall from the sky, but we cannot rise up into it; we can float or dive ourselves, but we cannot soar in the air like the most humble of birds do. The flights of Icarus and Simon Mago punctuate the history of dis-human aspiration, skirting its technical impossibilities until the gods laugh at it. We should fly above our corporeality with our imagination instead, and to give wings to this imagination seemed to me a good omen for the architecture schools.\textsuperscript{23}

As the wings were anchored on a brick wall, however, Ali suggested a productive paradox. ‘This sculpture [Ali] could be explained as the expression of that sense of freedom that flying triggers in all of us’, wrote Scolari, himself a certified pilot since 2001.\textsuperscript{24} In all of the previously mentioned works, the wings symbolize the nostalgia for paradise lost and the dream of flight. As explained by Carlo Bartelli, they express ‘the desire to fly which, since it cannot actually be realized, prompts us to think about other flights: those of the manual and architectural imagination, of the project that challenges limits and goes beyond them’.\textsuperscript{25} According to Daniel Sherer, the wings are ‘a metaphor both for the power of visual representation and the relative autonomy of architecture vis-à-vis its physical conditions of possibility’.\textsuperscript{26}
Ali was commissioned by Francesco Dal Co, director of the 1991 Architecture section of the Venice Biennale, to mark the entrance to the Corderie dell’Arsenale.27 Both Ali’s materialization in wood and its positioning at the junction of Rio dell’Arsenale and the entrance to the calle of the Corderie della Tana, were inadvertently reminiscent of Rossi’s wooden gate. Standing in almost exactly the same place eleven years earlier, this ephemeral structure by Scolari’s mentor marked the very first public and spectacular opening of Venice’s Arsenale on the occasion of the very first architecture Biennale in 1980.28, 29 Indeed, Ali firmly resonated with the cultural politics that played out in the history of the Biennale, and in the evolution of the Architecture Biennale in particular. Informed by the developments within the architecture community in 1970s Italy, the Venice Biennale, an institution that had existed for nearly a century, had started to extend its disciplinary boundaries beyond visual arts, cinema and theater, to also include the discipline of architecture, not so much intended as merely the act of building, but as a much wider field of culture that sits between form and archetype, technic and poesis, real and imaginary.30 By the time of the 5th International Architecture Exhibition in 1991, the Venice Biennale had brought the architecture international exhibition event another step closer to the model of the visual art exhibition: for the first time, the architecture exhibition occupied both the Arsenale and the national pavilions in the Giardini.31 Dal Co, a staunch proponent of the necessity to develop the Biennale’s internationality, introduced a number of novelties. Whereas 43 schools of architecture from around the world presented their pedagogical approach and unique working method in the Arsenale, the biennial international
exhibition was expanded with national representations in the pavilions in the Giardini.\textsuperscript{32} Well aware of his mentor’s intervention for the 1980 Architecture Biennale, Scolari did not build another architectural portal at the entrance of the Arsenale but devised a hybrid structure that was purposefully suspended between art and architecture.\textsuperscript{33} It subtly hinted at the intermittent elevation of architecture to the same status as visual arts while suggesting the prescribed journey of most Biennale visitors: wandering around Venice, from the Arsenale to the Giardini and back and navigating from one part of the exhibition to the other.\textsuperscript{34}

In this light Scolari’s Wings can be read as a celebration of architecture’s growing autonomy, power, and independence within the institutional and cultural system of the Venice Biennale. From 1968, when architecture first appeared at the Biennale, and up until 1991, when architecture was finally admitted within the geo-politically loaded site of the Giardini, the Architecture Biennale had altered from a by-product of the arts into an independent and fully legitimized event, almost as important as the Art Biennale.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Tectonic vs Scenographic}

While some of Scolari’s executive drawings and construction photographs for the Wings reveal a complex structural system (both for the wings themselves and for the connection between the two elements as well as the static of the entire piece), none of the internal or external structure is visible in the finished piece. In \textit{Ali}, Scolari gave prime of attention to the pictorial qualities of the work, over its constructive logic. The expressive articulation of \textit{Ali}’s structure, or, in other words, its physicality and materiality, was highly
scenographic. In doing so, Ali once again can be said to indirectly respond to larger currents in architectural discourse and the culture politics of the Biennale. Indeed, in the early 1990s, and following his resignation from the organization of the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale a decade earlier, architecture historian and theorist Kenneth Frampton deplored what he saw as ‘the current tendency to reduce architecture to scenography’.\(^\text{36}\) In his polemic essay ‘Rappel à l’ordre: The Case for the Tectonic’ Frampton writes that from its conscious emergence in the middle of the nineteenth century with the writings of Karl Bötticher and Gottfried Semper, the term not only indicates a structural and material probity but also a poetics of construction, as this may be practiced in architecture and the related arts.\(^\text{37}\)

In other words, for Frampton, an object becomes tectonic when the material and formal articulation of the joint between the respective elements of a construction is made visible and hence ‘readable’. The term tectonic, Frampton believed, provided an alternative to the scenographic aspect of most postmodern architecture.\(^\text{38}\)

In Ali, the articulation between the wooden wings and the brick base remains purposely enigmatic.\(^\text{39}\) The contrast between the weight of the wood and the lightness suggested by the dreamlike wings results in a structure that is ‘at once heavy and solid yet fleeting and the pure definition of lightness and fantasy’.\(^\text{40}\) Ali’s wings seem to rest on the brick wall, but they do not elucidate their construction method. Ali is primarily a sign, vested not so much in the representation of architectural structure, its tectonic nature—to use Frampton’s definition of the term—but rather in the representation of an architectural image. The wings first and foremost
symbolize the power of the imagination, that exceptional capacity that allows architecture to ‘fly away’.

The question of representation has always played a central role in Scolari’s work, as the architect steadily focused on the capacity of images to express architectural ideas. Scolari’s practice primarily addresses the question of the representation of architectural ideas, resulting in works that are suspended in a space that is neither pure art nor real architecture. In fact, Scolari serves as a good example of someone for whom the distinction between the arts is obsolete since all arts first and foremost have to tackle the problem of representation: whereas his paintings depict architecture (the wings in Gateway for a Maritime City are rendered as made of timber), his architectural objects ‘act as’ representations rather than structures. As a consequence, Scolari never built, ‘except visually in painting or sculpturally as functionless works’. Building for him is irrelevant: paramount is the architectural idea, and any attempt to translate this idea into built form takes a secondary role. In that sense, Scolari’s paintings and installations resonate with the words of the Italian philosopher and phenomenological thinker Gianni Vattimo (b. 1936), a significant theorist of postmodernity and a contemporary of Scolari. In his 1988 book The End of Modernity, Vattimo signaled the potential of a poetic sensibility to open up the age-old division between imagination and reality in the last quarter of the 20th century:

I would like to underline just one feature of the ‘poetic’, namely, its indefiniteness. To dwell poetically does not mean to dwell in such a way that one needs poetry, but to dwell with sensitivity to the poetic, characterized by the impossibility, in a sense, of defining clear-cut boundaries between reality and imagination. If there is a

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41 Constantly questioning the relationship between art and architecture, Scolari created drawings and innovative installations for the Venice Architecture Biennale in 1980, 1984, 1991, 1996, and 2004. His paintings and drawings are now in private holdings as well as in permanent collections of several art museums and galleries, including the MoMA in New York, the DAM in Frankfurt, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Galleria AAM in Rome. In 2012, the Yale School of Architecture’s Gallery dedicated a major retrospective ‘The Representation of Architecture 1967–2012’ to Scolari’s work, in an attempt to introduce the architect’s achievement to a new generation of Americans.

42 In this respect Scolari’s language also presents affinities, both representational and conceptual, with the work of American architects such as John Hejduk and Raymund Abraham, with whom Scolari interacted both in the Italian and East coast American contexts. (In 1976, Scolari was the first Italian to be invited to the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York and from 1977 he served as Visiting professor at Cooper Union School of Architecture). Hejduk and Abraham however did realize a very small number of buildings.

43 Sherer, Massimo Scolari, p. 313.
passage from modernity to postmodernity, it seems to lie in a wearing away of the boundaries between the real and the unreal, or, at the very least, in a wearing away of the boundaries of the real.  

Following Vattimo’s diagnosis, we can see Ali not so much as the materialization of an architectural idea but as a manifest plea for the irrelevance of the real/unreal distinction in representation. Scolari’s Ali, as Daniel Sherer argues, ‘makes the possible real’.

Conclusion

Despite evoking the dream of flight, Ali is a site-bound piece. It deeply resonates with the Venetian context and the respective institutions it embellished: the Venice Biennale and later the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia. Sketches and photographs show how Scolari imagined different interactions between the sculptural object and the architectural context. In one sketch he let the wings reach three quarters of the building marking the entrance of the calle of the Corderie della Tana, pointing just below the windows of the building’s penultimate floor, whilst in another he had them touch the tip of the roof, almost suggesting that the wings rested on the surrounding architecture. When mounted on the roof of the Iuav, the wings entered in a real and long-lasting dialogue with the brick context of the architecture school. Offering multiple views from the ground as well as from the water, they continue to fuel the discussion on the difference between representation and construction in architecture respectively.
Scolari’s approach implies, according to Sherer, ‘a radical questioning of some of the most deeply rooted assumptions of the discipline, particularly those that concern the supposedly binding relationship between its modes of representation and the materiality of its constructions’. Paying tribute to architecture’s dependency on the imagination Scolari created a powerful symbol that surpasses the very notion of building. *Ali* is characterized by a condition of indefiniteness, suspended between real and imaginary, between art and architecture. Yet it is, I would like to suggest, in contact with other Venetian buildings and architecture institutions that Scolari’s work assumes all its significance and achieves its full potential.
I look for the object and the picture: not for painting or the picture of painting, but for our picture, our looks and appearances and views, definitive and total. How shall I put it: I want to picture to myself what is going on now. Painting can help in this, and different methods = subjects = themes are the different attempts I make in this direction.
—Gerhard Richter, 1977

In the early years of the *Atlas* project—the vast album of photographs and sketches initiated around 1969—the artist Gerhard Richter included a group of remarkable architectural drawings and collages. In these plates—*Räume* (*Rooms*) as he himself calls them—the artist played with the imposition of sketchy or more elaborated perspective frames upon photographs of mostly clouds, sometimes mountains and, more rarely, enlargements of paint strokes. In doing so, Richter made these pictures part and parcel of representations of rooms and halls of different sizes and dispositions. While

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2 The first panels in *Atlas* are dated 1962–1966. Richter only started to save the materials he had employed in his painting practice around 1964, and decided in 1969 to combine on panels all the photographs that he had either used or could have used. Armin Zweite, ‘Gerhard Richter’s “Album of Photographs, Collages and Sketches”’, in *Photography and Painting in the Work of Gerhard Richter: Four Essays on Atlas* (Barcelona: Llibres de Recerca, 1999), p. 70. The first exhibition of the project dates from December 1972 in a museum in Utrecht, where it was entitled ‘Atlas van de foto’s en schetsen’. 
the importance of the Rooms group within Richter’s vast body of work is repeatedly acknowledged, these architectural drawings and collages have been rarely discussed in detail.³

All too often they are merely understood as speculative sketches of future installations or as projections of works into either existing or imaginary exhibition spaces, failing thereby to grasp the critical stakes of Richter’s early forays into architecture.⁴

Gerhard Richter and architecture form an intricate relationship indeed. In his work and practice the artist has engaged with architecture on many levels. He has touched upon real as much as on abstract spaces, ranging from elemental representations of doors and windows to elaborate interiors, and from buildings to cities. He also fabricated several ‘architectural sculptures’, such as the 4 Glasscheiben (4 Panes of Glass, 1967) and 9 Stehende Scheiben (9 Standing Panes, 2002/2010) and set up installations of series of works with a clear sensitivity to their spatial arrangement in the exhibition venue—such as (among many others) the 48 Portraits in the German Pavilion in Venice (1972), the 8 Graue Bilder (8 Gray Pictures, 1975) for the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach (1982) or the Acht Grau (Eight Gray, 2001) in Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin (2002).⁵

In addition, the artist conducted fruitful collaborations with architects. So, for his contribution to documenta IX (Kassel, 1992) housed in the Aue Pavilions, he took up architect Paul Robbrecht’s proposal to cover the walls with wood panelling. In this case, Richter not only relinquished the obligatory ‘white cube’ formula but also responded to the ensuing cabinet-like condition with a floor-to-ceiling disposition of his work.⁶

Throughout Richter’s career one can discern a genuine desire to grant his paintings architectural amplitude—an
aspiration that the *Rooms* series seems to exemplify. Yet in an interview with Dorothea Dietrich in 1985, answering a question about the meaning of the ‘drawings of entire rooms, architectural drawings’ in *Atlas*, the artist gave her a double-sided, overtly antithetic response. When asked whether these drawings represented the desire to devise a total environment, the artist concurred: ‘Oh, yes, that is such a dream of mine—that pictures will become an environment or become architecture, that would be even more effective.’ Yet in one fell swoop the artist derided the inescapable nature of architecture. The fact that ‘a building is there and one cannot avoid it’ bothered him profoundly:

That is why I sometimes hate architects so much. To erect a building is such a brutal thing, such an act of aggression. Painting is never like that... One can look away. It is fortunate that one cannot turn one’s paintings into buildings. 8

In this essay we will try to make sense of the *Rooms* group’s appearance in *Atlas* and of the apparent inner dissension that goes along with it. Moreover, we will attempt to figure out what the group stands for in relation to Richter’s oeuvre as a whole, and how it exemplifies the artist’s idiosyncratic understanding and use of architecture.

*Atlas* appears as a bulky collection of images—mostly photographs, self-made or found, whether clipped or not, generally devoid of specific artistic claims—presented sometimes individually, but usually in groups and often in grids on standardized cardboard supports, consistently framed and numbered, and loosely articulated in more or less discernible sets. These sets rely on a mix of subject-related and formal associations. *Atlas* is not a random accumulation of images. It is held together through associative relations. On the one
Whereas the Atlas is 'sometimes used as a source for his paintings', Iwona Blazwick suggests, 'Richter’s album of pictures also demonstrates the complex dialogues he has explored between painting and photography, history and memory, and perception and representation.' Blazwick, 'Introduction', p. 7.

The definitive numbering of the plates, which was established for the Lenbachhaus publication of 1997 and was strictly followed in the book, does not correspond to the order of display for future exhibitions prescribed at the same time. Furthermore, the numbering does not give evidence of a chronology regarding the composition of the sheets. So, the Seascapes were made in the period from 1969 to 1973, whereas the Clouds comprised in the next section (pp. 203–220) are all from 1970 and the Rooms (pp. 218–252; there is manifestly an overlap with Clouds) are from 1970–1971.


11 Dietmar Elger, Gerhard Richter Archive at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden for their kind help and assistance in comparing these early installation shots in the photographic archive with the Atlas sheets.

12 The Rooms group however stands out in a different sense. Among the vast majority of photographs, Atlas every so often includes installation schemes, sketches for exhibition settings and tentative set-ups for commissioned works. So, the large dimensions of the magnified details of brush streaks for the BMW commission (3 × 6 m) are verified by setting them against the representation of human silhouettes (1973, Sheet 103). What is more, the Städte (Cities) group even contains two plates with trapezoid cut-outs of aerial views.
mounted in perspectival sketches of interiors strongly akin to those appearing in the *Rooms* group (1968, Sheet 122). But in these cases the bodily and architectural expansion of the image seems to be fueled by the problem of concretization. They appear to aim at bridging the gap between a picture-photograph and a picture-painting, that is, at overcoming the challenges of transmogrifying the image of a photograph into a pictorial object in space. The perspectival spatialization achieved by Richter in the *Rooms* group however is far more intricate as well as being more projective or exploratory—an argument that may be supported by the artist’s later withdrawal of the concrete installation schemes for the Düsseldorf exhibition from the *Rooms* group in the Atlas.

The *Rooms* group is launched by the superimposition or erasure of the outline of window frames onto cloud pictures (Sheets 214 and 215). This is only a small step away from evoking a room around a picture (Sheet 218). As the artist loosely draws a perspectival extension from the four corners of the picture, the whole gains an architectural dimension. Such an operation may still be understood within the search for concretization or materialization: the problem of the transformation of a photographic image into a painting obviously requires judgments concerning dimension and scale, and their influence on the painting’s effectiveness in display. Yet, it is with this elementary gesture—the act of sketching a room around a picture-photograph which by the same token becomes an imposing picture-painting—that the *Rooms* series starts up.

From there on, various lines of development spin out. A first series of sheets shares the concerns of framing and repetition, as a regular paneling comes to articulate a neoclassical architectural order (Sheets 228–232, 234, 237, 239–240, 252). This plot gets a counterpoint in Richter’s adoption of a...
one-off deviant De Stijl- or Proun-like arrangement (Sheet 250). A second plotline consists in a mode of ‘theatricalization’, which results in stage-like environments (Sheets 224, 242, 251). ‘I wanted to find out what happens when pictures are staged’, Richter recently explained to Obrist, ‘if it’s possible to increase their effect and, if so, how and with what motifs.’ This story line abuts on the representation of a total environment with pictures occupying the ceiling, walls and floor—a setting that seems to completely rule out the public (Sheet 222):

That was the ‘total picture’ I talked to Sigmar Polke about in the fictional interview with him in 1964. We discussed pictures so overwhelming in effect they could have been used to torture or kill and so weren’t allowed to be shown again in public.

A third line resumes the question of the effect of painting by betting on a quasi-unlimited magnification of scale. These plates (Sheets 234, 243 and 249), Richter indicated in an earlier interview with Obrist, represent ‘sanctuaries … for pictures with an incredible total effect’. ‘Utopian spaces?’ asked Obrist. ‘And megalomaniac ones’ was Richter’s retort, revealing his own awareness of their vexed nature. In the more recent interview, the artist further elucidated:

That was wishful thinking or pleasure in provoking and opposing, because at the time there was a general move to reduce barriers, plus a certain degree of skepticism toward the sublime. Cologne Cathedral wasn’t allowed to have steps anymore, which is why there is this ugly square in front of it. And the Haus der Kunst in Munich was supposed to be demolished because it was fascist.
As a similar ‘kind of act of defiance’ Richter justifies the predominance of cloud and mountain scenery in the Rooms group: ‘traditional subjects were really looked down on, especially if they were done in oil on canvas ... there was something nostalgic about it, something neoclassical.’ However, apart from such a contrarian motive and the avowed pleasure in yielding to it, it seems significant that the pictures involved in these spatial set-ups are actually devoid of perspectival markers such as traceable horizons and vanishing points—even though they are obtained through a perspectival apparatus as photographs obviously are. In this respect these pictures are technically insensitive as to their degree of enlargement and their position vis-à-vis a beholder. To put it simply: they may fit in whatever place, regardless of their scale. Therefore, the picture of a stately—perhaps authoritarian—neoclassical interior (Sheet 223), mounted in the scheme of a room drawn in central perspective with concurring horizon and vanishing point, is not only an exception, but arguably a kind of counter-image for the whole Rooms group. If this picture were to match the view of a beholder standing in the envisioned room, the dimensions of both room and picture would have been fixed within narrow margins. Yet, even if the pictures integrated in the Rooms group represent the reverse of such a severe constriction, they are totalizing images nonetheless. The rooms look out on racks of cloud or over mountains (Sheet 246). One may think of the picture-window of the Berghof residence near Berchtesgaden and realize that the overbearing, totalizing vision threatens to open onto a totalitarian prospect.

With the painting as a window, Richter reconnects pictorial representation with the old episteme that determined about six centuries of modern culture and science: the postulated unity between the world and the perceiving (and
thinking) subject. It is well-known how photography supplanted painting on that field, and how, on the level of thought, this unity was undermined through the demise of the certainties about both terms of the relation. Richter came to painting when the soothing unifying idea of painting was already exhausted. In an interview with Benjamin Buchloh in 1986, he explicitly relativized the impact of photography on painting’s attrition, shifting register from the ‘descriptive and illustrative function’ to the moral realm. Observing that literature and music ‘are in the very same mess’ even though they have not ‘been edged out by anything analogous to photography’, he (at first sight quite) incidentally alluded to Hans Sedlmayr’s diagnostic of the Lost Centre. When his interlocutor expressed his dismay about this touchy reference, Richter asserted: ‘what he was saying was absolutely right. He just drew the wrong conclusions, that’s all. He wanted to reconstruct the Centre that has been lost… . I’ve no desire to reconstruct it.”


In his Notes dating from the same year, Richter wrote:

What offends me most of all is the slack apathy of such people, who ultimately regret only the loss of a centre, and who are too comfortable to give up the apparent pleasures of a corrupt and cretinous ersatz art. 29

‘Sacrifice oneself to objectivity’, he proclaimed; in sum, the anguish of being reduced to ‘a reaction machine, unstable, indiscriminate, dependent’ is preferable to business as usual. 30 The artist’s lucidity and antagonistic stance leads him to ‘bracket off’ ideology, not unlike Manfredo Tafuri’s call for a dispassionate historiography wherein ‘anguish’ would be replaced by ‘accomplishment’:
Fortunately for us, the reception of specific moments in the history of modern criticism permits a ‘bracketing off’ of the ideological sign originally stamped on them. For example, it is difficult indeed not to sense the close affinity between Sedlmayr’s intuition of loss, [Walter] Benjamin’s concept of the ‘decline of the aura’, and Robert Klein’s reflections on the ‘anguish of the referent’.  

But beyond the resemblance qua analysis and the dramatic dissimilarity qua fate, what basically distinguishes the victims (respectively fugitive and exile) of violent oppression from a benevolent contributor to National Socialist ideology and unremorseful reactionary, is the personal conduct in general, and more specifically their deeds and works, and the moral sense the latter reflect. ‘Action in pursuit of ideology creates lifeless stuff at best, and can easily become criminal’, Richter pens down on February 25, 1986. Hence, in his artistic practice he places deeds before ideas and the ‘How’ before the ‘What’. In the register of intentions this results in the following bias: ‘to invent nothing—no idea, no composition, no object, no form—and to receive everything: composition, object, form, idea, picture.’ On April 21, 1986 he formulates what may be considered the crux of his positioning:

This plausible theory, that my abstract paintings evolve their motifs as the work proceeds is a timely one, because there is no central image of the world any longer: we must work out everything for ourselves, exposed as we are on a kind of refuse heap, with no centre and no meaning; we must cope with the advance of a previously undreamt-of freedom.

34 Ibid.
The artist acknowledges this disenchanting freedom with an extremely versatile production. Yet, in the stirring conversation with Buchloh already quoted above, he strongly denied the latter’s hypothesis that his work would aim at making a sort of catalogue of the rhetorical possibilities of painting: ‘I see no point in enumerating the old, lost possibilities of painting. To me what counts is to say something; what counts is the new possibilities.’

Despite the loss of the Idea of painting, the artist remains committed to the Ethos of painting. He does not propose another or a new Idea for painting, but his work is entirely captivated with the quest for it. As he puts it already in 1977, ‘the own true element’ of painting is ‘that of formative thinking.’

Painting’s assignment is to ‘set an example.’ Therefore, we would like to argue, Richter’s work is suspended in reflection. His thoughtful practice entirely inhabits the moment that precedes the Idea, where the universal is sought in the particular, via the example. Through individual closure (determination) every singular work—be it a smaller or larger abstract, or a cloud-painting, a small landscape or still-life, a color chart, striped, grey or monochrome canvas, or a mirrored or glass plated piece, etc.—is an ‘example’ of Painting. It is as a whole that his oeuvre ‘exposes’ the ethos of painting. Reflection is the place where antithetic formulas are played out. It is the proper place of dialectics. The space of reflection detaches itself from worldly determination. Commitment to the ethos of painting is this distance proper: the realization by the artist that his deeds and gestures do not belong to him, nor that they confront a swarming anonymous mass, but that they do address a society of peers, a grand community of culture.

Hence, we can understand why Atlas is a necessary complement to Richter’s oeuvre. It is the repository of the
antithetic movements of his *Daily Practice*. Rejected formulas, dismissed thoughts can be kept and somehow ordered there. Since *Atlas* is a storehouse of incongruous elements and a compendium of conflicting notions about painting, Buchloh aptly named it an ‘Anomic Archive’. But even within this overall unruly whole the *Rooms* group ‘erupts’ as an anomaly alike. Since it stands out, as the artist himself has intimated, as an intemperate attempt to maximize the ‘effect’ of painting. In the *Rooms* group the artist does not so much emerge as an architect or a curator but rather as a scenographer. However, the striving towards a maximum impact destroys the distancing effect carefully maintained in reflection. In an effort entirely oriented toward effect, reflection is ruled out. Such an overbearing exercise can leave a trace in *Atlas* but cannot be integrated in the oeuvre. By betting on the effect of painting, the *Rooms* group works against Richter’s oeuvre as a whole. It overestimates painting’s determination and likewise devalues the artist’s reflective practice.

As for architecture then: In the *Rooms* group it appears as an accrued subject to painting. That is, architecture is the subject on which this adventurous but sidetracked expansion of Richter’s practice is piggybacked. It is a dead branch of *Atlas*, bearing neither fruits nor offspring. In a recent interview with Obrist, the artist called it a moment of ‘wishful thinking’. Twenty years earlier, he had already conceded that the sketches were marked by a megalomaniac impulse. Hence *Rooms* did not hold an appeal to be built in reality. ‘That sort of thing only works in sketches’, he acknowledged, ‘because the execution would be unendurable, overblown and bombastic.’ Nevertheless he maintained the importance of making them: ‘it was good to design sanctuaries of that kind, for pictures with an incredible total effect.’


40 Obrist, ‘Interview with Gerhard Richter’, p. 94.


At the back of a long gallery, distinguished only by its trapezoid-shaped window, hung a moderately sized photograph, in a thin white frame. The subject of the photograph was another photograph—a black and white photocopy in a protective plastic sleeve—pinned to an anonymous doorway indicated by the presence of a metal hinge. The photocopied image depicted a building in the midst of construction on the corner of a busy intersection. But the viewer did not need to read the caption to identify the unfinished structure: it was an image of the building in which the larger photograph was displayed; the same building in which they now stood.

Entitled, Service Entrance, The Met Breuer (Marcel Breuer, Former Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 1963–66), the exhibited photograph of a photograph was part of Bas Princen’s contribution to the 2017 exhibition ‘Breuer Revisited: New Photographs by Luisa Lambri and Bas Princen’. As its title suggests, the exhibition featured photographs of important public and municipal buildings by the Bauhaus-trained architect and designer Marcel Breuer (1902–1981), including the very building for which the exhi-
bition was curated: the former Whitney Museum.²

Founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney Museum occupied several temporary spaces before commissioning Breuer in 1963 to design its first purpose-built building on Madison Avenue.³ Even before it opened, Breuer’s inverted ziggurat structure courted controversy: its apparent indifference to the neighboring brownstone buildings garnered attention in the press, immediately raising the profile of the museum and its building.⁴ Hence, for almost fifty years after its opening in 1966, Breuer’s iconic building and America’s museum of national art were one and the same: the Whitney.⁵ In 2011, when the Whitney announced it would relocate to a new building designed by architect Renzo Piano in Downtown Manhattan⁶ it registered surprise from various corners of the community. Following the move in 2014, the Breuer-designed structure was leased to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which began a meticulous process of renovating and restoring the building to its original design, almost as if it were a new artwork added to the collection.

‘Breuer Revisited’ was a modest exhibition of twenty-five photographs curated by the Metropolitan and displayed on the upper most floor of the former Whitney Museum building, renamed The Met Breuer by its new institutional tenant. The subject of the images were a small number of buildings from an active period in Breuer’s career: Saint John’s Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota (1954–1961), the UNESCO headquarters in Paris (1953–1958), the IBM Research Center, La Gaude, France (1960–1962), and the former Whitney Museum of American Art (1963–1966). In Lambri’s photographs, architectural detail and texture were the focus, capturing the impact of subtle variations in light and shade on the outline of a window, a travertine surface or the silhouette
of a faceted wall. In Princen’s photographs, structural and sculptural components were profiled, affording a more holistic impression of Breuer’s architecture. “The only real challenge with Breuer’, Princen explained, ‘is that his authorship is very distinctly of his time. I was interested in his work as something that is of our time, eliminating style and nostalgia, and avoiding making it look futuristic in an old-fashioned way.”

As though to highlight Lambri’s and Princen’s different artistic responses, the curatorial arrangement avoided intermingling their photographs except in two places: on either side of the curatorial preamble at the entrance, and again in the back gallery in dialogue with the building’s most recognizable feature, the trapezoidal window. It was in this gallery that Service Entrance was hung, playfully responding to the curatorial premise of an exhibition about Breuer’s architecture, inside Breuer’s architecture: something Princen described as ‘a beautiful mise-en-abyme’. Certainly, the placement of Service Entrance within the exhibition, together with its curious subject matter, encouraged an awareness in the viewer, not only of the building but of the viewer’s own presence within it while standing before its image. This experience also eschews nostalgia—Princen’s aim precisely—which is typically invoked today by photographs of the Breuer building. Perhaps more so than any other photograph of the series, Service Entrance encouraged visitors to reflect on the contemporary moment of its historical subject matter.

Princen’s intriguing image and his contextualization of the building in the present captures the dynamic relationship between pictures and buildings, or what Claire Zimmerman calls photographic architecture: ‘Photographs of buildings are photographs of built representations—which means that we might understand them as mediated images that mediate yet
other sorts of images.’ The picture of Breuer’s incomplete Whitney was captured at a very different moment in the history of the building than that at which the Metropolitan commissioned Princen to take his photographs. In the original image, the visual power of Breuer’s purpose-built building is foregrounded: though unfinished, the inverted ziggurat is clearly recognizable, transporting the viewer back to an exhilarating, formative moment for the United States in the history of Modern Art. Yet, re-presented in Princen’s 2016 photograph, a very different picture emerges. Not only has the building been reframed and reconceptualized by the Metropolitan and its new stake in it, but the cultural and economic landscape has changed too. Indeed, Service Entrance and the collection of works included in ‘Breuer Revisited’ captures a contemporary moment in which the very relationship between architecture and visual arts museums is being renegotiated, not least in the case of the Metropolitan.

Since its founding, the Metropolitan has collected, curated and commissioned architecture. However, unlike the Whitney, which is focused on twentieth- and twenty-first-century American art, the Metropolitan’s scope is historically deep and geographically vast. While neither institution has a department devoted exclusively to architecture, the Metropolitan has a remarkable history of acquiring whole buildings and architectural fragments. From this angle, leasing and restoring the Breuer building to as close as possible to its original design could be considered a continuation of this collection history. At the same time, the building would provide additional space for exhibitions of modern and contemporary art, while those spaces at the Metropolitan’s main campus on Fifth Avenue were under renovation. Since The Met Breuer opened to the public in 2016, there has also been an increase in cross-disciplinary initiatives between

contemporary art and architecture at the Metropolitan. These initiatives include the exhibition ‘Breuer Revisited’, but also a new curatorial role dedicated to Architecture and Design within the Modern and Contemporary Art department.14

More than this, ‘Breuer Revisited’ is also evidence of the growing fascination with twentieth-century architecture in contemporary culture: one of several factors at play in the changing relationship between architecture and visual arts museums. Of course, architectural exhibitions are not a new phenomenon, and solo exhibitions devoted to Breuer’s architecture include shows at the Metropolitan (1972), MoMA (1981) and the Whitney (1996).15 But what was different about ‘Breuer Revisited’ was its premise to represent architecture from the perspective of the artist-photographer. Rather than show the diversity of Breuer’s output, spanning furniture, houses, and large-scale public buildings, ‘Breuer Revisited’ featured only four buildings from roughly the same period—all monumental concrete works. Further, both Lambri and Princen chose to focus on less familiar aspects of Breuer’s architecture and abstracted them using a combination of photographic techniques and unusual points-of-view, consistent with the curatorial imperative to reposition the buildings themselves as objects of interest in contemporary art.16

Unlike previous architectural exhibitions at the Metropolitan that have been curated for an architectural audience, exhibitions like ‘Breuer Revisited’ trade on the popular hype and the marketability of modern and contemporary art and architecture. While Princen’s aim was to avoid a nostalgic presentation of Breuer’s architecture, his photographs, and the exhibition more broadly, feed a nostalgic desire for architecture of the period. As if to make this populist orientation even more overt, there was no official
catalogue to accompany ‘Breuer Revisited’. Instead, the exhibition ‘publication’ was reimagined as a supplement to the 2017 Spring–Summer issue of PIN–UP magazine, self-described as ‘The only biannual Magazine for Architectural Entertainment’. As such, the exhibition might be seen less as a showcase of Breuer’s vast contribution to architectural discourse, than as an experiment to leverage a fascination in contemporary culture for iconic examples of twentieth-century architecture. This fascination is characteristic of today’s experience economy, in which images are a form of currency that circulate freely, influencing the value of their subjects, in this case, Breuer’s buildings from the 1950s and ’60s. The sheer number of popular publications and blogs in recent years focused on late-modern architecture, often under the loosely applied rubric of ‘Brutalism’ is a case in point. In the visual arts too, there has been a proliferation of works that uncritically employ modernist references or themes such as ‘ruined modernity’ and ‘failed utopias’, a condition which Claire Bishop has described as ‘reformatted modernism’.

The Metropolitan’s invitation to revisit Breuer’s architecture through new photography implies the need or desire for reassessing the values historically associated with the architect and his buildings. Following Zimmerman, the photographs exhibited in ‘Breuer Revisited’ can be understood as mediated images that project or mediate other kinds of images and ideas—for example, the image of Breuer’s significant contribution to architectural practice in the mid-twentieth century, or the image of Breuer’s buildings as objects of contemporary interest in and of themselves. In both cases, the inherent value of Breuer’s architecture is reinforced, helping to explain the Metropolitan’s investment in the former Whitney building. At the same time, new values are also produced—namely, the commercial and cultural value associated

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17 PIN–UP: Magazine for Architectural Entertainment, FEBU Publishing LLC (www.pinupmagazine.org/site/contact.html).
with the photographic works and the artists themselves, whose connections with the Metropolitan serve to enhance their reputations in the art world and increase the monetary value of their works in the art market.

Interestingly, the Metropolitan is not the only institution to employ photography to mediate, and to exploit, the shifting relationship between art, architecture and the museum. Prior to demolishing its three buildings by William Pereira (1965) and an addition by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates (1986), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) hosted the artist Vera Lutter, known for her use of camera obscura, through an artist-in-residence program supported by Sotheby’s auction house.\(^{21}\) Lutter’s photographs of LACMA’s exteriors and gallery interiors are foreboding, two-dimensional images that memorialize the buildings while they remain silently complicit in their demise.\(^{22}\) Unlike the works in ‘Breuer Revisited’, which assert the enduring cultural value of Breuer’s architecture and the importance of its preservation, Lutter’s are inextricably linked to the destruction of their subjects.\(^{23}\)

That both institutions—LACMA and the Metropolitan—are engaged in different kinds of transformation projects reveals a more complex relationship with architecture and understanding of architecture’s value in the museum context. On one hand, leasing the Breuer building as a venue for temporary use is a pragmatic solution while raising funds for another renovation. Restoring and rebranding the building, on the other hand, suggests there is a broader strategy at work: one based on the returns of prestige and goodwill generated in preserving the integrity of the building and introducing Breuer’s architecture to a new, highly sympathetic audience.

There is yet another dimension to the Metropolitan’s strategy, which seeks to translate this newfound prestige and
goodwill generated from its architectural investment into significant gifts of Modern and Contemporary Art. During a 2016 interview for the Financial Times, Sheena Wagstaff, the Metropolitan’s Chairman of the Modern and Contemporary Art Department candidly remarked:

The beauty of what we can offer is that if someone does give us an iconic, stunningly wonderful Gerhard Richter or Sigmar Polke, then there’s a pretty much ironclad guarantee that they would be up in perpetuity, and the donor’s munificence would be acknowledged in a way that is not possible in other institutions.24

In other words, the Metropolitan has reassured collectors of its commitment to Modern and Contemporary Art, by leasing and restoring Breuer’s modernist building, ostensibly an ideal setting for artworks from these periods.25 Unlike a typical museum expansion such as the Whitney’s new state-of-the-art museum facility by Renzo Piano, The Met Breuer is not high profile in the sense of its contemporary design or flagship status. Rather, the appeal of the Breuer building today lies in its boutique modernist aesthetic and object quality which, arguably, had been undervalued by the Whitney. Thus ‘Breuer Revisited’ can be understood as one part of a broader institutional ambition by the Metropolitan to raise the building’s profile and status, and to use it to leverage money and acquisitions that will enhance the Metropolitan’s collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

One of the principle ways for visual arts museums to create value is by collecting and historicizing artworks as part of longer histories that can be told through the museum collection. Of course, this practice is widely known and understood. What is often overlooked, however, is the role of the museum’s building in this process of value creation. For
example, the Whitney’s period of occupation of the Breuer building included several attempts to expand and re-contextualize the original, in order to increase permanent exhibition space. While part of the Metropolitan’s rationale for leasing the Breuer building was to gain more exhibition space during its own renovation, it was also about leveraging the implicit values associated with the building itself, and to strategically reposition the museum within the field of Modern and Contemporary Art. What then does this say about the relationship between museum buildings and the institutions that inhabit them, if one as iconic as the Whitney building was so easily converted to The Met Breuer, now one of three venues belonging to the Metropolitan? Why has this particular strategy to restore and profile Breuer’s architecture achieved popular and critical acclaim? Could this strategy, once the lease agreement has expired, be employed by another museum, including the Whitney, with similar results?

The Whitney’s relocation into a new building by Renzo Piano and the Metropolitan’s restoration and lease of the Breuer building suggests that the bond between two supposedly interdependent concepts—the museum and its building—is not as strong as one would think. On this issue, Wouter Davidts has observed: ‘Architecture is used as a vehicle to fundamentally re-think the museum on both a micro and a macro level—not only the commissioning institution itself, but the entire concept of “the museum” as well.’

Certainly, The Met Breuer is one such opportunity to re-think the entire concept of the museum—including how museums engage with the different values of architecture—and to consider its implications for museum expansion.

At the micro level, expanding into the former Whitney building not only impacted the physical identity of the Metropolitan, but its brand as well. Wagstaff explains,
For nearly half a century until 2016—when The Met publicly signalled a broader interpretation of the art-historical canon—the museum was identified with a distinctive letter M logo, adapted from the 1509 book *Divina proportione* by the Italian mathematician Luca Pacioli.  

Prior to the opening of The Met Breuer, the Metropolitan sought a fresh graphic identity that would convey a broader interpretation of the art-historical canon and ‘clarify and unify the Museum’s experience and communication across all platforms’. The result was to formalize the Metropolitan’s unofficial title, ‘The Met’, and adapt it to each of its satellite venues: The Met Breuer and The Met Cloisters. At a macro level, the Metropolitan’s rebranding is a very real example of how the experience economy has brought about a reassessment of architecture’s value by museums and the cultural sphere more broadly.

By combining the name of the institution and the architect, The Met Breuer replaced the bond which had come undone when the Whitney relocated, an event that is acknowledged in the full title of Princen’s photograph, *Service Entrance, The Met Breuer (Marcel Breuer, Former Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 1963–66)*. The Metropolitan’s treatment of the Breuer building as an artwork, building, and brand, is one example of how the relationship between architecture and visual arts museums has evolved. *Service Entrance* by Bas Princen registers this evolution by focusing on the black and white photocopy of Breuer’s unfinished Whitney, while playfully acknowledging the contemporary moment of the building itself as The Met Breuer. The exhibition ‘Breuer Revisited’ is one way in which the Metropolitan is mediating Breuer’s architecture as the
subject of new commissions that elevate the architect’s status in architectural discourse while reinforcing its object quality.

Of course, similar image-based mediations are also happening independently of the museum, and contribute to Breuer’s popular reclamation by the Metropolitan. In his book, After Art, David Joselit has observed that ‘in an “information era” where documentation is virtually inherent in the production of art, contemporary artworks typically belong to the category of documented objects’. As an exhibition of commissioned photographs, ‘Breuer Revisited’ extends beyond the physical constraints of the building: Princen’s and Lambri’s images—encoded with the circumstances of their production—circulate in real life through gallery and museum networks and online through social media channels and websites on which the artists promote their works. Trading on the photographic image of architecture, these pictures are shared, liked, and commented on; they signify value and collapse traditional distinctions between artwork, building, and brand. They also serve to legitimize the Metropolitan’s investment in Breuer’s high modernist building while gradually weakening its ties to the Whitney.

On the surface, ‘Breuer Revisited’ was a modest exhibition of commissioned photographs focused on aspects of Breuer’s architecture from the fifties and sixties. Its significance, however, was in how it revealed the complex and evolving relationship between visual arts museums and architecture, crystallized in both the content and context of Princen’s photograph Service Entrance. More than just a photograph of a photograph, Service Entrance captured the multiple and often competing values associated with the Breuer building: as an intact example of modernist architecture; as a functioning museum building; as a symbol of artistic nationalism; and as a work of art in its own right. Curated
in direct dialogue with its subject, *Service Entrance* further emphasized the unique circumstances surrounding its conception: that is, the building’s transformation from the Whitney to The Met Breuer. This deliberate gesture gave the viewer—standing within the building and in front of its image—space to reflect not only on the history of the building, but on its possible futures.
United States Patent

Oppenheimer

BIASED-AXIS ROTATIONAL FRAME MOUNTING SYSTEM

Applicant: Sarah Oppenheimer, Long Island City, NY (US)

Inventor: Sarah Oppenheimer, Long Island City, NY (US)

Assignee: Folding Enterprises, LLC, Long Island City, NY (US)

Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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Field of Classification Search

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See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Monica E. Millner
(Continued)

Attorney, Agent, or Firm — Lee Anav Chung White
Kim Ruger & Richter LLP

ABSTRACT

An apparatus for mounting objects disclosed herein. The apparatus includes a first mounting arm comprising a first portion affixed to a first surface and a second portion coupled to a frame, wherein the second portion is rotatably coupled to the first portion; and a second mounting arm comprising a first portion affixed to a second surface and a second portion coupled to the frame, wherein the second portion is rotatably coupled to the first portion. The first mounting arm and the second mounting arm define an axis of rotation about which the frame rotates, wherein the axis of rotation comprises a first angle relative to the first surface and a second angle relative to the second surface, wherein the first angle and the second angle are substantially congruent and less than 90-degrees.

1 Claim, 15 Drawing Sheets
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BIASED-AXIS ROTATIONAL FRAME MOUNTING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Field
Aspects of the present disclosure relate generally to mounting systems, and more particularly, to an biased-axis rotational frame mounting system.

Background
Many solutions exist for mounting frames to fixed surfaces such as walls and floors. These frames are used for holding pictures or works of art. These frames are also used for holding architectural elements such as doors and windows. For example, existing approaches offer fixed mounting of frames for static presentation of artwork.

Many solutions also exist for mounting architectural elements such as doors and windows. Most doors and windows pivot around a vertical or horizontal axis. For example, doors are mounted on hinges that are mounted to a door frame that allow the door to swing open and closed. Aligning the top and bottom of these doors and windows during mounting is essential for smooth rotation. However, this alignment is not always achievable and any lack of alignment generally leads to operational difficulties.

What would be desirable would be innovative mounting mechanisms for both various types of frames and architectural elements.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other sample aspects of the disclosure will be described in the detailed description that follows, and in the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 is a diagram conceptually illustrating an biased-axis rotational frame mounting system.

FIG. 2 is another diagram illustrating operation of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is yet another diagram illustrating operation of a first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1.

FIGS. 4A-4B are parts diagrams illustrating major components of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is a top plan diagram of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional diagram illustrating internal components of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIGS. 7A-7C are perspective cross-sectional diagrams illustrating internal components of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 8 is an exploded diagram illustrating internal components of an upper mounting arm of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 9 is an exploded diagram illustrating internal components of a lower mounting arm of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIGS. 10A-10B are diagrams illustrating various mounting approaches for the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1, using the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3 as an example.

FIGS. 11A-11B are parts diagrams illustrating major components of a second embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 12 is a top plan diagram of the second embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 13 is an elevational diagram illustrating how two pieces of the second embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 1 may be deployed.

FIG. 14 is a cross-section view of the internal components of the upper mounting arm in FIG. 8 of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 15 is a cross-section view of the internal components of the lower mounting arm in FIG. 9 of the first embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system of FIG. 3.

In accordance with common practice, some of the drawings may be simplified for clarity. Thus, the drawings may not depict all of the components of a given apparatus (e.g., device) or method. Finally, like reference numerals may be used to denote like features throughout the specification and figures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The detailed description set forth below in connection with the appended drawings is intended as a description of various configurations of an biased-axis rotational frame mounting system and is not intended to represent the only configurations in which the concepts described herein may be practiced. The detailed description includes specific details for the purpose of providing a thorough understanding of various concepts. However, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that these concepts may be practiced without these specific details. In some instances, well known structures and components are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring such concepts.

A mounting system configured in accordance with various aspects of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system disclosed herein facilitates a mounting of an architectural element for rotation around a bias-axis. The mounting system may interface with different types of materials, such as glass, aluminum, and wood, such that mounting system may be affixed to the architectural element. Once mounted using the mounting system, the architectural element may rotate around this axis in multiple configurations and locations.

The various concepts presented throughout this disclosure may be implemented across a broad variety of mounting systems for such architectural elements as doors and windows, including insulated glass units (IGU). These mounting systems may also be used to mount such objects as picture or display frames. In addition, these mounting systems may be used to mount such electronic devices as display screens or speakers. Those skilled in the art would understand that all of these elements, objects, and devices may be mounted using the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system described herein. As presented herein, one or more parts may be repeatedly shown in FIGS. 1-15, and a particular reference number may be repeatedly used to identify the same part whenever possible.

As used herein, the term “affixed” may be used to refer to an assembly or joining of one element to another using any means of attachment. As non-limiting example, screws, nails, bolts, nuts, and adhesives may be used.
Referring to FIG. 1 as an illustrative example without limitation, various functional aspects of the present disclosure are illustrated with reference to a layout for a biased-axis rotational frame mounting system that includes a planar element 124 and an axis 122. It should be noted that although the examples provided herein is a planar object, objects with other geometric shapes may be used.

Also referencing FIG. 2 as well as FIG. 3, it may be seen that the planar element 124, which may be a glass box, may rotate around the axis 122, which may be coupled to the planar element 124 in a biased-axis configuration. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the biased-axis configuration references a mounting configuration for the planar element 124 where the axis of rotation of the planar element 124 deviates from a true vertical or horizontal reference with respect to at least one geometry of the planar element 124. In the example, the axis of rotation of the planar element 124 remains in parallel with the planar surface of the planar element 124. However, viewing the planar surface of the planar element 124 along an axis that is perpendicular to the planar surface (i.e., at an axis that is 90 degrees with respect to the planar surface of the planar element 124), the axis of rotation may be seen to deviate from the true vertical and horizontal references defined by the edges of the planar element 124.

FIG. 2 illustrates various elliptical-shaped paths that are made by corners of the planar element 124 as it rotates around the axis 122. Four example positions of the planar element 124 as rotated around the axis 122 may be seen as position 302a-d in FIG. 3. It should be noted that the positions 302a-d of the planar element 124 as chosen for illustration for FIG. 3 are example resting positions for the planar element 124. Thus, as seen in FIG. 2, in one aspect of the disclosed approach, the planar element 124 may be freely rotated through any conceivable position around the axis 122. In another aspect of the disclosed approach, the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system may be configured such that planar element 124 may be stopped at (i.e., rest in) any position around the axis 122. In another aspect of the disclosed approach, the planar element 124 may be stopped in predetermined positions around the axis 122. The planar element 124 may occupy a state of rest in any position along the arc of rotation as the planar element 124 is constantly in a state of dynamic equilibrium around the axis 122.

Counterweights (not shown) may be used where the planar element 124, or another object that is used instead of the planar element 124, does not have equal mass distributed on either side of the axis. Further, as described herein, a locking mechanism may be used in various aspects of the disclosed approach to lock the position of the planar element 124 around the axis 122 as stopped.

With regards to surfaces to which the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system may be mounted, an upper support surface 112, such as a ceiling, and a bottom support surface 114, such as a floor, may be used. Referring to FIGS. 10A-10B, however, it may be seen that the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system may be mounted to either horizontal or vertical surfaces. In some aspects, only one surface may be needed to support the mounting system.

Major components of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system may be seen in FIGS. 4A-4B, which include a lower mounting arm 122a and an upper mounting arm 122b coupled to a left frame element 424a and a right frame element 424b, respectively. The lower mounting arm 122a may be used to attach the planar element 124 to the upper support surface 112.

FIG. 5 provides a more detailed component illustration of the planar element 124 that includes a first planar surface 124a and a second planar surface 124b. As shown, both the first planar surface 124a and the second planar surface 124b may be glass such that the planar element 124 is a laminated glass box. However, other materials may be used for the first planar surface 124a and the second planar surface 124b. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the first planar surface 124a and the second planar surface 124b may both be attached to the left frame element 424a and the right frame element 424b using structural silicone.

Continuing to refer to FIG. 5, in one aspect of the disclosed approach the planar element 124 may be rotated through the use of a rotating shaft assembly. Specifically, the lower mounting arm 122a includes a bottom static shaft portion 122a-1, which may be used to attach the lower mounting arm 122a to the bottom support surface 114. Similarly, the upper mounting arm 122b includes an upper static shaft portion 122b-1, which may be used to attach the upper mounting arm 122b to the upper support surface 112. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, to allow the planar element 124 to rotate around the axis 122 defined by the lower mounting arm 122a and the upper mounting arm 122b, the planar element 124 is coupled to a bottom rotating shaft portion 122a-2 on the lower mounting arm 122a, and an upper rotating shaft portion 122b-2 on the upper mounting arm 122b.

Also referring to FIG. 6 and to FIG. 7, the bottom rotating shaft portion 122a-2 and the upper rotating shaft portion 122b-2 may be attached to the left frame element 424a and the right frame element 424b, respectively, using receiver plates. The bottom rotating shaft portion 122a-2 is attached to a receiver plate 624a in the left frame element 424a while the top rotating shaft portion 122b-2 is attached to a receiver plate 624b in the right frame element 424b.

Further details for the upper mounting arm 122b are also illustrated in FIG. 8 and FIG. 14. Similarly, details for the lower mounting arm 122a are illustrated in FIG. 9 and FIG. 15. It should be noted that certain details shown in these figures have been omitted from other figures to avoid cluttering the other figures with details that may be better understood through the use of these figures.

Referring to FIG. 8, the upper static shaft portion 122b-1 of FIG. 5, FIG. 6, and FIGS. 7A-7C is illustrated as a static tube 801 while the upper rotating shaft portion 122b-2 of the same figures is illustrated as a dynamic tube 819 attached to an upper receiver plate 831 which illustrates the receiver plate 624b of FIG. 6. A threaded precision shaft 813 is held in both the static tube 801 and the dynamic tube 819. A plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807 and a pair of static discs 810 and 811 support the threaded precision shaft 813 in the static tube 801. The threaded precision shaft 813 is supported in the dynamic tube 819 by an upper rotation assembly 820.

The plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807, each of which include an O-ring, are spaced out along the threaded precision shaft 813 with a plurality of spindle spacers 804, and 806 sandwiched in-between. Use of O-rings provide for better contact between the plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807, and the static tube 801. The plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807 and the plurality of spindle spacers 804, and 806 are held in place between a pair of hex nuts 802 and 808.

The pair of static discs 810 and 811 includes a static spacer 840 sandwiched in-between. A pair of hex nuts 809
and 812 hold the pair of static discs 810 and 811 and the static spacer 840 in place on the threaded precision shaft 813. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the pair of static discs 810 and 811 is welded to the static tube 801. The static discs 810 and 811 may be threaded so that the static discs 810 and 811 may be threaded on to the threaded precision shaft 813. By welding the pair of static discs 810 and 811 to the static tube 801 and then attaching the threaded precision shaft 813 thereto, the threaded precision shaft 813 is prevented from rotating with respect to the static tube 801.

In one aspect of the disclosed approach, spacing between each of the plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807, and between the pair of static discs 810 and 811 are equidistant. In another aspect of the disclosed approach, spacing between each of the plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807, and between each of the pair of static discs 810 and 811 may be of different distances. Spacing between each of the plurality of spindle liners 803, 805, and 807 may be controlled by the plurality of spindle spacers 804, and 806 while spacing between the pair of static discs 810 and 811 may be controlled by the static spacer 840.

Rotation of the dynamic tube 819 around the threaded precision shaft 813 is enabled by the upper rotation assembly 820. The upper rotation assembly 820 includes a first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and a second upper rotation assembly bearing 825 to provide reduced rotational friction between the dynamic tube 819 and the threaded precision shaft 813. A bearing sleeve 826 is inserted between the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825, and the threaded precision shaft 813. The bearing sleeve 826 provides improved interface between, and support, the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825 on the threaded precision shaft 813.

Thus, different diameters between the threaded precision shaft 813 and the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825 may be matched. A bearing sleeve abutment 823 caps the end of the bearing sleeve 826 such that the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825 are sandwiched between the bearing sleeve 826 and the bearing sleeve abutment 823. Positioning of the bearing sleeve 826 and bearing sleeve abutment 823, and therefore the upper rotation assembly 820 may be secured on the threaded precision shaft 813 on one end by the hex nut 812 and on another by a hex nut 814.

A bearing plug 827 and a bearing plug cap 821 houses the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824, the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825, the bearing sleeve 826, and the bearing sleeve abutment 823. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the bearing plug 827 is welded to the dynamic tube 819 and provides an encasement for the first upper rotation assembly bearing 824 and the second upper rotation assembly bearing 825 to spin around the bearing sleeve 826. A set of bearing plug cap screws 822 may be used to affix the bearing plug cap 821 to the bearing plug 827 while still allowing the bearing plug cap 821 to be assembled and disassembled.

In one aspect of the disclosed approach, in order to provide rotation damping of the dynamic tube 819 around the threaded precision shaft 813, a damper 817 is implemented. The rotational damper provides resistance to rotation of the dynamic tube 819. The damper 817 is affixed within the dynamic tube 819 with a damper spacer 815 and a damper cap 816, all of which are held in place by a set of damper cap screws 818. The damper 817 is further interfaced with the threaded precision shaft 813 via a slot 851 in the threaded precision shaft 813, as illustrated in FIG. 8, and shown as a tab and slot coupling 850 in FIG. 9. In another aspect of the disclosed approach, no rotational damping is provided where no moderation of the rotation of the dynamic tube 819 is desired.

Referring to FIG. 9, the bottom static shaft portion 122 or-1 of FIG. 5, FIG. 6, and FIG. 7 is illustrated as a static tube 901 while the bottom rotating shaft portion 122 or-2 of the same figures is illustrated as a dynamic tube 919 attached to a lower receiver plate 931, which illustrates the receiver plate 624 of FIG. 6. A threaded precision shaft 913 is held in both the static tube 901 and the dynamic tube 919. A plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909 and a static disc 905 support the threaded precision shaft 913 in the static tube 901. The threaded precision shaft 913 is supported in the dynamic tube 919 by a bottom rotation assembly 920.

The plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909, each of which include an O-ring, are spaced out along the threaded precision shaft 913 with a hex nut 908 sandwiched in-between. Use of O-rings provide for better contact between the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909, and the static tube 901. The plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909 and the hex nut 908 are held in place between a pair of hex nuts 906 and 810.

A static disc 905 is offset from the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909 by a hex nut 906. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the static disc 905 is welded to the static tube 901. The static disc 905 may be threaded so that the static disc 905 may be threaded rotationally to the threaded precision shaft 913. By welding the static disc 905 to the static tube 901 and then attaching the threaded precision shaft 913 thereto, the threaded precision shaft 913 is prevented from rotating with respect to the static tube 901.

In one aspect of the disclosed approach, spacing between each of the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909, and between the static tube 901 and the static disc 905 may be equidistant. In another aspect of the disclosed approach, spacing between each of the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909, and between the static disc 905 may be of different distances. Spacing between the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909 may be controlled by the hex nut 908 while spacing between the static disc 905 and the plurality of spindle liners 907 and 909 may be controlled by the hex nut 906.

Rotation of the dynamic tube 919 around the threaded precision shaft 913 is enabled by the lower rotation assembly 920. The lower rotation assembly 920 includes a lower rotation assembly bearing 925 to provide reduced rotational friction between the dynamic tube 919 and the threaded precision shaft 913. A bearing sleeve 926 is inserted between the lower rotation assembly bearing 925, and the threaded precision shaft 913. The bearing sleeve 926 provides improved interface between, and support, the lower rotation assembly bearing 925 on the threaded precision shaft 913.

Thus, different diameters between the threaded precision shaft 913 and the lower rotation assembly bearing 925 may be matched. A bearing sleeve abutment 924 caps the end of the bearing sleeve 926 such that the lower rotation assembly bearing 925 are sandwiched between the bearing sleeve 926 and the bearing sleeve abutment 924. Positioning of the bearing sleeve 926 and bearing sleeve abutment 924, and therefore the lower rotation assembly 920 may be secured on the threaded precision shaft 913 on one end by the hex nut 903 and on another by a hex nut 904.

A bearing plug 927 and a bearing plug cap 923 houses the lower rotation assembly bearing 925, the bearing sleeve 926, and the bearing sleeve abutment 924. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the bearing plug 927 is welded to the dynamic tube 919 and provides an encasement for the lower
rotation assembly bearing 925 to spin around the bearing sleeve 926. A set of bearing plug cap screws 922 may be used to affix the bearing plug cap 923 to the bearing plug 927 while still allowing the bearing plug cap 923 to be assembled and disassembled.

It should be noted that the threaded precision shaft 913 may be held in a fixed position with respect to the bearing assembly 920 and the by the pair of hex nuts 903 and 904. In addition, the threaded precision shaft 913 may be held in a fixed position with respect to the static tube 901 through the use of hex nuts abutting the static disc 905 from below, such as the hex nut 906.

In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the threaded precision shaft 913 may include a hole for centering laser 951. A centering laser (not shown) may be placed in the hole for centering laser 951 to align the static tube 901 to the static tube 801 during mounting of a planar element, such as the planar element 124. One example of a procedure in which the planar element 124 may be mounted is described as follows, where initially a lower assembly such as that shown in FIG. 9 is mounted in place. Then, an upper assembly such as that shown in FIG. 8 is mounted in place. The centering laser mounted in the hole for centering laser 951 of the threaded precision shaft 913 may then be used to attempt to align axes of the threaded precision shaft 913 of the lower assembly and the threaded precision shaft 813 of the upper assembly so that there is one rotation axis about the upper and lower assembly. In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the centering laser may be used to align with a center of the threaded precision shaft 813 prior to installation of a damper. Preferably, 360-degrees of rotation may be tested for alignment. Once the upper and lower assemblies have been mounted and aligned, the left frame element 424a may be mounted to the lower receiver plate 931 from the lower assembly. The right frame element 424b may also be mounted to the upper receiver plate 831. After the right frame element 424b has been mounted, the glass plates 124a and 124b may be mounted to complete the assembly.

FIGS. 11A-11B provide another embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system where a planar element 1124, which may be a glass box, may rotate around the axis 122, which may be coupled to the planar element 1124 in a biased axis configuration. Major components of this embodiment of the biased-axis rotational frame mounting system includes a lower mounting arm 1122a and an upper mounting arm 1122b coupled to a left frame element 1424a and a right frame element 1424b, respectively. The lower mounting arm 1122a may be used to attach the planar element 1124 to the bottom support surface 114. Similarly, the upper mounting arm 1122b may be used to attach the planar element 1124 to the upper support surface 112.

FIG. 12 provides a more detailed component illustration of the planar element 1124 that includes a first planar surface 1124a and a second planar surface 1124b. As shown, both the first planar surface 1124a and the second planar surface 1124b may be glass such that the planar element 1124 is a glass box. However, other materials may be used for the first planar surface 1124a and the second planar surface 1124b.

In one aspect of the disclosed approach, the first planar surface 1124a and the second planar surface 1124b may both be attached to the left frame element 1424a and the right frame element 1424b using structural silicone. Further, the left frame element 1424a and the right frame element 1424b are angled such that the glass box that is constructed has a trapezoidal cross-section. As noted above for the planar element 124, although the planar element 1124 is a planar object, albeit one with a trapezoidal cross-section instead of a rectangular cross section, other geometric shapes may be used.

FIG. 13 illustrates a use-case where multiple planar elements may be mounted next to each other. In the configuration shown, two planar elements such as the planar element 1124 are mounted together. In this example, the glass boxes may be mounted adjacent to each other but with enough space between each glass box for the glass boxes to rotate freely with respect to each other. It is noted that although the illustrated configuration includes two planar elements mounted side-by-side, other configurations may be possible. For example, the two planar elements may be mounted in a top-to-bottom configuration where the planar elements are mounted to vertical surfaces such as walls instead of horizontal surfaces such as ceilings and floors.

Several aspects of a mounting system have been presented with reference to an biased-axis rotational frame mounting system. As those skilled in the art will readily appreciate, various aspects described throughout this disclosure may be extended to other mounting systems.

What is claimed is:
1. An apparatus for mounting rigid structures, comprising: a first mounting arm comprising a first portion affixed to a first surface and a second portion coupled to a frame, wherein the second portion is rotatably coupled to the first portion; and a second mounting arm comprising a first portion affixed to a second surface and a second portion coupled to the frame, wherein the second portion is rotatably coupled to the first portion; wherein the first mounting arm comprises a first longitudinal axis and the second mounting arm comprises a second longitudinal axis, and wherein an axis of rotation about which the frame rotates comprises an axis that runs through both the first longitudinal axis of the first mounting arm and the second longitudinal axis of the second mounting arm, wherein the axis of rotation comprises a first angle relative to the first surface and a second angle relative to the second surface, wherein the first angle and the second angle are substantially congruent and less than 90-degrees.
Light in an Empty Room (Studio at Night) (2015) by Spencer Finch, presents a reconstruction of the artist’s Brooklyn studio at night, lights turned out.\(^1\) Exhibited at Art Basel Unlimited, the large-scale installation is a spatial approximation of Finch’s studio constructed in thin white board—a minimal stage set made up of a few walls, a ceiling and floor—and empty except for a white bench seat pushed to one side. At one corner, five windows of two different designs pierce the walls as simple voids. The cut-out windows turn the construction into an architectural interior, lend the room recognizable scale, and effect the only visual connection to the studio referred to in the work’s title. Beyond the windows, on full view to visitors, an array of flashing and moving lights throw color and shadow upon the interior surfaces, recreating the night time glow of an urban street.

While constructed in the context of a contemporary international art fair, Finch’s ersatz studio has much in common with certain conventional forms of architectural exhibition and display. It is, of course, inherently architectural,
Spencer Finch’s Windows

and bears more than a passing resemblance to the often white cardboard models used by architects to present their work, notwithstanding the fact that it is executed here at a much larger scale. However, Finch’s work also recalls the popular exhibition of period rooms in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century: a practice that, like Finch’s, operates through a staging of effects. For both, architecture is turned into a kind of theatrical display, opening up questions of representation, illusion, and authenticity. This common ground also allows Finch’s windows to be employed as a new lens through which to interrogate the period room as an exhibitionary model for architecture in the museum.

The Problem of the Window

Unlike the display of most artefacts in museums and galleries, exhibitions of architectural interiors frequently employ strategies of fantasy and deception. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged (and accepted) that period rooms and other such interiors staged in a museological context, will typically merge original building artefacts—such as timber paneling, applied decoration and furniture—with reconstructed fabric—often including large expanses of walls, floors and ceilings—into a cohesive and coherent whole. Rarely is any legible distinction made between that which is simulated and that which is ‘real’. Instead, conventional displays generally favor visual and affective authenticity established through the ambiguous and seamless integration of old and new components; they frequently reconstruct the ‘original’ appearance and experience as accurately as possible, while forgoing other kinds of material and historical authenticity, as well as museological transparency. As exhibitions, these interior displays are theatrically
inclined, motivated by seduction over edification, and rely on evocation rather than precision.

Of course, the translation of such interiors from occupied environments into aesthetic objects and spaces of display is never an easy one. Despite the best efforts of architects, curators and exhibition designers, inherent problems of their exhibition almost inevitably expose their theatrical deceptions and conceits, highlighting tensions between material preservation, historical narrative and visual authenticity. Doorways, for instance, can allow views to escape the containment of the enclosing walls and create undesirable adjacencies to incongruent spaces; ceilings are typically new and prone to being cluttered with gallery lights and services; and floors are frequently rebuilt to suit public access requirements, or are conspicuously barricaded to prevent the unwanted entry of visitors. Still, it is the window that presents the most challenging conflation of museological concessions and illusionistic compromise, not only because the original view through the window is typically thwarted, but because the naturalizing presence of exterior daylight is almost always denied for reasons of conservation and proximity to external walls. Instead, most staged interiors resort to trompe-l’oeil backdrops, lighting effects and scenographic sleights of hand to maintain a semblance of reality.

Certainly, some enthusiastic attempts have been made to resolve the recurring problem of the window. For instance, during the renovation and extension of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (opened 1980), changes were made to permit natural light into a new permanent display of the living room of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Francis W. Little House (Wayzata, Minnesota). The result, however, is significantly compromised. What was once a pavilion-like room—attached only at its short sides to the rest

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2 John Harris has explained that most period rooms lack their original ceilings due to the cost and difficulty of their relocation. See John Harris, Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 2, 6.

3 The architect for the project was Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates.

of the house—is now completely enveloped by the gallery. The original doorways in those short ends now provide restricted visitor access into the room, while the long walls are ostensibly preserved intact—their galleries of Wright’s original oak windows immaculate and complete with the architect’s much-admired leaded glass. On one side, however, the room’s original view through trees to Lake Minnetonka has been substituted with one of Central Park, albeit across an intervening corridor used for fire egress. Opposite, the windows now look upon a display of unrelated chairs and ceramic vases.

More recently, Bud Brannigan’s reconstructed studio of the late Australian painter Margaret Olley at the Tweed Regional Gallery in Murwillumbah, has negotiated similar opportunities and constraints of natural light. Here, Brannigan positioned the suite of rooms in an identical orientation to that in Olley’s former Sydney home and studio, in an attempt to recreate the daylight effects of the original. However, now located inside a gallery, what were once outdoor spaces are now interiors lit with a smattering of skylights and windows. This is not to mention the change in latitude that comes with the relocation to the gallery some eight hundred kilometers north and its unavoidable impact on the quality of light that now enters the reconstructed interiors—spaces that Olley made famous by her domestic still-life paintings.

Given the difficulty of the window, it is not surprising that some rather more experimental installations of interiors have avoided these kinds of problems by doing away with any pretense of precision or illusion. The exhibition ‘1:1 Period Rooms’ by architect-artist Andreas Angelidakis at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam in 2015, for example, remade a suite of free-standing period rooms within a single exhibition space, exposing the fabrication of the period room as a
literal and ideational construction using original and substituted materials.\textsuperscript{7} Here, doors, windows, and ceilings were largely left as voids.\textsuperscript{8}

Still, the problem of the window remains a practical and conceptual challenge for period rooms and other such exhibited architectural objects—one that unsettles or interrupts the illusion of reality, and threatens to unravel any pretense of authenticity and fidelity to the original experience. In this context of experimental practices that unpack the architectural, artistic, and curatorial stakes of the window in staging the interior, the window installations of Spencer Finch promise to shed new light.

\textit{Light in an Empty Room (Studio at Night)}

Finch’s \textit{Light in an Empty Room (Studio at Night)}, based on the earlier, less elaborate, work \textit{Paper Moon (Studio Wall at Night)} from 2009, operates within many of the same conceptual and exhibitionary parameters as the period room.\textsuperscript{9} Yet despite this shared foundation, Finch’s economic staging of the studio interior makes no attempt to reproduce the architecture of the room itself: the set-like installation has no detail that would distinguish it, save the proportions of the room and the shape and position of its windows. Its white walls appear cardboard thin, the windows cut out as if from one of the white architectural models it so resembles. Indeed, the work is less a reproduction of the interior of Finch’s studio, than it is a staging of its nocturnal effects through the recreation of the play of light and shadow from the traffic lights, street lamps, and passing cars outside its windows.

As Emily Hall writes of the antecedent work, \textit{Paper Moon}:
In a darkish room you focus on the outline of a window, cast on a wall by a street lamp outside. Every so often a brighter light sweeps through the space, from the headlights of a car driving past, briefly lifting the room from darkness to a kind of twilight and then disappearing. There is nothing else to see.

... But there is no street lamp, no window, no car; the work is an effect, or series of effects, laboriously re-created with various media, including a model train on a track, to bring to viewers this particular artifact from the artist's catalogue of memories.  

Like much of his work, *Light in an Empty Room* and *Paper Moon* exhibit Finch's characteristically reductive means, his almost scientific precision, his play with memory, and what is often described loosely as a 'poetic' sensibility for re-creating ordinary and ephemeral phenomena—contingent, transient, or otherwise below conscious or studied perception.  

The primary interest here, however, is Finch's fascination with the representation of light and color and how they have frequently come together in his window-based installations. In many of these works, the artist makes careful observations of the color and intensity of light in one time and place, in order to recreate them in an altogether different location by modifying the light cast through an existing window.
As such, Finch’s windows become an interface not only between inside and out, but also between two distinct geographic or temporal realities. His 2003 installation, *Paris/Texas,* for example, recreated the blue light he observed on a winter’s evening in Paris, France, using forty panels of colored glass on the garage doors of a gallery in San Antonio, Texas. Similarly, *Moonlight (Venice, March 10, 2009)* used filters to shift the color of the Venetian sunlight to that of moonlight; while in Brisbane, Finch transformed a glass curtain wall of the Queensland Art Gallery with colored films that at certain times of the day would match the light of a single candle in his Brooklyn studio.

*Paper Moon,* and the more recent *Light in an Empty Room* fall squarely within the same set of conceptual and formal strategies demonstrated by the broader group of window works. There is also an apparent connection to the work of Light and Space artists such as James Turrell, as well as the light-based projects of artist Olafur Eliasson, both of which employ a similar kind of aesthetic immediacy and technical mastery of perceptual phenomena. What makes Finch’s works distinct, however, is that they are not just aesthetic (in the original sense of that word), but that they are also illusionistic, and hence, representational, without ever resembling the things to which they refer—in fact, the cut-out windows of *Light in an Empty Room* appear to be as near as Finch has ever ventured towards a conventional form of representation.

What is also compelling about Finch’s window installations is that by eschewing fidelity to the original space, viewers are made aware of, and left to experience, the distance that exists between the here and now, and the representation of a faraway light from another time or place—the same, the unavoidable gap that exists between any representation and the thing itself. Indeed, it is in the distance between the two
that all of Finch’s works operate. As Mark Godfrey notes on his work, Finch does not hide the crude, directness of his means. Rather, he reveals them so that we see the work as a staging (the thin cardboard walls, the cut-out windows, the torchlight strapped to the model train)—his illusions failing as soon as we recognize them as such. In other words, Finch is actually attempting to confront the very (im)possibility of exactly recreating observed light and its color, and for that recreation to be perceived in the same way by others.

Herein lies the paradox of his practice: that is, despite all of its care, precision and quasi-scientific apparatus, Finch’s work is ultimately concerned with the imperfection, limits, and failure of perception, exposing what, in the end, is the inherent inadequacy of any attempt at re-creation and representation. As Hall explains in relation to *Paper Moon*:

> In trying to capture fleeting things, he runs the risk of or even courts failure, but this itself leads us to think about how precise any depiction of anything at all can be, and thus his efforts bloom into something new, something just to the side of what one might be expected to remember—not the poetry but the colors, not the window but the anxiety—something that arises from the combination of a memory and the desire for it.\(^19\)

Rethinking the Period Room Window

Spencer Finch’s reconstruction of his studio interior resonates with the practice of exhibiting period rooms not only because of its theatrical staging, its attention to lighting effects, its implication of memory, or its collapsing of distinct geographies, spaces, and times, but also because of how all these
things come together around the salient presence of the window. Nevertheless, in identifying these symmetries, I do not mean to propose Finch’s work as some kind of solution or way forward to the practical challenges presented by windows in period rooms. Rather, I suggest that their juxtaposition helps to expose and to clarify the problem of the window, alongside the conceptual dilemmas of illusion and visual effects in the period room itself which, like Finch’s work, operate and oscillate between aesthetic immediacy and the delayed recognition of its representation.

Much like Finch’s crudely executed window installations, what is fascinating, and confronting, about period room windows is the fact that they often expose the artifice of display—the use of painted scenes and lighting tricks. Their windows also reveal such rooms to be the dislocated, distorted, and historically inauthentic constructions that they are. In doing so, the window inadvertently exposes a truth; the authentic condition of the staged interior as a piece of theater, as scenography, as a construction. Here, the window tends to expose a gap that exists between what we see, and the original to which it refers, forcing us to look again at the nature of the staged interior as an object of display and aesthetic contemplation—as something real and authentic in its own terms, but never adequate to, or the same as, the original. As Barbara Laan suggests:

A noteworthy aspect of the discussion about the period room, ever since it emerged, is the museum focus on the question of authenticity. If we consider it properly, this focus is amazing, given that the period room is always a construct, and thus never authentic in the sense of an existing or inhabited interior. Like a fine novel, the period room is a composition made by people with the
help of ingredients from a historical reality, and thus it belongs in its most profound sense to the realm of the imagination.\textsuperscript{20}

Finch’s \textit{Light in an Empty Room (Studio at Night)} helps us to see these fundamental aspects of the period room, and therefore moves our attention away from what tends to be characterized as an irresolvable competition—a deadlock—between visual and historical authenticity. However, Finch’s windows also open up another possibility for the staged interior. In particular, I argue, they inaugurate a shift: by simulating the effect of the window rather than its prospect or material form, Finch effectively reverses the problem of period room windows, by turning the viewer’s gaze—literally and metaphorically—back onto the reconstructed interior itself, escaping the Albertian idea of the window as a pictorial frame. Of course, the gaze Finch re-establishes does not provide a view of the actual room, but a surface upon which a presentation of its memory and its effects are displayed, registering the distance between it and the original. In much the same way, the period room is not the same as the thing it purports to represent: while it has pretensions of offering a live, immediate experience of history, it is merely a stage upon which an idea, or a memory of the past is projected. Again, it is the gap between illusion and reality, between the object and its representation, that we perceive—there really is nothing else to see.
Problem: How can one formulate a concept of what Mies does in his buildings? How can one understand the nature of our sensual experience of these buildings?

Possible solution: The building is a metaphor, although one does not know what it is a metaphor of, all one knows is that it is one. The form is made in such a way as to elucidate the form of something else that has similarities with this first form. It is up to the viewer/visitor to find out, to try out, what this form is a metaphor of.

—Ludger Gerdes

Bau-Bild Krefeld, Gartenfragment, Ludger Gerdes’ contribution to the group exhibition ‘c/o Haus Esters’ at Mies van der Rohe’s Haus Esters in Krefeld in summer 1984, at first resembles an architectural scale model. Installed in a ground-floor space that faces the museum garden, the elaborate work is replete with references, citations, and allusions to his own practice, and to art and architecture theory and history,
As a formal amalgam of many parts, Bau-Bild Krefeld is organized on and around a rectangular stylobate that forms the center of the low, room-filling sculpture. On and next to this plinth, a series of freestanding, mostly L-shaped walls establish a complex spatial layout, which is both free from and related to the context—a set of cross-shaped thresholds, for example, marches from the corner of the sculpture into the corner of the room. The reference here is to Mies, and specifically to the Miesian free plan, with its non-loadbearing walls that divide interior or exterior space. It also alludes to the angled-cross organization of some of Mies’ villa and house designs, like the unbuilt Brick Country House project (1922–1923) and the two Krefeld villas: Haus Esters and its neighbor, Haus Lange (1927–1930). Elsewhere in the installation, Gerdes joins Mies to more historical architectural elements—for example, to a colonnade in the heart of the work, which hints at Benedetto da Maiano’s portico of the Santa Maria delle Grazie, Arezzo (1442–1497) or a loggia at the Palazzo dei Papi in Viterbo, Italy (c. 1266), both of which Gerdes had seen. As the artist explains in the catalogue, ’Bau-Bild Krefeld is a paraphrase of the Haus Esters and Haus Lange. It joins transformations of their ground plans with elements cited from the history of villa and country house architecture.’

Bau-Bild Krefeld, however, also acts as a miniature stage: a spatial device for assembling and re-presenting a group of historically resonant artworks and aesthetic practices, bound together by three interrelated themes. First, the work thematizes a juncture of idealism and aesthetics, nature and culture, particularly as manifested in landscape and garden design of the eighteenth century. To these ends, quotations from thinker Johann Gottfried van Herder (1744–1803) and his contemporary, the writer August Rode (1751–1837),...
are transcribed onto the installation’s miniature walls, endorsing a mix of rationality and theatrical play—a theme that returns in Gerdes’ drawing depicting a man-with-lantern and woman-with-mask, and a painting of poplar trees, elsewhere in the work. Secondly, Bau-Bild Krefeld reflects upon science. For Gerdes, knowledge requires a continual retooling of views and methods, in a process that he likens to the rebuilding of a ship at sea—a metaphor borrowed from philosopher and mathematician Paul Lorenzen. This epistemology is also indebted to the science theorists Karl Popper and Paul Feyerabend, and is captured in the images of ships and rafts that Gerdes includes in the work, and in the phrase ‘use and mention’ the artist has cut out from Styrofoam (alluding to the active, mediatory role of language in knowledge formation). The third theme is painting. Bau-Bild Krefeld includes miniature proxies of Malevich’s Black Square (1915) and Sigmar Polke’s ironic take on that same avant-gardist moment, Higher Powers Command: Paint the Upper Right Corner Black! (1969). It also comprises a timber model of a pitched-roof building, partly covered by an alternately red and white striped fabric, invoking both Marc-Antoine Laugier’s origin myth of architecture—the primitive hut—and Daniel Buren’s signature stripes. Finally, Gerdes refers to Gerhard Richter, his former teacher at the Art Academy Düsseldorf, whose works hover between figuration and abstraction, the bourgeois modes of painting, and the objectifying creeds of modernism. Miniature walls painted in olive and brown recall the Vermalungen (Inpaintings, 1972), in which Richter reworked a photorealist painting until abstract, while elsewhere Gerdes joins a citation of Richter’s abstracts to human figures derived from Canaletto’s work.

The references to Mies and the three themes identifiable in Gerdes’ installation, I would like to argue, respond to, and

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even revise, a type of artistic practice usually referred to as Institutional Critique. *Bau-Bild Krefeld* analyses an institutional site, but it does so in a specific, complex way. To understand this analysis, we must first examine the architectural and institutional history of Haus Esters that Gerdes implicates in the installation. Further on, I turn to the relation between architecture and Institutional Critique and to that between art and the ‘scale model’, especially as theorized by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Designed in 1927 by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for two close friends, Hermann Lange and Jozef Esters, the neighboring Haus Lange and Haus Esters have acquired an iconic status since their completion in 1930. Not only are the villas discussed in nearly every book on Mies (his European oeuvre consists of just nine buildings, three of them in Krefeld), but they also attest to a transition in the architect’s thinking and design. Falling between the geometric approach of the Weissenhof Estate (1927) and the free plan of the Barcelona Pavilion (1929), the houses were first conceived as open, flowing spaces. For instance, preliminary designs show that Mies planned Haus Esters as a primarily low, horizontally elongated building, whose interlocking rooms were to be divided with ceiling-high partitions. The clients, however, rejected this design and asked that ‘individual rooms must be separated by doors.’ The result, in Haus Lange, is a classic layout, with single rooms accessible via standard doors. Haus Esters, in contrast, has retained a sense of flowing space: a compact, self-contained villa with steel frames supporting its brick skin. It also contains hints of the open floor plan and inside-outside logic developed in the Barcelona Pavilion, mainly in its large, interlocking ground-floor spaces. The house thus stands as a compromise between the rational,
solid building type of 1927 and the more radical design principles typifying Mies’ designs from 1930 on.

By 1984, when Gerdes made Bau-Bild Krefeld, Mies’ work and especially the Krefeld villas were known among artists. Haus Lange had been an internationally renowned museum for contemporary art for some three decades (with celebrated exhibitions by Christo, Yves Klein, Sol LeWitt, and many more).\(^{15}\) This model was reproduced at Haus Esters when the city of Krefeld bought the villa in 1976 and opened it as a museum with an ambitious survey of Mies’ house projects in 1981.\(^{16}\) Gerdes, we can speculate, saw this exhibition: at the time, he was studying in Düsseldorf—just a half-hour drive away from Krefeld. And, in his notes, Gerdes also makes reference to Wolf Tegethoff’s publication that accompanied the show.\(^ {17}\) In the book, Tegethoff explains that the ‘spatial concept’ of the Brick Country House Project and Haus Esters differs from the “unified space” that would become important only in a later phase of Mies van der Rohe’s career. Tegethoff continues: ‘Sections of the house still form recognizable entities, even though they are no longer sharply differentiated from one another.’\(^ {18}\) Tegethoff also regards the radial layout and asymmetrically placed walls of both houses as metaphors for (social and political) freedom and (spatial and imaginary) movement. He writes:

The dynamism of this interior communicates itself to the viewer, inviting him to move through these spaces—even if only in his imagination. No longer is interior space to be thought of as something enclosed and fixed; it must now be experienced in motion. … If one catalogs all the directions of movement possible here [Tegethoff is discussing the entry space of the Brick Country House Project], a swastika-like configuration results—one that

\(^{15}\) Christo, Haus Lange, Krefeld, 1971, installation view.


Mies en Abyme

is already suggested in the placement of the defining walls.\textsuperscript{19}

This reading clearly influenced Gerdes. For him, the open-floor plan counters the typical enclosure and isolation imposed by walls, enabling a more ‘free’ space and organizational principle. \textit{Bau-Bild Krefeld} demonstrates such freedom, not only in the spatial sense, but in the works and references displayed as well. Thus, seen through the lens of Tegethoff, Mies’ invocation in the installation might be argued to symbolize freedom and movement—not literally, but imaginary, that is, a freedom to move through history, its references, and the disciplines of which they speak. Something of a pluralist vortex, \textit{Bau-Bild Krefeld} can be read as a material and imaginary platform on which highly variegated works, voices, and positions are superimposed. As the artist explains in a later interview, he used the Miesian plan ‘as a metaphor, as an open flowing space for different concepts of art, different methods (styles) and cultures’. The result, Gerdes continues, ‘is not that everything is unified. It is non-hierarchic, polyfocal, but not indifferent. There is no leveling out, only manifold relations.’\textsuperscript{20}

Interestingly, it is this pluralist view of Mies that connects the work to then-current criticisms of the modernist architect. Since the mid-1960s, functionalist architecture was widely rejected as a dogmatic, limiting, and overtly commercial paradigm. The International Style in particular, codified in the eponymous exhibition of 1932 at MoMA (in which the work of Mies was represented), was widely associated with this development. Not surprisingly, it was Mies—and his credo ‘less is more’ and architecture of ‘silence’—that was a target for this criticism. Charles Jencks’ \textit{Modern Movements in Architecture} (1973), for example, describes ‘the problem of

\textsuperscript{19} Tegethoff, \textit{Mies van der Rohe}, p. 45. Tegethoff elucidates the social and political undertone of his reading further, writing: ‘Mies must have asked himself something like the following question: How can I achieve a maximum of “freedom in spatial design, give a free form to space, open it, and tie it to the landscape”, and thereby give its inhabitants the illusion of the greatest possible personal freedom and simultaneously a sense of being part of Nature (in the more all-inclusive sense of the term), without having to surrender one of the fundamental architectural values, namely its attribute of providing a self-contained and comprehensible section of the outside world that provides people with a sense of protection and seclusion?\textsuperscript{5} (p. 49).

Mies’ as an adherence to a Platonic worldview. For Jencks, Mies ignores the semantic profusion and social content of buildings, conceiving architecture as something essential and universal.\textsuperscript{21} Likewise, in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), Robert Venturi rejects the abstraction of program and site made by Mies, especially the analogy of houses and pavilions. The architect ‘excludes important considerations only at the risk of separating architecture from the experience of life and the needs of society’, Venturi writes; his ‘pavilions have had valuable implications for architecture, but their selectiveness of content and language is their limitation as well as their strength.’\textsuperscript{22}

Gerdes knew and mastered these debates well. In spring 1980, while still a student of Richter’s, he wrote a seventy-odd-page essay titled ‘Zum Programm der Post Moderne’ (‘On the Program of Postmodernism’), discussing works and writings by Venturi, Aldo Rossi, and Léon Krier, and referencing the work of Jencks. In the following decade, Gerdes continued to reflect upon architecture in works, essays, and letter exchanges with artists and architects (including Dan Graham and Krier) with the aim of extracting insights for art.\textsuperscript{23} *Bau-Bild Krefeld* exemplifies this ambition. The installation, Gerdes explains in the exhibition catalogue, rejects the essentialism and mysticism of Mies; his ‘attempt to distill from the conditions of technical producibility an “essence” of architecture’.\textsuperscript{24} Similar to the critiques of Jencks and Venturi, *Bau-Bild Krefeld* opposes the alleged promotion of a ‘universal principle of aesthetic form’, which makes art and architecture ‘a sort of religious ersatz’.\textsuperscript{25} However, the work is also profoundly ambiguous. Like Jencks, Gerdes links Mies to the Popperian idea of a ‘closed society’—in which truth is mystified and alternative, critical viewpoints are cancelled—but he also traces positive aspects, reading the free plan as a symbol

\textsuperscript{24} Gerdes, ‘Etwas aus dem Hintergrund’, pp. 26, 28.
of a multiplicity of views and the falsifiability of knowledge.\(^{26}\) Thus Bau-Bild Krefeld echoes contemporaneous revision-isms of Mies, notably by Michael K. Hays and José Quetglas (and more latently by Tegethoff as well).\(^{27}\) The work casts Mies not only as a protagonist of the International Style, but equally as a precursor to poststructuralism, someone whose work has a sensitivity to context and upsets the idea of essence. This ‘poststructuralist, labyrinthine Mies’, as Rosalind Krauss later called it, is critical of architecture’s worldly situation, in the sense that his work resists clear legibility and refuses to reproduce pre-existing cultural values.\(^{28}\) According to these poststructuralist readings, Mies exchanges the classical conception of art and architecture as closed, self-contained entities and regards them as open and fragmented works instead. Indeed, Miesian space and design principles are what Bau-Bild Krefeld targets; it aims at the restriction of meaning, the closure of the semantic they engender. To borrow a term from art critic-historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, the work promotes ‘semantic atrophy’: that is, it ‘prohibits the perception of an immanent meaning and … displaces meaning to the peripheries, shifting it to the level of the syntagma and toward contingency and contextual, heteronomous determination.’\(^{29}\)

In May 1982 (a year after the founding of Museum Haus Esters and two years before ‘c/o Haus Esters’), the two Miesian villas in Krefeld were the subject of an intense, parallel remodeling by the artists Daniel Buren and Michael Asher. Having each chosen a villa, the artists separately intervened in one of the houses by doubling and displacing interior walls on a one-to-one scale. Working at Haus Esters, Buren made an extensive timber framework based on the floor plan of the neighboring Haus Lange, lined with fabric
printed with the artist’s signature stripes. His work, *Plan contre-plan*, made for an intricate overlay of interior walls and spatial experiences: it reshaped Haus Esters into a labyrinthine space, and challenged the distinction between inside and outside through its extension from the interior to the exterior. Moreover, the visible ‘backside’ of the timber structure implied that interior spaces were, virtually, ‘outside’ and vice versa. The insertion of new fabric walls also made the existing spatial layout extremely hard to read—the new framework doubled and concealed existing interior walls, and it hindered access to some rooms. At Haus Lange, Asher made a comparable work. His untitled installation duplicated the interior walls as detached, abstract planes, rotated ninety degrees and superimposed on the plan. Like Buren’s intervention, this piece explored the relation between inside and outside—adding walls that ran from the interior to the exterior, where they were lifted up on wooden posts—and troubled the reading of the layout. Central to Asher’s work is the copy, which raises doubt over the status of walls as being real, representational, or both.

At first sight, these are classic cases of Institutional Critique. Both works reflect upon the spatial site that grounds and displaces art, and reflect upon the relation between art and institutional context. The interdependence of work and frame, projected onto works of Institutional Critique under the auspices of poststructuralist theory, is emblematized and confirmed. Yet this reading does not get to the heart of Buren’s and Asher’s works, certainly not to their relation to architecture, for in these works we trace commentaries on Miesian space as well. In the 1982 catalogue, Buren puts pressure on the villas’ self-proclaimed modernism, positing that their comparability is suggestive of displacement and movement, like ‘a Baroque [architecture] of sorts.’ In turn,
Asher’s copy challenges Mies’ ‘truthfulness’ and eschewal of representation, portraying the villas as precursors to Peter Eisenman’s self-referential ‘cardboard architecture’. With its shift of axis, the artist wrote, ‘this work reflects a familiar condition found within the post-modern discourse’—namely, the point where a building signifies the different stages of its own design, like a scheme of spatial transformations, shifts, and displacements.

As a student, and in his early career, Gerdes was deeply influenced by the phenomenon of Institutional Critique. Not only were its protagonists—Buren, Michael Asher, and Marcel Broodthaers—often present and influential for the Rheinland art scene, their work was also central to the thinking of Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, who taught Gerdes at the Art Academy Düsseldorf in the late 1970s. Buren even substituted for Richter as Gerdes’ tutor in 1978. However, not unlike many of the younger artists of his generation, Gerdes came to regard Institutional Critique as concluded and its methods as obsolete. A point of discontent was that the typically recursive, legible nature of institution-critical practices (the stripes of Buren, for example) became susceptible to recuperation by those institutions critiqued.

Another issue pertained to Institutional Critique’s claim to penetrate, analyze, or otherwise show ‘reality’, which related to their critique of authorship. Young artists (and especially for those trained as painters) instead saw the eradication of mimesis as a cancelling of critical distance provided by the image’s thwarting of expectations and its redirection of our sense of truth and reality. Indeed, these strategic, critical roles of mimesis, which were already signaled in Pliny’s founding myth of painting, are consistently espoused and practiced by Richter (and by many of his students). See Hal Foster, ‘Semblance According to Gerhard Richter’ (2003), reprinted in Gerhard Richter (October Files 8), ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 113–134.
1960s, there was a lot of criticism of the museum. There was this gorgeous idea of the artwork as being something “real”, a real thing, a real “object”. But, he adds despairingly, ‘I think all this … is a kind of attempted suicide of art.’ Necessary, in other words, was a practice that critiques reality in and through mimetic activity, bringing semblance to bear upon art’s conditions of production and consumption. ‘I think art is not imaginable without the idea of theater. Human beings never get to the “real things”,’ the artist notes. ‘Art is something other than knowledge or ethics. It is the visual shaping of the world. And because we can never be sure about our solutions, art is like making sort of removable stage sites, mise-en-scènes.’

Clearly, Bau-Bild Krefeld takes aim at the legacy of Institutional Critique. Not only does the stripe-patterned cloth cite Buren, but the scale model (the ground plan of which is drawn on a miniature wall inside the work) reframes Miesian space similar to Plan contre-plan and Asher’s work. The installation takes up Buren’s and Asher’s works, not to complement or correct them, but to tease out how Institutional Critique gradually came to consider architecture in all its historicity, beyond the spatial envelope of the institution. Bau-Bild Krefeld, therefore, links Institutional Critique to the museum as both a form and a concept; a spatial environment and a set of design principles to which these exhibition spaces attest. It critiques the architecture of the art institution, but it also reflects upon what the building signifies: Mies’ idea of the free plan, and his vision of an inside-outside dialectic (or the absence thereof). In doing so, the installation functions as a meta-reflection on knowledge production, on how critique inevitably engages art and architecture’s historicity and specificity. Rather than suggesting that the ideology of the museum can be disclosed and ‘truth’ shown,
Gerdes suggests that knowledge only leads from one sign or interpretation to another. Like the nested figure of the *mise en abyme*, *Bau-Bild Krefeld*, based on an epistemology joining rationality to aesthetics and critique to enchantment, rephrases rather than exposes Mies.

This view illuminates our reading of the installation as a ‘scale model’ as well. In a famous passage of *La pensée sauvage* (1962), connected elsewhere to *mise en abyme*, Claude Lévi-Strauss describes ‘the reduced model’ (*le modèle réduit*) as perturbing scientific modes of cognition. Scale models, he argues, reorganize and re-signify the world; they proffer new or alternative views, rather than ‘unmask’ or ‘reveal’ reality. Closely attuned to this idea, *Bau-Bild Krefeld* is a Lévi-Straussian model, one that retools the site in which it sits and seeks to know. In doing so, the work—like ‘remodeling the ship at mid-sea’—invites us to think about Institutional Critique and architecture as a historical sequence of trial and error, a refining of insights that, while perhaps merely an illusion, ‘gives rise to a sense of pleasure which can already be called aesthetic on these grounds alone.’

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44 Referencing Roland Barthes’ book *Mythologies* (1957), for example, Gerdes jotted down in his notebook around 1980: ‘Barthes—Buren—Broodthaers: “Mythologie”’. Later, Barthes revised his view. The goal of a ‘new mythology’, he wrote in correction of his 1957 book, ‘is less the analysis of the sign than its dislocation... In other words, a mythological doxa has been created: denunciation, demystification (or demythification), has itself become discourse, stock of phrases, catechistic declaration; in the face of which, the science of the signifier can only shift its place and stop ( provisionally) further on—no longer at the ( analytic) dissociation of the sign but at its very hesitation: it is no longer the myths which need to be unmasked (the doxa now takes care of that), it is the sign itself which must be shaken; the problem is not to reveal the ( latent) meaning of an utterance, of a trait, of a narrative, but to assure the very representation of meaning, is not to change or purify the symbols but to challenge the symbolic itself.’ Roland Barthes, ‘Change the Object Itself’ (1971), in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 166–167.


In September 2012, an architectural exhibition inaugurated the opening of a curious public space on an old dock in the harbor of Ghent. There, a 160-meter-long bunker complex had been completely transformed with a coat of white paint. Moving through the dozen open-air ‘rooms’ of the building, visitors encountered thirty-six ‘as found’ exhibits: a set of holes in one floor, a red and ochre colored deposit on a wall surface, various kinds of graffiti, butterfly bushes, and many other seemingly banal items.¹ These fragments of the original structure, with their traces of industrial and informal post-industrial use, patches of vegetation, and testimonies of material change, had been carefully selected, preserved, and masked during the cleaning and painting works. Now they appeared one after the other amid freshly painted walls and floors, crisply framed and casually lit on the opening night.² They presented themselves as aesthetic events within the white but still gritty environment, like artworks—complete with didactic panels—in a suite of galleries with their roofs torn off. At the same time, the whole of the converted structure, along with its exhibits, came together as a single,
cohesive art installation. But such allusions to contemporary art and its spaces were challenged by the captions on wall labels. Their titles and short texts were scientific in nature, and interpreted each item not as art, but as physical evidence of the harbor’s economic history, of building practices, and of ecological and material processes.

The 160-meter-long strip of what were originally concrete gravel containers (grindbakken in Dutch) were built in the 1950s for storing sand and gravel before being transferred to ships and trucks. As the harbor’s operations moved north, the grindbakken fell into disuse in the late nineties. Taken over by vegetation, the abandoned site became an illegal dump and a terrain vague for informal and transgressive use. However, urban redevelopment of the area adjoining the concrete structures forced the intervention of local authorities and, in 2010, the city initiated a project to turn the gravel containers into a temporary public space.

Architect Sarah Melsens, together with visual artist Roberta Gigante, won the competition with a project titled, Use Me, through which the grindbakken would be converted into an open-air site for cultural events. Their proposal was to make the structures more accessible and usable by cutting out door openings between adjacent containers, providing light and electricity, and, most strikingly, painting over the entire complex with white road paint. Melsens and Gigante were also convinced that this newly recovered piece of public infrastructure would benefit from a succession of artistic contributions to encourage an engagement with the project’s changing urban context and neighborhood population. They commissioned the Brussels-based collective Rotor to make the first contribution. Rotor seized the opportunity to critique the radical make-over of Melsens and Gigante’s project, which they felt entailed a rather formalist and violent gesture. They proposed to mount
an exhibition based on local observations on the site’s surface by preserving selected elements or zones of the abandoned infrastructure, and by introducing narratives that relate to the site’s past, present, and future. Their exhibition, simply titled ‘Grindbakken’, retained the ‘disorderly aesthetics’ of industrial ruins in selected areas, while also seizing on the aesthetic possibilities of the newly sanitized environment.\footnote{Tim Edensor, \textit{Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality} (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 72–79.}

On their website Rotor present themselves as ‘a collective of people with a common interest in the material flows in industry and construction’. They further specify that, ‘On a practical level, Rotor handles the conception and realization of design and architectural projects. On a theoretical level, Rotor develops critical positions on design, material resources, and waste through research, exhibitions, writings, and conferences.’\footnote{Rotor homepage (http://rotordb.org, last accessed on 20 March 2018). Screen view of Rotor’s homepage (March 2018) showing the various categories in which Rotor are active (next to the Rotor DC division doing deconstruction and re-use of construction materials).}

Before the ‘Grindbakken’ show, the collective was probably best known for their 2010 exhibition ‘Usus/Usures’ in the Belgian Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale—a project on the use and wear of contemporary materials—or for their radically archival ‘OMA/Progress’ show at the Barbican in London in 2011–2012.\footnote{Rotor, ‘Usus/Usures’ in the Belgian Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale, gallery view. Photo: Eric Mairiaux.}

On the basis of the latter exhibition, OMA characterized Rotor as ‘experts at dismantling constructions both material and rhetorical’ and as ‘the anti-OMA: borderline material fetishists, contemplative types, slow, resistant, consensus-driven’.\footnote{OMA, \textit{OMA/Progress} project page (oma.eu/projects/oma-progress, last accessed on 10 January 2018).}


In addition to their exhibition, research, and design activities, Rotor have extended their practice with Rotor Deconstruction (Rotor DC). As an autonomous branch of Rotor, Rotor DC offer consultancy services to the public on
On the Art/Architecture of Reframing an Industrial Site

the reuse of building materials and, through the Rotor DC Store, sell salvaged building elements, fixtures, and materials. Clearly, Rotor are not afraid of getting their hands dirty. They argue that their participation and intervention into the physical and economic realities of building and material reuse is not only the best way to understand the processes they are interested in, but also to bring about an alternative building materials ecology. This attitude can also be seen in their ‘Grindbakken’ exhibition, which grafted itself thoroughly and critically onto the spatial and processual context of Melsens and Gigante’s Use Me. In fact, Rotor did this so successfully that their exhibition came to somewhat overshadow the original project, which would sometimes be wrongly attributed to Rotor themselves.

This confusion of roles and responsibilities is not entirely anecdotal. The ‘Grindbakken’ exhibition, the Rotor collective, and the occasional collaboration with Melsens and Gigante, all illustrate forms of professional mobility that characterize contemporary expanded practices in art, architecture, curation, and even preservation.11 The specific sort of art and architecture exchange that takes place here occurs through exhibition making and research: practices that have no disciplinary home base. After all, Melsens and Gigante did not invite Rotor to make an art project, nor to make or exhibit architecture, but to make an exhibition. For Rotor, research and exhibitions go hand in hand: ‘We see exhibition-making as a way to conduct our research.’12 (Academic) research and (architecture or art) exhibitions are also the main platforms for projects in what has recently been coined ‘experimental preservation’. ‘Working mostly outside of the traditional governmental and nonprofit organizations’, a new generation of preservationists are not only challenging the authority of official heritage institutions to define the

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11 I developed this point earlier in more detail in my contribution to a special issue Beyond Art/Archaeology dedicated to the intersections of the expanded fields of contemporary art and of archaeology, in which I also made a first short analysis of the framing in ‘Grindbakken’. Maarten Liefooghe, ‘On Rotating Positions in Archaeology, Art, and Architecture: Grindbakken’, Journal of Contemporary Archaeology 4, no. 2 (2017), pp. 138–147.

standards of practice, but are exploring ‘preservation as a new form of cultural production in itself’.  

Both *Use Me* and ‘Grindbakken’ could well be interpreted as such contemporary experiments in preservation.

In sharp contrast, however, to ‘Grindbakken’s’ discipline-crossing practices of ‘curating’ and ‘research’, is the striking appearance of a shining white cube aesthetic in Melsens and Gigante’s conversion project. It is a mark of the museum’s exhibitionary regime and spatial conventions spreading beyond its walls, and of its entanglement in processes of post-industrial urban regeneration. Yet, the white wall and floor surfaces inside the previously abandoned gravel containers can also be read as a *tabula rasa* gesture: of establishing a clean slate to make place for the new, washing away the uncomfortable image of a contemporary industrial ruin, a decade before the structure would be demolished altogether to make space for redevelopment. It is against this double backdrop of contemporary art on the one hand, and the processes of urban destruction, renewal, and preservation on the other, that ‘Grindbakken’ is interpreted here. Rotor’s framing work combined a series of curatorial and exhibitionary operations which can be unraveled in order to map out different stakes in this *mise en cadre*, and to situate some threads of this project within an expanded field of art, architecture, and preservation.

On Framing as Shutting Out (Sacrifice)

The first operation is performed on the site as a whole. Rotor selected particular areas on the surface of the existing structure because of their aesthetic qualities, or because curatorially they would add up to a fitting set of prompts to raise the

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issues Rotor wanted to discuss. The thirty-six preserved zones therefore appear as exceptions: relics that are revealed only after everything else has been sacrificed. Such a dialectic between preservation and destruction is of course a stinging reality in any process of conservation or musealization, including Rotor’s own material recuperation activities. Rarely though is it so strikingly visible as it is here. In its boldness, but also in its precision toward the existing, the Use Me-‘Grindbakken’ combined project recalls the Plan Voisin, notwithstanding key differences in scale and ideology.

Le Corbusier’s canonical project is usually described as a tabula rasa gesture, but it is much more complex and ambiguous, as Thordis Arrhenius has shown. In fact, Le Corbusier justified his radical scheme with the assertion that it would preserve Paris’ past: his plan was to ‘save’ a group of historical monuments that would forever become dislodged from their former structuring role in Paris’ urban fabric. In that regard, Le Corbusier’s proposed isolation of historic monuments by cleansing them of all ‘accretions’ is a much more radical one than Haussmann’s dégagements, as the Plan Voisin also radically detaches many of the preserved monuments from the urban tracés together with which they could still take up a co-structuring role in the modernized Parisian fabric. While the integrity of some ensembles like that of the Place Vendôme are respected, other monuments such as the Église Saint-Eustache or Garnier’s Opéra are merely preserved as incidents in the park landscape, in between the cross-shaped immeubles-villas. They are preserved in situ but, as Arrhenius argues, they nevertheless become spatially dislocated through an operation similar to that of museological displacement. The salvaged surface fragments in the Ghent gravel containers appear in a similar configuration.

15 It is by now a familiar observation that the preservation of artefacts or sites as heritage is in itself often not only a process of warding off destruction but also a process of destruction of the preserved object, and of a usually unacknowledged creation of a contemporary preservation object. For instance, in Cornelius Holtorf and Troels Myrup Kristensen, ‘Heritage Erasure: Rethinking “Protection” and “Preservation”, International Journal of Heritage Studies 21, no. 4 (2015), pp. 313–317.

16 Le Corbusier, Plan Voisin for Paris, 1925, exhibited at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs (as published in the third volume of the Oeuvre complète, 1943).


18 The comparison, suggested by Stanislaus von Moos, is discussed in more detail by Arrhenius, ‘Restoration in the Machine Age’, p. 121.
The way Le Corbusier presented the Plan Voisin inside the Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau in the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes also opens up an interesting perspective on Rotor’s project. Besides being a prototype of one dwelling from the immeubles-villas, the pavilion also simulated views onto this utopia of a Paris ‘saved’ by the latest modernization project. The pavilion’s annex was designed as a powerful diorama apparatus to stage illusionistic views onto the shiny if chilling urban visions. Two panoramic scenes painted by the architect were supported each by a rotunda, and were framed by interior window openings. In ‘Grindbakken’ we can find similar ocular devices flattened out and compressed, as it were, into little more than a perforated layer of white paint. What it frames, however, are not projected cityscapes of the future that stretch out for miles behind the frame, but traces of a past and signs of a present ecology that lie in the depth of a structure’s skin.

On Framing as Finding and Pointing (Evidence and Index)

Framing operations become a tool for Rotor to highlight their finds in ‘Grindbakken’: they selectively defamiliarize and make visible what was already there but overlooked, helping us to see and read the existing walls. Of course, there is a history of such revelatory gestures. For example, Rotor’s confrontation of the idea of the pristine white surface with the material and historical reality beneath, is similar to that seen in Lawrence Weiner’s, A 36” × 36” Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall (1968). But, while Weiner’s ‘removal’ can be read as a gesture of institutional critique exposing ‘the raw room’ of the art space

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around his excision, Rotor urges us to join them in a quasi-
archaeological surface reading of what is found and shown inside the areas they framed.\textsuperscript{22} Another useful point of reference is \textit{Rooms}: the 1976 opening exhibition of PS1 in New York, located in a derelict school building turned into an art center. In her two-part essay, \textit{Notes on the Index}, Rosalind Krauss famously interpreted the works in the show as demonstrations of art that signify in an indexical way, rather than through the use of encoded pictorial representation: ‘this group of artists, working independently, chose the terminology of the index. Their procedures were to exacerbate an aspect of the building’s physical presence, and thereby to embed within it a perishable trace of their own.’\textsuperscript{23}

Roland Barthes is a continuous interlocutor in the essay, as Krauss’ notion of the index combines his theories on (photographic) indexicality with Peircian semiotics. It is from Barthes that Krauss derives a spatio-temporal characterization of traces as indexing a reality that is ‘physically present yet temporally remote’,\textsuperscript{24} but also the idea of the necessary ‘addition of an articulated discourse, or text, to the otherwise mute index’.\textsuperscript{25} Barthes argues that photographs as indexes have the power to create presence, but that this presence remains mute. For this reason, photographs and other indexical signs are typically complemented by supplementary captions, that can expand or specify the meaning of what is made present. Yet, Krauss admits, such typical supplementary captions did not accompany the works at PS1’s inaugural exhibition.\textsuperscript{26}

In ‘Grindbakken’, by contrast, Rotor supplements nearly all exhibited areas with a concise caption in a straightforward tone (in Dutch and with English translations).\textsuperscript{27} These texts interpret and give critical meaning to the sensory immediacy of each of the finds, taking them beyond the oscillation

\textsuperscript{22} Lavin argues that in the 1970s a notion of the real became ‘the primary art/architectural separatrix’, which, on the one hand, had ‘the raw room favored by art’ and, on the other, architecture (theory) turning away from the mundane realities of building towards semiotics. Sylvia Lavin, ‘Vanishing Point (2012)’, in \textit{Flash in the Pan}, ed. Sylvia Lavin (London: Architectural Association, 2014), p. 73.


\textsuperscript{24} Krauss, ‘Notes on the Index’, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 66.

\textsuperscript{26} ‘If in the work I have been discussing – the abstract wing of this art of the index – we do not find a written text appended to the object-trace,’ Krauss, ‘Notes on the Index’, p. 66. Krauss remarks that, in contrast, ‘contemporary art which employs photography directly’ does make use of such additional textual discourse. Yet, in a not entirely convincing argument that builds on a point of Walter Benjamin about the way sequence prescribes meaning to photographic images in film, Krauss ultimately discerns a supplementary narrative in the exhibition’s quasi-cinematic succession: ‘The “text” that accompanies the work is, then, the unfolding of the building’s space which the successive parts of the works in question articulate into a kind of cinematic narrative; and that narrative in turn becomes an explanatory supplement to the works.’ Krauss, ‘Notes on the Index’, p. 67.

between absence and presence. A ‘museographic’ paradigm of exhibiting is thus privileged over the ‘phenomenological’ one that Rotor associate with ‘installations in the contemporary arts tradition’. The caption texts describe material, chemical, and economic processes and situate them within larger ecologies, pointing to the agency of builders and users, of materials and constructions in a new materialist perspective. As such, the former ruin is visually prepared and re-presented in such fashion that desires for so-called ‘ruin porn’ are frustrated; the finds are discursively activated so as to recalibrate the interaction between nature and culture beyond Simmel’s allegorical appreciation of the ruin as an aesthetic moment of balanced metaphysical tension between nature and spirit. Take for instance the caption that is added to a small patch of vegetation in one of the final rooms in the sequence. The caption is given the tongue-in-cheek title ‘Green roofs’ and identifies the plant at the center of this found composition as Biting Stonecrop, noting that ‘the use of this plant on green roofs is a more recent phenomenon, and represents a victory for this plant which has been fought relentlessly on footpaths, where it is seen as weed’.

On Framing as Cropping (Shape)

This patch of Biting Stonecrop was delineated by a circular contour, but the shapes of the thirty-six framed items vary considerably. In determining the frame’s position in relation to these found surface archaeologies vis-à-vis the viewer—not only its size and shape, but also the way it ‘crops’ around or across some fracture, plant, stain or pattern—there also emerges a possible moment of design that is rarely acknowledged in heritage preservation. Rotor embrace this creative
moment and leverage the aesthetic and interpretative effects of the frame. Compare, for instance, the different ways in which areas of graffiti are framed, and how their captions interpret them accordingly. One group was framed into rectangular fields, cut out from spray paintings that seem to continue beyond their borders, underneath the white paint.\(^{31}\) Their captions invite viewers to compare them as samples of graphic styles. By contrast, other frames are determined by their figurative content, such as a depiction of a spray can of paint, stressing that image’s subject matter.\(^{32}\) In this case, the corresponding caption highlights an unexpected relationship between paint waste and the production of cement further down in the harbor:

Since the second oil crisis (1979), the major cement producers have been looking for cheaper fuels than gas and oil to feed their energy-devouring ovens. It appeared quite profitable to burn dangerous waste products, including waste generated by the paint industry. Paint waste is not only highly calorific; it also contains mineral fillers that contribute to the composition of cement.

Elsewhere in the exhibition is a more complex juxtaposition of four related and partly intersecting frames.\(^{33}\) Of these, the most striking is a diagonal vein-like shape: it highlights a construction joint that reveals how the concrete wall was poured in two phases. Separate captions discuss the remaining three framed surface phenomena, which also speak of the life of this concrete structure: a gravel pocket that results from the concrete being insufficiently vibrated when it was poured; a rusty outgrowth that reveals reinforcement rods have started corroding beneath the surface; and dark brown leaching that indicates a chemical process of depassivation within the concrete.
While this complex contour clearly results from the cumulative outlines of four distinct zones, we can also see the resulting shape as a studied abstract composition around a diagonal line, or as a figure-ground drawing that recalls images of geological or archaeological sedimentation. Throughout the exhibition, it is such appeal to ‘the archaeological imaginary’ that, in combination with a general minimalist aesthetic, seduces visitors to engage with an often technical exposé about what might at first seem to be banal phenomena.  

The most powerful example of this aesthetic economy is perhaps the Grand Carré. Crisply squared by the surrounding white, this surface now strikes us as at once an abstract Rothko painting, and then as a stratigraphic soil section, while we learn that what we see is in fact a distribution of deposits and lichens that index the past fluctuation of water levels.

Research/Curation

An overarching paradox that gives ‘Grindbakken’ much of its power is the simultaneity of an ex situ and an in situ condition: the seductively presented material finds are at once visually displaced by their whitewashed setting, at the same time as they are recontextualized and rewritten into the narrative of the site discursively. Similarly, the forceful aestheticization of Melsens and Gigante’s white gallery-like environment and Rotor’s concomitant framing strategies, sits in stark contrast to the critical discourse of the didactic labels that eschew issues of aesthetics or art. And, in the same way as their exhibits appear within but point to realities outside an aesthetic realm, Rotor take on an ambiguous disciplinary position with regard to the art world. While operating mainly

34 With regard to this strategic instrumentality of a minimalist aesthetic, an interesting reference is the exhibition Political/Minimal that Klaus Biesenbach curated at Kunst-Werke Berlin in late 2008. In the catalogue, Jenny Schlenzka states that ‘Artists such as Francis Alÿs, Monica Bonvicini, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Mona Hatoum make use of classical Minimalist forms in their sculptural works, only they share these with stories and questions about the human condition, life, the body, and society, … they exploit the visual authority of Minimalism in order to procure attention.’ Jenny Schlenzka, ‘Mehr als men sieht/More than one sees’, in Political/Minimal, ed. Klaus Biesenbach (Berlin: Kunst-Werke Berlin, 2008), p. 21. 

outside it, with ‘Grindbakken’ Rotor nevertheless use visual strategies shared with contemporary artworks, creating an exhibition with an even stronger installation character than their ‘Usus/Usures’ Venice show. Curiously, however, and in contrast to their often explicit analyses of the economies and ecologies of building materials, Rotor has remained notably silent on the questions their work raises in relation to art and aesthetics.

While Rotor might agree to their description by OMA as ‘a group of young architects who decided for some reason not to be architects’, they would almost certainly reject their categorization as artists. Just like OMA, Rotor seem wary of art’s disengagement from the powers that condition contemporary society, and want to deal ‘fully with that which autonomous art lacks and longs for: reality’. For Rotor, who developed a practice that tries to work with the building industry—with its economic and political realities to change matters from within—art can at most be one such reality to confront, or to make use of, but it is never presented as a pursuit in and of itself. For all of the intertextual references an audience versed in contemporary art might read into ‘Grindbakken’, and for all the cultural capital this might mobilize with that audience, Rotor’s mise en cadre is therefore best understood as neither a work of art nor architecture. Rather, their reframing of this industrial ruin is an indissociable aspect in what is ultimately ecological and building archaeological ‘research/curation’.

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paper.
Angelique Campens (b. 1980) is an independent art historian, writer, educator, and curator whose research focuses on sculptural concrete, interactions between sculpture and architecture in the twentieth and twenty-first century, and the integration of sculpture in public space. Born in Belgium, she has worked for international museums and public art spaces. She teaches at KASK Ghent and is a PhD candidate in art history. In 2010 she published her first monograph about the architecture of the Belgian Modernist Juliaan Lampens. Campens lives and works in both Turin, Italy and Brussels, Belgium.

Guy Léon Châtel (b. 1956) is an Engineer Architect, Associate Professor at Ghent University, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, and principal of Labo A conducting applied research on design-oriented issues. He publishes on architecture and art (A+, Janus, DW&B, AS, MDD, Architectural Review Flanders, Cahiers Thématiques AVH-F, Interstices, Oase, San Rocco, EspaceTemps.net). Books include Luc Deleu – T.O.P office: Orban Space
Wouter Davidts (b. 1974) is partner investigator of the arc funded project ‘Is Architecture Art?’ and teaches at the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning and the Department of Art, Music and Theatre Studies, Ghent University. He has published widely on the museum, contemporary art, and architecture, including Triple Bond (2017), Luc Deleu – t.o.p. office: Orban Space (co-edited with Stefaan Vervoort and Guy Châtel, 2012) and The Fall of the Studio (2009). With Mihnea Mircan and Philip Metten he curated ‘The Corner Show’, Extra City Antwerp, 2015. Davidts lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

Mark Dorrian (b. 1964) holds the Forbes Chair in Architecture at the University of Edinburgh and is Co-Director of Metis, an atelier for art and architecture. His research spans topics in architecture and urbanism, cultural history, landscape studies, media theory and visual culture, and his writing has appeared in key international journals in these fields. Books include Writing on The Image: Architecture, the City and the Politics of Representation (2015) and Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture (co-edited with Frédéric Pousin, 2013). He is currently working on the history of sketchbooks. Dorrian lives and works in Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Susan Holden (b. 1976) is an architect and Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland. Her research deals broadly
with historical and theoretic aspects of architecture as a subject of culture. Her research on architecture and art has considered historical cases from the post-WWII synthesis of the arts and the competition to design the Centre Pompidou to contemporary developments in practice including the proliferation of pavilion architecture. She has published in a range of journals including *Journal of Architecture*, *Leonardo* and *AA Files*, and contributes to the professional journal *Architecture Australia*. Holden lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

John Körmeling (b. 1951) studied architecture at the Technische Hogeschool in Eindhoven. His projects and realizations range from visual art, architecture, urban and rural planning to design. In 2010 Körmeling designed the Dutch Pavilion for the World Expo in Shanghai (CN), entitled ‘Happy Street’. The pavilion consisted of 26 elevated small buildings, designed after various Dutch architectural styles, along a main pedestrian strip that curved in a figure eight. Each house was a mini pavilion in itself, exploring themes such as energy, water, space, and other urban issues to achieve a ‘Better City, Better Life’. He lives and works in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Maarten Liefooghe (b. 1983) is Assistant Professor in architectural history and theory at Ghent University. His research revolves around encounters between art, architecture, and exhibition and preservation practices. Liefooghe graduated in architecture and engineering in 2006 at Ghent University and T U Berlin. His dissertation, *The Monographic Factor* (2013), studied the ideology underlying single-artist museums and their institutional and architectural hybridity in between art museums, archives, and an
individual’s memorial. He studies contemporary architectural exhibitions as an experimental field in which 1:1 and in situ exhibits formulate alternative approaches to key problems in historic preservation. Liefooghe lives and works in Ghent, Belgium.

Mark Linder (b. 1960) is a Professor at Syracuse University where he was also Chancellor’s Fellow in the Humanities. He has taught at the University of Michigan, Harvard, University of Illinois–Chicago, Rice, IIT, RISD, and UCLA. He wrote Nothing Less than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism (2004) and is completing That’s Brutal, What’s Modern? which argues that the intellectual formation and design practices of the New Brutalism are instances of modern architecture coming to terms with the transdisciplinary question, ‘What would architectural practice become if imaging were its acknowledged means and ends?’ Linder lives and works in Syracuse, United States.

John Macarthur (b. 1958) is Professor of Architecture at the University of Queensland where he teaches history, theory, and design. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and a Fellow of the Queensland Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was the founding Director of the Research Centre for Architecture, Theory, Criticism and History and remains an active member of the Centre. His research on the intellectual history of architecture has focused on the conceptual framework of the relation of architecture and the visual arts from the Picturesque to the present. Macarthur lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

Philip Metten (b. 1977) is an artist who freely moves between the respective media and regimes of sculpture and
architecture, suspending disciplinary differences. He teaches in the sculpture Department of Kask / School of Arts, Ghent. Metten’s recent projects include the scenography for the group show ‘The Corner Show’, Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp, 2015; a new façade for the Kai Matsumiya gallery 153. Stanton, New York, 2015; and the interior for the restaurant Essèn, Borgerhout, 2019. In May 2019, he has a solo show at Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp. Metten lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

Sarah Oppenheimer (b. 1972) is an artist whose work explores the built environment as an orchestrated field of stasis and change. Oppenheimer is a Senior Critic at the Yale University School of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include ‘s-399390’, Mudam Luxembourg, 2016, ‘s-281913’ at Pérez Art Museum Miami, 2016 and ‘s-337473’ at Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, 2017. Oppenheimer lives and works in New York City, United States.

Ashley Paine (b. 1979) is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland. His recent research and publications have examined topics as diverse as the history of striped façades, the collection and reconstruction of architecture in museums, contemporary pavilions, and the posthumously built works of Frank Lloyd Wright. He has contributed to journals including AA Files, ARQ, The Architectural Review, and Interstices, and is co-author of the book Pavilion Proposition: Nine Points on an Architectural Phenomenon. Paine is also a practicing architect, and co-founder of the Brisbane-based practice PHAB Architects. Paine lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.
Léa-Catherine Szacka (b. 1979) is Lecturer in Architectural Studies at the University of Manchester and Visiting Lecturer at Harvard GSD. Szacka’s work focuses on the history of architecture exhibitions and postmodern architecture. Work includes Mediated Messages: Periodicals, Exhibitions and the Shaping of Postmodern Architecture (co-edited with Véronique Patteeuw, 2018), Concrete Oslo (co-edited with Erik Langdalen and Andrea Pinochet, 2018), Le Concert: Pink Floyd à Venise (2017), Exhibiting the Postmodern: The 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale (2016, winner of the SAHGB Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion). She sits on the editorial boards of Footprint and Architectural History. Szacka lives and works in Manchester, United Kingdom.

Annalise Varghese (b. 1992) is a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland and part of the ARC funded project ‘Is Architecture Art? A history of categories, concepts and recent practises.’ Her research orbits conceptual architectural practices, with regard to the architectural pavilion and its rising presence in the contemporary design sphere. Varghese explores the pavilion’s indeterminate and shifting identity over time, as a form somewhere between art and architecture, with equal footing in physical and virtual domains—presenting and publishing her early research findings through international conferences: SAHANZ and AHRA in 2017. Varghese lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

Stefaan Vervoort (b. 1986) is a PhD candidate at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ghent University. His research focuses on the exchange between postwar art and architecture, specifically on architectural scale models and postmodern architecture theory in the 1980s
visual arts. Recent publications include *Aglaia Konrad from A to K* (co-edited with Emiliano Battista, 2016); *Raymond Barion* (co-edited with Mihnea Mircan and Stijn Maes, 2014); and *Luc Deleu – t.o.p. office: Orban Space* (co-edited with Wouter Davidts and Guy Châtel, 2012). Vervoort lives in Antwerp and works in Brussels and Ghent, Belgium.

Stephen Walker (b. 1966) is currently Head of Architecture at the University of Manchester. His research draws upon architectural and critical theory and examines the questions that theoretical projects can raise about particular moments of architectural and artistic practice. A developing methodology has brought together aspects of theory with a broad range of practical work including Mediaeval Breton architecture, ring-roads and the work of contemporary artists (in particular Gordon Matta-Clark, Helen Chadwick, about whom he has published widely, and more recently, Warren and Mosley). Walker lives in Sheffield and works in Manchester, United Kingdom.

Rosemary Willink (b. 1988) is a PhD candidate in the School of Architecture at the University of Queensland and part of the ARC Discovery Project ‘Is Architecture Art? A history of categories, concepts and recent practices’. With prior experience working in cultural institutions in Australia, Europe and the United Kingdom, Willink’s research focuses on how museums and galleries collect, curate and commission architecture. Her qualifications include a Masters of Contemporary Art from Sotheby’s Institute and a Bachelor of Music Performance from the Victorian College of the Arts. Willink lives and works in both Brisbane, Australia and Washington DC, United States.
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