Towards A New Architecture

Jeffrey Kipnis

In his seminal essay ‘Towards A New Architecture’, Jeffrey Kipnis delivers a compelling and detailed definition of the characteristics of a heterogeneous space as a democratic space that is different from both the homogenous universal space of Modernism and the incongruous heterogeneity produced by Post-Modern collage. Furthermore, he develops a strikingly decisive discourse on the relation between critical spatial strategies, instrumental design techniques and the production of architectural effects. He delivers both arguments at a stunning level of careful argumentation, and description and comparison of exemplary projects that embody the characteristics of his five points towards a new architecture.

Well, I stand up next to a mountain,
And I chop it down with the edge of my hand.
Then I pick up all the pieces and make an island,
might even make a little sand.

Jimi Hendrix

Over the last few years, a few projects by a handful of architects have broached discussions of a New Architecture. The themes of this discussion are only now coming into sufficient focus to allow for the preliminary efforts to articulate some of them in this volume. Before we turn our attention to that specific task, however, let us consider for a moment what is at stake in the endeavour.

‘A New Architecture’. Today one whispers this phrase with trepidation and embarrassment, perhaps for good reason. True enough, most New Architectures are so ill-conceived that they are stillborn or die a merciful death early in infancy. But the prognosis is poor even for those with the strength to survive their hatching, for the majority of these are killed by a well co-ordinated, two-pronged attack.

There are several variations, but the general schema of this attack is well known: first, critics from the right decry the destabilising anarchism of the New Architecture and the empty egoism of its architects; then, critics from the left rail against the architecture as irresponsible and immoral and the architects as corrupt collaborationists. Sapped by this onslaught, the eviscerated remainders are quickly mopped up by historians, with their uncanny ability to convince us that the supposed New Architecture is actually not new at all and that it was in fact explored with greater depth and authenticity in Europe some time ago.¹
Today, historians and critics alike proselytise upon the creed that there is nothing new that is worthwhile in architecture, particularly no new form. Their doxology is relentless; ‘praise the past, from which all blessings flow’. Thus, we retreat from the new and have become ashamed to look for it. I have colleagues who comb drafts of their work before publication in order to replace the word ‘new’ as often as possible; I have done it myself. As a result, PoMo, whose guiding first principle is its unabashed and accurate claim to offer nothing new, has become the only architecture to mature over the last 20 years.

‘Nonsense!’ it will be argued. ‘During the same period a flourishing revival of the avant-garde has developed’ and fingers will point to MOMA’s Decon exhibition and to the buildings of Eisenman, Gehry, Libeskind, Tschumi, Koolhaas, Hadid and others. Yet, upon closer examination, it is not more accurate to say that these works have been executed under the auspices of an implicit contract of disavowal. In other words, is it not the case that these designs are celebrated as aural, signature buildings of interest only for their irreproducible singularity, rather than as sources of new principles for a general architectural practice. In that sense, the discipline of architecture has recognised them as exotic, precisely so as to suppress their contribution to a New Architecture.

Yet within these disparate works are insights that might well contribute to formulating a new framework for a New Architecture: one that promises both formal vitality and political relevance. Consider the work of Daniel Libeskind, for example. From his Chamber Works to his recent projects in Germany and elsewhere, one finds a sustained, penetrating critique of the axis and its constellation of linear organisations. Considering the political, social and spatial history of the axis in architecture and urbanism, this is no minor issue. Yet, very little on the subject can be found in the critical literature treating these projects. Instead, Libeskind is configured as an avatar of the esoteric and the status and power of the axis in quotidian architectural practice, so thoroughly rethought in his projects, is left unquestioned.

On the surface, our retreat from the New seems both historically and theoretically well informed. Towards its utopian aspirations, architectural Modernism sought to overthrow obsolete spatial hierarchies and establish a new and more democratic, homogeneous space. However well-meaning this goal was, in so far as its search for the New was implicated in an Enlightenment-derived, progressivist project, it was also implicated in the tragedies that resulted. The instrumental logic of architectural Modernism’s project of the new necessarily calls for erasure and replacement, of Old Paris by Le Corbusier, for example.

In the name of heterogeneity, postmodern discourse has mounted a critique of the project of the new along several fronts. It has demonstrated both the impossibility of invention tabula rasa and the necessity to celebrate the very differences Modernism sought to erase. Its own version of the search for the New, a giddy logic of play, of reiteration and recombination, of collage and montage, supplants Modernism’s sober,
self-serious search for the Brave New. In Post-Modernism's play, history regains renewed respect, though on different terms. Rejected as the linear, teleological process that underwrites its own erasure and replacement, history is now understood as the shapeless well of recombinatorial material; always deep, always full, always open to the public.

In Post-Modernism's most virulent practices, those that use reiteration and recombination to insinuate themselves into and undermine received systems of power, a relationship to the New is maintained that is optimistic and even progressive, albeit not teleologically directed. In such Post-Modern practices as deconstruction, the project of the New is rejected. New intellectual, aesthetic and institutional forms, as well as new forms of social arrangements, are generated not by proposition but by constantly destabilising existing forms. New forms result as temporary restabilisations, which are then destabilised. Accelerated evolution replaces revolution, the mechanisms of empowerment are disseminated, heterogeneous spaces that do not support established categorical hierarchies are sought, a respect for diversity and difference is encouraged. Far from being nihilistic, Post-Modernism in this conception is broadly affirmative.

Unfortunately, however, Post-Modernism's critique of the politics of erasure/replacement and emphasis on recombination have also led to its greatest abuse, for it has enabled a reactionary discourse that re-establishes traditional hierarchies and supports received systems of power, such as the discourse of the nothing new employed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher for their political ends and by Prince Charles, Roger Scruton and even Charles Jencks to prop up PoMo.

I believe, therefore, that it is not Post-Modernism itself, but another, more insidious pathology, a kind of cultural progenia, that underlies our current withdrawal from the New. The symptoms of this disorder were first diagnosed by Nietzsche and have been thoroughly analysed more recently by Roberto Unger. Briefly, it manifests itself as a rationale which holds that the catalogue of possible forms (in every sense of the word form: institutional, social, political and aesthetic) is virtually complete and well known. We may debate the relative merits of this form or that, but we will no longer discover nor invent any new forms. This position is far from the suppositions of Post-Modern combinatorics.

Is it possible that 'Westernity' as a cultural experiment is finished and, put simply, that we are old? Only in that context could our current, excessive veneration of the received catalogue of forms be valid. Frankly, I cannot believe that in the short span of our history we have experimented with and exhausted the possibilities of form. It seems to me that every indication today is to the contrary; whether one considers the political transformations in Eastern Europe or the technological transformations that characterise today's society. The building of the catalogue of available forms, aesthetic forms, institutional forms and of forms of social arrangement, has only just begun.
I have already indicated some of the broader criteria for a New Architecture. If it is not to repeat the mistakes of Modernism, it must continue to avoid the logic of erasure and replacement by participating in recombinations. As far as possible, it must seek to engender a heterogeneity that resists settling into fixed hierarchies. Furthermore, it must be an architecture, i.e., a proposal of principles (though not prescriptions) for design. Finally, it must experiment with and project new forms.

The first two of these criteria already belong to architectural Post-Modernism. However, the last two criteria—the call for principles and the projection of new forms—detach fundamentally the theorisation of a New Architecture from Post-Modernism proper, however much it draws upon the resources of the latter.

Indicative of that detachment is the degree to which some New Architecture theorists, notably Sanford Kwinter and Greg Lynn, have shifted their attention from post-structural semiotics to a consideration of recent developments in geometry, science and the transformations of political space, a shift that is often marked as a move from a Derridian towards a Deleuzian discourse.

In these writings, the Deleuzian cast is reinforced with references to Catastrophe Theory—the geometry of event-space transformations—and to the new Biology. Not only are geometry and science traditional sources par excellence of principles and forms in architecture, but, more importantly, the paramount concern of each of these areas of study is morphogenesis, the generation of new form. However provocative and invaluable as resources these studies in philosophy and science are, it must be said that neither provide the impetus for a New Architecture, nor the particulars of its terms and conditions. Rather, these have grown out of architectural projects and developments within the discipline of architecture itself.

One contributing factor to the search for a New Architecture is the exhaustion of collage as the prevailing paradigm of architectural heterogeneity. In order to oppose Modernism's destituting proclivity for erasure and replacement, Post-Modernism emphasised grafting as the recombinatorial instrument of choice. The constellation of collage, in all its variations, offered the most effective model of grafting strategies. From Rowe to Venturi to Eisenman, from PoMo to the Deconstructivists, collage has served as the dominant mode of the architectural graft. There are indications, however, to suggest that collage is not able to sustain the heterogeneity architecture aspires to achieve. In lieu of the meticulous study necessary to support this claim, allow the suggestion of two of its themes, the first historical, and the second theoretical. First, Post-Modern collage is an extensive practice wholly dependent on effecting incoherent contradictions within and against a dominant frame. As it becomes the prevailing institutional practice, it loses both its contradictory force and its affirmative incoherence. Rather than destabilising an existing context, it operates more and more to inscribe its own institutional space. The only form collage produces, therefore, is the form of collage.
Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, collage is limited to a particular order of semiotic recombinations. Each element in a collage, even in the aleatoric process-collage of Dada, must be known and rosterable in its own right. Thus, although collage may engender new compositions as well as shifts, slips, accidents and other chimerical effects, the long-term effect of collage is to valorise a finite catalogue of elements and/or processes.

Collage is only able to renew itself by constantly identifying and tapping into previously unrostered material. Thus, collage can never be projective. The exhaustion of collage derives from the conclusion that the desire to engender a broadly empowered political space in respect of diversity and difference cannot be accomplished by a detailed cataloguing and specific enfranchisement of each of the species of differentiation that operate within a space. The process is not only economically and politically implausible, it is theoretically impossible. If collage is exhausted as a recombinatorial strategy – a matter still debated – then the problem becomes one of identifying grafts other than collages. The key distinction from collage would be that such grafts would seek to produce heterogeneity within an intensive cohesion rather than out of extensive incoherence and contradiction.

In a lecture delivered in 1990 to the ANYONE conference in Los Angeles, the neo-modern social theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger took issue with current Post-Modern practices in architecture, primarily in terms of what he saw as the ‘ironic distancing’ effected by PoMo and Deconstructivist architecture. At the conclusion of his lecture, he outlined five criteria that any New Architecture seeking to contribute to a non-hierarchical, heterogeneous political space must meet.

According to Unger, such an architecture must be vast, blank, it must point and be incongruous and incoherent. It is not clear from the lecture how Unger intended his criteria to be interpreted, but I was struck by the degree to which, with one exception, they lent themselves to a discourse on grafting alternatives to collage. Particularly interesting to me was how well these criteria read as generalisations of the spatial/formal project of Modernism outlined in Le Corbusier’s points. Where Corbusier’s points are directed towards producing a broadly democratic space by achieving homogeneity, Unger’s are directed towards a similar political goal by achieving a spatial heterogeneity that does not settle into stable alignments or hierarchies. I interpret and modify Unger’s criteria as follows: (i) Vastness – negotiates a middle ground between the homogeneity of infinite or universal space and the fixed hierarchies of closely articulated space. Recognising the necessity of finitude for heterogeneity, vastness seeks sufficient spatial extension to preclude the inscription of traditional, hierarchical spatial patterns. Design implications: generalisation of free plan to include disjunction and discontinuity; extension of free plan to ‘free section’; emphasis on residual and interstitial spaces. (ii) Blankness – extrapolates the Modernist project of formal abstraction understood as the suppression of quotation or reference through the erasure of decoration and ornament.
to include canonic form and type. By avoiding formal or figurative reference, architecture can engage in unexpected formal and semiotic affiliations without entering into fixed alignments. Design implications: generalisation of free facade to free massing. (iii) Pointing – architecture must be projective, i.e., it must point to the emergence of new social arrangements and to the construction of new institutional forms. In order to accomplish this, the building must have a point, i.e., project a transformation of a prevailing political context. The notion of pointing should not be confused with signifying, and in fact is a challenge to the determined structure, whether monosemic or polysemic. The indeterminacy of pointing shifts the emphasis from the formation of stable alignments and/or allegiances to the formation of provisional affiliations. (iv) Incongruity – a requirement to maintain yet subvert received data, including, for example, the existing site as a given condition and/or the programme brief. Maintenance and subversion are equally important; either alone leads inexorably to spatial hypostatisation. Design implications: a repeal of the architectural postulates of harmony and proportion, structural perspicuity and system coordination (e.g., among plan, section and facade, or between details and formal organisation). (v) Intensive Coherence – in fact Unger stresses the necessity for incoherence, understood as a repeal of the architectural postulate of unity or wholeness. However, because incoherence is the hallmark of Post-Modern collage, I suggest as an alternative, a coherence forged out of incongruity. Intensive coherence implies that the properties of certain monolithic arrangements enable the architecture to enter into multiple and even contradictory relationships. It should not be confused with Venturi's notion of the 'difficult whole', in which a collage of multiplicity is then unified compositionally.

At the beginning of this essay, I noted that a handful of recent projects offer specific terms and conditions for a New Architecture. While, in general, these projects show a shift away from a concern for semiotics towards a concern for geometry, topology, space and events, in my view, they subdivide into two broad camps, which I term DeFormation and InFormation. DeFormation, seeks to engender shifting affiliations that nevertheless resist entering into stable alignments. It does so by grafting abstract topologies that cannot be decomposed into simple, planar components nor analysed by the received language of architectural formalism.

The strategy for InFormation, of which Koolhaas's Karlsruhe and Tschumi's Le Fresnoy are exemplary cases, is to form a collecting graft, usually by encasing disparate formal and programmatic elements within a neutral, Modernist monolith. The resultant incongruous residual spaces are then activated with visual layering, programmatic innovation, technological effects and events.

Although both evolve from the same problem, the architecture of DeFormation and InFormation are by no means simply collaborative. In general, both agree on certain architectural tactics that can be understood in terms of Unger's criteria (as modified).
Both, for example, rely on such devices as box-within-box sections with an emphasis on interstitial and residual spaces (vast, incongruous); also, both deploy monolithic forms and avoid any obvious applied ornament or figurative reference (blank, intensive cohesion).

Yet the tensions between them are pronounced. While DeFormation emphasises the role of new aesthetic form and therefore the visual in the engenderment of new spaces, Information de-emphasises the role of aesthetic form in favour of new institutional form, and therefore of programme and events. The event-spaces of new geometries tend to drive the former, while the event-spaces of new technologies occupy the latter.

One of the persuasive characteristics of Information is its unapologetic use of the orthogonal language of Modernism. When Post-Modernist architecture first emerged, the formal language of Modernism was simply condemned as oppressive and monotonous—recall Venturi’s ‘Less is a bore’. Subsequently, that critique was deepened as architects and theorists demonstrated that, far from being essentialist, the language of Modernism constituted a sign-system. Once the demonstration that architecture was irreducibly semiotic was complete, the essentialist justification for the austere language of Modernism dissolved and the door opened to the use of any and all architectural signs in any and every arrangement.

Information posits that the exhaustion of collage is tantamount to a rendering that is irrelevant of all aesthetic gestures. The architectural contribution to the production of new forms and the inflection of political space therefore can no longer be accomplished by transformations of style. Furthermore, Information argues that the collective architectural effect of the orthogonal form of Modernism is such that it persists in being blank; often stressing that blankness by using the forms of screens for projected images. Pointing is accomplished by transformations of institutional programmes and events. For DeFormation, on the other hand, architecture’s most important contribution to the production of new space and the inflection of political spaces continues to be aesthetic. Far from being blank, DeFormation perceives the Modernist language of Information as nothing less than historical reference and the use of projected images no more than applied ornament. Instead, DeFormation searches for blankness by extending Modernism’s exploration of monolithic form, while rejecting essentialist appeals to Platonic/Euclidian/Cartesian geometries. Pointing is accomplished in the aesthetics; the forms transform their context by entering into undisciplined and incongruous formal relationships. Information sees the gestured geometries of DeFormation as predominantly a matter of ornament style.

To examine the design consequences of these issues, let us look at a brief comparison of Tschumi’s Information at Le Fresnoy with Shirel’s DeFormation at Nara. The National Centre for Contemporary Arts at Le Fresnoy offered a perfect circumstance in which to reconsider the graft. In his description of the problem, Tschumi was specific in outlining
the various possibilities. Since many of the existing structures were in disrepair, a return to an erase-and-replace approach was perfectly plausible. On the other hand, the quality of the historical forms and spaces at Le Fresnoy also suggested a renovation/restoration approach à la Collage. Tschumi eschews both, however, and envelopes the entire complex within a partially enclosed Modernist roof to create a cohesive graft. The graft does not produce a collage; rather than creating a compositionally resolved collection of fragments, the roof reorganises and redefines each of the elements into a blank, monolithic unity whose incongruity is internalised. Tschumi sutures together the broad array of resulting spaces with a system of catwalks and stairs, visually interlacing them with cuts, partial enclosures, ribbon windows and broad transparencies. Wherever one is in the complex, one sees partial, disjointed views of several zones from inside to outside at the same time.

Like the visual effects, the role of programming in this project concerns the production of space as much, if not more than, the accommodation of function. As far as possible, Tschumi programmes all the resultant spaces, even treating the tile roofs of the old building as a mezzanine. Where direct programming is not possible, he elaborates the differential activation in materials/events. In the structural trusses of the new roof, he projects videos as an architectural material in order to activate those residual spaces with events.

The result is a project which promises a spatial heterogeneity that defies any simple hierarchy: a collection of differentiated spaces capable of supporting a wide variety of social encounters without privileging or subordinating any. Le Fresnoy undermines the classical architectural/political dialectic between hierarchical heterogeneity and homogeneity and points to a potentially new institutional/architectural form.

Like Tschumi at Le Fresnoy, Shirdel also uses a collecting graft to unify an incongruous box-in-box section in his project for the Nara Convention Center. Unlike Tschumi, however, he shapes the form and internal structure of the graft by folding a three-bar parti with two complex regulation line geometries. The first geometry involves the exterior of the building into an abstract, non-referential monolith whose form flows into the landscaping of the site. The second geometry has a similar effect on the major structural piers that hold the three theatres (each one a box whose form is determined simply by exigent functional requirements) suspended in section.

The internal and external geometries connect in such a way that 'major' space of the complex is entirely residual, an alley, so to speak, [de]rived in the provisional links between two invaginated geometries. The residual-space effect is reinforced by the fact that all of the explicit programme of the building is concentrated in the theatres and lobbies that float as objects above and away from the main space. In a sense, Shirdel's attitude towards programme is the opposite of Tschumi's. Although the building functions according to brief, there is no architectural programme other than function, no informing choreography
nor any use of technology to activate space. Shirdel's computer renderings of Japanese
dancers performing in eerie isolation in the emptied, residual space underline the point.
The entire issue of spatial heterogeneity rests in the aesthetics of the form and in the
opposition between unprogrammed event and function. In passing, it is worth noting
that the risk of proposing that the dominant (and most expensive) space of a building be
nothing other than residual space should not be underestimated.

I pursue the development of DeFormation in greater detail below and will have occasion
to return to the Shirdel Nara project. However, I believe that the brief comparison above
is sufficient to indicate both the similarities and divergences in the routes that are being
mapped by InFormation and DeFormation towards a New Architecture.

DeFormation

As is always the case in architectural design theory, DeFormation is an artefact, a
construction of principles that have emerged after the fact from projects by diverse
architects that were originally forged with different intentions and under different terms
and conditions. Thus, strictly speaking, there are no DeFormationist architects (yet), just
as there were no Mannerist or Baroque architects. It is a minor point, perhaps too obvious
to belabour, yet as we move towards a development of principles and a technical
language with which to articulate them, we must be cautious not to allow these
prematurely to circumscribe and regulate a motion in design whose fertility derives as
much from its lack of discipline as from its obedience to policy. If there is a DeFormation,
it has only just begun.

Much has been written and no doubt more will be written that consigns the work of
DeFormation (and InFormation) to this or that contemporary philosopher, particularly
Gilles Deleuze. It cannot be denied that a powerful consonance exists between the field
of effects sought by these architects and various formulations of Deleuze and Guattari in
A Thousand Plateaus or by Deleuze in Le Pli. The sheer number of terms that the
architectural literature has borrowed from the Deleuzian discourse (affiliation, pliancy,
smooth and striated space, etc) not to mention such fortuities as the shared thematisation
of folding, testify to the value of this correspondence. However, for all the profitability
of this dialogue there are costs to which we should be attentive. In general, obligating any
architecture to a philosophy or theory maintains a powerful but suspect tradition in which
architecture is understood as applied practice. In that tradition, the measure of
architectural design is the degree to which it exemplifies a theory or philosophy, rather
than the degree to which it continuously produces new architectural effects; as a
consequence, the generative force of design effects in their own right are subordinated to
the limited capacity of architecture to produce philosophical (or theoretical) effects.

In his reading of Leibniz in Le Pli, Deleuze stages his meditation on the fold in part on an
interpretation of the space of Baroque architecture, thus it might be assumed that
Baroque architecture stands as a paradigm of the architectural effects of the fold. Such an assumption, however careless, would be fair and would underwrite the configuration of DeFormation as nothing more than neo-Baroque.

Now, though Deleuze's reading of Baroque architecture is adequate to exemplify his thought on the fold, it is by no means an adequate reading of the architectural effects of the Baroque. Baroque architecture is no more able to realise the contemporary architectural effects of the fold than Leibniz's philosophy is able to realise the contemporary philosophical effects of Deleuze's thought. In other words, Deleuze's philosophy is no more (merely) neo-Leibnizian than DeFormation is (merely) neo-Baroque.

However much Deleuze's philosophy profits from the generative effects of Leibniz's text, its payoff, ie what it has new to say, does not rest on the accuracy of its scholarly recapitulation of Leibniz's philosophy; rather, it rests primarily on the differences between what Deleuze writes and what Leibniz writes. On this point, I believe Deleuze (and Leibniz!) would agree. In the same way, the interest of DeFormation does not rest on its recapitulation of Baroque themes, but primarily on the differences it effects with the Baroque and its other predecessors.

But perhaps, the dearest cost to which we must be attentive is the degree to which formulating DeFormation in terms of a Deleuzian language belies the independent development of the (constant ideas within) architecture. No doubt this development, more a genealogy than a history, lacks the grace and pedigree that it would obtain from architecture conceived as applied philosophy. Yet, the halting, circuitous pathways of DeFormation's evolution — here lighting on cloth folds depicted in a painting by Michelangelo, there on train tracks, here a desperate attempt to win a competition, there a last-minute effort to satisfy a nervous client, and always drawing upon the previous work of others — not only bears a dignity all its own, but also materially augments the substance of the philosophy.

Allow me then, to retrace some of these paths, collecting my effects along the way. Neither arbitrarily nor decisively, I begin with three contemporaneous projects: Shirdel and Zago's Alexandria Library Competition entry, Eisenman's Columbus Convention Center and Gehry's Vitra Museum.¹²

For a number of years beginning in the early 1980s, Bahram Shirdel, in association with Andrew Zago, pursued an architecture which he termed black-stuff. Ironic as the term may first appear, black-stuff is quite an accurate name for the effects Shirdel sought to achieve. Rejecting the Deconstructivist themes of fragments, signs, assemblages and accreted space, Shirdel pursued a new, abstract monolithicity that would broach neither reference nor resemblance. Shirdel was interested in generating disciplined architectural forms that were not easily decomposable into the dynamics of point/line/plane/volume of modern
formalism. We will come to refer to these forms in terms of anexact geometries and non-
developable surfaces, but Shirdel’s black-stuff set the stage for the DeFormationist
principle of non-referential, monolithic abstraction we have already discussed.

To generate these forms, Shirdel developed a technique in which he would begin with
one or more recognisable figure(s) whose underlying organisation possesses the desired
internal complexity. Then, in a series of steps, he mapped the architectural geometry of
these figures in meticulous detail, carefully abstracting or erasing in each progressive step
aspects of the original figure that caused it to be referential or recognisable – a process
I termed disciplined relaxation at the time. Similar processes appear in the discussion of
the Gehry and Eisenman projects to follow.

The culmination of the black-stuff investigations was the Shirdel/Zago entry premiated in the
Alexandria Library competition, a design that evolved from a disciplined relaxation of a
painting of folded cloth by Michelangelo. In that figure of the fold, Shirdel found precisely the
formal qualities he sought. Although the final form shows no obvious traces of the original
painting, relationships among surfaces, form and space are captured in the architecture.

Shortly after the Alexandria competition, Peter Eisenman entered a limited competition
against Holt Henshaw, Pfau and Jones, and Michael Graves to design a convention
centre for Columbus, Ohio. Because the City of Columbus framed the opening of the
centre in terms of its quincentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus’s first voyage,
Eisenman’s initial strategy was to design a collage project based on the nautical
architecture of the Santa Maria. With only three weeks remaining in the 12-week
competition period, Eisenman learned that Graves, too, was basing his design on a nautical
theme. Anxious to win the competition (he had only just opened his own office), Eisenman
took the extreme risk of abandoning weeks of work and shifting to an entirely different
scheme, taking a moment to send Graves a postcard of a sinking ship en passant.

The new scheme was based on the notion of ‘weak form’ Eisenman had only just begun
to formulate. Working from two oddly similar diagrams, one of a fibre-optics cable
cross section and the other of the train-track switching system that once occupied the
site in Columbus, Eisenman produced the winning design: a monolithic box knitted out
of vermiciform tendrils. The likeness shared by the two diagrams is important to note, for
in that weak resemblance, Eisenman first saw the potential of weak form.

Although similar in many respects, the Eisenman weak form projects are different from
Shirdel’s black-stuff in one aspect that is of fundamental significance to the principles of
DeFormation. Eisenman also attempts to achieve an abstract monolith free of explicit
reference. But while black-stuff projects were intended to be radically other, Eisenman’s
notion of weakness requires the form to retain a hint of resemblance, so that it might
enter into unexpected relationships, like the one that connects the two diagrams.
True enough, once alerted, one is quite able to read both the train-track and fibre-optic diagrams in the convention centre form. However, the most surprising weak link occurs when the scheme is placed on site. As is to be expected, the design addressed many traditional architectural relationships to the site; such as reinforcing the street edge and negotiating a severe scale transition. On the other hand, almost as if it had been planned from the beginning, the braided forms of Eisenman’s project connected the mundane three-storey commercial buildings across to street from the complex highway system interchange behind it. Though entirely unplanned, this connection has the effect of transforming the prevailing architectural logic of the site.

Borrowing from Deleuze, DeFormation refers to these tentative links with contingent influences as affiliations, and engendering affiliations is the foremost mechanism by which DeFormation attempts to Point. Affiliations are distinct from traditional site relations in that they are not predetermined relationships that are built into the design, but effects that flow from the intrinsic formal, topological or spatial character of the design.

Typically, one identifies important site influences such as manifest or latent typological/morphological diagrams, prevailing architectural language, material, detailing or the like, and incorporates some or all of these influences into a design, often by collage. Such relationships are not affiliations, but alignments and serve to reinforce the dominant architectural modes governing a context.

Affiliations, on the other hand, are provisional, ad hoc links that are made with secondary contingencies that exist within the site or extended context. Rather than reinforcing the dominant modes of the site, therefore, affiliations amplify suppressed or minor organisations that also operate within the site, thereby reconfiguring context into a new coherence. Because they link disjoint, stratified organisations into a coherent heterogeneity, the effect of such affiliations is termed ‘smoothing’.16,17

In order to complete our initial survey of affiliative effects, we must pick up a few threads from Frank Gehry at Vitra. Gehry’s design process, not unrelated to Shirel’s disciplined relaxation and Eisenman’s weakening, involves incessant modelling and remodelling an initial figure or set of figures. Though he distorts and deforms the figures towards architectural abstraction, Gehry is even more concerned than Eisenman to preserve a representational heritage in the design.

Gehry’s Vitra commission called for a site master plan, a chair assembly factory and a museum for the furniture collection. In the preliminary design, Gehry simply aligned the new factory with the factory buildings previously on site, while his museum, a geometr’s Medusa, stood in stark contrast. Though Gehry reduced the differences to some extent by surfacing in white plaster, so as to relate to the factory buildings, nevertheless, as a graft on the site, the form of the museum installed the familiar disjunctive incoherence.
have associated with collage. The client, fearful of employees' complaints that all of the
design attention was being invested in the museum and none in the workplace, asked
Gehry as an afterthought to enliven the new factory building. In response, Gehry
appended some circulation elements that reiterated the stretched and twisted tentacles
of the museum to the two corners of the new factory nearest to the museum.

The architectural effect was dramatic, for like the Eisenman convention center, the
additions knit affiliative links between the factory buildings and the museum, smoothing
the site into a heterogeneous, but cohesive whole. However, unlike the convention
center, the staircases entered the site as a field rather than as an object – pointing to the
possibility of intensive coherence generating a smoothing effect at an urban scale. From
this perspective, the circulation additions contribute as much to the architecture of
DeFormation as the museum itself.

Because other genealogies tracing through other projects can also be drawn, it cannot
be said that DeFormation is born from these three projects. Two of the key principles of
DeFormation are in place. In summary these are: (i) an emphasis on abstract, monolithic
architectural form that broaches minimal direct references or resemblances and that is
alien to the dominant architectural modes of a given site; (ii) the development of
smoothing affiliations with minor organisations operating within a context that are
engendered by the intrinsic geometry, topological and/or spatial qualities of the form.
However, before we examine the discussions that have developed around these issues,
the evolution of one last principle must be traced.

As Bahram Shirdel and I analysed these and related projects, we noticed that, for all of
their other movements, they tend to leave the classical congruity between massing and
section largely intact. As a result, the skin of the building continues to be partitioned into
the familiar programme-driven hierarchies of major, minor and service spaces implied by
the massing. The issue, as we saw it, was to avoid both the continuous, homogenous space
of the free plan and the finite, hierarchical space of more traditional sectional strategies.

Several projects suggested different ways to approach the problem of section. Among the
more influential of these were Eisenman's Carnegie Mellon Research Institute, the
Nouvel/Starck entry for the Tokyo Opera House competition and Koolhaas' Bibliothèque
de France. In the Eisenman scheme, essentially a chain of pods, a large sculptural object
whose form was congruent with the pod floated concentrically within each pod, in effect
rendering the primary space of the building interstitial. The striking Nouvel/Starck Opera
House was noteworthy for the way its theatre was embedded as an incongruent object
into the urban object massing. In his competition entry for the Bibliothèque de France, a
seminal example for InFormation, Koolhaas achieved an extreme detachment of sectional
space from the massing. Bahram Shirdel, Andrew Zago and I formed a partnership in
order to continue to develop methods for generating affiliative, monolithic forms and, as
well, to develop these sectional ideas. Our Event-Structure entry for the Place Jacques Cartier – Montreal competition, for example, called for a large DeFormed envelope within which three independently DeFormed theatres floated as sectional objects. As in InFormation, every surface, including the outside and inside of both the exterior envelopes and the floating theatres, was programmed. Our goal was to render all of the spaces in the building interstitial and/or residual and to activate them into a non-hierarchical differential structure. However, the formal similarity between the two systems, the envelope and the object-theatres, resulted in spaces that were less interstitial than homogeneous.\textsuperscript{18}

Our subsequent design for the Scottish National Museum competition produced somewhat more interesting results. The typical section of such a museum partitions the space into well-defined compartments determined by categories of the different collections. In order to counter this alignment between form and programme, we devised a section and circulation system in which elements of differing collections would enter into various and shifting associations as one moved through the museum. The effect of encouraging provisional weak links among the items in the collection was further augmented with a series of windows calculated to frame objects in the urban setting as if they were objects within the collection. Finally, two of the major lobes of the building itself stood as objects within the basement galleries.

The section/circulation system was embedded within a three-lobed, articulated monolith. Though conspicuously alien to the classical language and other dominant architectural influences of the site, the geometry of the massing took good advantage of several subordinate organisations within both Edinburgh and the larger context of Scotland to extend the production of affiliative effects. A catalogue of over two dozen of these relationships generated by Douglas Graf, an architectural theorist specialising in formal relations, was included with the competition submission.\textsuperscript{19} As we and others worked on similar and other problems, the two major themes of DeFormation began to emerge. First, as far as possible, the section space of the building should not be congruent with the internal space implied by the monolith. Second, wherever possible, residual, interstitial and other artefactual spaces should be emphasised over primary spaces. Because the box-within-box section is effective at producing both of these effects, it is often the tactic of choice, though by no means the only one possible. The impetus to programmatic saturation so central to InFormation plays a much less significant role in DeFormation.

With these sectional themes, the last of the preliminary principles of DeFormation is in place. Yet, we should not prematurely draw the conclusion that DeFormation is complete and that prescription for its architecture written. Indeed, though paradigmatic building projects such as Eisenman’s Max Reinhardt Haus\textsuperscript{20} or Shirel’s Nara Convention Hall can be identified, the internal debates among these and other related projects assure us that
there are principles and projects to follow. The most interesting of these debates revolve around design techniques for producing smooth affiliations. Because such affiliations require that loose links be made among dominant and contingent organisations operating within a context, some architects work by identifying examples of both types of organisation and then drive the design towards their connection, while others rely entirely on the intrinsic contextual affiliations engendered by the Eisenman convention center or the Shiribel, Zago, Kipnis Scottish National Museum are examples of the latter; in each case, most of the links were unplanned and occurred only after grafting the project to the site.

Shoel Yoh's Odawara Sports Complex, on the other hand, is a conspicuous case of the former. Shoel Yoh designed the complex's roof by mapping a detailed study of a variety of contingent forces confronting the roof, such as snow loads, into a structural diagram. He fine-tuned the mapping by abandoning the coarse, triangulated structural geometries that generalise force diagrams, choosing instead to use computer-generated structural analysis that resolves force differentials at an ultra-sensitive scale. The unusual undulating form of the roof resulted. This process enables Shoel Yoh to avoid the pitfalls of stylistic necessities of the project. As computer-aided manufacturing techniques proliferate, such approaches which maximise efficient use of material will no doubt enjoy favour.

Undoubtedly, such an approach to contingency is attractive; yet, questions arise. At the very least, these processes threaten to turn DeFormation into a single theme architecture based on a search for contingent influences, much as Arnold Schoenberg's dodecaphonic theories of atonal music composition resulted in a decade during which serious music composers devoted all their attention to finding new tone rows. As Greg Lynn quipped, 'Soon we'll be designing form based on the air turbulence generated by pedestrians near the building'. More significant, however, is the degree to which such processes are actually aligning, rather than affiliative. It seems to me that by predetermining the contingent influences to be addressed, the process simply redfines the dominant architectural influences on site. The test of whether or not the results are DeFormative, therefore, will not depend on the success of the project in embodying responses to those influences, but on the other contingent effects it continuously generates.

If embodying effects into the design a priori is problematic, then the central issue for DeFormation design technique becomes the elucidation of methods that generate monolithic, non-representational forms that lend themselves well to affiliative relationships a posteriori. If all that were required was gesture and articulation, then the problem would pose no particular difficulty and could be saved by employing familiar Expressionist techniques. Yet, the DeFormationist principle of minimal representation also prohibits explicit reference to Expressionist architecture, much as it criticises InFormation for its explicit reference to formalist Modernism. I have already mentioned a group of related techniques that start with a complex figure or set of figures and then move these
towards non-representational abstraction while preserving the intrinsic complexity. These techniques have stimulated investigations into a variety of methods for accomplishing that movement towards non-representation; for example, including the study of camouflage methods, experimenting with computer ‘morphing’ programs that smoothly transform one figure into another, or employing topological meshing techniques such as splines, NURBS, etc., that join the surfaces delimited by the perimeters of disjoint two-dimensional figures into a smoothed solid. Because these methods often yield an exact geometries and non-developable surfaces, other architects have turned their attention to these areas of study. An exact geometry is the study of non-analytic forms (i.e. forms that are not describable by an algebraic expression) yet that show a high degree of internal self-consistency. Non-developable surfaces cannot be flattened into a plane.

As far as I am concerned, it is in the context of the development of architectural technique rather than as applied philosophy that the issue of the fold in DeFormation is best understood. Clearly, the initial figure and transforming process in any DeForming technique does not in itself guarantee the results, nevertheless, both of these mainly contribute to the effective properties of the results. It has occurred to many architects that the fold as a figure and folding as a transformative process offered many advantages, long before any of these persons ever heard of Le Pli or paid any attention to the diagrammatic folds found in Lacan or René Thom’s Catastrophe Theory.

Neither pure figure nor pure organisation, folds link the two; they are monolithic and often non-representational, replete with interstitial and residual spaces, and intrinsic to non-developable surfaces. As a process exercised in a matrix such as an urban site, folding holds out the possibility of generating field organisations that negotiate between the infinite homogeneity of the grid and the hierarchical heterogeneity of finite geometric patterns, an effect which Peter Eisenman employs in his housing and office park in Rehstock, Germany. Finally, when exercised as a process on two or more organisations simultaneously, folding is a potential smoothing strategy.

All of these aspects of the fold are related to architectural effects. Although they may be attracted to the underlying work, none of the architects who make use of Thom’s fold diagrams, for example, make any claim, as far as I know, to inscribe the four-dimensional event-space that the diagram depicts for mathematicians in the resultant architecture; any more than any architects claim to be inscribing the effects of Descartes’s philosophy when they employ a Cartesian grid. And, fortunately, there do not seem to be too many persons suffering from a radical mind/body split walking around downtown Manhattan. In both cases, architects employ these diagrams for the architectural effects they engender.

As is typical of Eisenman, both the Rehstock Park and Alteka Tower are driven more by folding as a process than by any particular fold as a diagram or spatial organisation. In the former, Eisenman inscribes an initial parti derived from the modern housing schemes
of Ernst May on the site. Then, operating strictly in the representational field of drawing, he projects both the extended site and the parti into the respective figures formed by the boundaries of these two sites. The resulting drawings create the representational illusion that these two organisations have been folded. This drawing, neither axonometric, nor perspective or fold, is then massed as the project. Through this process, he attempts to transform the modern, axonometric space characteristic of the original scheme into a visual space that hovers between an axonometric and a perspectival space with multiple vanishing points. The figure of the fold, a quotation of sections cut through a Thomian diagram, appears on the top of the building to effect the weak, cross-disciplinary links of which Eisenman is so fond.23 Similarly, the Alteka Tower begins with the high-rise type and folds it in a process reminiscent of origami in order to deform the type and to produce multiple residual spaces.

Many diagrams such as those depicting Lacan’s ‘mirror state’ or the parabolic umbilic fold and the hyperbolic umbilic fold associated with Thom’s Catastrophe Theory, have attracted architectural interest for several reasons. In order to avoid the pitfalls of Expressionist processes, such diagrams offer a level of discipline to the work. Using these diagrams as a source of regulating lines, so to speak, allows the architect to design with greater rigour. As Le Corbusier writes, ‘The regulating line is a guarantee against wilfulness.’ Moreover, as stated, such diagrams are neither purely figural nor purely abstract. They therefore hold the potential to generate weak resemblance effects. Finally, the multiple and disjoint formal organisation that compose these compound diagrams themselves have many of the desired spatial characteristics described previously on sections.

A more sophisticated use of these diagrams as regulating lines can be found in Shirdel’s Nara Convention Center. To better understand the role of the diagrams in this project, it is necessary to examine its design process in greater detail. Rather than beginning with a typological or formal parti, Shirdel initiated the design for the hall by grafting a carefully excerpted portion of the Scottish National Museum project to the site. He chose a portion of the museum where two independent lobes of the museum joined obliquely and were subtending a constricted, interstitial space. Transferred to Nara, this graft had the advantage of already being incongruent but coherent, an aftereffect of excerpting the connections between the two disjoint lobes. Shirdel reinforced this effect by using the resultant interstitial space as the main entry-way into the new building.

Studying the famous Todai-ji Temple in Nara, Shirdel found the temple space dominated by three figures: a giant central Buddha and two smaller flanking attendant figures. Stimulated by this analysis, Shirdel decided to enlace each of the hall’s three theatres in objects that would float in the section. The forms of these theatre-objects were determined simply by functional exigencies. Other than their painted copper cladding, chosen to link the sectional objects to the figures in the temple, the theatres were entirely undesignned.
Visitors to the Todai-ji Temple encounter the Buddha figures frontally; a classical arrangement that emphasises the subject/object relationship between the two. Shirdel, on the other hand, arranged his three sectional objects axially. Visitors entering the convention hall confront nothing but empty space – the enormous mass of the three theatres hovering off to the side. In order to design the envelope of the hall and to configure the main entry as residual space, Shirdel used two folds. First, he reconfigured the massing of the original grafted with a Thomian diagram of a hyperbolic umbilic fold, extending this fold into the surrounding landscape so as to smooth the connection of the building and its immediate site. Then, he shaped the concrete piers holding up the three theatres and the lobby of the small music theatre according to the parabolic umbilic fold. As a result, the main space of the hall is the residual space between the topology of these two folds, an effect that the constricted entry-way again reinforces. Shirdel’s scheme introduces into Nara an entirely new form in both the architectural and institutional sense. More interestingly, it effects its affiliations spatially as well as formally. At the level of the building, it accommodates the effects that the preliminary principles of DeFormation seek to engender. I also believe that it meets the five criteria for a New Architecture, ie that is Points, that it is Blank, Vast, Incongruent and Intensively Coherent.

Whether or not DeFormation and/or InFormation mature into a New Architecture remains to be seen. Certainly, the rate of realisation for DeFormation is not yet as promising as it is for InFormation and not sufficient for either to develop or evolve. Yet, I believe it can be said with some confidence that at least these architectures have broached the problem of the New and thus offer a measure of optimism. But, the critics and historians have not begun to circle them in earnest. Yet.

Notes
1 Historians may note similarities in the work included in this volume to the spatial character of Baroque architecture and/or to the formal character of German Expressionism. I predict their observations will conclude that none of the architects and theorists working in this area are aware of these similarities. Because the writings and projects are not united with analyses of Borromini, Guarini and Bernini or references to Escher, the Tauts, Politz, Haring, Mendelssohn, Schaarman, Steiner, etc, it will be assumed the work is conducted in blissful ignorance of these similarities. This first conclusion is necessary to support the second, namely that the similarities are far more important than the differences. Thus, recalling Marx, they will argue that the second instance is but a parody of the tragic profundity of the first (a tautological argument, since the first instance establishes the terms and conditions of similarity. By coincidence, this argument also happens to support the capitalisation of their professional activities). However, interesting and worthy of study the similarities are, greater stakes are found in the differences: historians will again must the point.
3 Other post-structural theorists, notably Jennifer Bloomer and Robert Somol, have appealed to the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, though to different ends.
4 ‘Collage’ is used here as a convenient, if coarse, umbrella term for an entire constellation of practices, eg bricolage, assemblage and a history of collage with many important distinctions and developments. This argument is strengthened by a study of the architectural translations of the various models of collage and its associated practices. As we proceed further into the discussion of affirmative effects below, one might be inclined to argue that Surrealist collage, with its emphasis on
amending the seams of the graft, might provide an apt model. Though there is merit in this position, it seems to me that the so-called seamlessness of Surrealist collage, act actually to emphasise by irony the distinct nature of the elements of the collage and therefore the incoherent disposition at work.

A better model might be Jasper Johns’s cross-hatch paintings, prints and drawings. Though these works certainly employ many techniques associated with collage, their effect is quite different. In them non-ideal, grid-like organisations are materialised by grafting elements whose form is disjoint from the overall organisation. Moreover, in some of these works, other cloud-like shapes entirely outside of the dominant formalist language are built up of the medium itself and camouflaged within the work. For me, these paintings are good examples of a cohesive heterogeneity engendered out of an intensive coherence in the elements themselves.

For example the Wexner Centre for the Visual Arts and his ‘scaling’ projects, e.g. ‘Romeo and Juliet’.

Clearly, the economic and political difficulties that result from a model of heterogeneity based on fostering definable species of difference I have associated with collage have broad implications across many institutional frontiers. In the recent US presidential election, for example, a key issue in the election was the widely felt frustration over the number of officially recognised special interest groups (now numbering in the thousands) seeking to influence decisions by federal government. However cynical one may be about this situation, it is an inevitable consequence of a social arrangement that attempts to negotiate the classical conflict between individual and community and to achieve a democracy by offering the right to adequate voice and recognition of differences, i.e. democracy through extensive incoherence. Models of heterogeneity achieved through intensive coherence would need not only to rethink the individual/community conflict, but ultimately to rethink the entire notion of a democracy achieved by systems of rights.


To be sure, we have already seen possibilities for such grafts, e.g. in the work of Hejduk or Rossi. It is entirely unpersuasive to account with the logic of collage for the effects of Aldo Rossi’s incongruous grafts of received institutions with his catalogue of autonomous architectural forms, or for the effects of Hejduk’s mytho-poetic, scenographic urban grafts.


Rem Koolhaas stresses this point in his short programme for the recent Shinkenchiku Housing competition, entitled ‘No Style’. Cf. FA 7.

Many of the ideas introduced in the second part of this text grew out of discussions I have enjoyed with Greg Lynn and Sanford Kwinter as well as from their writings. That I do not cite these writings in particular in this text is merely testimony to how thoroughly it is suffused with their influence. Cf Greg Lynn, ‘Inorganic Bodies’, Assemble 18; or Sanford Kwinter in the Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts, Vol 2, Benjamin (ed). For related issues see Incorporations, Oray and Kwinter (eds), Urzone Press (New York), 1992.

In order to achieve some focus, in this account I stress Deformation primarily as a matter of building design, and touch on urban issues only as they arise in that context. Several projects have attempted to extend the themes I have identified with Deformation to urban design, such as Eisenman’s office and housing park in Restock in the shuiddle, Zaha. Kipnis project for the central business district of Montreal. There are also projects incorporating the themes of Information such as Koolhaas’s Lille and La Defense or Tschumi’s Chartres. [...] For a discussion of these three projects, see my ‘Freudian slipper or what to make of the fetish’, The Fetish, Lym, Mitchell and Whiting (eds), Princeton Architectural Press (Princeton), 1992.


One of the most fascinating aspects of Peter Eisenman’s design career is his uncanny ability to derive an entire architectural design thesis from a key word or phrase happened upon in his reading of criticism or philosophy. While not underestimating the significance of this eventual arrival at some understanding of the source of the term in question, the fact is that Eisenman’s design inventions virtually always evolve from his initial reaction to what he sees as the architectural implication of the term or phrase, loosened from its original discursive context. Whether it was Chernoff’s ‘deep structure’, Derrida’s ‘trace’, Mandelbrot’s ‘fractal scaling’, or Varian’s ‘weak’, Eisenman’s architectural derivations have much more to do with his stimulated intuition of potential architectural effects than with embodying the original philosophical effect in question. Eisenman’s ‘deep structure’, ‘trace’, ‘scaling’ and ‘weak form’ therefore have little to do
with the philosophy, but much to do with architecture. This comment is by no means meant to disparage. Indeed, to the contrary — in so far as Eisenman’s work has at one and the same time maintained a dialogue with philosophical discourse, while locating the domain of architectural effects from an exemplifying/embodiment obligation to philosophical effects may be its most important contribution. The conspicuous absence of this issue from the critical literature on Eisenman’s work — including my own — testifies to an institutional need for critical literature to maintain a metaphoric of embodiment at any cost, even at the cost of paying attention to the architecture.

16 Camouflage is often cited as a paradigm of affinities that smooth. Effective camouflage such as ‘dazzle painting’ is often entirely different from the prevailing influences of the operative context and almost always outside of the dominant modes of the primary discipline (i.e., of clothing design or the surface treatment of ships and planes). Yet the effect of camouflage is to smooth the disjunct relationships between site and interloper into another context.

17 Though the discussion of affinities this point emphasizes form-to-form effects, a mediation on the weak links of affinities effects also undermines the most pre-eminent of strongly aligned relations in architecture, the correlation between form and programme. Form follows function is, of course, the declaration per excellence of an alignment between architectural design and programme. Yet, does a close attention to the history of architecture actually sustain that position? I believe a careful reading of that history would require a negative answer to the question.

Throughout its history, the relationship between form and programme has been far more affirmative than aligned, a fact to which the endless numbers of reprogrammings more than testify (houses to museums, fascist headquarters to state treasury facilities, fire stations to Christmas offices ad infinitum). This is not to say there is no relationship between form and function, but that the relationship is in its essence weak. It is the affirmative character of the form/programme relationship that allows Rossi to produce his typological grails and Tschumi to theorize about diaspora and trans-programming. After all, has the design of any building significant to architecture’s history ever achieved its status due to how well it functioned? But the most glaring case of form/programme affiliation is to be found in the house, for no one ever lives in a house according to its architectural programme. Can a theory of strong alignment between form and programme account for reading in the bathroom or eating in the living room, or for the particular pleasures of having sex anywhere but the bedroom? No doubt it was out of frustration over the failure of affinities to congeal into alignments that drove Mies van der Rohe to nail down the furniture. The affirmative nature of the relationships between form and programme accounts in the large part for DeFormation’s relative complicity vis-à-vis Information, on the issue of programme.

18 For additional discussion of the Shindel, Zago, Kipnis Place Jacques Event Structure project, see L’Arca, No. 56 (December 1981).


20 A mixed-use office tower in Berlin. Though unavailable for publication at that time, the Max Reinhardt Haus project is scheduled to be published in Anywhere.

21 To state the most interesting discussions in architecture revolve around design technique is to me virtually a tautology. The most interesting aspect of any and every study of architecture — historically, theoretically and otherwise — is its consequences for current design technique.


23 In his studio at the Ohio State University, Eisenman and his students began to develop the implications of the initial Rebetstock folding for the building section and to study its capacity to interface disjoint organisations. I intend to treat this work and further developments of the scheme in more detail in my forthcoming treatment on Information and Deformation urban design.

J Kipnis, ‘Towards A New Architecture’, AD Folding in Architecture, Profile No. 102, John Wiley & Sons Ltd (London), 1993, pp 40–9. Reproduced by permission of Jeffrey Kipnis and John Wiley & Sons Ltd.