REVEALING A CONTEMPORARY RUIN:

Toward Understanding the Ruin, Landscape, and Change

by

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ABSTRACT 

An approach toward understanding the ruin in relation to a design intervention. In an important way, this thesis asks the question of how a new form can be built or introduced as the survival of the previous form. 

The first part describes the ruin generally, and in terms of a formal arrangement of relations undergoing change in a landscape and within the context of culture. 

The second part describes an approach to seeing the ruin which is singular, absolute and rooted in the romantic experience. 

The third part describes a relational and more relativistic approach. It is one which directs toward an understanding of design. 

The fourth part reveals a specific ruin of a contemporary nature that exists outside Lausanne, Switzerland. It describes, through design, a relational bridge between what exists and what is made to exist, or those "facts" which reveal temporal and spatial relationships between older and newer forms. 

The fifth part describes comparable references as the survival of the design, or as relational facts through which to describe the design further.

Thesis Supervisor: William L. Porter 
Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning
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The idea of doing a thesis on and in a ruin occurred while vacationing in Switzerland in the summer of 1986. Discovering an awkward, decaying, brutalist form of modern origins in a beautiful landscape is not exactly a chalet-styled Swiss vacation. However, it did provide an impetus to go beyond, and search for a way to understand the ruin and its change in the context of design. It did provide a context or landscape within which to evaluate or execute a design and in return, understand the ruin at a new level. I would like to thank those people who have helped to make that understanding possible. To my close friend Rebecca Lyon, for the introduction to the Lausanne ruin and who has been wonderfully supportive and helpful through this thesis. To my advisor, Bill Porter, who helped my understanding in clear terms of what I was doing. To two essential reader/critics, Fernando Domeyko and Anne Wagner. To Cecile Jan, who helped to obtain valuable information from Atelier 5 Architects, Berne, Switzerland. I would like to acknowledge thanks to Maurice Smith and Ted Cullinan. Many thanks also to my friends, David Nelson and Andrew Bennett. I am especially thankful to my mother Lou, who has supported and helped to make the journey into architecture more possible.

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Layers of ruin: Palenque, Mexico
I. WHAT IS RUIN?

As a form, the ruin is a physical identifiable fact existing in a landscape. It is one strata, or moment of material in an overall stratum of history. It might be a pile of Corinthian rubbish on Turkey's coast or some decaying brutalist aggregate in the hills of Switzerland. A ruin is a form which describes a structure however developed, undergoing the process of decay and disintegration. The ruin in a sense is never finished, mainly because it finds its presence in the fact of its incompletion. The structure of a ruins presence is fundamentally related to its not being there, or to its differance.  

Seeing through a ruin, therefore, does not comprise the view of a single entity, form, or object. The view might be described in more complex terms. A ruin is a bricolage of events, textures and forms existing in a manifold of relations, both different and deferred, both visible and invisible within a landscape. It is sustained by a notion which describes something else. The option of seeing or experiencing landscape is therefore not excluded from the view of the ruin.

At another level, beyond landscape, a ruin manifests the changes apparent in a cultures ideas cumulatively affecting the evolution of a ruin over time. The decision to impose changes upon the ruin becomes one of choice. Actual decisions describe a structure of "differance", or one which differs, to quote Derrida.
The Duomo, Stracusa, Sicily (fig. 1.1)

The Parthenon, Athens, 1986 (fig. 1.2)
We only desire what is not ourselves and defers; "desire is never fulfilled." 2

In other words, a culture never fully defines the limits of its understanding and therefore the choices that it exercises upon its ruins. One might see the ruin as a further bricolage of cultural understanding and misunderstanding through history, or of the desire to see something else beyond and through the ruin. For example, the Greek temple structure illustrated in the two accompanying photos describes not only the bricolage of adjacent landscapes and forms, but also of one describing the varying cultural nuances affecting the new and perceived form of the ruin.

In the first example (fig. 1.1), a fifteenth century wall of Baroque origin reveals a fragment of the ruin, or the column of a fifth century Greek temple. The wall of a new origin describes what is essential about an earlier pre-existing form. In the second example (fig. 1.2) one reads the ruin fragment in relation to the machine fragment. In this situation the ruin not only describes an essential component of landscape, it also describes an essential component of time, or a contemporary moment, July 1986. What is clear about both of these examples is that they illustrate the possibility of reading and understanding forms at multiple levels, and in relational terms. In other words, the form of the wall or the machine gives a presence or allows a new redefinition of the other pre-existing part. The totality of the experience is not fixed and it is not completely formed. Rather, the experience
becomes more ambiguous, more mixed, more democratic in the sense that one is able to choose which form to associate the possibilities of place.

A ruin therefore by contemporary definition exists within an order defined by the parameters of a relational word. Order is meant to mean the relationship between what exists as time and what is made to exist as human interventions and values. A ruin is both finished and unfinished, both visible as landscape passing through it and invisible as a culture directly affecting its discourse with the future. The value of a ruin is therefore not absolute, rather it exists as a dialectic between what is seen and unseen; what is built and yet to be built.

*Everything changes without anything having budged.*

*Jacques Derrida*


2. Op Cit. see p. lxviii.
II. THE ROMANCE OF THE RUIN: A CRITIQUE

Beginning in the early 19th century is the discovery that the ruin was made to exist as an inspirational heap of precious rubble in a newly found landscape. Discovery and interest in the ruin parallels the more general process of a culture discovering its boundaries and probing its stratum. The ruin was the specimen of historical fact found in and on the way to the outer edges of uncharted landscapes. The idea of the journey outward, and beyond the domestic and familiar was important in the cultivation of romantic paradigms about nature and the ruin. Rousseau writes of such a quest:

Wandering deep into the forest, I sought and I found the vision of those primitive times...and by comparing man as he had made himself with man as he is by nature I showed him in his pretended perfection the true source of his misery.¹

Victor Hugo describes in similar terms, the romance of things outside the domain of urban experience in Les Miserables:

The Cities produce ferocious men, because they make corrupt men. The mountain, the sea, and the forest produce wild men. They develop the fierce side of a man’s character, without destroying the human side.²

The ruin, and the less familiar natural place around it was made to appear as the distant place, or a reality removed from an experience manifested by the city. The dichotomous split between nature and townscape, or between the ruin and that experience is portrayed in the early depiction of the ruin of the Chateau Gaillard.
Alexis Victor Joly, Ruins of the Chateau Gaillard, 1824  (fig. 2.1)

James Duffield Harding
The Chateau de la Roche, 1825
(fig. 2.2)

Louis Alphonse de Brebisson
Ruins of the Chateau de Falaise, 1851
(fig. 2.1). The ruin is portrayed as the inaccessible, vertically extended rock far above or even detached from the more serene domestic setting of the horizontal world below. The ruin as represented in this view, is the idealization of the rock and the difficult and dangerous journey to arrive there. Perhaps one does not arrive there at all, but rather the ruin is made to appear as the finite event placed on a huge pedestal divorced from any perception of the possible experience of actually being there.

In the lithograph of Chateau De La Roche (fig. 2.2) the rock is made to appear as the actual building. As in the ruin of the Chateau Gaillard, the lives of the inhabitants are made to appear separate and within the domain of a different place and experience. In each of these examples the ruin, or rock as the manifested ruin, seems to be valued more for its static qualities, or portrayed in a manner which freezes the moment of experience into one vantage position. The larger dynamic of change itself or the evolving experience of the inhabitants who seem to exist in encampments apart is excluded. The moment of impression is instead immortalized and frozen upon the artists page as one conceptual event. The ruin is not experience but in fact becomes the object framed by a landscape. The experience of its change, does not exist.

While the advent of the photograph towards the middle part of the 19th century allowed a clearer portrait of some of the continuities which exist between the ruin, landscape, and change, it did not de-immortalize the ruin as the object in space. The camera greatly devalued the mystical
Auguste-Rosalie Bisson, Roman Forum, 1864  
(fig. 2.4)

James Roberston, Acropolis, 1854

P. Moraithes, Acropolis, 1860's

William James Stillman, Acropolis, 1868
and sublime qualities of the ruin, and made it appear more as an extension of the town or landscape. In the depiction of the ruin of San Jeronimo (fig. 2.3) or in the view of the Roman Forum (fig. 2.4) the ruin contains many of the details of the materials and textures of the city, or many of the clues of the making of such places. Even the more ugly details of decapitated columns and eroded entablatures could not be hidden from the revealing view of the lens. The experience of men lurking about collapsed column fields and probing the physical origins of their present time gives the ruin a more identifiable context, or at least one within the reach of its earthbound visitors. (see figs. 2.5 & 2.6)

Despite the rich and descriptive value of the ruin in a stripped-down photographic state, it was still singular in its point of view, and only heightened the temporal freezing of an object in space. In the photographic view of the Parthenon from the 1860's, one notices the very clear dichotomy between the static object hovering above the more dynamic urban tissue and process below.

Even in the present, the Acropolis still contributes to this 19th century perspective or point of view of the ruin framed by its context. Surrounded by city, the Acropolis sits as a sort of caged zoo animal stranded in its context. The exclusion of larger orders or possibilities that might influence or reveal the presence of a ruin is evidence of the recent notion that they are objects that should be preserved or stored for some later culture to worry about. Recent attempts to clean-up the Acropolis and other
Either the form can support a given development of the idea, or else the idea destroys the form.\textsuperscript{6}

\textit{Giovanni Michelucci}


ruin-types (i.e., the placement of ropes) seems to be rooted in a cultural obsession with visual pleasure. A desire to wipe out ugliness in favour of more pristine and well-ordered places, seems to be more rooted in the fixed, vantage point perspective of nineteenth century romanticism.

A contemporary romance of the ruin might be further extended into the domain of the work of Site, Inc. Their Best Company building could be described as the quintessential "modern ruin", or a building deliberately formed to appear as though it was the ruin-like rock perched upon an endless asphalt seabed. Instead of collapsed corpses of Corinthian-like capitals, the ruin describes an eroded wall of white bricks. Such a literal reapplication of the ruin idea lacks the formal understanding of a ruin as a potentially more complex form comprised of relational possibilities, and not of singular, framed vantage point ideas about forms within landscapes.

Perhaps the problem of the contemporary understanding of the ruin lies in the cultural dilemma of wanting to define ruins or make transformations without having the historical and formal sense of how to act. In other words, ideas come cheaply. The degree to which ideas are able to bring some level of understanding to and of the form they are didactically trying to represent, will determine the success of such ideas to cope with the essential origin and change of the form itself and of the formal specifics of the landscape in which it exists.
III. THE RUIN REVEALED: TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING

Every work chooses its own form and is not subject to inner necessity alone. Every element of form has its absolute physical effect (=value); the construction chooses among these media in such a fashion as to turn absolute value to relative value, so that, for example, warm becomes cold and sharp dull.

Wassily Kandinsky, 1919

One of the more important ideas to be learned from the experience of the modern movement, was the importance of seeing things in multiple terms and not as singular objects. The contemporary experience sees forms as more open possibilities existing in a field of relations, rather than closed orders where options are limited. A contemporary approach to understanding the ruin would see more value in seeking out at a dynamic level the tensions between form and possibility rather than all out solutions, or ideas which immortalize the form as an absolute way of solving the problem. A contemporary paradigm for understanding the ruin carries with it not only the understanding and appreciation of what exists, but also establishes a model for associating new forms and relations.

A Piranesi drawing of a ruin for example, depicts the layers of a landscape undergoing a continuous transformation. Amidst the chaotic proliferation of rot, decay and growth, Piranesi’s ruins admit or envision a sort of truth, or the reality that things will never be the same. At another level of reading, Piranesi’s drawings
graffiti scars, Musee Deutsch
describe a sort of visionary model for establishing more complex relational orders. New forms or visionary fragments are juxtaposed in a collage-like way to old fragments of the past (see fig. 3.1). His interventions are suggestive and allow a new, more transformative reading of an existing fragmentary forms such as the ruin.

In a similar way, Charles Simond's contemporary ruins describe the inevitability of their contexts and change. His built, ruin-like interventions within the city seek to reduce the figure-ground difficulties of their immediate space, instead evoking an understanding that such spaces are derived from the materials and smaller niches of the city-ground (see fig. 3.2). At another level Simond's ruins can be understood as juxtapositions of an entirely different scale and context. Like a Piranesi ruin, his occur as both evidence of what exists and realizations of what can be made to exist. Both can be seen as forms which identify their present, yet in a curious way probe the depths of an unknown future.

The nature of the contemporary experience is that it is very much a synthesis of continual change and more discontinuous events and occurrences. Jantsch describes our current situation as that of a nonequilibrium world, in which physical, biological, social and cultural systems all mutate toward new dynamic regimes in order to maintain their capability for exchange, or in order to keep alive in a broad sense.\textsuperscript{1} The character of such fluctuations or discontinuities is described by Bachelard:
They suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it off from its empirical origin and its original motivations, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities; then direct historical analysis away from the search...²

Peter Buchanan describes the contemporary experience as one where we are less interested in doing anew than seeing anew. Continuity is no longer hampering but is essential to depth, to the joy of discovering new nuance in what was always there.

Given the circumstances of a contemporary experience, how in fact can action or retranslated as "ruin transformation" develop as a structure or framework through which to exercise design related choices. Transformation in this context might be described as a definition of the ideas surrounding such a place. It is not unlike the inevitable conditions and processes which arise within cities. The dynamics of the on-going form of cities is that they oscillate between a number of possibilities and options. New forms are constantly brought into a juxtaposition with old ones, thereby opening up the possibility of reading and understanding them at multiple levels. Cities, by nature of their incompleteness and ambiguity, but also because of their richness and complex strata describe the human experience of change as not one, but as an accumulative and multiple process. The ruin might be described as an analogous form by virtue of its indefinite and fragmentary nature. Its transformation offers the
The ruin as urban fragment
Siracusa, Sicily (fig. 3.4)
possibility that it will not be limited to only one level of interpretation or reading (see fig. 3.3).

For example, the ruin of Greek origin within the Italian city of Siracusa, Sicily can be seen as a piece of a larger form or of the totality in which it exists (see fig. 3.4). The ruin as an indefinite form exists within the overall indefinite form of the city. That is, a ruin can be seen as a whole comprised not of one, but many pieces or layers. Each piece within a city or ruin for example deserves recognition not only for what it is physically, but also in terms of what it wants to be in terms of choice.

Building is both a continuation and a departure from the norms that exist in the original form and meaning of the ruin. Convinced that in a society where choices are free, the real freedom of the citizen rests in being able to choose one solution, rather than another. 4

Derrida, for example, describes a framework or model which could be useful for translating and redefining the ruin.

\[ A \text{ contemporary approach has to do with elaborating models of relations in which ambiguity finds a justification and acquires a positive value.} \]

Building in consideration of this value reaches beyond the merely formal interpretation of the "isms" of the contemporary age or of a romantic re-appreciation of the past. The process is instead capable of appreciating both domains of "what is now" and "what was then". A level of inquiry and ambiguity is possible where an
openness of relations between past and future events is advocated. The ruin therefore becomes and forms an optional process of both building and de-building or deconstructing and constructing what exists. Transforming in these terms expires an absolute approach based on guarantees that the form will work.

*Nothing can be guaranteed by history (desired goals must be worked for, not waited for), nor can any action be measured against norms and criteria given in advance, rather they are born in the conflicts of authority and desire, (we now ask not is this correct but rather what is this trying to do.)*

_-Victor Burgin_

*From compulsive action in the modern age we achieved more alienation than liberation. We no longer see truth as something to be grasped in external facts, but as something to be uncovered slowly inside ourselves._

_-Peter Buchanan_

Derrida's theories provide an option of viewing transformation or change in less strict terms. He states in his theory of deconstruction that the "differance" implied by two structures, (in his example between speech and writing) implies movement; a sort of "moire effect" or a deconstruction in which the old term is both retained and displaced. The text carries with it in a fragmentary way both some of its old associations but also a new reading or effect which describes a new association or terminology. What is interesting about Derrida's approach is that it implies a sort of open transformation process that is not based upon
Model view, Musee Deutsch transformation, 1987
a pedagogic list of formal prerequisites. It can be seen as an approach allowing a level of incompletion or openness, which implies choice. At another level, his theory allows a reading of forms and interventions which is multiple, or occurring at many levels. Layers which were previously invisible or undefined can be seen as and in new terms of understanding.

*The usefulness of the concept of transformation (read translation, rotation, reflection) consists in the fact that, unlike the more familiar notion of analogy, transformation permits the more radical move toward taking the basic parameters themselves - the political, psychological and religious dimensions as transforms of one another. Unlike symbolism and analogy, which tend to assume a basic or literal foundation on which an analogy is built or a symbol drawn, the concept of transformation assumes no fundamental dimension.*

-Jacques Derrida


Site Sketches, 1986
IV. REVEALING A CONTEMPORARY RUIN: THE EXAMPLE OF THE MUSEE DEUTSCH LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND

The fact of a ruin existing in Switzerland seems somewhat incongruous with the associations one usually formulates with the small country. The vision of Switzerland, in an often stereotypical way, is one of ultra-pristine landscapes and towns, the awe-inspiring jagged crags of the Alps, and smooth-running trains which run with as much accuracy as the Rolex watches hawked in Geneva jewel shops. Form is usually an issue of clarity and precision, and in many ways, architectural forms manifest a culture consumed with high standards of performance. Despite the incessant clarity of the form of Swiss life, an alternative exists in the form of a chaotic, decaying and evocative structure located a few miles outside the territory of Lausanne and above the lake of Geneva.

The structure, known simply as the Musee Deutsch, might be described as a sort of open, unfinished shell of late modern origin that exists in a ruinous condition. It exists as an unfinished yet decaying assemblage of recent modern building technology, or an early 60's concrete brutalist form. In place of standard ruin material (i.e., Corinthian rubble or eroded entablatures), one finds heaps of pre-cast aggregate panels embedded with moss and the fast growing weeds of a subalpine landscape.

Rebar, in a rusted state, can be seen to be growing from open floor slabs, eroded by the stress of Swiss climate. Landscape moves around
and through the building. Grass and other organic materials seem to have invaded every available crack and surface. Water drips through the ruin in a controlled, rhythmic way, finding its way to the basement where it forms pools in the dark. The darkness is everywhere in the lower depths of the ruin. A few shafts of light stream through uncontrolled fissures in the floor planes above. One large square opening affords an understanding of a larger light-filled space located higher up in the ruin complex.

From the darkness, one climbs towards the light inside an eroded fire stair, passing some cube-like office territories and to a level where there exists a low gallery space, perhaps the original entrance place. Rust-blistered stainless-steel columns rise in a grid-like formation through the central part of the space measuring roughly ten by fifteen meters. Round holes at the edges wash the walls with light. A series of graffiti works inscribed on the walls indicate a sort of unsanctioned exhibition-in-progress. As one reads down the far wall located opposite, a landscaped edge of a forest is revealed through an unfinished wall. At another corner a dark passage leads to a light-filled space on the same plane. Diagonally opposite, a steep planar surface (was a stair) directs an upward movement into another light flooded territory, a box.

Once inside the boxes, heroically raised above the ground, there is no indication of any outside landscape. Light pours through the
punched holes of a massive concrete panel hanging above the space. The pure and minimal surface of the box remains as the spatial memory. Layered upon the raw, exposed surface are the text-like hieroglyphs of popular culture. The graffiti describes another layer about the place. It is a place which lives by virtue of its indefiniteness, ambiguity and nonspecificity. In Derrida’s terms, it might be described as an ongoing construction or process which arrives at its meaning and placeness through its deconstruction and delayered purpose.

_Deconstruction can never be a positive science. for we are in a double bind. We must do a thing and its opposite and indeed we desire to do both, and so on indefinitely. Deconstruction is a perpetually self-deconstructing movement that is inhabited by difference, or...things don’t let themselves be reconstituted so simply._

-Jacques Derrida
ruin sketches
THE RUIN: ORIGINS

The origin of both the form and idea of the Deutsch Museum occurs at a number of levels and circumstances. At one level, the form can be seen to be rooted in important modern tenets of architecture. At another level the ruin is the result of failed personal ambitions in a post-war world. The origin of the idea of the Deutsch Museum begins in Germany during the war, at a time when many of Europe's best private art collections had fallen into the hands of the Nazis. After the war, many of the works remained lost, destroyed or stolen. The German government was placed in the post-war position of having to make reparations to victims of Nazi-related art crimes. Dr. Hans Deutsch, an attorney and expert in art affairs, was given the task of recovering an important collection of impressionist paintings, as well as the task of seeking damages from the German government for a number of Jewish clients. His previous dealings in the art world and numerous connections with people of influence insured him a comfortable reputation as well as a modest amount of wealth. He had in his acquisition, a sizable collection of modern paintings.

During the time of the late 1950's, it was a personal ambition of Dr. Deutsch to build a museum complex of a public nature to house his own extensive collection aside other exhibits of a temporary kind. A property was acquired in the vicinity of Lausanne, Switzerland near a village known as Belmont. For the years between 1961 and
the box as form

the square as grid structure

the circle as light
1964, Dr. Hans Deutsch and the architects of Atelier 5 worked closely together on the design and construction beginnings of the museum complex. The concept of the museum extended into the domain of becoming more of a cultural facility for the people of Belmont and the outlying areas of Lausanne. By 1964, the museum was near completion. All of the concrete structure, walls, and floors were in place; most of the exposed aggregate cladding panels were in place on the building frame. In that year, work was stopped due to the misfortunes of Dr. Deutsch. He was accused in Germany of mishandling a clients cheque issued by the German government. He was sent to prison and later acquitted after serving a period of two years. Since 1964, the museum has remained an open, ambiguous, and indeterminate form. It exists as a sort of "modern ruin".

The form of the Deutsch Museum is derived from the office of Atelier 5, a group of architects who brought themselves together in the 1950's under a common interest in purist, Corbusian-inspired approaches to architecture. They were commissioned by Dr. Deutsch to execute a design for the Lausanne site in 1960. The idea of their design is a series of enclosed, square gallery spaces lit from above through a group of round skylight openings. At a simple level of understanding the form is clearly that of a box formally disconnected from the ground. It is of the genre of Corbusier's thinking about a building's relationship to the ground. His well known principle was to liberate the ground by
Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, 1929
raising the enclosed habitable spaces to a location above and resting on pilotis. The box hovering above the ground became a sort of metaphor for building "landed space ships on stilts". Corbusier argued, as did many of his contemporaries, that his forms were universal and could be erected anywhere and on any terrain. (See figs. 4.1 & 4.2).

Atelier 5's design for the museum conceptually describes a Corbusian approach to building. The museum spaces or boxes are built above the ground on pilotis. What differs from a strict application of Corbusian inspired open pilotis is that these architects, in their design chose to clad the lower portions of the building with aggregate panels. This effectively interrupts the movement of the hill through the site. The enclosed nature of the gallery spaces also prevents a further rereading of the landscape and its composition. The intent of the building, thus, might be described as a very formal juxtaposition to the landscape, and defined by platonically distinct geometries and elemental forms such as the square and circle. The square is the basis of the grid and of the gallery shapes structured by it. The grid defines its origins in the ground and effectively describes the use spaces related to the horizontal and ground related movement. The circle occurs within the square above and as light. All the openings in the roof slab are circular, defining light, and related to the territory of the sky. Access to
Musee Deutsch: existing road to ramp access
the museum was originally conceived as perpendicular to the contour of the south-facing slope.

It was intended that the museum be approached directly and up a slope via some stairs, across a broad stretch of an open gentle slope, and finally up a scissor ramp to a covered entrance space. The entrance zone defines the abrupt transitions between the inner, closed, container-like museum areas and the open, outer landscape; a broad, wide valley containing the large, flat liquid plane of Lake Leman and defined by the more vertical, crag-like enclosure elements of the Alps. The larger scale of access to the museum ruin is along a road which slowly climbs and turns with a major south-facing slope for about 3 kilometers. The slope defines the general direction of movement into the site. Beginning in the center of Lausanne, the larger access begins as an important confluence of streets, a plaza, and a series of smaller routes intended for use by foot. The route to the museum leaves this main confluence, branching off and continuing through the less dense, outlying layers of Lausanne. For the last kilometer the road enters into a forest, the light darkening, and winds about some curves, passing over a stream and finally enters an open landscape of exposed ridges and scattered villages seen in the distance. The lake is below and visible, while the ruin is above on an open slope, yet adjacent to the forest edge. The village of Belmont is seen to be directly ahead approximately 200 metres.

COMMUNE DE BELMONT
PLAN FOLIO 10 et 11
PROPRIÉTÉ
MUSEE DEUTCH

Site Plan, 1963

SITE
Interior Sketch: Ruin Entrance
V. UNDERSTANDING THE RUIN, LANDSCAPE, AND CHANGE: DESIGN WITHIN THE MUSEE DEUTSCH


The means must be asked what the end is.

Bertold Brecht

The program for this site is to build an archeology that describes a site but also the form of what already exists there. "What exists" are those fragments or remnant forms both visible and invisible built as an earlier site intervention. The intent of the program is to discover a way of building new fragments which are both related and juxtaposed to the less recent interventions of the site. An open, ambiguous museum is a way of addressing not only the value of the use which has come to exist within the ruin, but also as a means to express the form of the ruin. The new form is intended to be in paradoxical relation to the old one...it is meant to be both a continuation of those processes informing the nature of the existing form as well as a disjunction or redefinition of what exists.

The scope of the project is that it value both the attributes of deconstruction and addition as an approach to making a formal intervention. The building is that of a museum which redefines conventional notions, or conventional norms which normally define human associations with such places. It is a museum within a museum, a new
fragment placed in relation to an older one, or a ruin building through which to see another ruin. The paradox of most museums in light of contemporary experience is the need for institutional specificity in light of an art-form experience which might be described as generally non-specific and open-ended. Victor Burgin in *The End of Art Theory* describes the museum as:

> no more irretrievably bourgeois than is, for example, the movie theatre, or the classroom - in all such cases, the spaces are sites of perpetual contestation over what goes on in them, what gets shown, what gets discussed, what issues get raised, and taken out of the museum into the surrounding social institutions: in short, what truths are (re)generated as prisms of perception and frameworks of action.

Therefore it seems appropriate to understand program in a foremost way as a question that asks how can a form be constructed as the survival of the previous form as a plurality. In other terms, now can one form be read, used, or understood in terms of the other.


DESIGN

Work in architecture is working on oneself, on one's own interpretation, on one's way of seeing things, and what one expects of them.

-Wittgenstein

Culture and Value
Early Sketches: Building & Landscape Movements
DESIGN

People always say buildings are in bad shape when they want to get rid of them.

Ted Cullinan

Design is seen as a structuring of the parts or of the relations of the ruin, the surrounding landscape, and change which is inclusive of the museum program. If one were to slice a hypothetical section through the situation or problem, a new dimension of complexity would be apparent. One could begin to understand the problem as having layers of complexity, visible yet invisible, and existing as layers both above and below understood surfaces. Design entails an understanding of those structures, and the building of new structures as a deconstruction of pre-existing forms and structures. Design is therefore a process of a process (construction through deconstruction). One is seen in terms of the other, and therefore ensures the survival of the other. At various levels of reading or understanding the pre-existing Deutsch ruin could be seen as the survival of a new ruin, or of a museum within a museum; the form might be read as the survival of the hill and its reconstruction; or it might be understood as the survival of the plurastic needs of a modern society undergoing rapid change. (The form changes as the survival of temporal realities).
THE RUIN: DECONSTRUCTED

The ruin is valued in terms of its essential or underlying characteristics and then revealed as a deconstruction of what is understood as the essential form. The form of the Musee Deutsch is the square. It is realized as space above the ground. There are two main galleries which define the internal and external territories necessary to understand the form of the museum. The two spaces are similar in that both describe the form of a square. One is a square, the other is two squares brought into relation to describe a rectangle. Geometrically they express a common origin, however, they are dimensionally and spatially divergent.

Internally, the two spaces are options that exist at the edges of a centralized access space. Externally, they form an L-shaped precinct or boundary with the landscape. At another, perhaps more invisible layer, the forms describe an essentially "modernist" approach towards space (i.e., the box raised above the ground on pilotis). This seems particularly interesting as an endemic and also identifiable characteristic of the form, its making, and its period.

The design seeks to understand this as an attribute whether right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, that "exists". It is not the intent to make a new architecture on the basis of an exclusion of the forms which exist as fragmentary evidence of another time. Derrida describes this approach in relation to writing:
Early Deconstructions: Ruin as Form

Ruin as Space
The ultimate deconstruction of the logocentric suppression (of writing) is not to analyze the inconsistency of the offending theories but to construct a fully operational mode of thought on the basis of the excluded elements (in the way that the non-Euclideans built consistent geometries that defied and contradicted the accepted axioms).

The approach is one which sees the ruin serving and being served by the new intervention. The ruin describes a way of arriving to the new building. In return, the new building describes the ruin under new terms and conditions. At one level of decision, the ruin is left as a fragment, the lone box on pilotis, or "as is". At another decision level, the remaining fragment is transformed into a reversed condition of the first fragment. It becomes the screen-like horizontal plane to move through. "Moving through" implies both landscape and built territories as concurrent movements. The landscape is the hill or its downward movement through the lower depths of the ruin fragment. The built territories are the sequence of entrance, access, and gallery spaces experienced as a movement up the hill and always with the option of movement down and into the space of the hill. Each of the existing ruin fragments can be seen as a reverse form or as the possibility of the other. One can be experienced as the closed, internalized form recognizable as its origin. The other, is more screenlike, open, and yet is still identifiable in relation to the other.
Model View: Ruin Entrance
THE RUIN: CONSTRUCTED

The new territory of the ruin, now reconstructed, is built as space. A new precinct or domain within which to build is developed within and around the existing ruin fragment. The "new precinct" might be described as a series of layers or spatial options which de-layer, or reveal the ruin as a form occurring in a relational context, or in association with a new form. The first built layer or intervention is a wall built as a juxtapositional frame to the grid-like screen of the ruin, built to define a space through which to understand the wall; built as a passage into the ruin and the territory of the new intervention. The wall delimits a precinct which allows one to build.

Arrival consists of leaving the more open road-space and entering a parking edge which follows the continuous curve of the hill. It is defined by the U-shaped territory of the wall and is open to the south or the larger expanse of the valley. Through a large curve opening in the wall, the landscape reappears as does the memory of the hill in the form of a steep stepped ramp. The ramp then leaves the ground as a more spatial version arriving through another wall to the entrance area.

Entrance is delimited by the spatial joining of the predominant forms. The entrance is the joint which gathers and juxtaposes the fragments, or building materials of the ruin and newer buildings. The entrance area "is" the ruin,
Model View: The Ruin Revealed as Landscape Movement

Sketch: Museum Space
a screenlike grid of columns that filters movement into the museum, and structures a rooftop canopy of existing pierced pre-cast concrete.

The space of the addition is less dense and can be understood as a juxtaposition to the existing space of the ruin. The roof is structured by a few, bold, wing-like trusses perched and heavily bolted to doubled piers seen to be emerging from the territory of the ground below.

The walls consist of large vertical surfaces that enclose the space of the horizontal reference plane and can be seen to be vanishing into the excavated depths of the gallery spaces below. While the building pieces of the new museum precinct are seen more as disjunctive possibilities, the space in dimensional terms is more of a continuation of existing space within the ruin. The galleries revealed in the new museum are based on sizes found in the ruin and re-defined. Such sizes or forms (the square) reoccur not as literal reapplications, but rather the new forms occur as fragmentations, or as square forms which allow new options of association.
Landscape Movement

The Hill as Space
THE LANDSCAPE: DECONSTRUCTED

Landscape, in the context of the existing ruin occurs as a hill moving down and outside the form, and at a larger level, as a valley containing the large horizontal expanse of Lake Leman. The ruin describes perhaps in "view terms" a salient feature of the larger land framework, however fails to address aspects of a more local and adjacent landscape. At a local level, the hill can be seen as a series of movements: of contours controlling the geometry and shape of its form, and describing the undulations and rythmms of its downward movement.

The hill can be seen as the form which describes the place for building. The building place can then be further seen as the precinct which then further redefines the hill. The hill might be seen as a series of statements or clues which inform the possible statements of a new structure. The reconstructed landscape is therefore a way of seeing the discursive possibilities of a built landscape.

One statement with regards to the hill is that it might be read as a series of directions, or fragments which describe a totality of the larger form of the hill. The fragmented structure of the hill becomes the clue for the building. Another statement which might be read as a hill deconstruction is that of a reversal, or the hill as space. In this deconstruction, the hill is reduced to a series of mobile tectonic planes in suspension. The planes describe the hill as a horizontal and scaled framework within which to build.
Model View: The Dialogue of Building Landscape and Ruin

Early Sketch: Hill Movement Through the Ruin Precinct
THE LANDSCAPE: CONSTRUCTED

The design seeks a stronger spatial understanding of the hill, its scale, directions and movement. Strong directional moves are established as structuring measures for the design. The first occurs as a built piece above the ground intended for museum offices. It recognizes the important edge and direction of the existing form and allows the important cross-direction of the hill to move freely below.

The hill is an aspect of the design which "moves through" the space of the ruin and the new precinct. In the process of its "movement through", the landscape is deconstructed as space. The space reveals itself as the excavated portion of the galleries and tunnel networks below. The main access route through the museum thus, appears more as an implied ground. It follows the direction of the landscape, profile. However, the ground-related experience occurs below and within the lower museum depths. This dialectic of real and virtual ground, of the hill as a deconstruction, or of movement topologies that overlap, appear as the incrementalized and optionally available experience of the building. The experience is that of a hill, spatialized, displaced, and "moving-through".
Ruin as a Spatial Precinct
CHANGE: DECONSTRUCTED

As a deconstruction, "change" implies a description of the essential order of its process. The question of this deconstruction asks what is the process of its process or how is the time of its time formed. The process of the ruin is that it is not based upon any absolutes with regards to how, when, or if in fact it may be finished. Its process is not linked to the understanding and realization of an idealized form. The form as an ideal never exists. Rather, it is represented as an ongoing dialogue between possibilities and not as only one possibility or process.

Change within the context of its deconstruction, implies the ability to make the choices and to realize such choices as embodied within the process of design, and further, within the building itself. The process of change then, can be seen to be happening at various levels of building and non-building, of permanence and impermanence, and as both additive and non-additive processes.

This is a process which advocates an understanding of the ruin as a form which never completely exists as one form or total moment. It is one which describes a dynamic of growth, change and varying rates of decomposition. It evokes continuous yet discontinuous forms that seek an understanding, reversal or recollection of the original form. The new form could thus be seen as a synthesis, or meta-morphology of an "ideal" form and what has come to exist over time as the "real" or continuous form.
In the context of the Lausanne ruin this synthesis is the embodied form of a ruin within and of the future, or of a ruin which actively engages in the dialogue of its process or ongoing dynamics of change.

*Early Sketch: Gallery and Outside Space*
Entrance as Change; The Movement of Space
CHANGE: CONSTRUCTED

The experience of the ruin/museum complex is one which is non-singular, forever changing, and constituting a dynamic series of places. The experience of entering is of a landscape size, or a long broad sweep upwards, upon the ramp-version of the hill. The journey to the ruin is elongated as time and as the ramp-form which bridges the territory of the ground and the lofty, contemporary space of the ruin. The overwhelming scale of the landscape is allowed to dwell here, on this bridge, on this ramp. The lofty ruin-like screen of gridded columns is of the scale of an interior forest. A wall protects its south side. Thin wafers of glazing denote more invisible, and vulnerable edges on the other sides.

The space of the new extension is more of a contradiction, perhaps a less permanent fixture than the residual territory of the ruin and its entrance. Built as a mesh-like cage of spidery steel trusses and spine-like screen walls, the museum is seen as a growing, extendable form of and from the ruin complex. Its form describes the hill as precious in terms of what it can yield as space. This museum animal actively mines the territory of the hill, erects walls to restrain the moving force of the hill, and defines its space as a new structural invention that bases itself in the situation of the old structure.
Wall as The Delineation of Change:

Change in the Context of Scale
Re-emerging from the spidery formations of the cave and cage-like galleries, is the discovery of a new space outside...a long gallery-like court. As an external space it can be understood in terms different from the more bold spatial experience associated with entrance. It has a more subtle and finer texture. The hill is built and appears as a cascade which flows along one edge of the court and through the open territory of the ruin. Walls are defined as a series of layers and not as the juxtapositional delayering which occur as other wall surfaces more embedded in the landscape. The outer layers of these walls are lighter and are designed as light screens for the more internal spaces of the building.

V. COMPARABLE REFERENCES

Comparable analysis is another relational process within which the dialogue of design takes place. While actual decisions such as those taken for the Lausanne Ruin are primarily based on a philosophical point of view and of an understanding of the form of the context and the intervention, another level of understanding is perhaps that which arises out of the experience of comparables or an understanding of what one sees.

The Ruin of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico
Palenque

Situated in the rainforested foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, Chiapas, Mexico, Palenque is a ruin of Mayan origin. It is a form which virtually carves and expresses the form of the landscape. Contextually, it is not dissimilar from the Lausanne ruin. It describes the hill yet in a spatial way describes the horizontal and planar qualities of a landscape below. The vertical, seemingly inaccessible temples which climb the dense rainforest structure of the hill are juxtapositionally opposite the less imposing palace structures which occupy a more horizontal space below. Movement throughout the complex can be described as optional.

There is the choice of "moving through" in relation to the landscape and between the more built forms of temple and palace or within the structures of the more built pieces. For example, it is a relief to discover after frontally attacking the imposing steps of the Palace of the Inscriptions, that an alternate return exists as a path in the hill itself. In the Lausanne ruin, one experiences the hill as both built and unbuilt. For example it is possible to arrive in the cylinder-like container of the open cinema/theatre, climb the hill as a built extension, then rediscover the hill again as a natural upward movement through the ruin.

At Palenque, movement options within the palace are complex and contain multiple possibilities. The main movement or access option occurs in relation to a series of long
corbel-vaulted structures that are deployed in a space-defining way. A single mansard-like roof form defines two long vaulted spaces separated by a massive party wall. The double vaulted feature of the roof is that it defines access and use areas, or areas having inside and external associations.

Within the larger structure of these forms are the open courtyards of variable size and form. The spatial experience is always changing or moving in relation to the more constant, structuring form of the corbelled vault buildings. Within the context of this larger, unfolding experience are contained all the other options to move between walls, smaller openings, and down into darker carvern-like alleys below the main level. In essence one can read and experience the place as layered, and constituted by both larger and smaller orders of form.

The form of the Lausanne Museum describes a similar topological condition. The main lateral access within the complex occurs in relation to a long building constructed as a series of similar structures and related gallery spaces. An open, directional courtyard space is defined within the context of the new intervention and is sided on one side by the existing ruin. The large order of these pieces serves the main movement through, while other options such as a system of stairs exist to access down and into the excavated portions of the museum.
Wall as built space

Sketches, 1987
MITLA

Located in the drier highland portion of the Sierra Madres of Oaxaca, Mexico, the ruin of Mitla describes the wall as space. Mitla might be seen as a built wall which describes at a local level the form and space of the individual parts which comprise the totality of its construction.

The wall is built as space which defines the space of the room constructed to form the space of an exterior room or courtyard. The walls of the aggregate room/courtyard complex then further define a larger, more open court around which the buildings of Mitla are grouped. The dry wall-like form of the mountains seem to be the last layer of enclosure in this context. Mitla’s walls are thus understandable as space-defining, however, at more than one level or scale. They define, yet also define more.

The walls used in the context of the Lausanne project are not only surfaces upon which to gather light but also serve as containers for both inside and outside space, or as doubled walls within which there is movement. The wall as a planar definition is described both as solid and more screen-like forms. The wall is seen as the possibilities of its form and usage. It carries with it a double meaning and association.
MONTE ALBAN

Literally built as the deconstruction/extension of a hill, Monte Alban describes landscape building as the horizontal definition of space. It describes the hill as the possibility of space. Arriving to the rim of Monte Alban’s precinct is like arriving to a sort of dialectical threshold between the built and unbuilt space of the hill. On one side the slope moves away in a curving natural formation, falling toward the broad expanse of valley below. On the opposite side of the rim-like threshold is a series of built terraces and steps which describe the downward descent, and build the edges of a grassed horizontal plaza high up in the spine of the Sierra Madre Mountains. In many ways the form of the larger landscape is maintained within the form of the precinct. Large horizontal references (ie., the building of the precinct edge) describe in a bold way the huge scale of the context in which the precinct is found. The larger landscape edge or horizon is essentially read as the strong horizontal gesture of the precinct edge.

In relation to the Lausanne museum, the huge undefined scale of the landscape is understood through a few large design decisions that form a context through which the museum can develop. Walls are used not only to define territory but also the horizontal condition of the land. A bridge-like territory of office and administration space describes in a forward way the large horizontal space of the road, the lake below and the farther string of the Alps beyond.
Split: interior court
The Diocletian's Palace in Split, Yugoslavia describes the ruin as an essential form of an adjacent structure, or that of the city. The city exists as a palace, fragmented and redefined as a new place. The memory of its previous form, of the roomlike character of its space, has evolved as the external room of the city. Dynamic evolutive processes of the city allow a new reading, or understanding of the ruin. It is seen not as a static field of ruinous rubble, but rather the city reveals the structure of the ruin in terms of its possibilities. Column and entablature fragments exist outside the field of appreciative romanticist preservation, but instead are used to define and structure new urban spaces and uses. It can be seen in the form of an aluminum-framed bank door in bold juxtaposition and violation of a former, more classically inspired arch. It can be felt while relaxing at a room cafe (as opposed to street), as the ambiguous experience of being outside, yet curiously within a room, or fragment of the earlier palace.

Within the Lausanne museum, the experience of being inside the space of the ruin, yet outside in terms of landscape is realized as fundamentally related to the state of the present existence of the ruin on the site. The passage of landscape and its elements through the ruin is actual and realizable as an optional route which branches from the territory of the museum entrance. This is a bridge which hangs in the gridded space of the ruin. A perforated steel
plane above offers the option of climbing higher into the ruin complex, and affords the close inspection of the huge pre-cast plane of perforated concrete supported above the grid. The last option along this ruin route is the box, raised heroically and under constant onslaught by the ravages of time and weather. The space of this outdoor room could be interpreted as the memory of an essential order of the ruin. It is a fragment, left as is, and describes an opposite space, more enclosing and outside the landscape ruin. These are the last remaining walls of a room turned inside out.
entrance floor

Movement through

Museum entrance

Hill extension
NEUE STAATSGALERIE

The Staatsgalerie by James Stirling is a recent example of a building which describes a bricolage of events, forms, and various overlapping topologies of movement. It describes an attitude toward formmaking which might be described as idiosyncratic in that it refuses to limit itself to any recent style or popular "ism". In doing one thing the building does another. For example, the rather formal U-shaped sequence of roomlike galleries of the main exhibition wing might be described as a continuation of what exists as the formal structure of the older, adjacent Staatsgalerie. Beyond just a reapplication of older formal structures, Stirling's building also explores the use of free plan and open form as suggested by the entrance foyer.

The complex addresses the hill in a skillful and formgiving way. In its deconstruction, the hill can be seen as a series of outwardly projecting horizontal planes which build the territory of the museum. The circular, spatial drum resolves the downward movement of the hill as a stepped ramp while also ensuring an open public access or continuity through and into the urban space of the town.

The Lausanne project, in comparison, can be seen as both a continuative and disjunctive description of its context. It describes what is essential about the existing space, form, and dimension of the ruin, while also introducting in
Built extension of the hill
new terms, another tectonic of building which defies the grid. It describes the essential ruin in terms of space; whether it is the space of the hill moving down and through the ruin or as the space of the new building formed as a precinct around the ruin.
Richard Meier's Decorative Arts Museum in Frankfurt, Germany is illustrative of a contemporary museum which seeks the survival of a pre-existing form as embodied within the new addition. In the difficult problem of building in relation to the existing space of a 19th century villa, Meier chose to reveal the Villa Metzler within the new museum. This was accomplished through a precinct developed as space outside the museum, and as internal space related to the dimensional configurations of the villa.

The 17 meter square dimensions of the Villa Metzler are inscribed in his plan as a module for new gallery spaces. The smaller dimensions of the villa are further extrapolated as other room sizes within the museum complex. The connection to the villa is further implied through a smaller bridge which connects the two territories of museum and house but also allows the landscape to move freely below it.

In the Lausanne Museum the new gallery additions are based on a continuation of existing dimensions understood within the structure of the ruin. A 15 meter square room dimension was extrapolated as a basic module for organizing some of the new galleries. Walls are used to define the space of the hill. Trusses and rigid steel vaults define the overhead spatial enclosure. The new structure can be described in juxtapositional terms with what exists, and within the territory of the ruin. Instead of many columns of a solid concrete type, a few large trusses or a single screen-like vault describes the space and
The bridge to the ruin

landscape detail
structure of the new galleries. The new museum departs from what exists as "structure" yet develops a continuity within what exists as "structuring" as a dimensional framework.

Within the Lausanne ruin, a bridge describes the connection to the landscape. It is large and of a relational scale with the landscape. It is inhabited by the museum offices. Within the adjacent context of the larger landscape is a smaller, human-scaled bridge or ramp that moves beside the larger one as the passage to the ruin.
Palenque, 1987
VI. CONCLUSION

Against this ruin I have shored these fragments.

-T.S. Eliot

It is important that the understanding of the ruin is one which is relational, or one which is perhaps best described in the context of a larger field of both experience and possibilities. Design can then be seen as an activity which seeks to endorse the larger field. The field is landscape as a new form or it is change as a form which evolves and addresses the temporality of its nature, or in fact, the future. The ruin manifested as built and unbuilt is thus only another layer of what exists below, outside, and beyond.

The ruin in the field expresses a deeper possibility embedded in design. Design can seek to probe, excavate, and in essence discover the layers of place as metamorphologies of everything that exists and of those things which can come to exist as a new place and time. The ruin in the field describes in many ways what is essential about design. It describes design as the discovery of relational possibilities between forms and their associated contexts. Through and of the ruin in a relational world is the realization of place.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix 2

Musee Deutsch
Working Drawings, Atelier 5 Architects