

THE ARCHITECTURE OF MONTAGE:  
A Critical Inquiry into the Work of Machado/Silvetti

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1986

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES  
AT THE  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
SEPTEMBER 1989

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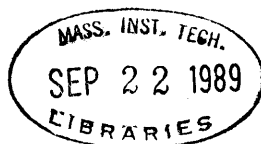
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## Abstract:

The paper argues for the relevance and possibility of a critical resistance *within* the social and cultural lines to replace the negational tactics of the avant-garde. The montaged work -- disjunction in the guise of "realist" representation -- is presented as a site for cultural resistance, maybe most evocatively in the metaphor of the trojan horse. The montaged work is thus shown to *seduce* the recipient with coherent imagery and intelligible form into accessing its familiar but unstable territory where a critical attentiveness about reality could be shaped.

The argument hinges upon a contrasted comparison of often conflated collaged and montaged works in the history of the avant-garde. The latter are thus distinguished in their heterogeneous yet *functional* imagery, one that seems *accessible* to hermeneutic procedures of intellectual objectification yet resistant to a transparent meaning. While contriving a (paradoxical) congruence between whole and parts, montage is shown never to achieve among its contradictory layers of meaning, the necessary synthesis for an organic "expression" of social totality. Rather, the montaged work ruptures the supposedly indissoluble unity of form and content which *is placed on history by ideology* so as to "distance from within" the categories of dominant ideology. The ambivalent constructions of montage are accordingly identified in the structure of a *quasi-organic work*: an ad hoc category which eventually claims a permanent territory between the traditional *organic* (Lukács and social realism) and *nonorganic* (Adorno and critical modernism) fields of representation.

The work of Machado/Silvetti will serve to extend and demonstrate the critical power and cultural relevance of montage and its characteristic *quasi-organicity* in the current architectural practice.

Thesis Supervisor: Francesco Passanti, Assistant Professor of Architecture.

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## *Acknowledgements*

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this work to my family in Lebanon (for whom issues of cultural criticism, however important, come second to basic every day survival). I thank them for an uncompromising support --- emotional as well as material.

This work owes an obvious debt to Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti, whose work generated the impetus of this research. I thank them for their cooperation in providing an abundance of sources, documents, and information which served as a foundation for this research.

I am grateful also to the faculty and students of the History, Theory, and Criticism Program at M.I.T. who furnished a stimulating arena of discussion and debate around relevant issues of cultural criticism. I am especially grateful to K. Michael Hays, Shayne O'Neil, Ann Wagner, and Judith Wolin whose rigorous criticism over the years has contributed greatly to my intellectual development.

I am indebted greatly to Nader Tehrani, not only for a careful editing of this writing, but also for a long-time contribution to the arguments presented in this paper

I am most thankful to Francesco Passanti, whose close reading, detailed remarks, and critical insight proved profoundly constructive in the process of generating this thesis, and certainly suggestive as to the future evolution of this project.

*Introduction: Architecture as a Semi-Autonomous Practice*

Nothing remains from a desublimated meaning  
or a destructured form; an emancipatory effect  
does not follow.

Jürgens Habermas

All revolutionary hope is bound up in a  
promethean myth of productive forces, the  
liberation of which is confused with the  
liberation of man.

Jean Baudrillard

The arguments developed within this thesis assume a role for the architectural discipline in the production of knowledge; they recognize a potent voice for architecture in the cultural debate and demand at the outset an examination of its critical power in relation to the existing ideological/cultural apparatus. Architecture is construed here as a semi-autonomous "level" of the social formation, a technical/ideological *practice* transforming both matter and human consciousness through determinate means of production and human labor, into determinate *products*. Architecture is thus the product of specific determinants which are not reducible to material relationships at the "base"; it is governed by laws of its own that cannot be read off from other "instances" of practical activity. As a material and ideological force, it claims a power and an effectiveness of its own in relation to other levels of social practice (Althusser). This paper thus examines the possibility, nature, and function of a *critical* architecture, "one resistant to the self confirming, conciliatory operations of a dominant culture and yet irreducible to a purely formal structure disengaged from the contingencies of place and times."<sup>1</sup>

The critical activity here examined is distinguished from the avant-gardist modes of transgression and negation now considered ineffective and ideologically suspect in their mythifying representations of the transcendental "truths" of "progressive" social emancipation, and inevitable disengagement from social praxis, in the entrenched autonomy of a hermetic discourse. These strategies do protest --- sometimes with pure silence (Krauss) -- against alienation and reification in capitalist societies and insist upon the realization of certain ideals (in the future). But while the enigmatic forms of negational art are helpless against the passive consumption of styles, the anticipation of social harmony risks degenerating into a mythical compensation of society's shortcomings (Marcuse). The recuperation of the avant-garde, its institutionalization and final

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<sup>1</sup>K Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture -- Between Culture and Form," in *erspecta* 21 (1984) p. 15

commodification testify to the ambivalent ideological affiliations of such strategies; we may also evoke Tafuri's analysis of the collusive great "progressive" modern urban projects and capitalist speculative development as a vivid illustration of such ambivalence.

The practice here examined, furthermore undermines the notion that destructured formal compositions possess a potential for deconstructing ideological closure. With their celebrated dispersal of referential meaning such compositions tend to capitalize on the materiality of the work -- fetichize the "signifier" and bracket-out the "signified" -- and thereby promote instantaneous consumption of disembodied forms while answering the demands of an avid market with an addiction for the new (Jameson).

This paper thus examines an architectural practice which recognizes the avant-garde as a historically and culturally bound activity and claims a more adequate positioning *vis a vis* a new social order of increasingly heterogeneous elements; it renounces the negational silence before the commodity fetich, the *active* drive toward the replacement of existing ideological and cultural apparatuses, and any possibility for operating *outside* ideological representation; at the same time, it rejects the formalist biases of the current architectural production which (supposedly) "deconstructs" the *realist* discourse of typology only to "package" a new style for immediate consumption.

This does not mean that a critical architecture should ignore the ruptures and gaps of reality and strive for a "realist" expression of "social totality" (Lukács). Possible rather, is an architecture of resistance within a social formation construed not as a "total system" but as a structure of interrelated, intersecting or colliding semi-autonomous *practices* (Althusser), where culture is seen as a site of struggle and active contestation. This architecture would stress cultural representation -- the prime home of ideology -- in



typological transformation rather than negational or utopian abstraction and manipulate the cultural affiliations of types and icons -- so as to reveal the processes and ideological apparatuses which control them -- rather than profess their (stylistic) destruction.

This architecture is one of montage procedures. Exemplified in Machado/Silvetti's work, the nature and critical "effect" of this architecture is discussed in the second part of the paper, according to a revised theory of montage, articulated in its divergence from collage (*Toward a Theory of Montage in Architecture*). The argument starts with a reorientation of theories of typology toward a discussion about realism in architecture. The Country House in Virginia by Machado, the House in Djerba, and the Leonforte Tower by Silvetti in Italy serve here to substantiate a claim for "realism" in typological representation (Chapter Three: *Typology and Realism*). The discussion then moves to define the montage procedure and its raw material (reality fragments or "types"); it describes the constitution of the *montaged* work in contradistinction to its (less critical) *collaged* counterpart and extends its transformational operations into architecture with an examination of an urban proposal by Machado for Este, Italy (Chapter Four: *Montage: Material, Procedures, and Constitution*). Finally the revised montage and its architectural manifestation are examined in their critical function and "empirically" tested in their effectiveness with an analysis of Machado and Silvetti's project for Palermo, Italy (Chapter Five: *Montage and the "Aesthetic Effect"*).

The first part of the paper establishes a cultural background for the arguments above while discussing the shortcomings of postmodern architectural production (Chapter One: *The Postmodern Condition: Diagnosis and Implications*) and critically revising the strategic program of traditional cultural criticism (Chapter Two: *Revisions and Possible Strategies*). Also. . . by recognizing an accommodating and polymorphous Capitalism and the ideological ambivalence of "melancholic complacency" in montage/allegory (Benjamin) and the

## *Introduction*

"fetichization of the code" in the manipulation of signification (Baudrillard), this first part of the paper (*On the (In)effectiveness of Critical Art and Architecture in Mass Culture*) casts a maybe *cynical* but necessary shadow of doubt over the assumed *naïveté* of my following constructions.

Part One:

*On the (in)effectiveness of Critical Art and Architecture in Mass Culture.*

## Chapter One: *The Postmodern Condition: Diagnosis and Implications*

Octavio Paz, a fellow traveller of modernity, noted already in the middle of the 1960's that "the avant-garde of 1967 repeats the deeds and gestures of those of 1917. We are experiencing the end of the idea of modern art." The work of Peter Bürger has since taught us to speak of "post-avant-garde" art; this term is chosen to indicate the failure of the surrealist rebellion. But what is the meaning of this failure? Does it signal a farewell to modernity? Thinking more generally, does the existence of a post-avant-garde mean there is a transition to the broader phenomenon called postmodernity?

Jürgens Habermas

In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society"<sup>2</sup> Fredric Jameson examines postmodernist art<sup>3</sup> against the emergence of a new kind of society after World War II<sup>4</sup>, variously described as postindustrial society, multinational capitalism, consumer society, media society etc., and in terms of "new types of consumption; planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and the media generally to hitherto unparalleled degree throughout society; the replacement of the old tension between city and country, center and province, by the suburbs and by universal standardization; the growth of the great networks of superhighways and the arrival of automobile culture etc."<sup>5</sup> Jameson seeks here to draw a parallel between the logic of this particular social system and the formal features of postmodernism. This consonance --- or complicity --- is most explicitly demonstrated by the "disappearance of a sense of history" in both, the postmodern pastiche/textuality, and the 'schizophrenia' of consumer society.

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<sup>2</sup>Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in *The Anti-Aesthetic -- Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster, ed. (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 111-125.

<sup>3</sup>In Jameson's essay the term 'postmodernist' qualifies a variety of works emerging as specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism. By definition, postmodernism is a heterogeneous body converging only against the hegemony of a modernism it seeks to displace: "This means that there will be as many different forms of postmodernism as there high modernisms in place, since the former are at least initially specific and local reactions against those models." Most importantly, postmodernism is a periodizing concept allowing to correlate new cultural formal features with unprecedented socio-economical developments.

<sup>4</sup>In "periodizing the Sixties," Jameson structures the modern history of capital -- after Ernest Mandel -- in three phases:

first, a market economy which in its erosion of traditional forms through the equivalence of commodity exchange, allowed for early (negational) modernism

Second, a monopoly capitalism whose monolithic structures prompted the private and ironic languages of high modernism.

Third, multinational capitalism, in whose mediated space, at once homogeneous and discontinuous, the "schizo" productions of postmodernism surface. (Fosters' summary)

<sup>5</sup>Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", p. 124

Jameson borrows the concept of schizophrenia from Lacan's psychoanalysis in order to diagnose the 'neurosis' of late capitalist society. Lacan's schizophrenia entails, in short, a failure to accede fully into the realm of speech and language. Resulting is a breakdown of the experience of temporality --- the experiential feeling of time being an 'effect' of language, and the patient is condemned to live in subjectless perpetual present: "schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the "I" and the "me" over time."<sup>6</sup>

After the breakdown of language --- or more precisely the relationship between the signifier and the signified , only the *material* signifier now transformed into an *image* remains behind in the schizophrenic experience of the *perpetually present* world. Now, according to Jameson's analysis, both, the transformation of reality into images and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents characterize the dominant operations of postmodernism, namely textuality and pastiche. In short, pastiche and textuality may be the very symptoms of the schizophrenic collapse of the subject and historical narrativity in late capitalist society. The analysis thus finally serves to question the critical value of postmodernist art:

There is some agreement that the older modernism functioned against its society in ways which are variously described as critical, negative, contestatory, subversive, oppositional and the like. Can anything of the sort be affirmed about postmodernism and its social moment? We have seen that there is a way in which postmodernism replicates or reproduces --- reinforces --- the logic of consumer capitalism; the more significant question is whether there is also a way in which it resists that logic.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.119

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 125

Judging from the recent architectural production we are inclined to share Jameson's skepticism regarding the critical effectiveness of postmodern tactics in displacing the status quo. Whether erected in *reaction* to modernism with a return to 'representation', narrative, ornament and figure (pastiche) or intended to *deconstruct* modernism by problematizing representation in its assumed transparency to reality (textuality), the current design strategies in architecture may be revealed in their complicity with the process of reification and fragmentation under late capitalism. Not only do they exacerbate the schizophrenic inability to think the present and precipitate the rapid dissolution of traditional forms provoked by a radicalized capitalism, they also fuel the obsessive economic imperative "to produce more environments with the appearance of novelty at greater rates of turnover."<sup>8</sup>

Although opposed in their political tactics and formal strategies (the 'deconstruction' of a discipline is strategically quite different from its instrumental pastiche), the "dislocating" architecture of Peter Eisenmann and the cubist classicism of Michael Graves --- both paradigmatic in their respective camps --- coincide in their agreement with the logic of consumer capitalism.

In an attempt to 'critically' resist the gradual erosion of values and traditions (in art, family, religion, etc.) Graves construes his architecture as a repudiation of a modernism, here reduced to a style (the international style) or an abstraction (functionalism) and emphatically condemned as a cultural mistake.<sup>9</sup> This repudiation is strategic: as Habermas argues, "Neoconservatism shifts onto cultural modernism the uncomfortable burdens of more or less successful capitalist modernization of the economy and society. The neoconservative doctrine blurs the relationship between the welcomed process of societal modernization on

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<sup>8</sup>Walter Clarke, "The Economic Currency of Architectural Aesthetics," in *Threshold* vol. IV, Spring 88

<sup>9</sup>See Stanford Anderson, "The Fiction of Function" for a discussion on the instrumental characterization of modern architecture as "functionalist".

the one hand, and the lamented cultural development on the other." Accordingly, Graves can blame the practice of modernism for the ills of modernization. And while "adversary" culture is denounced, the political and economical status quo is safeguarded in the name of a new "affirmative" culture, and the restoration of the humanist project.<sup>10</sup>

Adorno once wrote --- from the modernist position of "negative commitment" ---that "the promise of happiness, once the definition of art, can no longer be found except where the mask has been torn from the countenance of false happiness."<sup>11</sup> Graves' architecture can accordingly be revealed as an attempt to restore, by imposing lost traditions on a present gone far beyond humanist verities, the ideological mask over the face of social control.<sup>12</sup>

In his quest for lost values and traditions, Graves pastiches art-historical and pop-cultural references by colliding different fragments in a collage. The initially critical modernist technique becomes a mere instrumental device: "The sign, fragmented, fetishized and exhibited as such, is resolved in a signature look, enclosed within a frame."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Graves promotes style --- in the sense of the signature of the architect and also the spirit of the age --- and proclaims a return to history. Yet, in the name of style and history he inevitably resorts to the eclecticism and relativism of pastiche, contradicting thereby the very concept of style (as a singular expression of an author or period) and denies the possibility of thinking historically in the collapsing of period signs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>See Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity -- an Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*.

<sup>11</sup>Theodore Adorno, "on the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression in Listening," in *The essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 274

<sup>12</sup>See Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985).

<sup>13</sup>Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, p. 131

<sup>14</sup>Pastiche has to be distinguished here from parody. Parody capitalizes on the uniqueness and ideosyncrasies of particular styles in order to critically satirize the originals *in contrast* to a stable linguistic/formal norm and "cast ridicule on the private nature of these stylistic mannerism and their excessiveness and eccentricity with respect to the way people normally speak or write." Pastiche also imitates particular styles without however a "satirical impulse." Since the absence of a stable norm in the



The contradictions inherent in Graves' architecture are most accurately qualified in Fosters words: " The Postmodern Style of History may in fact signal the disintegration of style and the collapse of History . . . Postmodernism is revealed by the very cultural moment it would otherwise flee. And it, in turn, reveals this moment as marked not by a renaissance of style but by its implosion in pastiche; and not by a return of a sense of history but by its erosion; and not by a rebirth of the artist/architect as *auteur* but by the death of the author -- as origin and center of meaning. Such is the postmodern present of hysterical, historical retrospection in which history is fragmented and the subject dispersed in its own representations."<sup>15</sup>

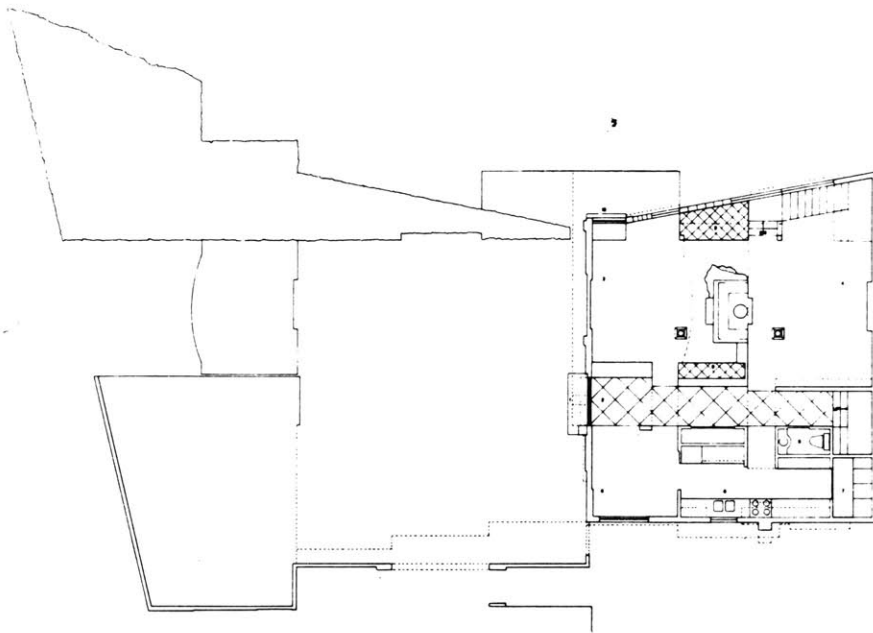
In contradistinction to Graves' return to 'innocent' representation, Eisenmann's project is aligned with the post structuralist critique of 'mimesis' and of the modern discursive paradigms, aiming thus to 'deconstruct' the truth content and "false authority" of visual and discursive representations, and expose the cultural codes at the basis of their opaque 'constructions' of reality: "The apparent truth of architecture is in its claim for the univocality of the representation of the architectural object, that is, that object which has an immediate aesthetic and a function that it represents in its *presence*."<sup>16</sup>

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pluralist sea of private languages -- the logical consequence of consumer capitalism (see note 3) -- makes any such satirical mockery impossible: "Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor." (Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" p. 114)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 128

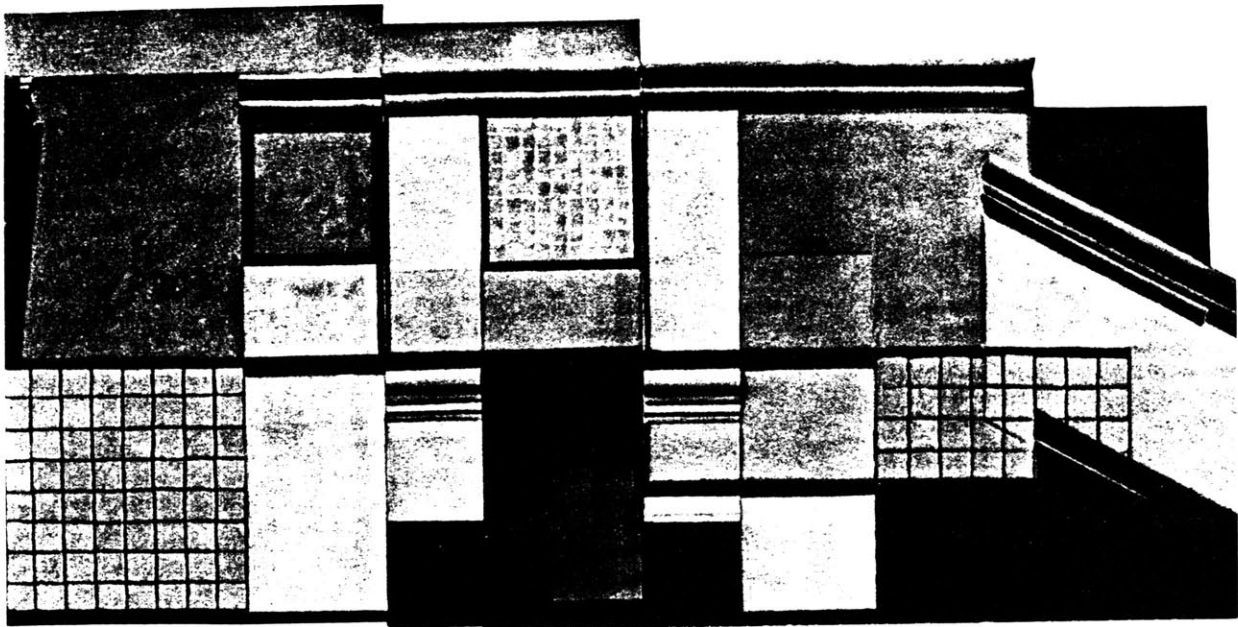
<sup>16</sup>See Eisenmann, "Architecture as a Second Language," in *Threshold* vol. IV, Spring 88



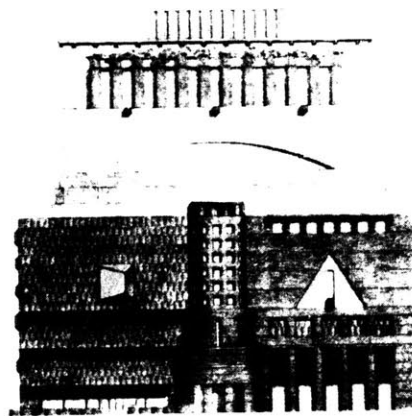
Michael Graves, Plan of Crooks House, Fort Wayne, 1976.



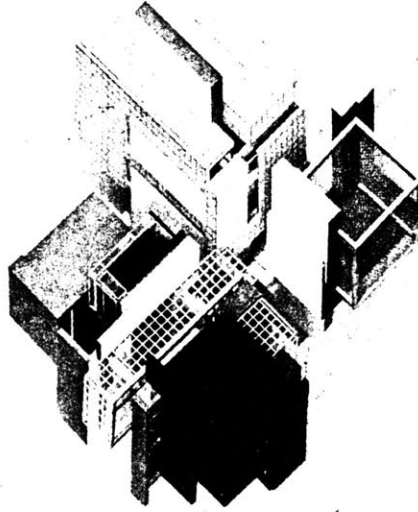
Michael Graves, Schulman House, Princeton, 1976.



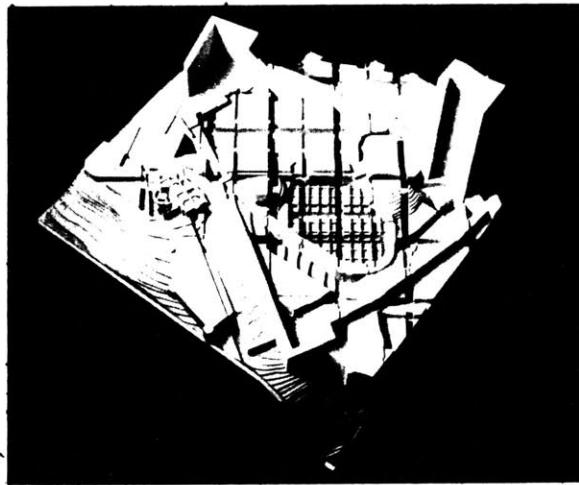
Michael Graves, Elevation of Wageman House, Princeton, 1974.



Michael Graves, Project for Whitney Museum of Art, New York, 1985.



Peter Eisenmann, Model of House X, Project, 1980



Peter Eisenmann, Model of *Romeo and Juliet* Project, 1985.

Strategically, Eisenmann blurs the distinction between object and representation by allowing them to intersect in the design process in order to 'deconstruct' the terms by which *presence* is represented. For instance, the very artifice of orthographic projection in axonometric drawing generates the actual form in his project for *House X*. Similar in intention but different in its mode of operation, the *Romeo and Juliet* project proceeds by collaging planimetric representations of objects from diverse temporal and spatial origins, repeatedly drawn and superposed at different scales, in order to generate yet another "dislocated" form. The design process now construed as a series of systematic superpositions --- an instrumental appropriation of Mandelbrot's notion of *self-similarity* in fractal geometry --- is believed to be automatic, open ended, "no longer governed by the teleology which moves it from an origin to a final goal or truth."<sup>17</sup> These projects are thus intended to confront the authority of traditional architectural representation which separates and mediates drawings and objects. They also seek to "deconstruct" the idea of originary/authorial value and the notion of an ontologically grounded meaning that 'seal' the work as a finite and stable sign.

This 'deconstructive' impulse must however be distinguished from the modernist self-critical tendency. "Modernism theory presupposes that mimesis, the adequation of an image to a referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically for its referent ... Postmodernism neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works instead to problematize the activity of reference."<sup>18</sup> And while the modernist sign is a stable entity comprising a signifier and a corresponding signified (with the referent bracketed in abstraction), Eisenmann's practice "reflects on the contemporary dissolution of the sign and the released play of signifiers."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (1980), p. 105

Eisenmann's post-structuralist critique, thus, attempts to theoretically restructure the modernist work --- an organic entity sealed by an origin (the author) and an end (a transcendent meaning) --- into a postmodernist text --- "a multidimensional space in which a variety writings, none of them original, blend and clash."<sup>20</sup> As Jameson writes:

The contemporary poststructuralist aesthetic signals the dissolution of the modernist paradigm --- with its valorization of myth and symbol, temporality, organic form and the concrete universal, the identity of the subject and the continuity of linguistic expression --- and foretells the emergence of some new postmodernist or schizophrenic conception of the artifact --- now strategically reformulated as "text" or "écriture," and stressing discontinuity, allegory, the mechanical, the gap between the signifier and signified, the lapse in meaning, the syncope in the experience of the subject.<sup>21</sup>

Gap, rupture, syncope, disjunction, erosion of a sense of space and time, breakdown of signification, dispersion of the subject in the endless flux of textuality... Such is the rhetoric --- and intended effect --- of an architectural practice which has appropriated the strategic arsenal of post-structuralism in an attempt to deconstruct ideological closure. But one has to wonder here with Jameson whether such critique is not likely to exacerbate the schizophrenic condition of consumer capitalist society thus rendering even more difficult any attempt to think the present. Phrased differently the question reads as follows: Isn't the dislocating effect of Eisenmann's architecture collusive with the action of capital itself?

In actuality, the question is irrelevant since this architecture does not even achieve the intended effect. Indeed, nothing breaks down in the "dislocating" textuality but the radical implications of the architectural artifact itself: textuality severs the architectural forms from

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

<sup>21</sup>Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Agression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 20.

the stabilizing authority of original meaning only to isolate them in their *materiality* and transform them into images. "What the schizophrenic breakdown of language does to the individual words that remain behind is to reorient the subject to a more literalizing attention towards those words. . . a signifier that has lost its signified has thereby been transformed into an image."<sup>22</sup>

The disembodied signs of Eisenmann's architecture cannot question the epistemological value of representation or deconstruct the ideological basis of architectural form; they can only be passively and instantaneously *consumed* in their neutral materiality by an audience avid for stylistic novelty.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the radicality of late capitalism seems to allow little if any room for such critical strategies since "the real radicality is always capital's . . . More than any avant-garde, capital is the agent of transgression and shock --- which is one reason why such strategies in art now seem as redundant as resistance seems futile."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", p. 120.

<sup>23</sup>This process will be addressed in greater detail in the discussion around collage.

<sup>24</sup>Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* p. 147.

## Chapter Two: Critiques, Revisions and Possible Strategies

The adventures of the aesthetic make up one of the great narratives of modernity: from the time of its autonomy through the art-for-art's-sake to its status as a necessary negative category, a critique of the world as it is. It is this last moment (figured brilliantly in the writings of Theodor Adorno) that is hard to relinquish: the notion of the aesthetic as subversive, a critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world. Now, however, we have to consider that this aesthetic space too is eclipsed --- or rather, that its criticality is now largely illusory (and so instrumental). In such an event, the strategy of an Adorno, of "negative commitment," might have to be revised or rejected and a new strategy of interference (associated with Gramsci) devised.

Hal Foster



A critique of cultural hegemony is possible today only after a radical re-orientation of the program of a culturally and historically bound avant-garde. The effectiveness of critical strategies depends upon their historical specificity and cultural pertinence. No practice is inherently critical or resistance, independently of the way it engages a specific context and informs particular modes of reception. "So to consider the status of the avant-garde is not to challenge its criticality in the past, but on the contrary to see how it may be reinscribed as resistant, as critical in the present."<sup>25</sup>

*On Transgression.*

. . . the structural codes which the modern avant-garde sought to transgress no longer exist as such or are no longer defended as such by the hegemonic culture. In this new, all-but-global reach of capital, there may be no limit to transgress . . . And in this case the modernist strategy of transgression must pass...<sup>26</sup>

Transgression ---a central principle and ultimate objective in avant-garde practices --- presupposes a limit to cultural experience; transgressive activity can indeed be only defined in relation to a *limit* delineating the the edges of culture against a dark *outside* ---the "other" space of *difference*. Transgression seeks to "burst through" this tangible limit, thereby bringing cultural experience into violent contact with the disruptive force of the Other. Such a (rigid) limit can indeed exist in a tightly structured and relatively stable society like that of monopoly capitalism.<sup>27</sup> While the displacement effected by transgression has proven relatively powerful --- at least momentarily --- and politically valid in such societies, its strategic force can be seriously doubted within the already fragmented society and against the greatly "elastic" ideological limits of multinational capitalism.

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<sup>25</sup> Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* p. 149

<sup>26</sup> Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* p. 152

<sup>27</sup> See note "3".

According to Roland Barthes, the bourgeoisie is unable to imagine the Other, the "scandal" which threatens its existence. Yet the Other as "scandal" is necessary for it defines the limits of the bourgeois social space against a structural and structuring *outside*. Order is produced, on the one hand, by *exclusionary* stereotypes (the marginal, the exotic, the primitive . . . ) which transform the Other into an inoffensive "pure object, a spectacle, a clown. Relegated to the confines of humanity, he no longer threatens the security of the home."<sup>28</sup> On the other hand --- and much more effectively --- the disciplining apparatus of our social regime *recuperates* the Other with the agency of *false transgressions*. In a social order which seems to know no *outside*, *difference* is processed through the coopting order of recognition and thereby reduced to the *same*.

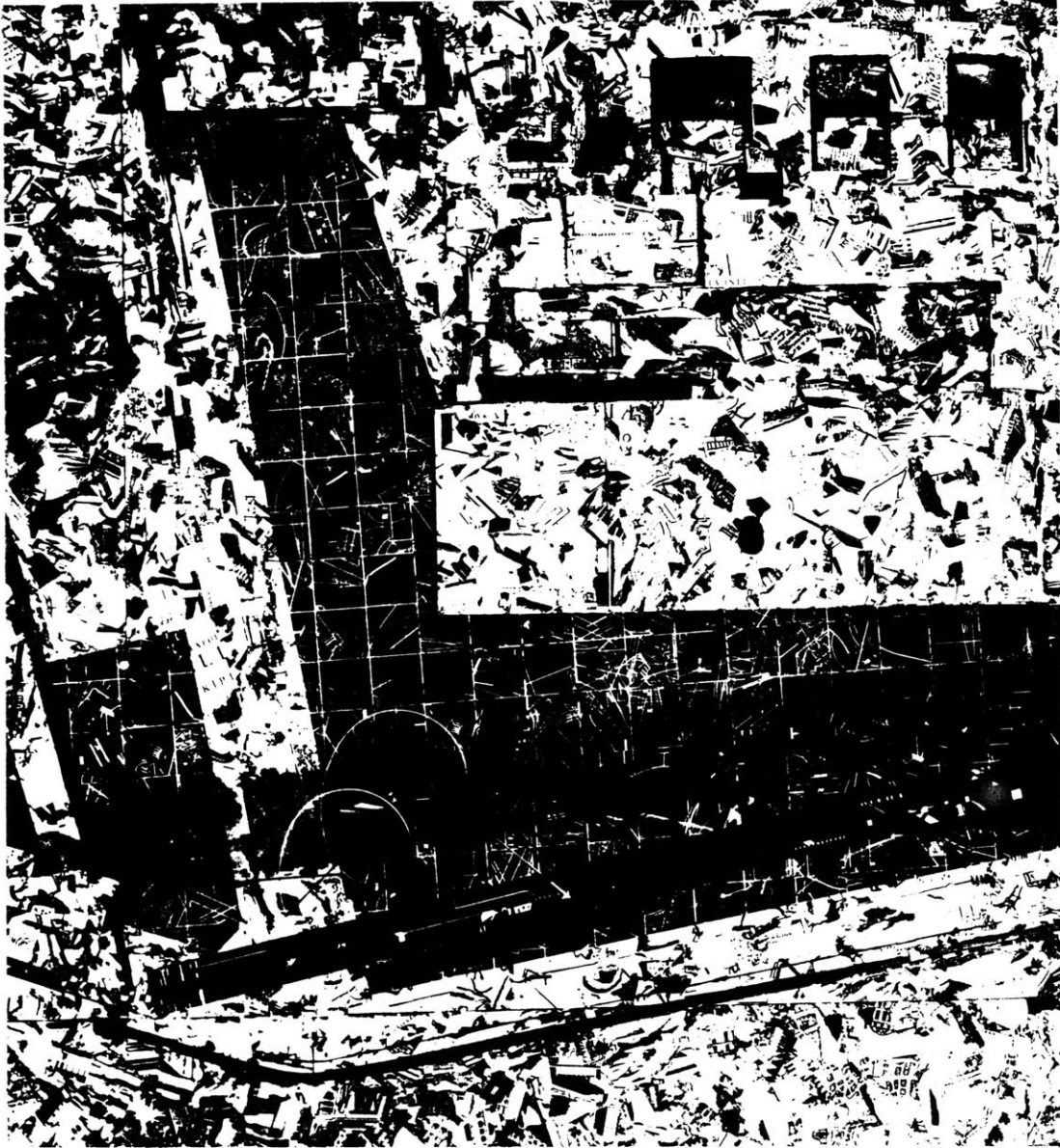
In short, *transgression* (into the space of the Other) may be revealed --- dialectically --- to be one with *recuperation* (of *difference*). Critical marginality can thus be construed as a mythological construct, an ideological space where subversive difference is neutralized.

*Transgression/recuperation* absorbs the Other only to the degree that it may be rendered innocuous: "One immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil, one that protects it against the risk of generalized subversion... The bourgeoisie no longer hesitates to acknowledge some localized subversions; the avant-garde, the irrational in childhood, etc. It now lives in a balanced economy: as in any sound joint-stock company, the smaller shares compensate the big ones."<sup>29</sup>

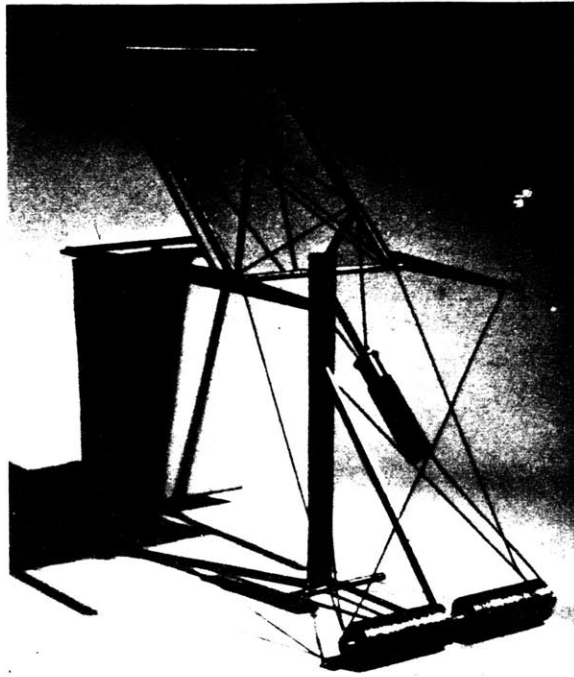
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<sup>28</sup>Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, (1957), trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 151

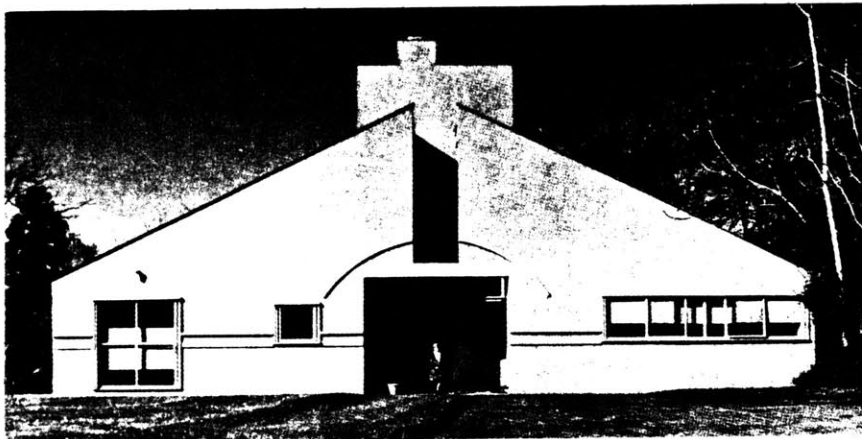
<sup>29</sup>Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, (1957), trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 152



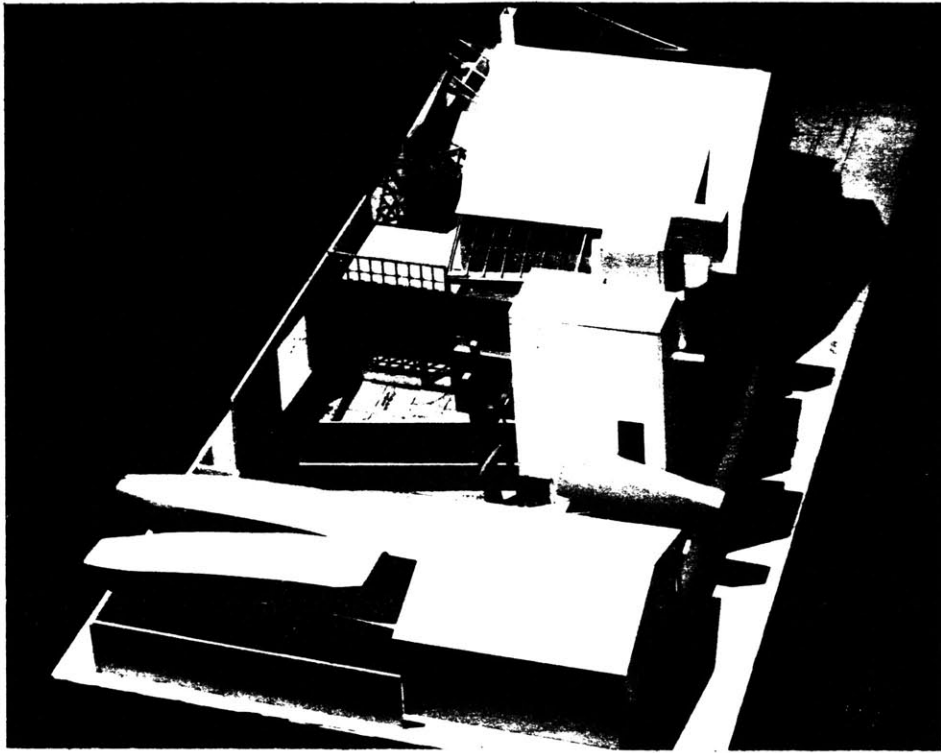
Daniel Liebeskind, *City Edge*, Berlin project, 1987.



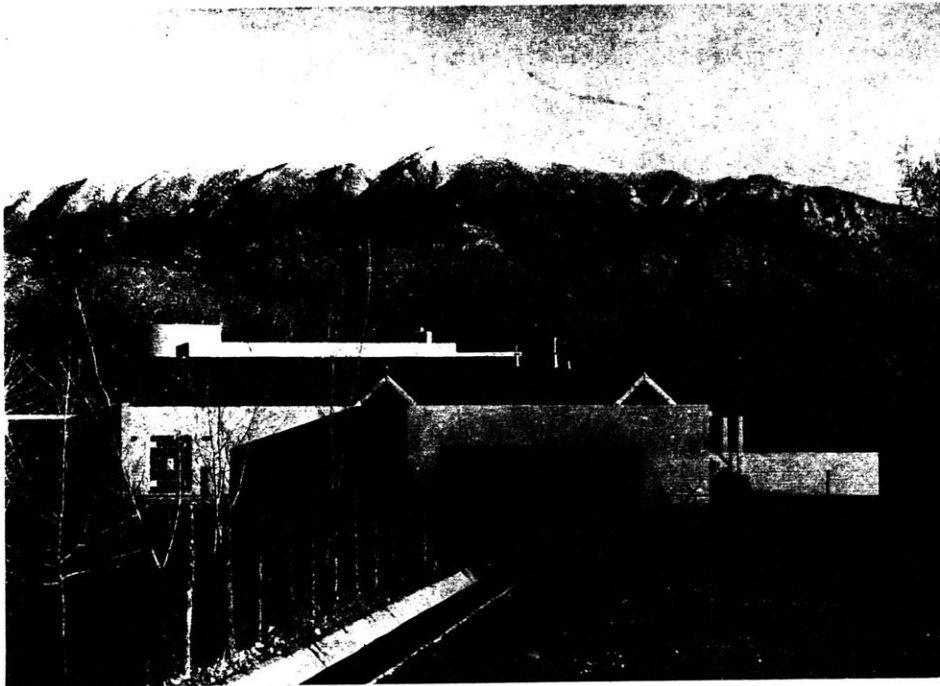
Elizabeth Diller, *Surgical Screen*, 1988.



Robert Venturi, Vanna Venturi House, Forest Hill, 1965.



Frank Gehry, Gehry House, Santa Monica, 1978-88.



Antoine Predock, Private Residence, Albuquerque 1984

The recuperation of Daniel Liebeskind's work into the mainstream architectural practice --- after thorough sterilization in the aseptic environment of the art-gallery --- effectively inoculates the discipline against a potentially dangerous displacement in the conception of the architectural artifact from building to representation. Liebeskind's *transgressive* objects, neither buildings nor representations; sculpture or architecture, are exhibited, described and evaluated in terms of traditional architectural categories and taxonomies. The *Other* object is inscribed back within an architectural discourse, and completely exhausted by its explanatory power. The appropriation sets a precedent --- a tradition --- for any similar attack on the integrity of the discipline, providing thereby a comfortable space for its (displacing) activity within a safely entrenched discourse.<sup>30</sup>

*Transgression/recuperation* transforms the Other into an incorporeal representation, a substitute for active presence. Such recuperation is effected in the so-called regionalist architecture where vernacular or subcultural artifacts are appropriated and *architecturalized* in aesthetic representations.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, vernacular types, "folk technologies," "indigenous forms of collectivity" are removed from a marginal *reality* to be "domesticated" in the abstractions of a disciplinary discourse. The recuperation of subcultures can offer a vivid illustration for this "domesticating" process. Dick Hebdige describes the phenomenon in a two-fold operation: "1) the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc. ) into mass-produced objects (i.e., the commodity form); 2) the "labelling" and re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant groups --- the police, the media, the judiciary ( i.e., the ideological form)."<sup>32</sup> The two processes converge in

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<sup>30</sup>Today, the ambiguous artifacts produced by Elizabeth Diller are no longer believed to be subversive.

<sup>31</sup>The architecture of Frank Gehry can be seen performing the same operation on the marginalia of Californian culture. Venturi's practice is different in the sense that "recuperation" is here an intention. This operation will be later discussed in detail.

<sup>32</sup>Dick Hebdige, *Subculture* (London: Methen, 1979), p. 94.

Baudrillard commodity-sign form "by which the Other is socially subjected as sign and made commercially productive as a commodity. In this way, the Other is at once controlled in its recognition and dispersed in its commodification." Baudrillard's critique, stemming from the diagnosis of a total conflation between sign and commodity in consumer capitalism undermines completely the structural identities of the economic and the cultural:

Today, consumption defines the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities. . . Nothing produced or exchanged today (objects, services, bodies, sex, culture, knowledge, etc. ) can be decoded exclusively as sign, nor solely measured as commodity; everything appears in the context of a general political economy in which the determining instance is . . . indissolubly both [commodity and sign], and both only in the sense that they are abolished as specific determinations, but not as form.<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, Baudrillard can denounce the post-structuralist textuality --- the "fetishization of the signifier" <sup>34</sup> --- in its very complicity with the logic of political economy. Baudrillard compares here the bracketing of the referent and the signified --- as they become mere effects of the signifier --- to the bracketing of use value --- a mere projection of exchange value. "For Baudrillard, the differential structure of the sign is one with that of the commodity; and the (post)structuralist "liberation" of the sign is one with its fragmentation. This fragmentation, manifested in many ways in recent art and architecture, may thus accord with the logic of capital, which suggests that capital has now penetrated the sign thoroughly."<sup>35</sup>

Even more radical is Jacques Attali's suggestion that difference is indispensable for social order and commodity innovation:

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<sup>33</sup>See Jean Baudrillard, *For a critique of of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p. 141.

<sup>34</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *For a critique of of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p. 92.

<sup>35</sup>Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* p. 6

No organized society can exist without structuring a place within itself for differences. No exchange economy develops without reducing such differences to the form of mass production or the serial. The self-destruction of capitalism lies in this very contradiction. . . : an anxious search for lost difference, within a logic from which difference itself has been excluded."<sup>36</sup>

While recuperation and commodification can effectively eradicate the subcultural or extra-cultural Others, our socio-economic system might also fabricate in its "anxious search," false differences specifically tailored for consumption.

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<sup>36</sup>Jacques Attali, "Introduction to Bruits," *Social Text* 7 (Spring and Summer 1983): p. 7



*On Demystification and Final Emancipation.*

The political agenda (social liberation) of such activities can also be questioned in the light of recent problematizations of *liberation* or *emancipation* conceived as opposites of *repression*. Traditional Marxist notions central to cultural criticism such as *ideology*, *reification*, and *alienation*, have undergone radical revisions since the late sixties. Such problematizations and revisions tend to undermine the validity --- and possibility --- of emancipatory transgressive or negational activities based on an outmoded conception of ideology as encoded class beliefs.

In the tradition of cultural criticism, ideology is construed as a set of incoded class beliefs that guarantees consent to the social order. Ideology promotes "false consciousness" while integrating the mystified and consenting subject of capital into his assigned position in society.

Ideology can no longer be conceived in the terms of the architectonic metaphor, as an infra-superstructural relation between material production and a production of signs masking the contradictions at the base. According to Althusser, ideology is to be construed not as an inverted reflection, in thought, of society's material base but as a semi-autonomous level of the social formation, the product of specific determinants irreducible to economic relationships ---the economic is determinant "only in the last instance".

Ideology becomes here a practical activity which has its own *material* means and relations of production as well as its own *material* products. Ideas can only exist, according to Althusser, in the actions of social subjects. These actions are inserted into practices and thereby "governed by the rituals in which these practices are inscribed within the material

existence of an ideological apparatus," such as a church, a school, a political rally, etc.<sup>37</sup> According to this formulation, the celebration of communion, becomes an *ideological practice with a material existence*: a practice of signification inscribed in ritual form and housed within the ideological apparatus of the church produces the consciousness of the communicant: that is, produces him/her as the *subject* of a religious consciousness:

The individual in question behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such practical attitude, and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which depend the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject. If he believes in God, he goes to church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents and so on. If he believes in duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices 'according to correct principles.' If he believes in justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in demonstrations, etc.<sup>38</sup>

A parallel but maybe more radical displacement in the tactics of cultural criticism was effected by Michel Foucault's theory of *power*. Echoing Althusser's insistence on the *material* administration of order, Foucault reformulates social consent in a matter less of ideological representation than of technical control that materially *disciplines* social behaviour (at work, in schools, in church, etc.)

Foucault's analysis of discipline is an analysis of objectification - of procedures which take man as an object and involve him in a relation of power. " The processes of objectification originate in the very tactics of power and the arrangement of its exercise."<sup>39</sup> They do not originate in the alienation of an ideal intersubjectivity (Marxism). Foucault, therefore does not address the politics of subjectivity, in terms of ideal "autonomy" alienated by the

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<sup>37</sup>Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, p. 168

<sup>38</sup>Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, p. 167

<sup>39</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 201

processes of objectification. Rather, subjectivity becomes political with the concrete operations of subjectivization - operations through which we come to recognize ourselves as subjects of a form of experience which rests on a body of knowledge, norms, and models of our nature. Foucault's politics of subjectivity does not start with an ideal autonomy as a standard of critique, but with an analysis of the historical forms of the constitution of the subject. Since he proposes to analyze the "tactics" of both objectification and subjectification in terms of actual identifiable practices, his critique abandons the supposed "dialectical" relation between subject and object which is the basis of the Marxist model of alienation.

In the traditional model of ideological mystification, critique is focused on ideology. Ideology being the body of irrational belief that stands between us and our "enlightened" or true interests. To demystify an ideology is therefore to discover our true interests and assume our role in history. There is a departure from ideology as the focus of critique in Foucault's work, and a move towards an analysis of the practices that make particular forms of experience historically possible. In *Discipline and punish*, he frames tangible operations of control where power gets its grip on us in much more direct and concrete ways than through the inculcation of irrational beliefs; it is directed at the very formation of our bodies and identities. To reduce all nonviolent domination to ideology is to construct a restrictive, abstract picture of its operation, and to turn the central issue in its analysis into a problem about the falsification of our true nature, taken as an abstract given. In short, Foucault does not look beyond or behind historical practices for the final truths about our nature or the norms dictated by reason. Rather, there is an attempt to look more closely at the workings of those practices in which moral norms figure. Thus the centrality of the model of ideology in critique is questioned, along with the assumption that power works primarily through a mystification or falsification of a true, or rationally grounded

experience.

The model of repression combines the models of alienation and mystification.<sup>40</sup> It starts with the assumption that a basic misunderstanding of sexual desires (mystification) is at the root of our failure to achieve genuine autonomy (alienation). To undo repression through self criticism (demystification) is thus to discover the truth about our desires that we must know in order to be free (disalienation). In an attempt to determine the conditions for a non repressive society, critical histories of sexuality have focused on the blocking of the natural expression of sexuality and its consequence for individual autonomy. The blocking of sexuality would occur primarily in the family, but more generally, in any "authoritarian" institution. Liberation would lie in a release of sexuality from authoritarian restraint, or in the acquisition of "adult" relations among autonomous subjects. In short the central aim of sexual politics was to overcome sexual denial in the family and thus free the individual for public life. The aesthetic program of Surrealism, most explicitly expressed in the notion of *écriture automatique* provides here an example of this political strategy with its insistent insurrection against sexual repression.

Foucault develops more sophisticated tactics for sexual politics: By focusing on the constitution of subjectivity in specific historical forms of sexual experience, he questions the way the individual become subject to a particular kind of sexual experience, supported by forms of knowledge, systems of constraint, and conceptions of human nature: "How an experience was constituted such that individuals were to recognize themselves as subjects of a sexuality which opened onto very diverse domains of knowledge, And which was articulated as a system of rules and constraints." In orienting his critical history to this question, Foucault distances himself from the model and subverts the question of repression. His critique is not concerned with an alienation or mystification incurred by

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<sup>40</sup>This model is most prominent in H. Marcuse's work. See *Eros and Civilisation*,

sexual desires; he investigates how practices to discover the "true desires" ever became part of the experience of sexuality. He also inquires into the historical conditions which led to the assumption that there is a hidden truth about desires to be uncovered and formulated in order to undo the grip of repression. Starting with no anthropological given about sexuality, he displaces the problem about the knowledge of sexual desire from a condition of emancipation into an object of investigation.

Foucault's project thus undermines the assumptions in Marx and Freud, whose theories are revealed in their fixed, final, founded form. Foucault, thus, turns what was critical in their writing - the very foundation for the aesthetic theories of modernism and the avant-garde - into a norm, a final truth, a final emancipation. We must question practices of objectification and mystification. But we must also question the "politics of truth" in the very concept of a critique of final emancipation that descends from Marx and Freud in the project of the historical avant-garde.

Both, Althusser's reformulation of ideology in terms of a material practice acting directly -- - via ritual --- upon the bodies of social subjects and Foucault's notion of disciplining social regimens that structure experience according to forms of knowledge and conceptions of human nature inevitably invalidate the quest for emancipation through simple ideological demystification. According to these theoretical models, the cultural can no longer be construed as an effect of economic determination or ideological reflection. Rather, it is presented as a site of struggle for cultural *practices*, a hegemony of representations and disciplines.

Part Two:

*Toward a Theory of Montage in Architecture.*

### Chapter Three: *Typology and Realism.*

In the courts, in fact, people do not bother to say the truth, but persuade, and persuasion depends on verisimilitude.

Plato

An impossible verisimilitude is preferable to a possible unverisimilitude.

Aristotle

To raise the question of typology in architecture is to raise a question of the nature of the architectural work itself. To answer it means, for each generation, a redefinition of the essence of architecture and an explanation of all its attendant problems. This in turn requires the establishment of a theory, whose first question must be, what kind of object is a work of architecture? This question ultimately returns to the question of type.<sup>41</sup>

The notion of architectural type has resurfaced in the last two decades to dominate the critical discourse in architecture. A critical reassessment and a strategic re-orientation of this notion is central to my argument. But before undertaking a necessary redefinition of 'type' and 'architectural typology' I shall first retrace the vicissitudes of this concept in its various historical interpretations<sup>42</sup> in order to articulate its theoretical ramifications in the current architectural practice and safeguard against the "dangerous shift towards reductionism" in its recent instrumentalizations.<sup>43</sup>

*The Neo-Classical notion of Type, from Laugier to Durand*

In its first polemical articulation the notion of type emerged as an active principle --- a mode of design in itself --- in an attempt to purify architecture from the excesses of Rococo. Eighteenth century theorists (including Laugier among others) elaborated new formal principles according to the model of a hut grounded in an argument about origin, ambiguously scientific and mythological. The primitive hut is thus posited as a 'type' for all succeeding architecture: "I mean by the word type, the first attempts of man to master

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<sup>41</sup>Raphael Moneo, "On Typology" in *Oppositions* 8, (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press), p.23.

<sup>42</sup>My following reconstruction of the genealogy of the notion of architectural type is partially modeled after Anthony Vidler's account in "The Idea of Type: The Transformation of the Academic Ideal, 1750 - 1830" in *Oppositions* 8, spring 1977.

<sup>43</sup>See Micha Bandini, "Typology as a form of Convention" in AA files 6, for a critical account of the 'degeneration' of typology as a 'research programme' due to the "monetary pressures of an architectural market-place where ideas are uprooted from their original cultural context and speedily passed on in their most popular and superficial form."



nature, render it propitious to his needs, suitable to his uses, and favorable to his pleasures. The perceptible object that the artist chooses with justness and reasoning from nature in order to light and fix at the same time the fires of the imagination, I call archetypes."<sup>44</sup> That is, trees were archetypes and wood columns types of the fundamental elements of architecture. Thus this notion of type, emerging from the rationalist philosophy of the Enlightenment "was founded on a belief in the rational order of nature; the origin of each architectural element was natural; the chain that linked the column to the hut to the city was parallel to the chain that linked the natural world; and the primary geometries favored for the combination of type-elements were seen as expressive of the underlying forms of nature beneath its surface appearance."<sup>45</sup>

A revised concept of type -- introduced with a growing concern among late nineteenth century theorists to distinguish between different kinds of buildings -- assigned the already symbolically loaded 'type' with a reference to character.<sup>46</sup> "All the different kinds of production which belong to architecture should carry the imprint of the particular intention of each building, each should possess a character which determines the general form and which declares the building for what it is," wrote Jacques François Blondel.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ribard de Chamoust, *L'ordre François*, p. 5. Quoted in A. Vidler.

<sup>45</sup>Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology" in *Oppositions* 7

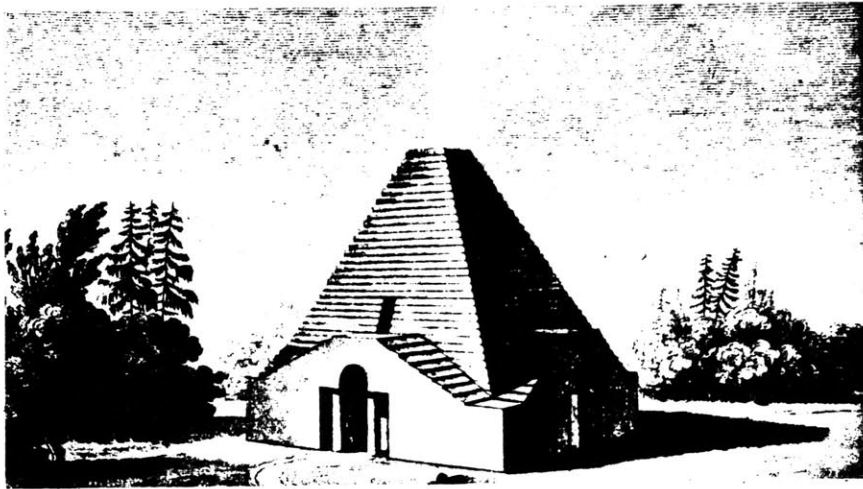
<sup>46</sup>As noted by Vidler, this interest is triggered by the central position of taxonomy in the emerging natural sciences:

If Linnaeus was able to establish a classification of the zoological universe in Classes, orders, Genera (with their attendant species and varieties), why should not the architect similarly regard the range of his own production, in a practice that had ever attempted to relate to (imitate) natural order? Buffon, proposing in 1753 the existence of "a general prototype for each species on which each individual is modeled" seems to have provided an exact parallel for Blondel.

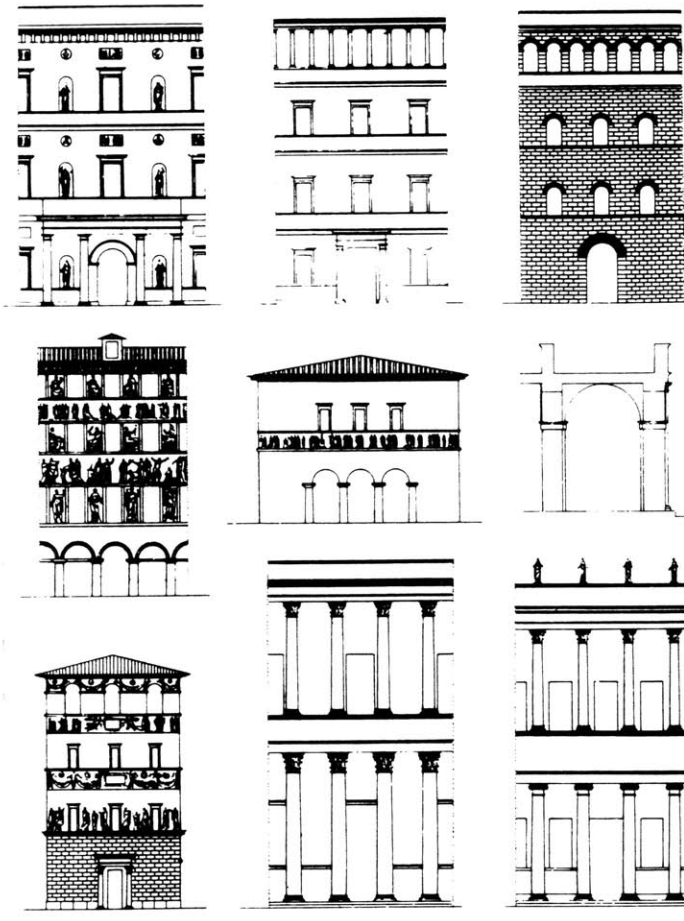
<sup>47</sup>Quoted in Vidler. Jacques François Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*(Paris, 1771-1777), vol. 2, p.229



Abbe Laugier, Primitive Hut, 1753.



C.N.Ledoux, Woodcutters Lodge, c. 1785.



J.N.L.Durand, *Facade Combinations*, 1809.



J.K.Lavater, *Physiognomies of Monkeys*, 1775.

Thus, the notion of building type not only served to ontologically legitimate a building but also designated its character, the form that made its intention and purpose legible. '

A theory of typical character stressing the allegorical mode of expression was developed by Etienne Boullée and exercised in his *architecture parlante* where each 'speaking monument' acquires "the character which is suitable to it," a symbolic system engendering a specific impression in the observer. This project was pushed to an extreme limit with Ledoux's symbolic program where a too literal characterization of building types --- a specific type expressing status and function corresponded to each individual in the social order --- almost brought his architecture into the realm of caricature. The shortcomings of this project were soon revealed with the growing awareness of the relativity and instability of meaning in an increasingly decentred culture.

Caught in the relativistic excitement of romantic-classicism, Boullée and Ledoux were more interested in accentuating circumstantial alterations, distortion and modification in an endless play of abstract geometrical permutations rather than positing a strict building typology in their search for individual 'characters'. Quatremère de Quincy's idealist typological theory was erected in opposition to such individualist tendencies and to serve a purist neo-classical revival. Quatremère de Quincy's type is at once "pre-existent germ," origin, and primitive cause.<sup>48</sup> The adherence of architecture to types does not however imply the mechanistic imitation of an original model.<sup>49</sup> Rather, the idea of type was

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<sup>48</sup>Quatremère de Quincy's position on the issue of type, defined in his article "Type" for the third volume of his Dictionary reflects generalized attitude firmly developed by the time of the revolution.

<sup>49</sup>A.C. Quatremère de Quincy's entry on "Type" in *Dictionnaire d'architecture, encyclopedie methodique* (Paris, 1788-1825), vol III, part 2:

Type: ... On en use aussi comme d'un mot synonyme de Modèle, quoiqu'il y ait entre eux une différence assez facile a comprendre.

*metaphorical*," it enabled architecture to reconstruct its links with the past, forming a kind of metaphorical connection with the moment when man, for the first time confronted the problem of architecture and identified it with a form. In other words, the type explained the reason behind architecture, which remained constant throughout history, reinforcing through its continuity the permanence of the first moment in which the connection between the form and the nature of the object was understood and the concept of type was formulated."<sup>50</sup>

Thus 'type' had to be distinguished from 'model' and conceived in terms of an *ideal*, never realized or copied but nevertheless the representative form of the idea of the building:" this elementary principle which is like a sort of nucleus about which are gathered, and to which are coordinated, in time, the developments and forms to which the object is susceptible."<sup>51</sup>

The idealism of the neo-classical 'type' was precipitated into a crisis when J. N. L. Durand presented his comparative taxonomy of building types in *Collection and parallel of buildings of every genre, ancient and modern*.<sup>52</sup> Following the example of Cuvier whose taxonomy in the natural sciences was "no longer a matter of superficial description and

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Le mot Type presente moins l'image d'une chose a copier ou a imiter completement, que l'idée d'un element qui doit lui-même servir de règle au Modèle...

Le Modèle entendu dans l'exécution pratique de l'art, est un objet qu'on doit répéter tel qu'il est.

Le Type est, au contraire, un objet d'après lequel chacun peut concevoir des ouvrages qui ne se ressembleraient pas entre eux.

Tout est précis et donné par le Modèle, tout est plus ou moins vague dans le Type. Aussi voyons -nous que l'imitation des types n'a rien que le sentiment ou l'esprit ne puisse reconnaître, et rien qui ne puisse être contesté par la prévention et l'ignorance.

C'est ce qui est arrivé par exemple à l'architecture.

<sup>50</sup>R. Moneo, "on Typology" p. 28

<sup>51</sup>Quoted in Vidler

<sup>52</sup>J. N. L. Durand, *Recueil et parallèle des edifices en tout genre* (Paris, 1801)

nomenclature but a complete expression of structural resemblances and differences,"<sup>53</sup> Durand characterized each type in terms of its abstract geometric constitution and use with total disregard to external attributes or outward effect. He then proceeded in his *Lessons at the Ecole*<sup>54</sup> to develop --- with the help of graph paper grid and the impetus provided by the emerging descriptive geometry --- rules for the combination of fundamental constructive elements into the forms of new types. The architect's task is to generate complex entities according to those rules of combination. He is guided in his disposition of each type by a specific program and subjected to the overriding law of economy. Durand thereby offered a practical method for coping with the new building needs demanded by a new society thereby launching the nineteenth century project of typological construction on the basis of inner structure or programmatic functioning of things.

The handbooks and manuals which began to appear in the nineteenth century, following Durand's teachings, simply displayed the material available to the profession, classifying buildings by their function in a way that could be called typological. But however much well-defined single elements and vague and imprecise schematic plans for various kinds of programs seemed to beget generic *partis* and thus seemed to suggest type forms, that organic entity (form/attribute/character) which had been defined as type was irrevocably flattened. It had become a mere compositional and schematic device. The theory of character, central to the project of the Enlightenment --- and most valuable for our present analysis, is thus reconstituted: "Without doubt the grandeur, magnificence, variety, effect, and character that are perceived in buildings are so many beauties, so many causes of pleasure . . . But what is the need to strive for all this if one disposes a building according to the demands of its functions? Will it not differ appreciably from another building

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<sup>53</sup>Quoted in Vidler, Patrick Geddes, "Morphology," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 28 (New York, 1911, eleventh edition)

<sup>54</sup>J. L. N. Durand, *Précis des Leçons d'architecture données à l'Ecole Polytechnique*(Paris, 1802-05)

intended for another function? Will it not naturally possess a character, and furthermore its own character?<sup>55</sup> With Durand character is thus made a logical attribute of function.

*Against Type*

At the end of the nineteenth century a new idea of type --- but also a logical consequence of Durand's redefinition of type --- emerged from a need to address the conditions of mass production. This idea of type totally restructured the concept of typology and created a definite rupture in its evolution: by virtue of industry, type was transformed from an abstraction to a reality; type had become prototype. The singularity of the architectural object which had previously permitted adaptability to site and flexibility for use within the framework of a typological structure was undermined by the limitless repeatability of the industrial prototype (Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* is a clear example of a building type conceived as a factory unit, pre-cast and assembled in various locations).

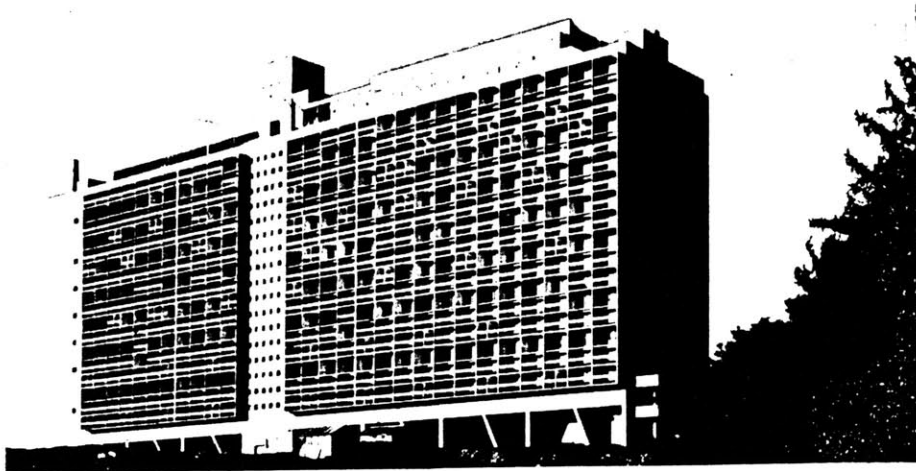
While the previous typologies had made an appeal to Nature as a metaphysical guarantor of legitimacy, the new typology of mass produced objects found its legitimating ground in the 'nature' of the machine: "The link established between the column, the house-type and the city was seen as analogous to the pyramid of production from the smallest tool to the most complex machines, and the primary geometrical forms of the new architecture were seen as most appropriate for machine tooling."<sup>56</sup> Another displacement occurred with Functionalism where a cause/effect correspondence between form and programmatic requirements discredited the legitimacy of precedents and problematized thereby the historical concept of type. Accordingly architecture was construed as an epiphenomenon, a "superstructural" reflection of socioeconomic, political technological and material

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Introduction.

<sup>56</sup>Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology" in *Oppositions* 7 p. 2

processes: " the optimum relationship to be established between culture and form is one of of correspondence, the latter efficiently representing the values of the former."<sup>57</sup> These two modernist attitudes vis-a-vis type follow different paths in their divergence from the historical notion of type. Their consequences are however coincident: "Architecture was predetermined not by types, but by context itself. As an almost inevitable conclusion, architectural theories connected with functionalism deliberately rejected typology."<sup>58</sup>



Le Corbusier, Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, 1946.

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<sup>57</sup>K Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture -- Between Culture and Form," in *Perspecta* 21 (1984) p. 22

<sup>58</sup>R. Moneo, "on Typology" p. 35



*The Evolution of Typology in postmodern polemics.*

In an attempt to construct a comprehensive urban history of Venice --- linking the morphological nature of the urban fabric with its social political and demographic aspect, Saverio Muratori's *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia* developed a "scientific methodological tool for investigating the relationship between urban morphology and building typology" and thus reintroduced the idea of type as an instrument allowing a synchronic and diachronic understanding of pattern and growth of the city.<sup>59</sup>

The revitalization of typology in urban historiography was complemented by a renewed interest in the rationalist conception of type and a reappropriation of Quatremère de Quincy's definition in G.C. Argan's "Tipologia".<sup>60</sup> Returning to the origin of the concept, Argan argues that "if type is the end product of a reductive process, the form which results cannot be seen as a mere model but must be regarded as the internal structure of a principle which includes not only all the formal manifestations from which it has been derived but any future elaborations developed from it."<sup>61</sup> Argan's type is thus not merely a system of classification but a also an operational concept that can inform a creative process in which he distinguishes two stages or two moments:"that of typology and that of historical invention"<sup>62</sup> The "moment of typology" is the non-problematic moment --- a 'natural' given received and not invented by the artist, where a connection with the past and with society is established: "The artist does not really look for the most appropriate solution

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<sup>59</sup>Saverio Muratori, *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia* (Rome, 1960). See Micha Bandini, "typology as a Form of Convention"

<sup>60</sup>G. C. Argan presented his arguments on typology in numerous articles but his entry for "Tipologia" in the *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte* (Fondazione Cini, Venezia) remains the most influential.

<sup>61</sup>Micha Bandini, "typology as a Form of Convention" AA Files 6.

<sup>62</sup> G. C. Argan, "Tipologia" in the *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte* (Fondazione Cini, Venezia), p. 6. (cited in Bandini)

to a given objective need, but looks for the formal solution which, little by little, developed to answer that need in its historical development..."<sup>63</sup> The de-historicizing moment in design is, however, given primacy in conditioning the architectural artifact:"The artist having accepted the reduction to type , can free himself from the conditioning influence of a determined historical form, neutralizing it, by assuming that the past is an accomplished historical fact capable of further development."<sup>64</sup>

Following Argan, a series of writings interested in developing more politically effective methods began to challenge the modernist notion of functionalism and design process.<sup>65</sup> Typology was identified as an epistemological foundation characterizing and classifying all architectural utterances and the design activity was understood as a concretization of an abstract type into a precise reality: "The very identification of such a type was a choice by virtue of which the architect inevitably established ties with society. By transforming the necessarily vague, undefined type in a single act his work acquires a certain consistency with a specific context."<sup>66</sup> This critique reaches one of its most potent forms in the writings of Aldo Rossi and Massimo Scolari who initiated design speculation around typology while they maintained an interest in the dialectics of urban politics:

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>65</sup>Micha Bandini has insisted upon the importance of the particular political climate that generated an interest in typology and urban morphology in Italy:

Italian architectural culture of the sixties was concerned mainly with urban problems. It is quite astounding, in the present climate of apolitical individualism, to consider the scope of the debate in those days. In the best tradition of the gramscian intellectual, architects saw architectural problems as part of a wider social and cultural arena. Because their awareness of the limits of the so-called Modern Movement was more pronounced at the theoretical than at the stylistic level, most architects were striving to establish a methodology capable of uniting the urban with the architectural.

<sup>66</sup>R. Moneo, "On Typology" in *Oppositions* p. 36

The problem is to design new parts of the city choosing typologies able to challenge the status quo. This could be a perspective for the socialist city.<sup>67</sup>

Or:

Thus even choices of design (topographical or typologica) become metaphors by which the ruling class controls the distribution of the various social classes in the big industrial towns.<sup>68</sup>

Most importantly for our discussion, the *Tendenza*<sup>69</sup> conceives architecture as a *disciplinary autonomous practice*.<sup>70</sup> It locates the principles of the architectural *discipline* and the proof of their *autonomy* in the permanence and integrity of types in the city. Autonomy does not imply here a total disengagement from other spheres of production (economical, ideological, political). Instead, autonomy denies --- in terms almost echoing Althusser's "materialism of the superstructure" --- the possibility of literally "reflecting" or translating the economical or the political realities into architectural form. As an autonomous level of the social formation --- in the sense that it is governed by laws of its own that cannot be identified or reproduced elsewhere, architecture becomes the product of quite specific determinants which are not reducible to economic/technological relationship. As a material force, architecture wields a power of its own in relation to other level of social practice. The disciplinary autonomy thus allows the *Tendenza* to formulate *progress* in terms of a "clarification of the discipline" in its interaction with other levels of practice within the "social formation," in a concrete social context.

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<sup>67</sup>A. Rossi, "Two Projects", *Lotus International* no. 7 (1970), p. 9 (quoted in Bandini)

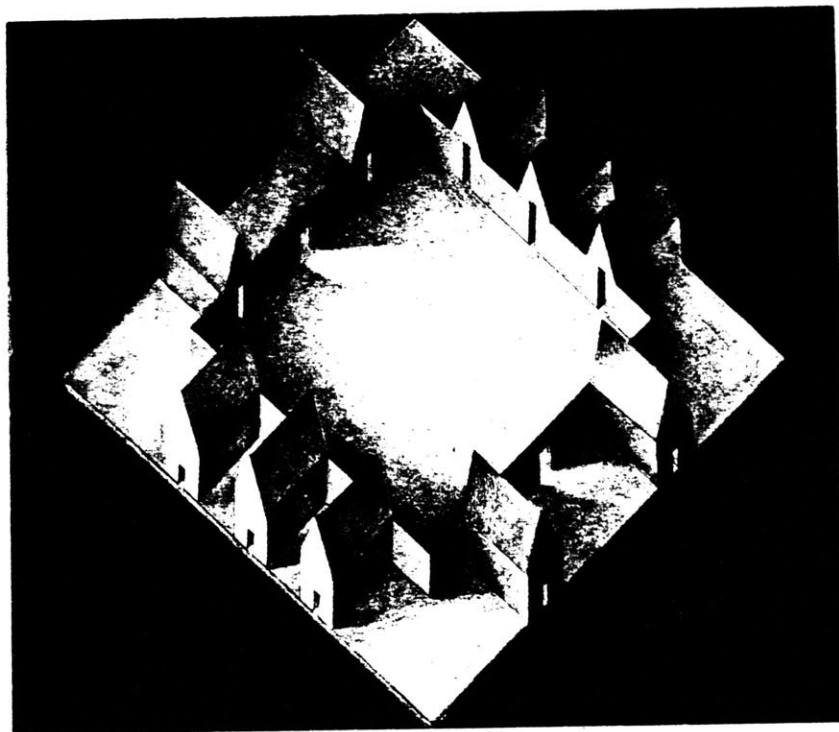
<sup>68</sup>M. Scolari, "The Origins of the Working Class House: Design and Theory", *Lotus International* no.9 (1975), p. 116. (quoted in Bandini)

<sup>69</sup>*Tendenza*: Literally trend. A term designating the Neo-Rationalist movement in Italy. See Massimo Scolari, "Avant-guardia e nuova architettura razionale" in *Architettura razionale, XV Triennale di Milano*. Franco Angeli, Ed. (Milano,1973)

<sup>70</sup>*Practice* is here understood according to the neo-marxist concept of "social formation" which comprises a number of interrelated levels of *practice* -- "any process of *transformation* of a determinate given raw material into a determinate *product*, a transformation effected by determinate human labour, using determinate means of production" (Althusser), each being relatively autonomous in relation to the others.



Aldo Rossi, Project for Cemetery in Modena, 1971.



Massimo Scolari, 'Recinto Urbano', 1979.

By the end of the seventies a consensus about the notion of typology was realized in Italy, and its role as an architectural convention was established. Its polemical edge was, however, to be revitalized in the process of its subsequent European, British, and American (mis)interpretations.<sup>71</sup> The rediscovery of typology undertaken by Alan Colquhoun along structural linguistic guidelines deserves here a special attention for reorienting the discussion towards issues of iconography and signification in architecture. In his seminal article, "Typology and Design Method", Alan Colquhoun writes:

If as Gombrich suggests, forms by themselves are relatively empty of meaning, it follows that the forms which we intuit will, in the unconscious mind, tend to attract to themselves certain associations of meaning. This could mean not only that we are not free from the forms of the past, and from the availability of these forms as typological models but that, if we assume we are free, we have lost control over a very active sector of our imagination, and of our power to communicate with others, it would seem that we ought to accept a value system which takes account of the forms and solutions of the past, if we are to retain control over concepts which will obtrude themselves into the creative process, whether we are aware of it or not.<sup>72</sup>

Colquhoun's statement denounces the shortcomings --- and impossibility --- of an architecture supposedly freed from the intelligible and ideologically tainted forms of the past thus reclaiming the centrality of typology in engaging the ideological content of architecture. "The architect thus makes his voluntary decisions in the world of types, and these voluntary decisions explain his ideological position in architecture."

Colquhoun's theory of typology is grounded in a structuralist epistemology that foregrounds the arbitrary conventions of the discipline as they dialectically engage the process of society's transformation. Central to this epistemology is Saussure's critique of the traditional notion of signification where a particular conjunction of form and meaning constitutes the word. In contradistinction to the unique --- and naturalized ---

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<sup>71</sup>See Bandini.

<sup>72</sup>Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method", *Perspecta* 12, 1969 p.18.

correspondence of form and content (signifier and signified), Saussure posits the differential sign which acquires meaning or only according to a value or position within a network of differential relationships: the semiotic system.<sup>73</sup> Saussure thus undermines the classical notion of representation where a language 'mirrors' a thought that exists before any linguistic realization and foregrounds thereby the arbitrariness of the sign.

Accordingly, Colquhoun rejects the theory of expression which was current at the turn of the century and most explicitly outlined in Kandinsky's *Point and Line to Plane*. Expressionist theories rejected all historical manifestations of art --- viewed as ossifications of technical and cultural attitudes whose *raison d' être* ceased to exist --- and were based on the belief that shapes have physiognomic or expressive interest which communicates itself to us directly. This view, Colquhoun argues, has since been subjected to a great deal of criticism, and one of its most convincing refutations is undertaken in E. H. Gombrich's *Meditation on a Hobby horse*. Gombrich demonstrates that an arrangement of forms such as found in a painting by Kandinsky or Paul Klee is in fact very low in content, unless we attribute to these forms some system of conventional meaning not inherent in the forms themselves. His thesis is that physiognomic forms are ambiguous, though certainly not

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<sup>73</sup>Saussure illustrates the differential quality of the sign or the semiotic value by making reference to the dynamics of economical value:

For a sign (or an economic 'value') to exist ... it must be possible, on the one hand, to exchange dissimilar things (works and wages) and on the other, to compare similar things with each other. That is, one can exchange five dollars for bread, soap or a cinema ticket, but one can also compare this five dollars with ten or fifty dollars, etc. ; in the same way, a word can be exchanged for an idea (that is for something dissimilar); but it can also be compared with other words (that is something similar): in English the word mutton derives its value only from its co-existence with sheep; the meaning is truly fixed only at the end of this double determination: signification and value." Value, therefore comes "from the reciprocal situation of the pieces of language. What quantity of idea or phonic matter a sign contains is of less importance than what there is around it (Roland Barthes, *Elements of semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p.55.

without expressive value, and that they can only be interpreted within a particular cultural milieu.<sup>74</sup>

Colquhoun then proceeds to question the thesis of inherent meaning in architecture: "a plastic system of representation such as architecture has to presuppose the existence of a given system. No more than in the case of language can the problem of form be reduced to some kind of essence outside the system itself, of which the form is merely a reflection. In both cases it is necessary to postulate a conventional, arbitrary system embodied in solution/problem complexes."<sup>75</sup>

This analysis immediately invalidates the notion of function as the privileged determinant factor in the production of form and emphasizes its socio-cultural nature. That is, "to attribute a certain function to an architectural fact implies an underlying convention. In other words, an architectural object is only understood as such, not because it has a certain inherent meaning which is "natural" to it, but because meaning has been attributed to it as a result of *cultural conventions*."<sup>76</sup>

Those conventions can thus undergo change with the agency of the architect who manipulates the codes and controls signification in the configuration of the built environment.. And Typology becomes the field of operation where architecture actively engages the mechanisms of signification in the cultural sphere of production and allows the process of change to be carried out "not by a process of reduction, but rather by a process of exclusion, and it would seem that the history of the modern movement in all the arts

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<sup>74</sup>This analysis is of course grounded in the principles formulated by Saussure for sign systems in general. See especially "The Differential Quality of the Sign" in *Course in General Linguistics*

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest, "Semiotics an Architecture: Ideological consumption or theoretical work" in *Oppositions 1*, p. 93

lends support to this idea. . . traditional formal devices were not completely abandoned, but were transformed and given new emphasis by the exclusion of ideologically repulsive iconic elements."<sup>77</sup>

Colquhoun thus conceives of the evolution of the architectural language in terms that echo the Russian Formalist "replacement of systems" and recall the notion of "dominant" which refers to the elements or group of elements that is placed in the foreground in a given work or during a given period.<sup>78</sup>

According to Jurii Tynianov, succession in literary history can be viewed as a continuous replacement of one group of dominants by another. They do not drop out of the system entirely; rather they recede into the background to reappear later in a novel manner. Resulting is, as Fredric Jameson has noted, an "artistic permanent revolution," a succession of formal innovations displacing --- or defamiliarizing --- previous techniques gone stale.<sup>79</sup> The political metaphor, however, distorts an important aspect of Formalist literary history, for a continuity can be established in this 'revolutionary' process, and it does consist solely in the negation of one's predecessors. Indeed, Shklovsky stresses that new literary forms inevitably rely upon a forgotten or non-dominant heritage for its basic principles:

The new hegemony is usually not a pure instance of restoration of earlier forms, but one involving the presence of features from other junior schools, even features (but now in a subordinate role) inherited from its predecessors on the throne.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Quoted From Boris M Eichenbaum, "The theory of the formal method," in *Readings in Russian Poetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 32

<sup>79</sup>Fredric Jameson, *The Prison House of Language: A Critical account of Structuralism and Russian formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 53.

<sup>80</sup>Cited in Eichebaum, Boris. "The theory of the formal method," in *Readings in Russian Poetics*



The inheritance, according to him, is not patrilineal, but rather avuncular and literary history does "progress" but in a broken rather than a straight line. The "dialectical self-production of new forms" defines the nature of literary history and accounts for the rise and fall of literary schools.

Accordingly, architecture, now conceived as a system of signification, informs a cultural *practice* which works on and transforms a material provided by ideology in order to *produce* a critical knowledge about the values that can be carried by form and effect *change*. Typology, a "given" system of iconic representations embodying conventional values, a set of "fixed entities which convey artistic meaning within a social context"<sup>81</sup>, provides the 'raw material' of this *transformative operation*.

Both, Rossi's *autonomous discipline* and Colquhoun's *signifying practice* suggested, in an invigorated notion of type, an array of critically potent strategies for research with a broader spectrum of cultural references for architecture. They inform a new level of meaning for architectural objects given life in the dynamic process of history and relocate the "progressive" production of architectural knowledge in the dialectical struggle with ideologically tainted forms. Both typological theories generate a field of operations critically suspended between the realm of received cultural values and the autonomous sphere of an abstract formal system and can potentially produce a *critical* architecture: " This is an architecture that cannot be reduced either to the conciliatory representation of external forces or to a dogmatic, reproducible system."<sup>82</sup>

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(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) p. 32.

<sup>81</sup> Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method", p. 18.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture -- Between Culture and Form," p.

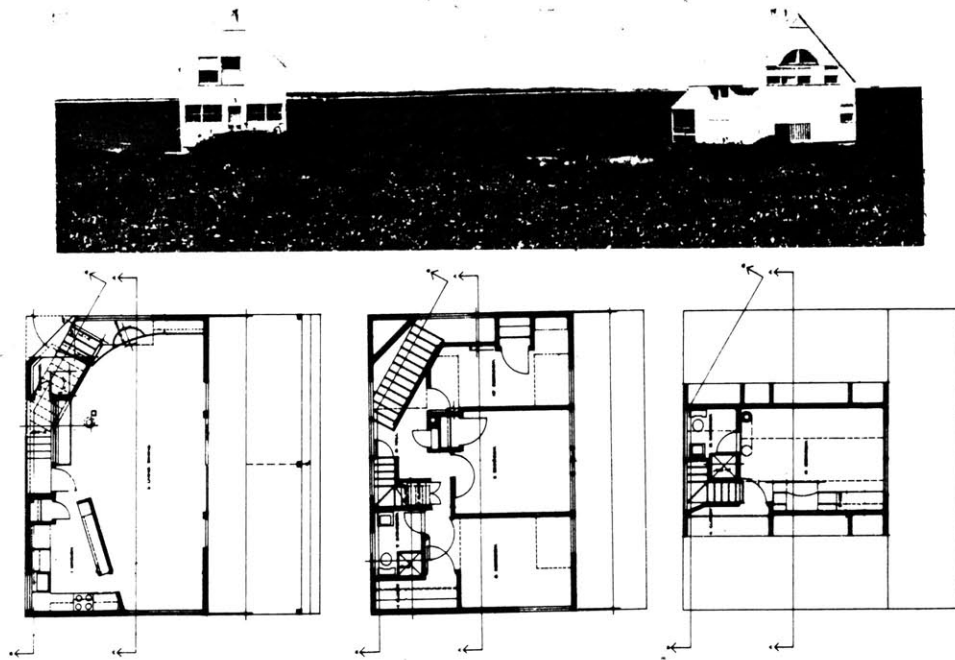
Unfortunately, in the reductive process of academic and professional recuperations, *type* was to become either the easily appropriated icon (after Colquhoun) for mythifying representations or the nostalgic sign for an "impossible orthodoxy" (after the *Tendenza*). The polarity stands as a logical consequence of an latent dichotomy --- or contradiction --- separating within the program of the Enlightenment the ontological type from the figurative type, or Laugier's primitive hut from Boullée's *architecture parlante*. Micha Bandini's article, "Typology as a form of Convention", retraces the reductive process whereby the theory of type or typology is gradually appropriated, assimilated and instrumentalized by the 'academic industry' to finally acquire a comfortable place within "the most respectable American teaching institutions. The nature of this place, though, is questionable. . . The interest seems to be focused on type as historical precedent, and current design research completely overlooks the relationship between building typology and urban morphology, regarding typology only as a convenient repository of authoritative imagery waiting to be transformed by personal creativity."<sup>83</sup>

The work of Robert Venturi accurately exemplifies the iconographic tendency. Indeed, carefully chosen elements on the elevations of his houses in Nantucket clearly construct a typical image of the vernacular while the inner structure lacks any reference to this original type. "Type is reduced to image, or better, the image is the type, in the belief that through images, communication is achieved. As such, the type image is more concerned with recognition than with structure."<sup>84</sup> Resulting is a fragmented pastiche (collage) that intentionally undermines typological coherence and frustrates formal synthesis in its iconographic and structural discontinuities.

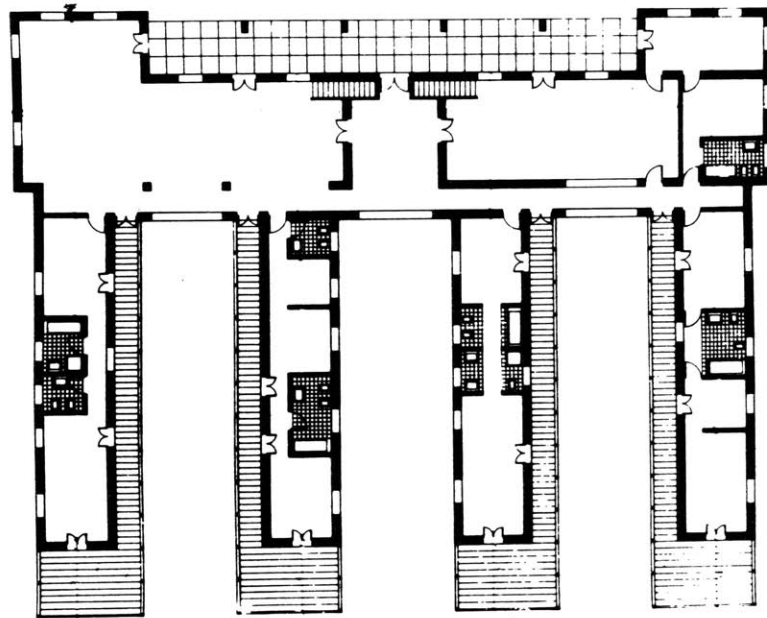
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<sup>83</sup>Micha Bandini, "typology as a Form of Convention" AA Files 6. p.

<sup>84</sup>Raphael Moneo, "on Typology," p.



Robert Venturi, Trubeck House Nantucket, 1970.



Aldo Rossi, 'Casa Baj', 1970.

Rossi's architecture, paradigmatic in the other camp, seemed to stand in its initial stages against this discontinuity. Nevertheless, Moneo's analysis of Rossi's house convincingly -- and most eloquently --- diagnoses the subtle symptoms of formal dissociation: "There is an almost deliberate provocation in this breakdown and recombination of types. In a highly sophisticated manner, Rossi reminds us of our knowledge --- and also ignorance --- of types; they appear broken, but bearing unexpected power. It might be said that a nostalgia for an impossible orthodoxy emerges out of this architecture."<sup>85</sup>

By the mid-eighties this process is exhausted, and fragmentation, now brandished as a theoretical --- ideological? --- principle, is thorough. Type, barely recognizable in its fragmentation and totally disembodied in its reduction, was to enrich the figurative palette of the so-called "deconstructivist architecture": *reality* fragments in formal collages, reflecting in broken mirrors the discontinuous reality of architecture.<sup>86</sup> This latest stage in architectural production might suggest that the notion of type has lost its centrality and legitimacy in the architectural discourse:

The object --- first the city, then the building itself --- once broken and fragmented, seems to maintain its ties with the discipline only in images of ever more distant memory. . . . The traditional typological approach, which has tried to recover the old idea of architecture, has largely failed. Thus, perhaps the only means architects have to master from today is to destroy it.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, even in its most radical moments of "disjunction", deconstructivist

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid. p41

<sup>86</sup>While the validity and academic rigor of such a reductive label is highly questionable, its usefulness as a general title evoking immediate images of a current 'style' cannot be doubted. 'Deconstructivist architecture' is thus used in this text only to designate a collection of artifacts with a shared stylistic sensibility crystallizing around collage operations. This body of work does not include practices derived from post-structuralist theory such as Eisenmann's.

<sup>87</sup>Raphael Moneo, "on Typology," p. 41

architecture has to depend on a traditional notion of type in order to perform and articulate its "disruptive" operations: typology is restored --- maybe most efficiently --- in its staged *destruction*. Indeed, behind every fragmented or distorted "deconstructivist" form lurks the shadow of a traditional "type". Typology is *latent* in the traces of a distanced origin and the signs of a frustrated synthesis (the typology of Quatremère de Quincy and Argan), and *present* in the (material) iconic fragments (the typology of Ledoux and Colquhoun). The persistence of typology<sup>88</sup> in the "deconstructivist" project is figuratively illustrated in Mark Wigley's description of a Coop Himmelblau Building:<sup>89</sup>

The rooftop remodeling project is clearly a form that has been distorted by some alien organism, a writhing, disruptive animal breaking through the corner. Some twisted counter-relief infects the orthogonal box. It is a skeletal monster which breaks up the elements of the form as it struggles out. Released from the familiar constraints of orthogonal structure, the roof splits, shears, and buckles. The distortion is peculiarly disquieting because it seems to belong to the form, to be part of it. It seems to have always been latent there until released by the architect: the alien emerging out of the stairs, the walls and the roof plane is given shape by the very elements that define the basic volume of the attic. The alien is an outgrowth of the very form it violates. The form is distorting itself. Yet this internal distortion does not destroy the form. In a strange way, the form somehow remains intact.

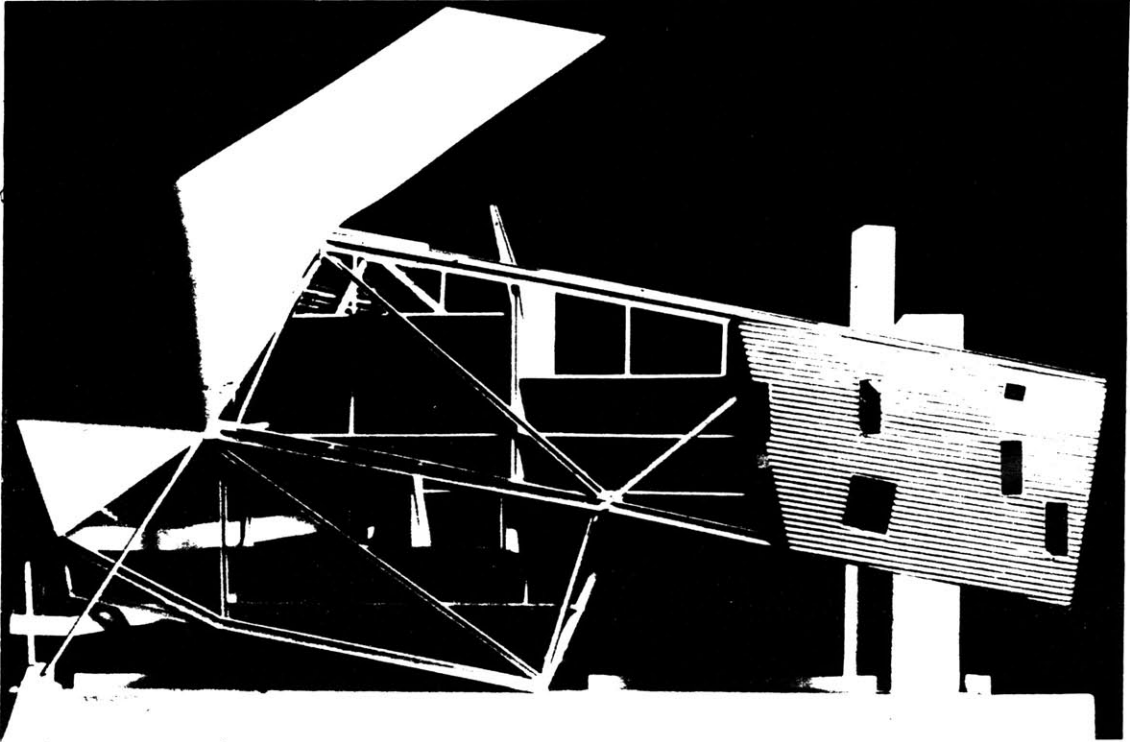
And furthermore:

This work is not fundamentally different from the ancient tradition it subverts. It does not abandon the tradition. Rather, it inhabits the center of the tradition in order to demonstrate that architecture is always infected, that pure form has always been contaminated. By inhabiting the tradition fully, obeying its inner logic more rigorously than ever before, these architects discover certain dilemmas within the tradition that are missed by those who sleepwalk through it.

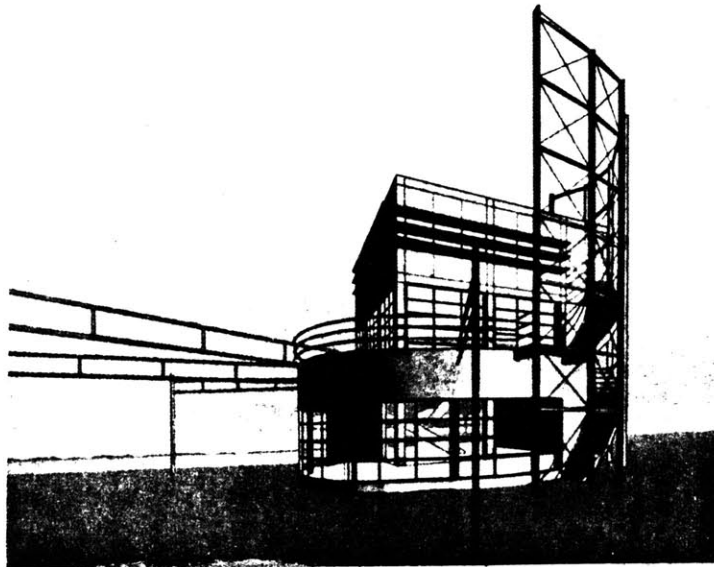
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<sup>88</sup>Wigley doesn't use in his description the term "type" -- this term is by now taboo. Nevertheless, his conception of "form" as an identifiable, distinct entity and integral structure, clearly approximates a traditional -- but certainly reductive -- definition of type.

<sup>89</sup>Most appropriately --and ironically, Coop Himmelblau is a most vocal opponent to the typological approach and a fanatic adept of "expressive" theories of architecture where artifacts are construed as spontaneous and *immediate* (unmediated) expressions of "inner realities."



Coop Himmelblau, Apartment Building, Vienna, 1986.



Bernard Tschumi, Folie at Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1983.

Wigley allegorical description of the "deconstructivist" process thus suggests a dialectical struggle between a traditional mode of representation --- i.e. a naturalized *reality* (the "form") and its internal contradictions, its hidden flaws, the silenced gaps in its logic: its artifice (the "alien"). Deconstructivist architecture is thus expected to undermine the naturalized symmetry between representation and *reality* by isolating the worldly "contaminant" in the purity of the Ideal type. In other words, it enacts the dissolution of an ideological reconciliation between the contradictions of society in our time by exacerbating the seams, the fault lines in the fabricated illusion of a reality that is whole. The historical avant-garde had staged similar conflicts and performed the same operations upon the conventions of "classical" *realist* representation in order to challenge its "innocence," foreground its artifice, and problematize its relationship with the no less artificial "reality".

It is not hard now --- the last comparison should help --- to recognize typology as a *realist* system of architectural representation, architectural "reality" being found in the *substance* of concrete architectural examples in concrete historical situations. The following discussion shall further clarify and substantiate this claim in order to relocate --- with Argan and Colquhoun --- the notion of type at the center of architectural signification.

*Typology and Verisimilitude.*

In order to clarify the nature of the modern figurative rupture and the postmodern return to history, Jorge Silvetti examines in his essay, "On Realism in Architecture", the relationship of architectural knowledge to reality: "how it interprets reality and explains it, and how it reflects reality in its work (we might say more accurately 'represents' it in its work."<sup>90</sup>

His question: "with what 'real' does architecture establish figurative relations is answered by a kind of tautology in which the referent of architectural representation is architecture itself:

Until modern architecture (and since the Renaissance at least), the 'real of architecture' was found in its own history, which in turn provided a sufficient proof of truth... Thus architecture has posed itself, as a figurative enterprise, a 'real' of architectural substance (or at least of building substance) which necessarily refers to its own history.<sup>91</sup>

Silvetti proceeds to introduce the concept of 'verisimilitude' to qualify different modes of architectural production corresponding to different objects of representation and means of persuasion.<sup>92</sup> Hence the following conceptualization of modern architecture:

Modern Architecture of the heroic period was one of those rare cases of invention of a new verisimilitude; it replaced another architecture whose foundations of truth and credibility lay in history. As if the possibilities of such realism had been exhausted by the preceding paroxysm of eclecticism, revivalisms, etc., architecture joined ranks with the generalized figurative rupture that occurred in all the arts, from literature, painting, to music (where even the seemingly eternal 'truth', the 'natural' scale, lost its authority).(p. 14)

Before the avant-garde, verisimilitude was grounded in a 'truthlike' representation of the existent. In a radical reversal modern architecture represented an object projected into the future, fragments of a utopian reality: a new society, a new man, a new physical reality. But unlike past utopias, the fragments of modernism are not the products of recombinations of hitherto known architectural elements. Modern architecture substitutes what might be collectively believable and plausible as its rhetorical basis for persuasion with the 'truth' in which the artist believes in making reality evident when Man is transformed through the

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<sup>90</sup>Jorge Silvetti, "On realism in Architecture," in *Harvard Architectural Review*, v. 1 spring 1980. pp. 11-31.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, p.14

<sup>92</sup>Verisimilitude for Plato and Aristotle and for subsequent rhetoricians, is a concept which dismisses definitely what thought to be the constitutive proper.....



potent agency of architecture. Thus the terms of the verisimilitude are inverted:

It is a complex and contradictory verisimilitude, for if, on the one hand, as a truly avant-garde movement, it does not accept society's expectation as the source of its persuasion, on the other it believes that forms themselves will transform those expectations, and that persuasion will result. (p. 15)

The reversal is manifested in the demotion of symmetry ,(the most immediate target of the new figurative strategy) and a metaphorical loss of center expressed in the displacements of figurative elements to the periphery of architectural substance.<sup>93</sup>

As the abstract and hermetic figurative propositions of modern architecture failed to communicate their revolutionary program for reorganizing the praxis of life, the traditional idea of verisimilitude was restored in the late fifties with a return to the logic of persuasion based on an elaboration of what is culturally believable. The problem of historical continuity is posed, the incorporation of contextual mimesis and popular motives is effected and common knowledge becomes a privileged source for architectural persuasion "Architecture does not become more involved with representation, since it always is, but the 'real represented and the verisimilitude sought after are easier and more concrete. The 'reality' predicated by Rogers' *Torre Velasca* and by Gardella's house in Zattere although derived from very different lines of thought are conscious efforts to install architecture with a figurative program that is more *realist* and more intelligible as a collective discourse." (p. 15)

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<sup>93</sup>besides the incorporation of extra-architectural icons as figurative devices, another element of abstract character comes to replace the legitimating credibility of history: function will generate buildings so self-evident that their truth will be incontestable. This procedure postulates according to Colquhoun, a kind of onomatopoeic relationship between form and content. The content becomes the set of relevant functions -- functions which themselves represent a reduction of all the socially meaningful operations within a building -- and it is assumed that the functional complex is translated into forms whose iconographical significance is nothing more than the rational structure of of the functional complex itself.



Belgiojoso, Peressuti and Rogers, Torre Velasca, Milan, 1957.



Gardella, House in Zattere, Venice, 1958.

This program was found in typology since "the idea of 'type' implies, first of all, a minimum level of intelligibility for forms based on the architect's and beholder's experience, which in turn will make architecture 'believable.'"(p. 23) Accordingly, the dichotomy in the conception of type which has generated the two divergent interpretations of typology in the architectural theory and practice of the late seventies (Neo-Rationalist and iconographic) is substantiated by the two major categories of verisimilitude that have been established in art and literary criticism:<sup>94</sup>

In the works of the neo-rationalists, we see that their rhetorical efforts are geared toward the establishment of a verisimilitude based upon the purity and congruence of 'genre.' This explains the notion of autonomy and the search for the 'discipline.' although the latter is probably reduced to the selection of genre. The populist choice, all too obvious, is linked to the Aristotelian notion of 'common knowledge,' 'public opinion,' etc., that what people think is true... Both will necessarily produce divergent discourses because their 'reals' are diverse. But, both are consciously engaged with one or another idea of verisimilitude. (p. 21)

This attempt to reinstate an orthodox verisimilitude is, thus, to be understood as an "ideological mutation" : a strategic adoption of an accessible system of signification, more effective in engaging the social discourse of architecture in the cultural debate. The restoration of historical precedents in the typological approach is not an innocent quest for a lost continuity with the past but a "lapse into consciousness" that emphasizes the cultural origins of architecture and reactivates the mechanisms of its signifying processes.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, any attempt to grapple with ideological signification entails an "appropriation of the

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<sup>94</sup>On the one hand, as defined by Aristotle, verisimilitude deals with the techniques that appeal to the audience in order to convince and which are based on the sentiments, emotions and 'knowledge' of the audience. On the other hand, according to a more recent practice, the effect of reality is established not in relation to public opinion but to a 'genre'. Thus an epic, a tragedy, a comedy, a still life, etc., conform to their own reality if the rules of the genre are respected. (see Silveti, p. 21)

<sup>95</sup>Colin Rowe, "Neo-Classicism and Modern Architecture", in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other essays*, (The M.I.T. Press, 1976), p.131.

*real.*" Whether conceived in terms of culturally encoded icons or conventional modes of discourse, types invariably constitute a *plausible* and *intelligible reality*. A discussion of concrete and explicit instances of typological *realism* is now in order. The following examples are meant to further clarify this notion; they are also intended to reformulate the concept of *realism* as a critical category.

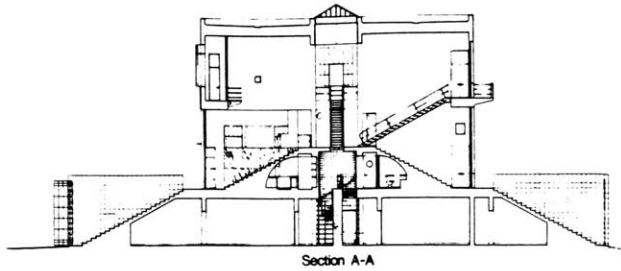
The Country House, an early project by Machado, greatly anticipates an attitude about type more explicitly articulated in Machado/Silvetti's later projects. The origin of the design, we are told, can be found in the architect's personal and lasting encounter with a work of sixteenth century architecture during his apprenticeship: Villa Emo Capodilista (called Montecchia). Built at Selvazzano, in the proximity of Padova, in 1570 by Dario Varotari. "This act of design is then a tribute, a loving reenactment, a new *mise en architecture*. It ignores those features of Montecchia that are found bothersome, it exaggerates or repeats those that are found especially pleasurable."<sup>96</sup> The general layout of the house in the completeness of its symmetrical relationships also recalls typical schemes of the Grands Prix de Rome in the late Eighteenth century or early nineteenth century (Vaudoyer's winning "Ménagerie" in 1783). I shall argue however that the historical precedent or type is not evoked as a legitimating principle, nor as an image or icon, readily available for consumption. The design is not presented as a mythifying repetition of a historical precedent but appears as an assemblage of multiple elements 'montaged' according to a typological analogy. In other words, the type provides a architectonic 'grammar' or syntax that structures and binds together an otherwise fragmented assemblage.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the type allows the fragments now inscribed within an architectonic armature and a culturally encoded context to acquire a level of realism necessary for their intelligibility.

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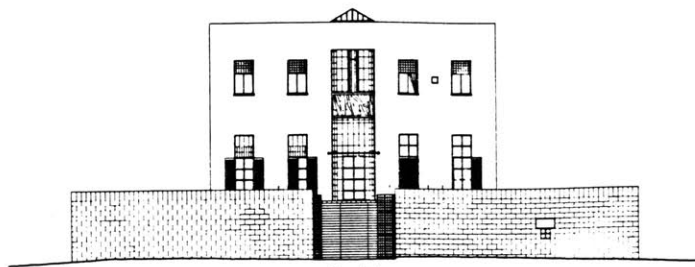
<sup>96</sup>Rodolfo Machado, "Country House," in *Harvard Architectural Review*, vol.1, 1980, pp. 252-253

<sup>97</sup>The mechanisms of this 'montage' operation will be discussed in great details in the next chapter.

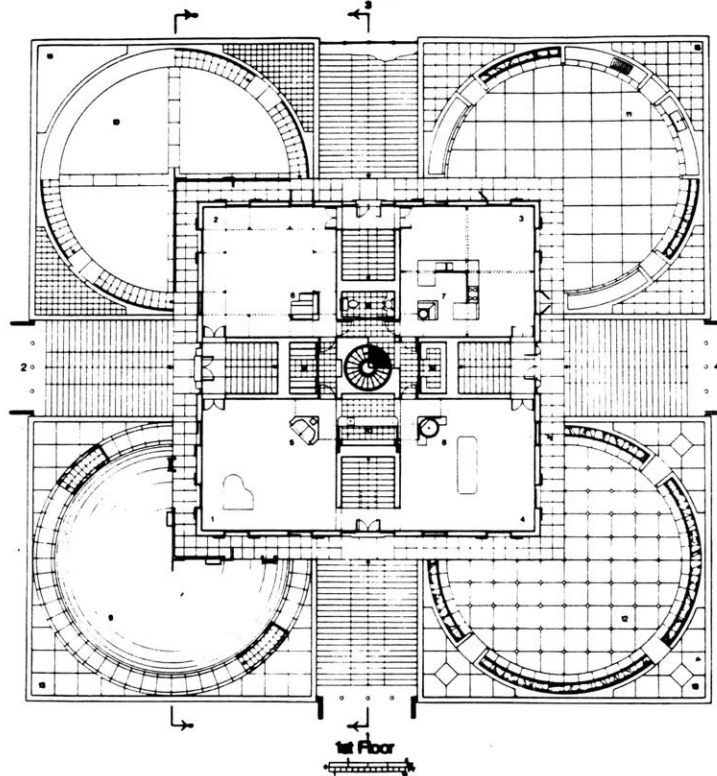
*Typology and Realism*



Section A-A



Facade 1



1st Floor

**First Floor Plan**

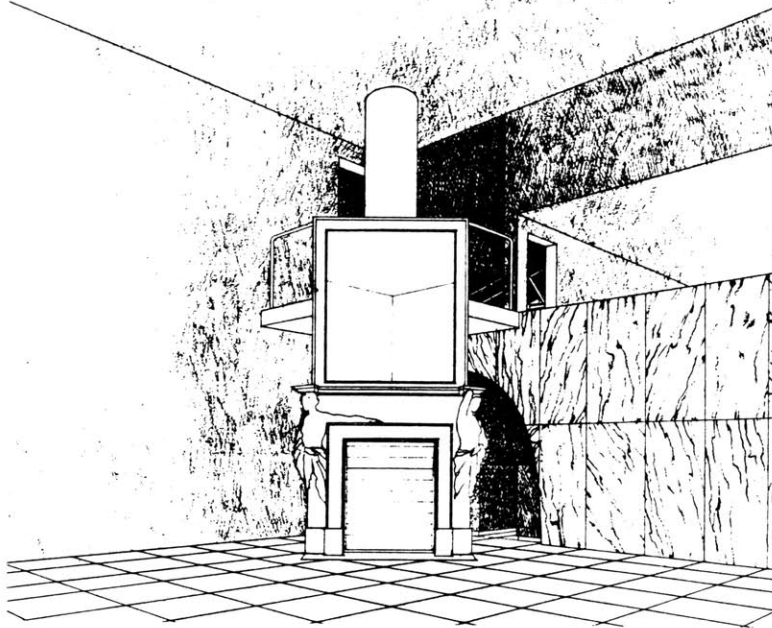
**Rooms**

- 1 Living Room
- 2 Library
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Dining Room

**Attributes**

- 5 Fireplace
- 6 Lectern
- 7 Oven
- 8 Cooling Fountain
- 9 Swimming Pool
- 10 Cloister
- 11 Patio
- 12 Terrace
- 13 Solarium
- 14 Grotto
- 15 Herb Garden
- 16 Pavillion

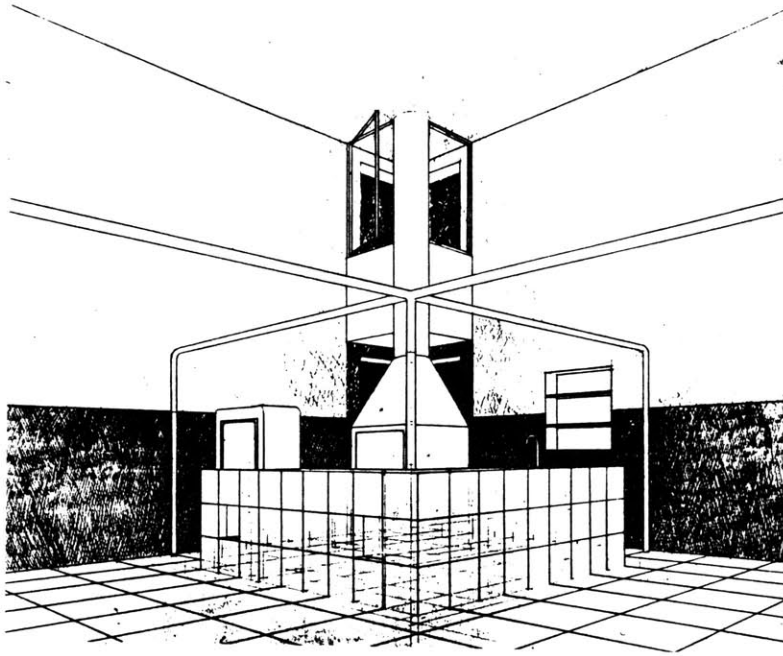
Rodolfo Machado, Country House, Virginia, 1978.



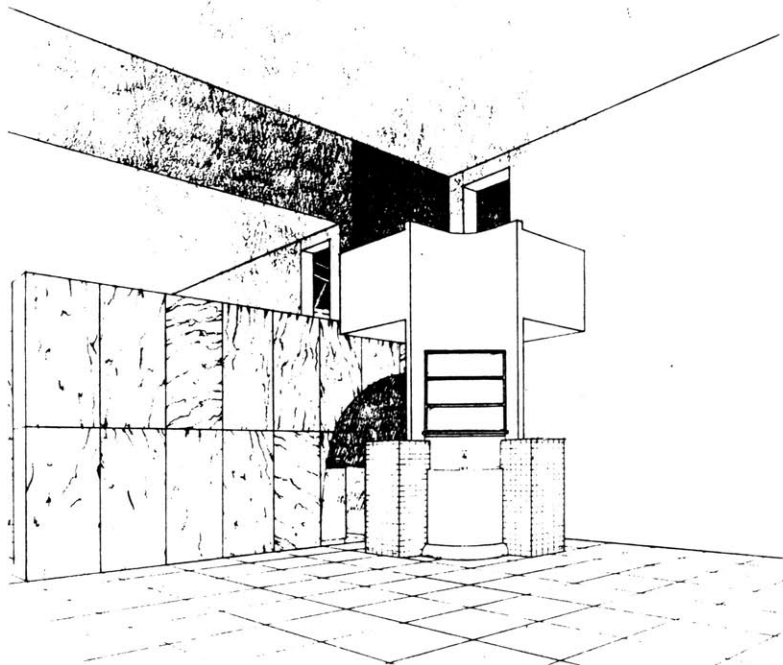
Country House; View of Living Room, Fireplace.



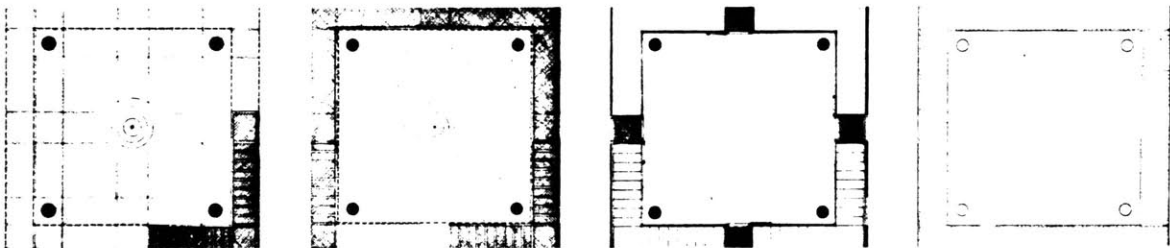
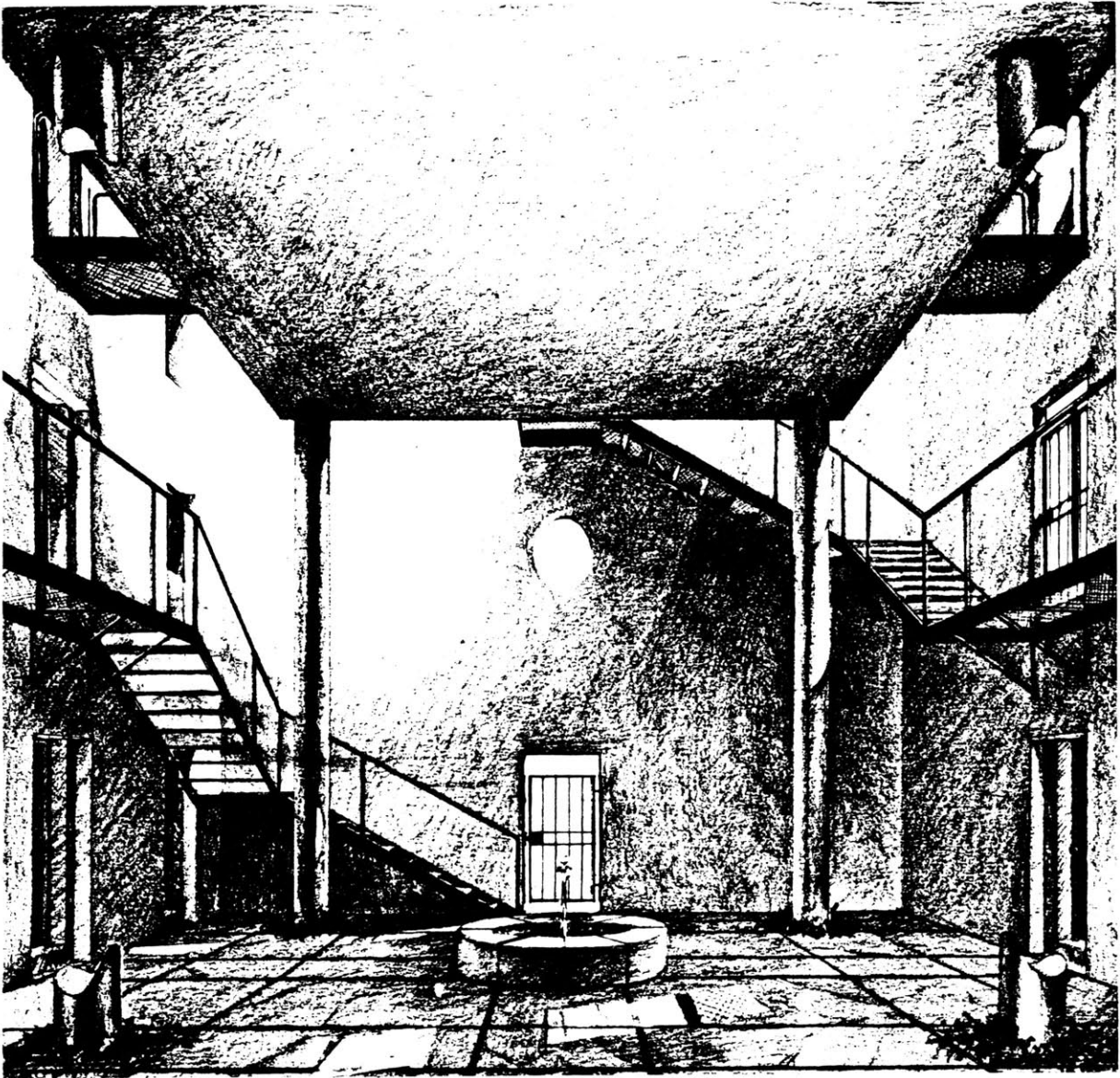
Country House; View of Library, Lectern.



Country House; View of Kitchen, Oven.



Country House; View of Dining Room, Cooling Fountain.

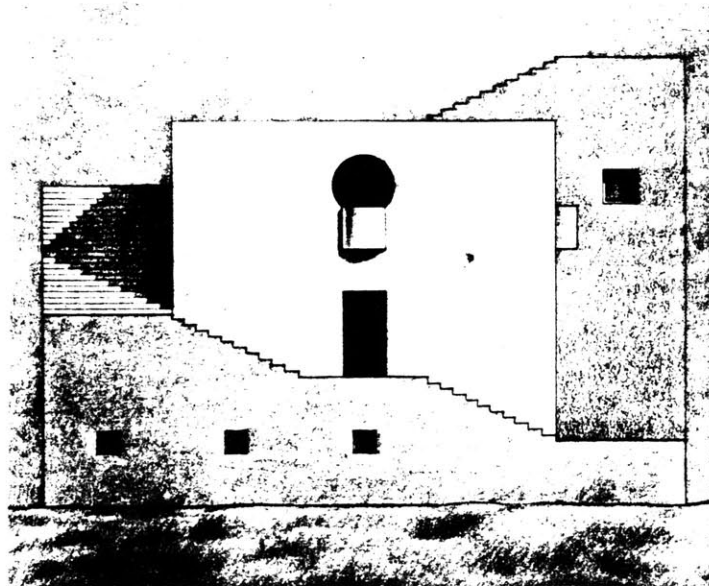


Jorge Silvetti, House in Djerba, 1977





Jorge Silvetti; House in Djerba, Section.



Jorge Silvetti; House in Djerba, Elevation.

The first floor of the building consists basically of four rooms and four exterior annexes specially organized according to a strict bilateral symmetry and functionally (or semantically) qualified by a diagonal chain of attributes --- both rooms and exterior annexes contain attributes placed at the corner: "little buildings, monumentalized objects, emphatically placed within the rooms and the gardens as if they were domestic totemic structures, enthroned, deified."<sup>98</sup> For instance, moving diagonally, the stove occupying the corner qualifies the function or character of the space as a kitchen, which in turn, along with the herb garden at the opposite corner qualifies the exterior annex as a patio, etc.

<b>attributes</b>	<b>rooms</b>	<b>gardens</b>	<b>attributes</b>
fireplace	living room	swimming pool	solarium
lectern	library	cloister	grotto
oven	kitchen	patio	herb garden
cooling fountain	dining room	terrace	pavilion

On the second floor the same strategy is executed but the choice of furniture is here allowed to semantically reinforce the function of the attributes. Echoing Saussure's notion of the differential sign this strategy thus emphatically problematizes the traditional notions of function and expression which are understood to be naturally communicated by architectural form. This building should be understood as a demonstration of a thesis about the nature of the architectural sign; about the problem of type and character. This didactic intention can thus elucidate the role and nature of the typological precedent in this building.

The rhetorical function of the type is most legible in the plan where a complete symmetry conveys a sense of organic coherence. The plan thus allows the viewer to rationally intuit

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid

the building in its compositional armature and to articulate a system of formal relationships or syntactic equations between its major components. Also, the building is most rhetorically represented with a series of perspectival drawings depicting the four major rooms of the house. The drawings are identical in their layout; they all share the same perspectival parameters, orientation, and focus: the attribute occupying the corner. Formulated in the principles of structuralism, this structural similarity can be seen to establish a paradigmatic nexus among the different spaces, thereby reproducing the syntagmatic structure already established in the plan. Both planimetric and pictorial modes of representation thus emphatically serve to subordinate the elements of the building to a very tight but reduced syntactic structure --- the type --- which in its explicitness and clarity allows them to be considered semantically, in their similarities and differences.

Thus, the typological clarity of this building with its characteristic disorienting symmetry and exacerbated redundancy should be understood as a formal or rhetorical device that structures, redistributes, channels and also amplifies the connotative fields of the different elements (rooms and attributes) brought together in a new product. Type is at the same time, pretext and catalyst for a new "mise en architecture" as Machado calls this transformational procedure.

Silvetti's house in Djerba --- a project from the same period --- offers another insight into the role of typological precedents in actively shaping the meaning and intelligibility of artifacts. Although immediately legible in the calligraphic simplicity of its form, the house appears to be totally unprecedented: a solid cube enveloped by a colossal staircase. A closer look at the drawings will however point to an unmistakable affiliation with a particular genre, most strictly articulated in Palladio's *Pallazzo Thiene*: a monumental and ceremonial space shaped by a thick "wall", a dense layer of alternating subservient rooms. This generic affiliation allows the recipient to construct an interpretive framework from a

set of generic expectations. The recipient can accordingly *decipher* the "contradictory assemblage" of cube and stair: an allegorical confrontation between architecture and building, order and function, culture and the vernacular.

Silvetti's Tower in Leonforte -- a part of a larger urban proposal in a small Sicilian town -- is equally suggestive in its dependency upon type.<sup>99</sup> Although a first impression might suggest a strange and unprecedented object--- "a mysterious shaft inscribed with indecipherable hieroglyphs and brisling with metal darts,"<sup>100</sup> a closer look at the drawings (the model is much less hermetic and more readily intelligible) will allow the typological attributes of a tower to be identified. Indeed, the object has the characteristic proportions of a typical tower or *campanile*, it is considerably higher than all the buildings around it, it is square in plan with a circular stair leading to the top and crowned by the typical belvedere. The 'tower' is furthermore 'correctly' situated, next to a church and even takes an inflected position vis-a-vis the church portal thus emphatically reclaiming an illusive typological identity.<sup>101</sup> The typological affiliations are also made further explicit by a rhetorical isolation of the various typal elements: the stair is free-standing within a hollow shaft, the viewing platform at the top is separated with a pool of water from the wall, the arcaded wall of the belvedere stands alone etc.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Silvetti describes Leonforte in the following terms:

Leonforte is a paradigmatic seventeenth-century Mediterranean town that displays a remarkable urbanistic ideas and reflects the humanist concerns behind its first layout in 1610. Structured on a linear axis that corresponds to a natural valley, it is anthropomorphic in its tripartite organization: the 'head' includes the palazzo, piazza, stables, and cathedral; the 'umbilicus', the Piazza Margherita; and the feet, the gate to Catania. These three characteristic points along an axis are determined by golden section ratios. Toward the west, the old city walls and a gate opened on the piano della scuola, the equestrian school's fields, and the road to Catania.

<sup>100</sup>Judith Wolin, "The Rhetorical Question" in *VIA*, vol. 8 p.28

<sup>101</sup>The tower is located next to the church of the Annunziata, at the intersection of the two major axis of the city (the original axis of the old city and a perpendicular one created by the new Piazza Carella.

Despite its unmistakable strangeness this artifact acquires a certain familiarity once its typological affiliations are recognized. The typological identity thus establishes a frame of reference allowing the recipient to 'engage' the artifact in a familiar territory mapped by a received knowledge of forms and taxonomies. Only then can the recipient 'enter' the work through the 'bridge' erected in this moment of recognition --- the moment of typology --- to momentarily suspend the aesthetic distance.

Considered within this typological framework the tower of Leonforte becomes culturally plausible. It masks its 'strangeness' to strategically claim a pertinent presence in the world. It becomes a 'worldly' object, dynamically engaged in a web of cultural and historical filiations and affiliations objectified in its distancing representations. Accordingly, the "strange but familiar" artifact distances itself from mythological recuperations or instantaneous consumptions --- the inevitable fate of a stylistic novelty --- to demand our active participation in deciphering and articulating its polysemic voices.

The darts are actually telescopes and framing devices, gradually accessible from the stair and permanently aimed at important architectural events in the city; exacerbated windows which transform the tower into a sort of "optical machine." By selectively framing significant episode and bringing them together in an 'specular' promenade the tower/optical machine phenomenally reconstructs the historical and spatial intelligibility of a dislocated twentieth century Leonforte. At the conclusion of his didactic ascent, the visitor emerges upon a platform offering a 'spectacular' panoramic view of a "reinvented" Leonforte. The platform is actually an 'island' in the middle of a pool filled to the rim. The water occasionally overflows ---depending on wind or rain --- to cascade upon the tower's moss

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<sup>102</sup>See Wolin

covered facade transforming it into a fountain of some sorts.

The 'tower' derives its polymorphic character from Leonforte's most memorable monument, *La Gran Fonte*: a public fountain with twenty-two continuously running spouts, a drinking trough for animals, a viewing device with twenty-two windows framing views to the valley and the city beyond and a significant event or landmark encountered by visitors as they enter the city from the gates to Palermo --- a multifunctional artifact offering both, material (literal) and virtual (symbolic) support for the integrity and intelligibility of the city. <sup>103</sup>

The tower 'appropriates' and 'subverts' *La Gran Fonte's* multiple functions.

The water-source is rhetorically evoked in the tower's poetically gratuitous fountain; the symbolic function of the 'windows to the landscape' is concretized in the tangible effects of a precise "optical machine;" and the road-side landmark, a unique (episodic) and significantly structuring event in a temporal experience of the city becomes a permanent presence, a spatial datum, simultaneously visible and emblematic from distant places throughout the city. <sup>104</sup>

The dialogue between the two monuments is also figuratively materialized. The tower is 81 feet high, the exact length of the *Gran Fonte*. Furthermore, an engraving of *Gran Fonte's* facade traced sideways upon the tower's least public surface figuratively demonstrates the operations (appropriation, abstraction, reversal, subversion etc.) performed by the tower upon a precedent transformed beyond recognition.

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<sup>103</sup>The *Gran Fonte* was built by Leonforte's founder, the humanist Prince Branciforte who made water -- the condition of Leonforte's prosperity -- a theme of the town.

<sup>104</sup>This point is convincingly demonstrated by a series of drawings perspectively representing the tower from different significant stationary points -- the same focal points of the telescopes.

The Leonforte Tower does not really depend upon these literal or metaphorical references to guarantee its coherence or achieve its effects.

The dialogue, however, does effectively channel and elucidate its connotative powers and, most importantly, objectifies a cultural basis for its poetic --- and subversive --- operations, allowing it to serve as a counterpart to Gran Fonte in redefining the city: "First by being a monument with extraordinary attributes, visible from key points throughout the city; and second, by being a complex and multifunctional artifact from which the city can be known again and reassembled in the viewer's mind."<sup>105</sup>

Both, 'tower' as an abstract and universal type, and the Gran Fonte as a specific and concrete object, act as 'precedents' for the Leonforte Tower. While the 'tower' type serves as a indispensable agent in promoting the intelligibility and plausibility of an 'unprecedented' form, the historical artifact, pictorially quoted on the elevation of the tower, further substantiates the cultural pertinence of an object now firmly grounded --- and informed by --- a specific context.

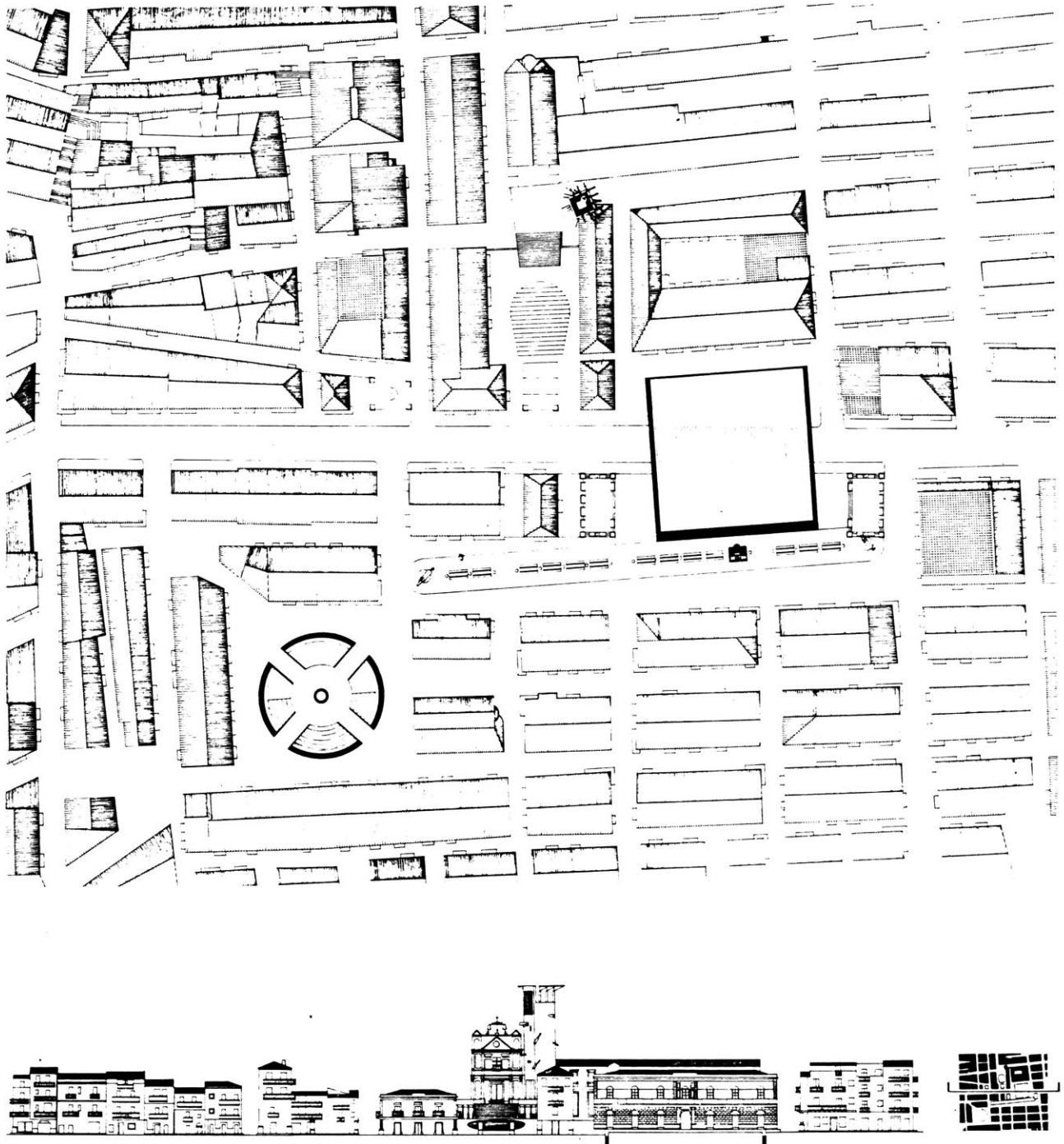
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<sup>105</sup>Jorge Silveti , "Four Public Squares in the City of Leonforte, Sicily," in *Assemblage*, no. 1, October 1986, p. 55.

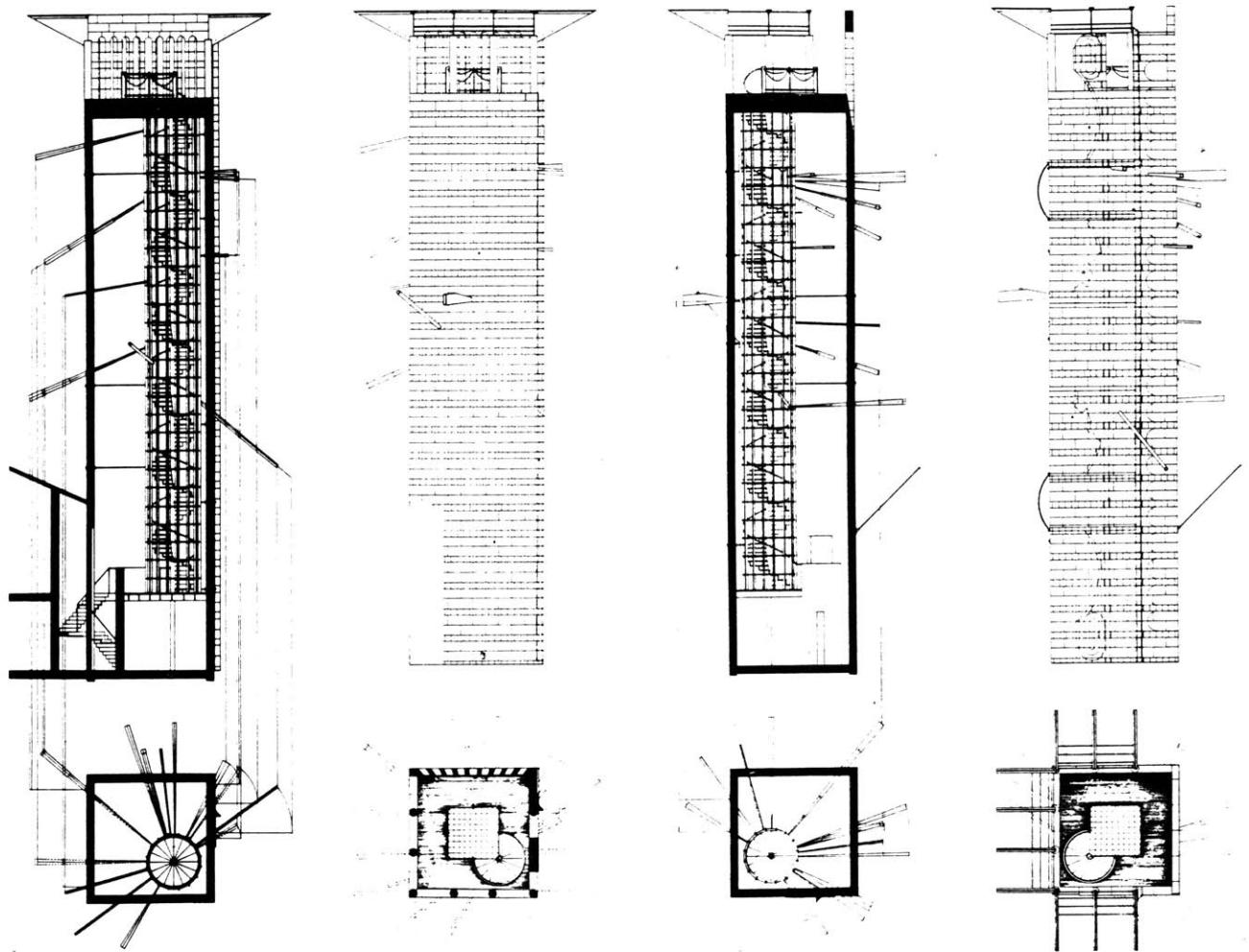


Jorge Silvetti, Urban Design Plan for Leonforte, 1983

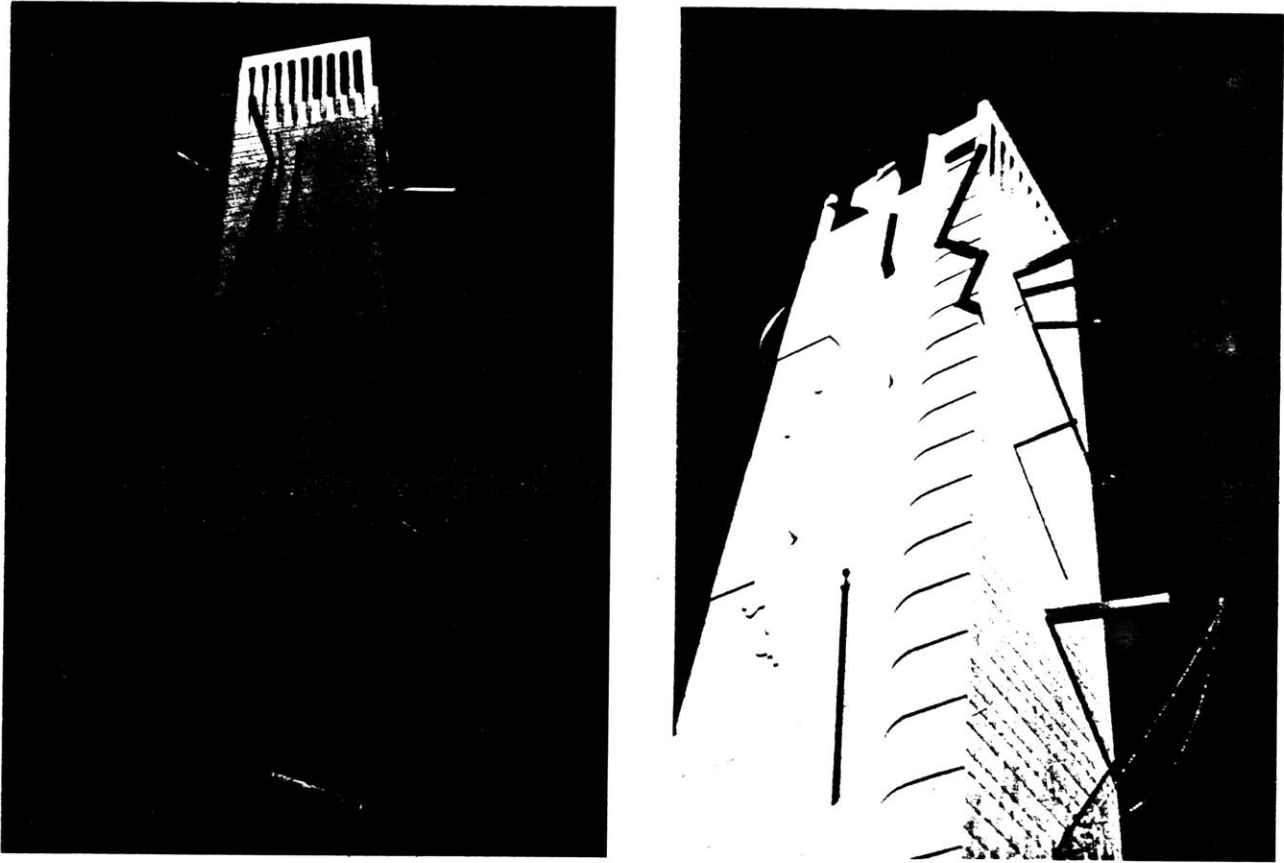




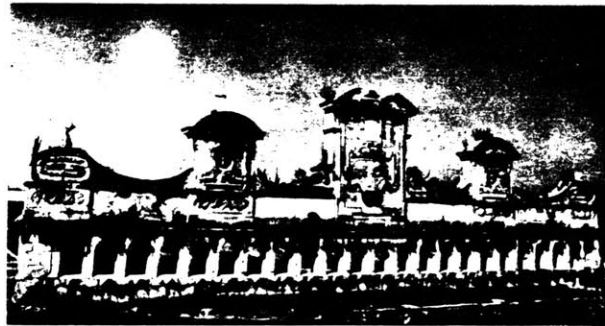
Leonforte, City Plan and Elevation.



Leonforte, Design for *Campanile*; Plans, Elevations, & Sections.

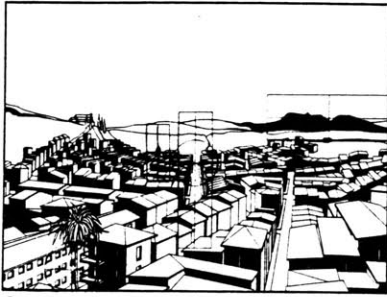


Model Photographs of Leonforte Tower.

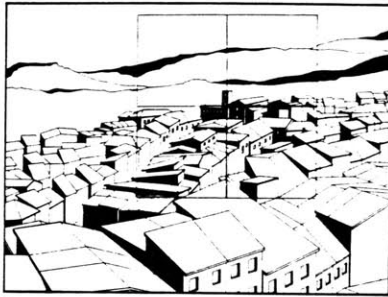


*La Gran Fonte* in Leonforte.

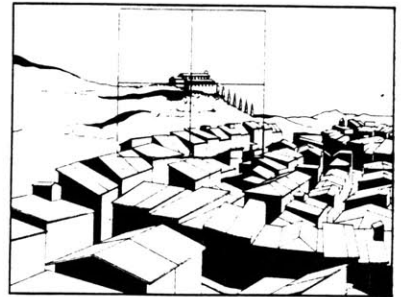
*Typology and Realism*



3. a.



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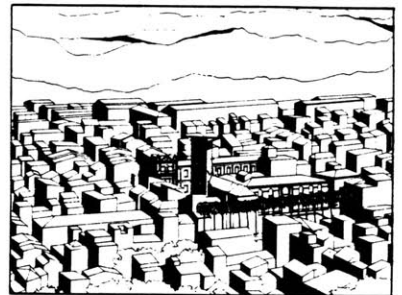
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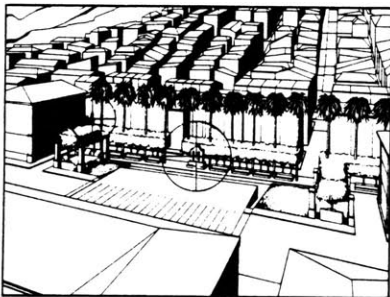
4. a.



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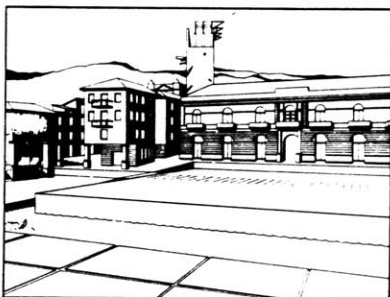
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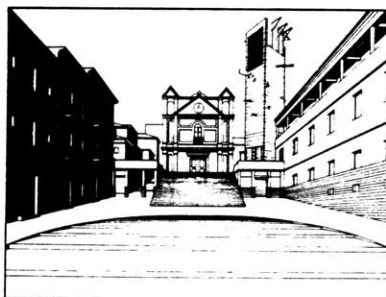
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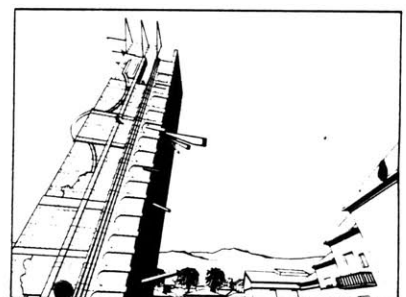
f.



d.



e.



f.

Perspective Views of and from the Tower in Leonforte.

Chapter four: *Montage: Material, Procedures, and Constitution.*

For the cubists, the postage stamp, the newspaper, the box of matches that the painter sticks on to his picture, have the value of a test, an instrument of control of the reality itself of the picture, with Max Ernst, it is quite different, collage with him becomes a poetic procedure completely opposite in its ends to Cubist collage. . .

Louis Aragon

### *1. The Collage/Montage Revolution*

In a still-life scene at a café, with lemon, oyster, glass, pipe, and newspaper [*Still-Life with Chair Caning* (1912), the first cubist collage], Picasso glued a piece of oilcloth on which is printed the pattern of woven caning, thus indicating the presence of a chair without the slightest use of traditional methods. For just as the letters JOU signify JOURNAL, a section of fascimile caning signifies the whole chair. Later Picasso would go one step further and incorporate in his collage actual objects or fragments of objects, signifying literally themselves. This strange idea was to transform Cubism and to become much of the twentieth century art.<sup>106</sup>

The early cubist experiments in collage/montage stand as an abrupt departure from a 'classical' mode of representation defined by the 'illusionism' of perspectival space. Indeed, While the collage/montage remains 'figurative' with the incorporation of identifiable fragments of actual referents on the surface of the canvas, it no longer 'represents' the world now *immediatly* reconstructed on the canvas --- the printed oil cloth. With a radical revision of the epistemological foundation of western art, "these tangible and non-illusionistic objects presented a new and original source of interplay between artistic expressions and the experience of everyday world. An unpredicted and significant step in bringing art and life closer to being a simultaneous experience had been taken"<sup>107</sup> --- a step whose social/political consequences were soon to be recognized and exploited.

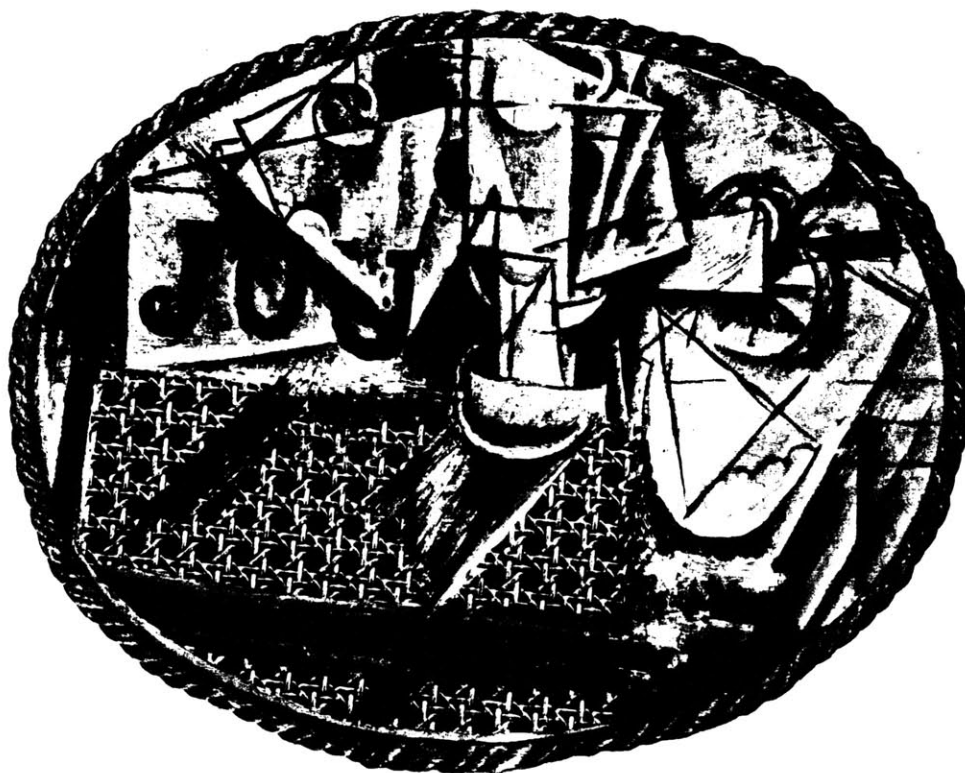
Collage/montage was also to revolutionize the literary practices of the twentieth century. In Breton's *Nadja* for instance, the events in the novel are not structured according to a traditional linear narrative scheme. Unrelated events are rather juxtaposed because of shared semantic characteristics. Breton thus substitutes an assemblage of formally disparate but semantically congruent events to the narrative coherence of the nineteenth century novel

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<sup>106</sup>Edward Fry, *Cubism* (McGraw-Hill: New York), p. 27.

<sup>107</sup>Eddie Wolfram, *History of Collage* (MacMillan: New York, 1975), pp. 17-18.

where the last incident logically presupposes all preceding ones. More radically disjointed are Tzara's "newspaper clippings" poems where textual fragments, "sentences from newspapers, scraps of conversation and clichés out of context, words wrenched from their normal associations" are randomly selected from a bag and arbitrarily assembled in incoherent syntagms reproducing thereby the very techniques of Dada collage.<sup>108</sup> These textual strategies were to lead through persistent attacks on the "realist" epistemology of traditional literary practices to a total disruption of linear narrative structures in the "new novel" and a radical problematization of "representation" and "realism" in literature.



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912.

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<sup>108</sup>See Dawn Ades, *Photomontage* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

Later, the collage/montage technique extends its revolutionary mode of representation beyond the realm of artistic/literary production, into the academic essay and the discourse of knowledge, replacing the 'realist' criticism based on the notion of 'truth' as correspondence to or correct reproduction of a referent object of study.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, Gregory Ulmer argues that Derrida relies upon collage/montage as a privileged stylistic device in the deconstruction of 'Mimesis' --- the mode of representation extending from Plato to Freud (and beyond) in which the signified or referent is always *prior* to the material sign, the purely intelligible *prior* to the merely sensible.<sup>110</sup>

Derrida's alternative to 'Mimesis' does not abandon reference but re-thinks it: "It complicates the boundary line that ought to run between the text and what seems to lie beyond its fringes, what is classed as the *real*."<sup>111</sup> Derrida replaces the 'sign' (composed of signifier and signified --- the most basic unit of meaning according to structuralism) with a still more basic unit --- the *gram*.

It is a question of producing a new concept of writing. This concept can be called gram or différance . . . whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each element --- phoneme or grapheme --- being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. The gram, is the most general concept of semiology --- which thus becomes grammatology.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>This point is thoroughly argued by Gregory Ulmer, "the object of Post-Criticism" in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Bay Press: Port Townsend, 1984) p. 84.

<sup>110</sup>Cf. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (John Hopkins: Baltimore, 1976).

<sup>111</sup>Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (University of Chicago: Chicago, 1981).

<sup>112</sup>Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (University of Chicago: Chicago, 1981), p. 26.



With its irreconciled differences, disrupted syntax and undecidable reading effect, collage/montage is thus the discursive manifestation of the gram principle. Again, collage/montage is strategically adopted as a privileged mode of intellection and production, for the deconstructive project of postmodernist art, architecture and literature in their 'critique of representation'.<sup>113</sup>

It is not necessary here to reconstruct in greater detail the historical evolution of collage/montage as it came to dominate representations in 20th-century arts and finally direct the current break from 'mimesis' in a variety of postmodern works.<sup>114</sup> I shall rather articulate the principles of these techniques: "To lift a certain number of elements from works, objects, pre-existing messages, and to integrate them in a new creation in order to produce an original totality manifesting ruptures of diverse sorts," and re-evaluate their critical potency --- previously proven effective in the hands of the historical avant-garde --- and cultural relevance in the present architectural practice.<sup>115</sup>

Central to my following argument is a differentiation between the often conflated collage and montage. The two techniques will thus be differentiated at the outset in their respective formal qualities, historical manifestations, and modes of production and reception . While an attempt to differentiate terms may be an artificial imposition on the often interchangeable

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<sup>113</sup>See Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," October 12 (1980).

<sup>114</sup>It is necessary here to distinguish between the role of collage and montage in the modernist critique of realism and their current recuperation in the post-structuralist attack on representation:

The deconstructive impulse is characteristic of postmodernist art in general and must be distinguished from the self critical tendency of modernism. Modernism theory presupposes that mimesis, the adequation of an image to a referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent ... Postmodernism neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works instead to problematize the activity of reference. Ibid. , p. 105.

<sup>115</sup>Cited in Gregory Ulmer, "The object of Post-Criticism" in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Bay Press: Port Townsend, 1984) p. 84.

*collage* and *montage*, this distinction helps to clarify what may be important issues when considering heterogeneously assembled artifacts as systems of signification. For the difference is more than a matter of focus --- one arbitrary (*collage*), one ordered (*montage*). *Collage* presents situation rather than context; texture rather than text and its elements are more didactic than directed (illustrations). *Montage* exercises more syntactic control over the assembled fragments and tightly structures and directs their connotative powers. Thus, as *collage* triggers immediate and nonspecific reaction in the recipients (shock at best), *montage* generates meaning by ordering its elements so they may be 'read'.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>The resulting definition of *montage* does not coincide with its historical or conventional understanding. A new terminology would have helped avoiding certain confusions and would have probably been more appropriate in discussing Machado/Silvetti's work. The redefined 'montage' allows however a radical reinterpretation of some avant-garde works previously subsumed under the general category of *collage/montage* and usually explained in terms of negational strategies.

## 2. Collage Versus Montage

Collage and montage coincide as they diverge from the 'organic' work in their attitude toward the material.<sup>117</sup> The material of an organic work of art grows from concrete life situation and is therefore respected and treated as something living. The collage or montage artist proceeds by first killing the 'life' of the material by tearing it out of the functional context that gives it meaning. Where the organic work presents the material as the locus of meaning, collage and montage only recognize the differential sign to which only they can impart significance. Correspondingly, the material is 'present' as a whole in the organic work and occurs only as a fragment, isolated from the life totality, in collage and montage.<sup>118</sup>

The attitude towards the constitution of the work also separates collage and montage from the organic work. Indeed, the organic work always attempts a living picture of totality (however limited the segment of the reality represented). Both collage and montage reject the naturalized appearance of totality. But while the *non-organic* collage breaks through the appearance of totality as it calls attention to the fact that it has been made up of unmediated reality fragments, the *quasi-organic* montage constructs a *simulacrum* of reality in order to "distance" *from within* the appearance of totality.<sup>119</sup> And while collage

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<sup>117</sup>The notion of "organic work" is here used according to Peter Bürger's definition:

"The organic work appears as a work of nature: "fine art must be clothed with the aspect of nature, although we recognize it to be art" (*Critique of Judgment*). And George Lukács sees the task of the realist as twofold: "first, the uncovering and artistic shaping of these connections(i.e., the connection within social reality) and secondly and inseparably from the former, the artistic covering of the connections that have been worked out abstractly -- the sublation of the abstraction." (*Marxism and Literature*) What Lukács calls 'covering' is nothing other than the creation of appearance (Schein) of nature. The organic of art seeks to make unrecognizable the fact that it has been made." (*Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 72.)

<sup>118</sup>See Bürger, "The Avant-Gardist Work of Art," in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.

<sup>119</sup>The term 'quasi-organic' that is hereby introduced will be further clarified in the discussion on montage.

undermines the organic coherence of a work with the heterogeneity of its inarticulate fragments in order to posit the impossibility of meaning, montage joins irreconcilable fragments in a cohesive structure with the intent of producing a new meaning.

Thus, two different philosophical and historical modes of production and reception can be argued to correspond to the two techniques (collage and montage). These modes have contrary aesthetical, social and political implications. One stems from a critical modernism and its will to opacify *language* finally leading, through a persistent and negational retreat into the medium (formalism), away from the subject matter of common experience <sup>120</sup> to non-objective art (*collage*). The other, fundamentally objective and sometimes anti-aesthetic seeks to reorganize the praxis of life by leading art back into a relevant discussion of norms and values (*montage*). Collage starts from a formalist bias in the belief that certain 'constructions' (the non-organic work) hold a potential for deconstructing ideological closure and proceeds to 'transgress' the sphere of ideological representations. Montage, reappropriates and restructures the ideologically tainted language *from within*, allowing it once again to become a medium for cultural criticism (the quasi-organic work).

Strategically speaking, collage (or the non-organic work) belongs to the avant-garde (literally) of traditional warfare with its direct and explicit attack on hegemonic formations. Montage (or the quasi-organic work) resembles the mythological *trojan horse* in its covert operation. Only after being admitted within the walls of the city does the strangely familiar horse reveal its threatening --- and devastating ! --- 'content' beneath its fascinating monumentality; similarly, montage allows the viewer to 'enter', with the act of

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'Quasi-organic' was selected to evoke an intermediate and equivocal space between Lukács' organic and Adorno's nonorganic realms and in order to claim an affiliation with Stanford Anderson's quasi-autonomous architecture.

<sup>120</sup>Cf. Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Art and Culture. Critical Essays*. (Boston, 1965) p. 6.

interpretation, the 'familiar' space of the work only to subject him to the 'alienating' effects of 'camouflaged' critical devices.

The first strategy can be associated generally with the larger body of the historical avant-garde but more specifically with its later formalist recuperations (especially in its American reception) and has had its most potent definition in Adorno's Aesthetic theory and was reductively canonized in Greenberg's writings. Deconstructivist Architecture is probably its most explicit and convincing advocate in architecture. The other (the trojan horse tactic) has made sporadic appearances in the course of the century, within the ranks of Dada and Surrealism, with Brecht's *verfremdung* and Benjamin's allegory. The work of Machado/Silvetti will serve to demonstrate in the following analysis the critical power, effectiveness and relevance of montage and its characteristic 'quasi-organicity' in the current architectural practice.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>This distribution coincides with Jochen Schulte-Sasse's mapping of the two predominant theories of cultural politics in his foreword to Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.

*Collage and the Nonorganic Work*

In his Aesthetic theory, Adorno articulates the meaning and significance of collage: "The semblance of art being reconciled with a heterogeneous reality because it portrays it to disintegrate as the work admits fragments of empirical reality, thus acknowledging the break and transforming it into aesthetic effect," . . . "The negation of synthesis becomes a compositional principle."<sup>122</sup> Thus according to Adorno, the naturalized artifice of 'realist' --or 'organic' --- work projects the illusion of a reconciliation of culture and nature, whereas the non-organic collage no longer creates the semblance of reconciliation.

"The insertion of reality fragments into the work of art fundamentally transforms that work. The artist not only renounces shaping a whole, but gives the painting a different status, since parts of it no longer have the relationship to reality characteristic of the organic work of art. They are no longer signs pointing to reality, they are reality."<sup>123</sup> And although these fragments remain largely subordinated to the aesthetic composition which seeks to create a balance of individual elements, they do not show a synthesis, in the sense of a unity of meaning.

Collage finds its latest application in recent architectural projects loosely labeled "deconstructivist". Finding legitimating support in Derrida's critique of representation, Bernard Tschumi<sup>124</sup> exercises in his project for the *Parc de la Villette* some design operation closely modeled after avant-gardist collage techniques: the park is conceived in

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<sup>122</sup>Theodore Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 232

<sup>123</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984), p. 78

<sup>124</sup>Bernard Tschumi's work is here selected as a paradigmatic example of the use of collage in recent architectural practices. While different candidates (Eisenmann; Gehry; Hadid...) might also suggest other pertinent examples, Tschumi's *La Villette*, with its methodological clarity and theoretical rigor, remains most appropriate and amply generous for the illustration of point.

terms of collided and superposed independent compositional and programmatic systems that "avoided all attempts to homogenize the project into a totality."<sup>125</sup> Tschumi argues that today's cultural circumstances with their disruptions, disjunction, and characteristic fragmentation suggest the need to discard established categories of meaning. His architecture is presented as one that would stress not only the dispersion of the subject and the force of social regulation, but also the effect of such decenterings on the entire notion of unified, coherent, architectural form. After the experiment in *La Villette*, Tschumi, thus, articulates a theoretical programme qualifying an architectural method where 'disjunction' is a formative principle:

1. Rejection of the notion of synthesis in favour of the idea of dissociation of disjunctive analysis;
2. Rejection of the traditional opposition between use and architectural form, in favour of superposition of or juxtaposition of two terms that can be independently and similarly subjected to identical methods of architectural analysis;
3. As a method, emphasis would be placed on fragmentation, superposition, and combination, which trigger dissociative forces that expand into the whole architectural system exploding its limits while suggesting a new definition.

Tschumi's architecture of 'disjunction' is totally aligned with the avant-garde's attacks on the 'organic' work of art and his programme clearly an extension of Adorno's theory of Modernity --- via post-structuralism --- where art can be understood as a medium that resists the hegemonic tendency and negates the ossified linguistic, formal and mental clichés that are the result of instrumental rationality: "The asocial in art is the definite negation of the definite society . . . What [art] contributes to society is not communication with society, rather something very indirect, resistance."<sup>126</sup>

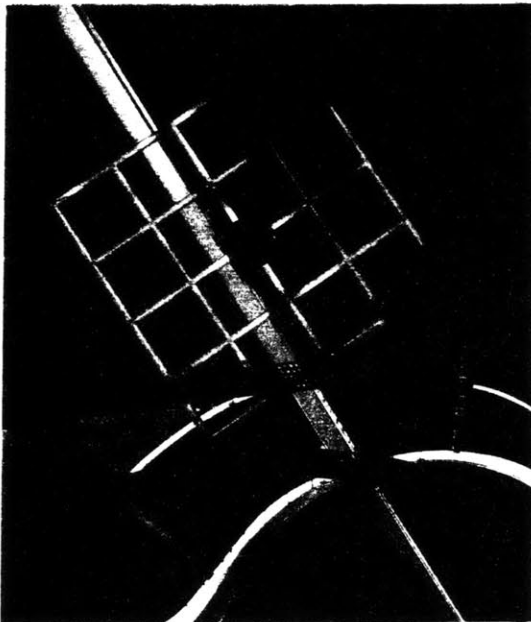
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<sup>125</sup>Bernard Tschumi, AD vol. 58, p. 36.

<sup>126</sup>Theodore Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 235-36



Bernard Tschumi, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1983.



Bernard Tschumi, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1983.



Tschumi's architectural collage thus seeks to make explicit in its heterogeneous form and disrupted syntax the cultural contradictions that are always reconciled in the nostalgic pursuit of coherence. The practice of collage in *La Villette* is meant to "dislocate and deregulate meaning, rejecting the symbolic repertory of architecture as a refuge of humanist thought."<sup>127</sup> But most importantly, *La Villette* aims at an architecture that *means nothing*--- as eloquently argued by Tschumi, "an architecture of the signifier rather than the signified." Tschumi recovers here Adorno's interpretation of the negation of synthesis as a negation of meaning. The refusal to provide meaning and the impossibility of interpretation are indeed the characteristic features of the non-organic work and the corresponding mode of reception.

The individual parts and the whole form a dialectic unity in an organic work of art. This means that an anticipating comprehension of the whole guides, and is simultaneously corrected by, the comprehension of the parts. The fundamental precondition of this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole. This precondition is rejected by collage --- or the non-organic work --- and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts emancipate themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential elements. This means that the parts lack necessity.

In an a typical dadaist collage, one could eliminate one of the pasted *objets trouvés* or "accidental" images from the composition without disrupting the construction or altering the meaning of the work in any significant way. Thus, the manner of appropriating intellectual objectifications that has been formed by the reading of organic works of art becomes inappropriate to collage. Since the individual parts of a collage are no longer subordinated

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<sup>127</sup>Bernard Tschumi, AD, vol. 58, p. 39.

to a synthetic intent, they can no longer account for any impression made upon a recipient now incapable of interpreting the meaning of a collage. The impossibility of meaning is experienced as shock. Here lies the critical power of collage and "the intentions of the avant-gardist artist who hopes that such withdrawal of meaning will direct the reader's attention to the fact that the conduct of one's life is questionable and that it is necessary to change it. Shock is aimed as a stimulus to change one's conduct of life; it is the means to break through aesthetic immanence and to usher in (initiate) a change in the recipient's life praxis."<sup>128</sup>

What remains when shock is 'consumed' ---- The history of the avant-garde provides numerous examples where shock was either diluted by an increasingly *blasé* audience or completely neutralized with its inevitable institutionalization, "is the enigmatic quality of the forms, their resistance to the attempt to wrest meaning from them. The recipient will suspend the search for meaning and direct attention to the principles of construction that determine the constitution of a work. In the process of reception the collage provokes a break which is analogue to the incoherence (non-organicity) of the work. Between the shock-like experience of the inappropriateness of the mode of reception developed through dealing with organic works of art and the effort to grasp the principles of construction there is a break: the interpretation of meaning is renounced. <sup>129</sup>

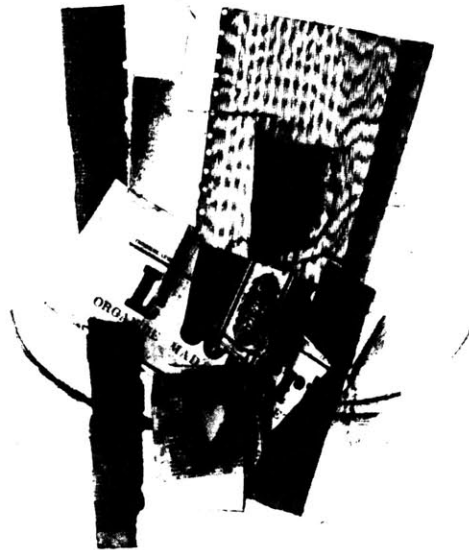
One of the decisive changes in the development of art that collage brought about consists in this type of reception. In Georges Braque's *Le Courier* of 1913 we recognize strips of imitation wood graining, part of a tobacco wrapper with a contrasting stamp, half the

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<sup>128</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984), p. 80  
On the problem of shock in Modernism, see the comments by W. Benjamin, "on some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, introd. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1968) pp. 155-200.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p.61

masthead of a newspaper and a bit of a newsprint made into a playing card (the ace of hearts)<sup>130</sup>. The decontextualized reality fragments in *Le Courier* do not "summarize in one form many characteristics of a given object" for the recipient. It is rather the very materiality of a signifier now divorced from its referential function that is here perceived with other shapes, colors and textures in the disrupted syntactic field of the collage where referential meaning is diluted, dispersed, and finally suspended and the materiality of signs reduced to pure form is foregrounded. The recipients attention no longer turns to a meaning of the work that might be grasped by a reading of its constituent elements, rather, his attention is focuses on the formal characteristics of a work which eludes interpretation.<sup>131</sup>



George Braque, *Le Courier*, 1913.

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<sup>130</sup>Description provided by H.W. Janson in *History of Art*, (New York, 1981) p. 654.

<sup>131</sup>Of course, the critical histories of the avant-garde provides many instances where referential meaning is *contrived* from or narrative is imposed upon even the most radically destructured collages. I shall argue that these efforts actually coincide with the cultural/institutional recuperation of montage: the disturbing silence is made to *signify* --- mythologically.

*Montage and the Quasi-Organic Work.*

The First photomonteurs, the Dadaists, started from the point of view, to them incontestable, that war-time painting, post-futurist expressionism, had failed because of its non-objectivity and its absence of convictions, and that not only painting, but all the arts and their techniques needed a fundamental and revolutionary change, in order to remain in touch with the life of their epoch. The members of the Club Dada were naturally not interested in elaborating new aesthetic rules. . . . But the idea of photomontage was as revolutionary as its content, its form as subversive as the application of the photograph and printed texts which, together, are transformed into a static film. . . . They were the first [the Dadaists] to use photography as material to create, with the aid of structures that were very different, often anomalous and with antagonistic significance, a new entity which tore from the chaos of war and revolution an entirely new image; and they were aware that their method possessed a propaganda power which their contemporaries had not the courage to exploit. . . .<sup>132</sup>

As it is clearly suggested by Hausmann's statement, photomontage was *strategically* developed against the Expressionist inwardness and utopianism. Photomontage, in its equivocal relation to "reality" --- photography being an *immediate* registration of the real --- provided an alternative to the hermetic rhetoric of Expressionism and the semantic atrophy of abstraction --- the dominant voice in avant-garde art --- by allowing the artifact to directly and more effectively engage the world. As noted by Rosalind Krauss, "Photography is an imprint or transfer of the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers. . . . The photograph is thus genetically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing. . . . technically and semiologically speaking, drawings and paintings are icons, while photographs are indexes."<sup>133</sup> The Dadaists aimed at the outset to exploit the photographic "reality effect" in their constructions. The photograph was to be fragmented, dispersed and reassembled according to the collage principle, thus yielding in its heterogeneous form a trace, a registration of the gaps, the

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<sup>132</sup>Raoul Hausmann, cited in Ades, *Photomontage*, p. 24

<sup>133</sup>Rosalind Krauss, *L'Amour Fou*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), p. 31

See also C. S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955)

fissures, the tensions --- the contradiction --- of "that very reality of which *this* photograph is merely the faithful trace." Photomontage was thus initially construed as the site of a paradox: "the paradox of reality constituted as a sign," an empty sign.<sup>134</sup>

Hannah Höch's *Cut With the Cake Knife* is a paradigmatic example of the Dadaist photomontage. Here, we can discern individual photographic fragments haphazardly juxtaposed within a pictorial frame, leaving "emphatic gaps between one shard of reality and another, . . . rivers of white paper to flow around the individual photographic units."<sup>135</sup> Accordingly the early Dadaist photomontage is not concerned with *meaning*. Only silence --- the silence of negation --- is voiced in the unintelligible gaps:

Ordinarily we discover meaning by claiming some sense from the outside world and constructing a unified, integral image of reality on the pictorial surface. But in Dada photomontage what we experience more than a unified surface or pictorial whole are the fissures and gaps that separate the disparate images. The Dada surface does not claim a formal or material unity that we can press into service inward; rather it registers each of a sequence of disjunctive representations and intruder objects, securing them in isolation, holding each within a condition of separateness and difference.<sup>136</sup>

However, Raoul Hausmann's *Tatlin at Home* seems to indicate a shift from the Dadaist paradigm hereby described. Indeed in this particular photomontage, the juxtaposed "reality" fragments are no longer suspended, silenced, and distanced in their alterity by "rivers of white paper." On the contrary, the typical haphazard arrangement gives way for a more structured assemblage of parts, while the negational silence is disrupted by faint but clearly articulated messages. Hausmann's *Spirit of Our Times* translates the experiment of *Tatlin*

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<sup>134</sup> Krauss, *L'amour Fou*, p. 31. Krauss describes here the surrealist manipulation of the photographic image, her description is however relevant -- if not more appropriate -- for the Dadaist photomontage.

<sup>135</sup> Krauss, *L'amour Fou*, p. 27

<sup>136</sup> K. Michael Hays, "Photomontage and its Audiences, Berlin, Circa 1922" *Harvard Architectural Review* VI (preliminary draft).

at Home into three a dimensional object. The "reality-effect" of Photography is here achieved in the use of mass produced objects or *objets-trouvés*: unmediated fragments of "reality" itself.<sup>137</sup> A wallet, tape measure, collapsible drinking cup and numbered card (among other things) are assembled onto a wooden head in order to "express the petty bourgeois spirit of the times, unthinking, without individuality, reduced to a cipher and progressively dehumanized. Just like *Tatlin at Home, Spirit of Our times* seizes "reality" and restructures it in order to express "not simply the fact which it shows but also the special tendency expressed by the facts."<sup>138</sup>

Here lies the break with collage, in the insistence upon *meaning*. Dada photomontage was initially conceived within the context of collage. And while the term "photomontage" was chosen in order to distance at the outset the two activities, collage and Dadaist photomontage remained structurally one despite their proclaimed ideological differences.<sup>139</sup> While *Tatlin at Home* and *The Spirit of Our Time* show, however, evidence of a genuine mutation in the conception of photomontage, the radical departure from collage can most clearly be identified in John Heartfield's work: "As he was playing with the fire of appearances, reality took fire around him . . . John Heartfield was no longer playing. The scraps of photographs that he formerly manoeuvred for the pleasure of stupefaction, under his fingers began to *signify*," wrote Aragon.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Constructed objects which contain ready-made materials are to be understood as a three-dimensional analogues of photomontage:" Objects like the 'adorned dummy of hausmann's mechanical head *Spirit of Our Time* could be said to bear a similar relationship to the photomontage of Höch, Grosz or hausmann as earlier Dada works, like Janco's *Construction 3* (1917) withits abstract exploration of the properties of wire, etc., do to abstract Dada collages." (Ades, *Photomontage* p. 30)

<sup>138</sup>John Heartfield, *Photomontages of the Nazi Period* (New York: Univers Books, 1977). p. 26

<sup>139</sup>montage (*montageas* defined in this paper)remains relatively anomalous in comparison to the larger body of Dada photocollage. Furthermore, the photomontages of heartfield are not usually concidered Dadaist.

<sup>140</sup>Louis Aragon, "John Heartfield et la beauté révolutionnaire," in *Les Collages* (Paris, 1965) p. 78 translation by Ades.

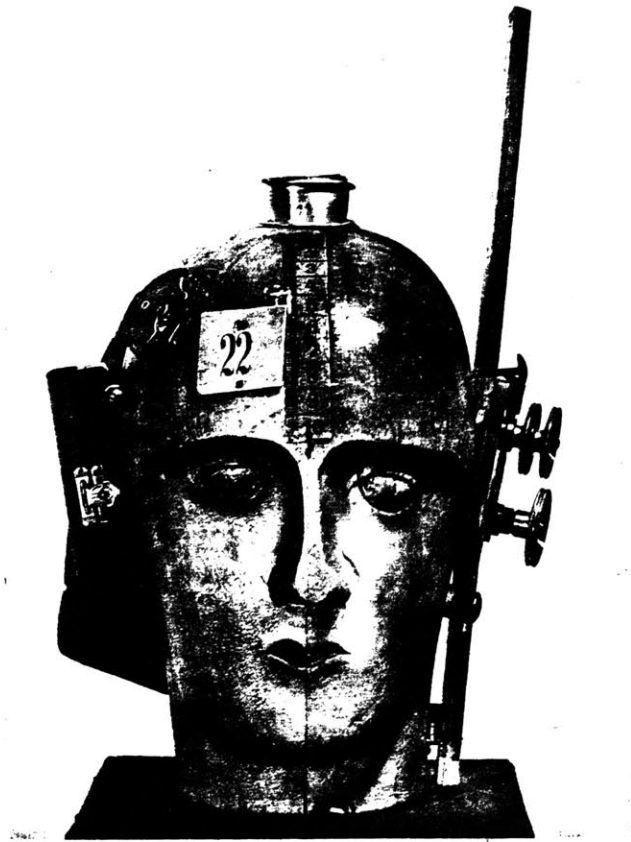


Hannah Hoch, *Cut with the Cake Knife*, c.1919.



Raoul Hausmann, *Tatlin at Home*, 1920.





Raoul Hausmann, *Spirit of Our Time- Mechanical Head*, 1919.

Photomontage von JOHN HEARTFIELD



**ADOLF, DER ÜBERMENSCH: Schluckt Gold und redet Blech**

John Heartfield, *Adolph-the Superman-  
Who Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk*; July, 17, 1932.

What differentiates Heartfield's work from the more random or undirected expression achieved through similar means or media in collage (assemblage of individual elements) is the possibility of 'interpreting' the work: our gaining of new information, our receiving of a specific semiotically-controlled message, through reading his precise layering of metaphorical devices. In contradistinction to the Dadaists who aimed to silence the expression of an ideology --- implicit in any representation of "reality" --- by breaking up images, "Heartfield was able by juxtaposing them to reveal the ideology for exactly what it was, rendering visible the class structure of social relationships or laying bare the menace of Fascism."<sup>141</sup>

In Heartfield's photo montage *Adolph --- the Superman --- Who Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk*, an X-ray image of a ribcage, a photograph of coins and a swastika are superposed on a portrait of Adolf Hitler. Imitating the format of the old art of the emblem, the assembled image is placed between the title or inscriptio (*Adolph the Superman*) and a lengthier explanation, the subscriptio (*Swallows Gold and Spits Junk*). In contradistinction to the cubist collage, Heartfield's photo montage is not primarily an aesthetic object but an image for reading (lesebilder). The photomontage is thus conceived as a semantically saturated image, condensing more information than any other visual discourse and its principle of construction entirely subordinated to the the necessary legibility and intelligibility of the message.

The compositional treatment of the image tends to undermine the heterogeneity of the constituent elements in an attempt to construct a coherence to the overall form which in turn ensures the legibility of the restructured signs. The irreconcilable differences --- material, syntactic and semantic --- separating the various assembled fragments is suspended the

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<sup>141</sup>Ades, *Photomontage*, p. 45.

moment they become subordinated to the logic and coherence of the whole: the portrait, X-ray ribcage, coins and swastika are reconciled, their position justified and their new function clarified in relation to the total image, its assigned title and formal reference to the emblem genre. The photo montage does not, however, achieve a complete synthesis of parts since the fragments remain internally separated by their semantic differences. The work, thus, constantly oscillates between a resolved totality of form and content (Hitler as a dehumanized capitalist extortionist) and a fragmented image of suspended differences (Hitler-coins-ribcage-swastika).

The juxtaposition of singular elements involves a liberation of objects from ordinary contextual constraints and their recombination in a new context, opening them for interpretation. The bond between form and content thus tends to dissolve within the new construction as the initial fragments/signs acquire new meanings/referents: Metaphorically, the swastika 'becomes' a heart according to its assigned position in the image and metonymically Hitler's ribcage now designates a safe-deposit box for the coins cascading down his esophagus.

Without getting into a further detailed interpretation of this particular work and its effects on an audience or inquiring into its political consequences, I shall move to articulate more systematically --- maybe reductively --- and in greater detail the characteristic features and governing principles of montage.

### *3. Montage: Procedures and Functions*

Benjamin saw affinity between the allegoric imagination of the German baroque dramatists and the artistic needs of the twentieth century; first in the melancholy spirit of the former, with its emblematic but inscrutable insignia, which he rediscovered in Kafka; then in the cognate principle of montage which he found in the work of Eisenstein and Brecht. Montage became for him the modern, constructive, active, unmelancholy form of allegory, namely the ability to connect dissimilars in such a way as to "shock" people into new recognitions and understandings."<sup>142</sup>

Montage coincides indeed in the treatment of the material, operations and procedures with Benjamin's definition of the allegorical procedure: "The allegorical mind arbitrarily selects from the vast and disordered material that its knowledge has to offer. It tries to match one piece with another to figure out whether they can be combined. This meaning with that image or that image with this meaning. The result is never predictable since there is no organic mediation between the two."<sup>143</sup> Benjamin developed the concept of allegory in relation to the literature of the Baroque.<sup>144</sup> His analysis construes the allegorical practice as a consequence of the "worldly orientation" of baroque culture which undermines the anticipatory utopian dimension of historical time. In a static, immanently present experience of historical time, the productivist impetus gives way for melancholic contemplation:<sup>145</sup>

In allegory, the observer is confronted with the 'facies hippocratica' (the deathmask) of history as a petrified primordial landscape. Every thing about history that, from the very beginning had been ultimately sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face --- or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks all "symbolic" freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity --- nevertheless, this is

<sup>142</sup>Stanley Mitchell, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: New Left Books, 1977), p. xiii

<sup>143</sup>Walter Benjamin, "Zentralpark," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.1, 2, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974 p. 660. English translation from Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," in *Artforum* September 1982, p. 44

<sup>144</sup>Walter Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

<sup>145</sup>See Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," in *Artforum* p. 44

the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. (*Origin* p. 166)

A number of critics have recently argued for the extreme relevance of Benjamin's concept of allegory in contributing to a theory of the avant-garde and providing for a "more adequate reading of the importance of certain aspects of contemporary montage, its historical models, and the meaning of their transformation in contemporary art."<sup>146</sup> According to Peter Bürger --- and after Benjamin's later writings, namely the "fragments" on Baudelaire, where the baroque allegorical procedures translate into the modern concept of montage, the melancholy of the baroque allegorist corresponds with the surrealist concept of *ennui* which distills a sense of vacuum created with a growing consciousness of the elusiveness of "reality."<sup>147</sup> *Ennui* protests social functionlessness, the lack of practical possibilities of action: "From the surrealist perspective, *ennui* is not viewed negatively but rather as the decisive condition for that transformation of everyday reality which is what the surrealists are after."<sup>148</sup> The concept of allegory thereby acquires a most adequate object in the modernist collaged or montaged work. The allegorical activity, now posited as a central category in a theory of the avant-gardist work of art, is summarized according to the following schema:

1. The allegorist pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it from its

<sup>146</sup>Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," in *Artforum* p. 44

Buchloh ranks among several other critics -- usually associated with the journal *October*: Douglas Crimp, Craig Owens, Yves-Alain Bois --who attempted to qualify the postmodernist break in terms of an "allegorical impulse." Some doubts about the validity of this particular periodization of allegorical activities still persist.

<sup>147</sup>The Surrealist historical consciousness acts here as a paradigm for an avant-gardist attitude about history and society.

<sup>148</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, endnote no. 22, p. 117.

function. Allegory is therefore essentially fragment and thus the opposite of the organic symbol. "in the field of allegorical intuition, the image, the image is a fragment, a rune. . .The false appearance of totality is extinguished." (*Origin*, p 176)

2. The allegorist joins the isolated fragments and thereby creates meaning. This is posited meaning; it does not derive from the original context of the fragments.

3. Benjamin interprets the activity of the allegorist as the expression of melancholy: "if the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains dead but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is, it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has, it acquires from the allegorist." (*Origin*, pp. 183-84)<sup>149</sup>

Accordingly, montage proceeds by first isolating and 'appropriating' selected fragments from the functional context that gives them meaning. The fragments are then refigured in a newly fabricated context and thereby reinvested with a new content. Thus, in contradistinction to the organic work where the material is treated as a 'whole' , the material of montage is similar to the allegorical emblem: already isolated, severed from the totality of 'reality', ready to be radically transformed, distorted or supplemented in the hands of the *monteur*-allegorist.

The allegorical procedure in montage is clearly exemplified in the strategies of the Dadaist *monteurs* which allowed them "to speak publicly with hidden meaning." Georges Grosz is explicit about the original circumstances, political context and strategic intentions of the invented technique:

In 1916, when Johny Heartfield and I invented photomontage in my studio at the south end of town at five o'clock one May morning, we had no idea of the immense possibilities, or of the thorny but successful career, that awaited the new invention. On one piece of cardboard we pasted a mishmash of advertisements for hernia belts, student song book and dog food, labels from schnaps and wine bottles, and photographs from picture papers, cut up at will in such a way to say, in pictures, what would have been banned by the censors if we had said it in words.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 69.



*Marcel Duchamp*

Marcel Duchamps, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919.



Sherrie Levine after Walker Evans, 1981.

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<sup>150</sup>Cited in Ades, *Photomontage*, p. 19.



Duchamps' ready made employ different tactics but perform the same disjunctive operations upon "significant" fragments in order to "add another meaning" to the appropriated artifact. In *L. H. O. O. Q.* a devaluated mass-reproduced icon of cultural history is subjected to *confiscation*, *alteration*, and *reinscription* within a new context. Montage serves here to allegorically protest the devaluation of objects into commodities by reproducing the devaluation process in its very own practice: "The allegorist subjects the sign to the same division of function that the object has undergone in its transformation into a commodity. The repetition of the original act of depletion and the new attribution of meaning redeems the object."<sup>151</sup>

Sherrie Levine's work is a radicalized instance of the same operation. Levine rephotographs photographs, robbing them for the second time, and in a true allegorical fashion, of their historical function and authenticity. Levine does not alter the appearance of the appropriated material or physically "tear" it out from a larger cohesive whole to reassemble it with different fragments (material or textual), in a new configuration. Her intervention --- the degree-zero of montage --- is strictly limited to the allegorical *confiscation* which nevertheless radically transforms the artifact in its ideological dimension. Levine's *montaged* photograph is thus a paradigm --- and *cas extrême* --- of the quasi-organic work: simultaneously total and coherent, heterogeneous and fragmented. Heterogeneity and fragmentation do not imply here a figurative (collage like) collision of incongruous parts; "Levine's notion of fragmentation differs from the phallogocentric tendency which associates fragmentation with broken saucers, burnt wood, and crumpled straw. In her seemingly random selection of imagery from the history of modernism, representations are literally fragmented, torn from the hermetic totality of the ideological

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<sup>151</sup>Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," in *Artforum*, September 1982, p.44.

discourse within which they currently exist. Thus, as Benjamin described the allegorical procedure, Levine devaluates the objects of representation for the second time. She depletes the current commodity status of photography by Walker Evans, Edward Weston, Eliot Porter and Andreas Feininger for the second time by her willful act of rephotography, by restating their essential status as multiplied, technically reproduced imagery."<sup>152</sup>

There is no doubt that Benjamin's notion of allegory is indispensable for an understanding of montage procedures and effects (removing elements from a context and recombining fragments, positing a new meaning) in relation to concrete historical conditions (transformations effected by capitalist modes of production: "The world of material objects is perceived as being invalid with the transformation of objects into commodities. . . This devaluation of objects, their split into use value and exchange value and the fact that they ultimately function exclusively as producers of exchange value, profoundly affects the experience of the individual."<sup>153</sup>) and corresponding modes of production and reception (melancholy of the producer, pessimistic view of history of the recipient).

But while the analytical breadth of this category might be suitable for the elaboration of general theories of the avant-garde or postmodern art, it fails, due to its lack of descriptive specificity, to thoroughly qualify the *structure* of the montaged work or to distinguish it from other practices which perform less critical operations upon appropriated imagery.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," p. 52

<sup>153</sup>Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," in *Artforum* p. 44.

<sup>154</sup>The generalizing tendency of the term is illustrated in the vicissitude of its various formulations and instrumentalizations. From a key figure in baroque literature to a "central category of a theory of the avant-garde" (Bürger) and yet a "single, coherent impulse" governing the totality of postmodern art (Owens), allegory multiplies its faces and reasserts its usefulness. In its universality, allegory becomes meaningless, particularly when Heidegger identifies it with the very notion of art:

The following discussion will therefore evoke other models, rely upon other analytic tools, and introduce new categories for additional insights into the constitution and function of the montaged work. Upon strategic locations, this alternative and parallel account will intersect with the theoretical space of Benjamin's allegory --- including its current *postmodern* reinterpretations --- occasionally creating *denser* moments in the narrative.

Furthermore, the *appropriation* of ready-mades and *confiscation* of cultural icons have demonstrated their effectiveness in the realm of the visual arts. A literal translation of these strategies into an architectural practice seems, however, problematic if not impossible. Similar operations have occasionally been performed only to produce provocative architectural drawings or so-called theoretical projects: trivial glitches in the margins of the discipline.<sup>155</sup> In fact, the architecture of montage can barely approximate the radicalness of Levine's or Duchamp's work while totally renouncing a univocal, single-minded program for a cultural critique. Such a program is both unrealistic and inadequate for a worldly architectural practice, engaged in a myriad of professional, technical, and functional responsibilities.<sup>156</sup> Some more relevant --- nevertheless still distant --- models for architectural montage can however be found in more complex, composite assemblages, such as Dada and Surrealist "fitted" objects in general, Heartfield's photomontages, Picasso's *Bull's Head* or Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel on a Stool* in particular.<sup>157</sup>

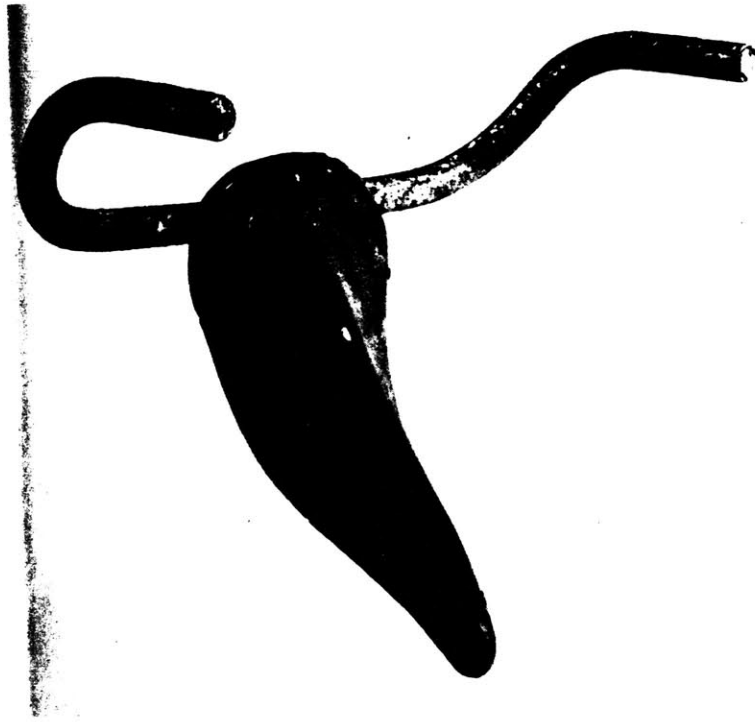
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The art work is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than the mere thing itself is, *allogoreuei*. The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. ["The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and row, 1971), pp. 19-20.]

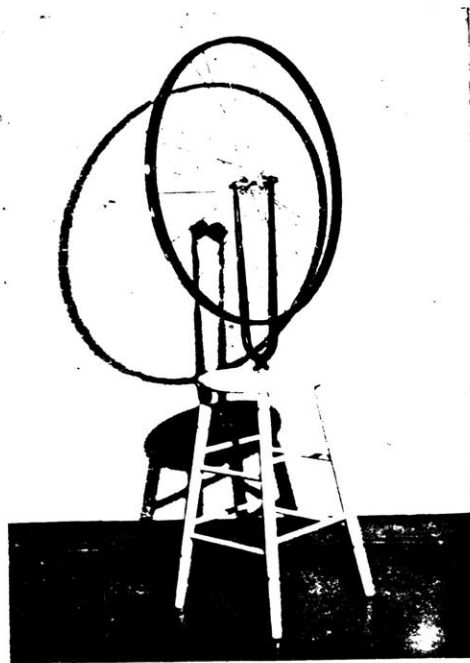
<sup>155</sup>The "Late Entries" for the revived *Harold Tribune Competition* included a number of such "anecdotes."

<sup>156</sup>See Intro.

<sup>157</sup>The following discussion will therefore concentrate on the montage of composite artifacts. This type of montage assembles more than one element into unprecedented configurations and entails a substantial alteration of the selected material; subtraction, multiplication, reduction or magnification, distortion and transubstantiation are some of the possible operations performed in this transformational process.



Pablo Picasso, *Bull's Head*, 1943.



Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913.

The following discussion will therefore concentrate on montage in relation to complex artifacts. This type of montage assembles more than one element into unprecedented configurations and entails a substantial alteration of the selected material; subtraction, multiplication, reduction or magnification, distortion and transubstantiation figure among the possible operations performed in this transformational process.

An examination of a building by Machado chosen for a didactic clarity in the operations of montage shall now extend the argument into an architectural realm. The building is a particular event in a larger urban proposal for Este, Italy;<sup>158</sup> the site, a vacant area (a soccer field) ambiguously suspended between the historical presence of an already dissolving urban fabric and the thin, undifferentiated expanses of more recent developments --- a fertile ground for invention. The proposal includes housing, a parking garage, a public swimming pool, a municipal office building and most importantly for our analysis, a monument:

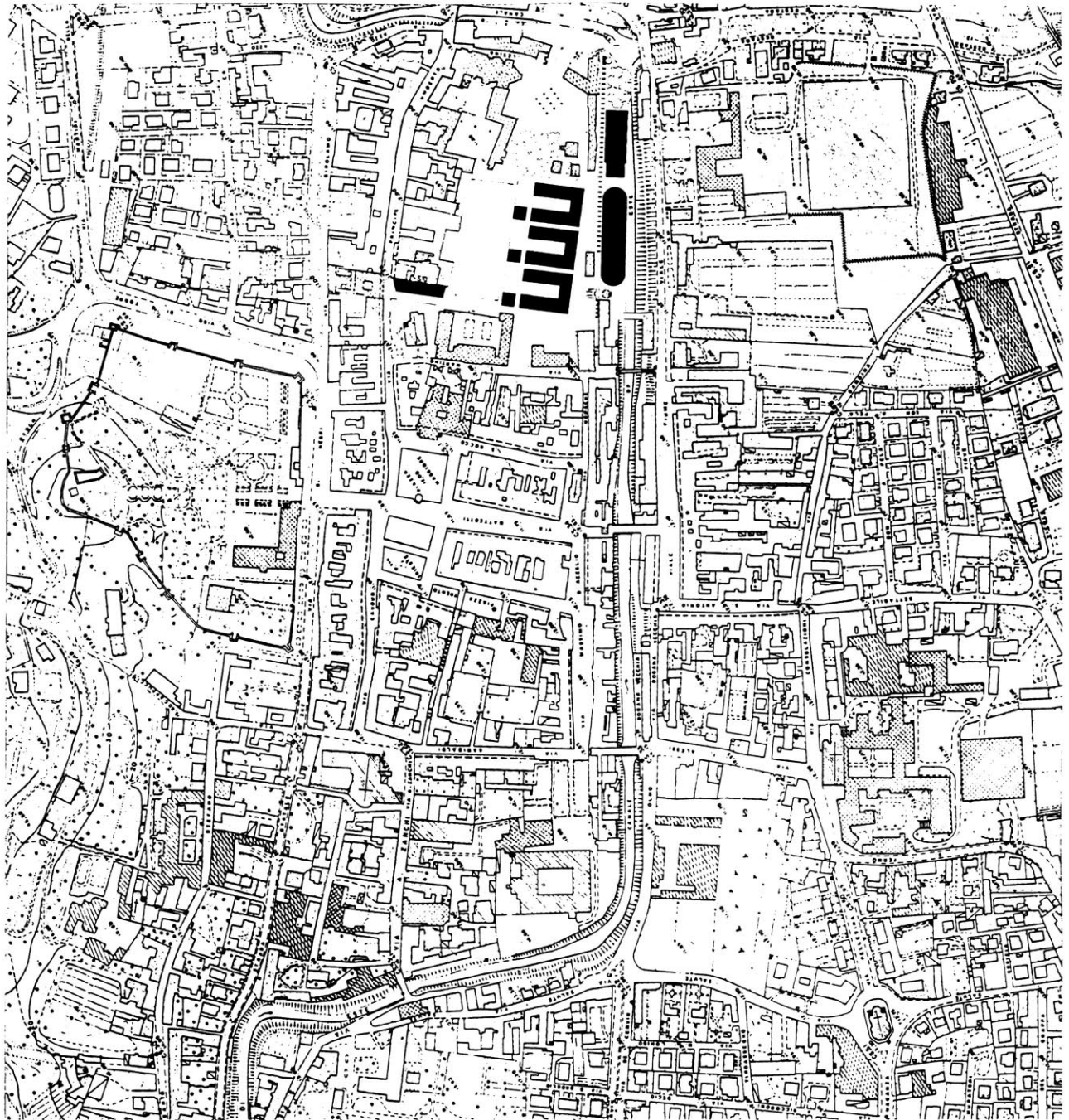
The monument is a complex piece that contains three major parts: an access ramp, a staircase building and the tower itself. The tower, in turn, results from combining three major types of public squares in ascending order: a loggia, a basilica-like room and a garden. The loggia and the room are orthodox renditions of types found in the region. The garden, however, is highly unorthodox in that it does not belong to any known type of garden.<sup>159</sup>

The combination process described by Machado and observed in the drawings of the monument undoubtedly falls within the realm of montage.

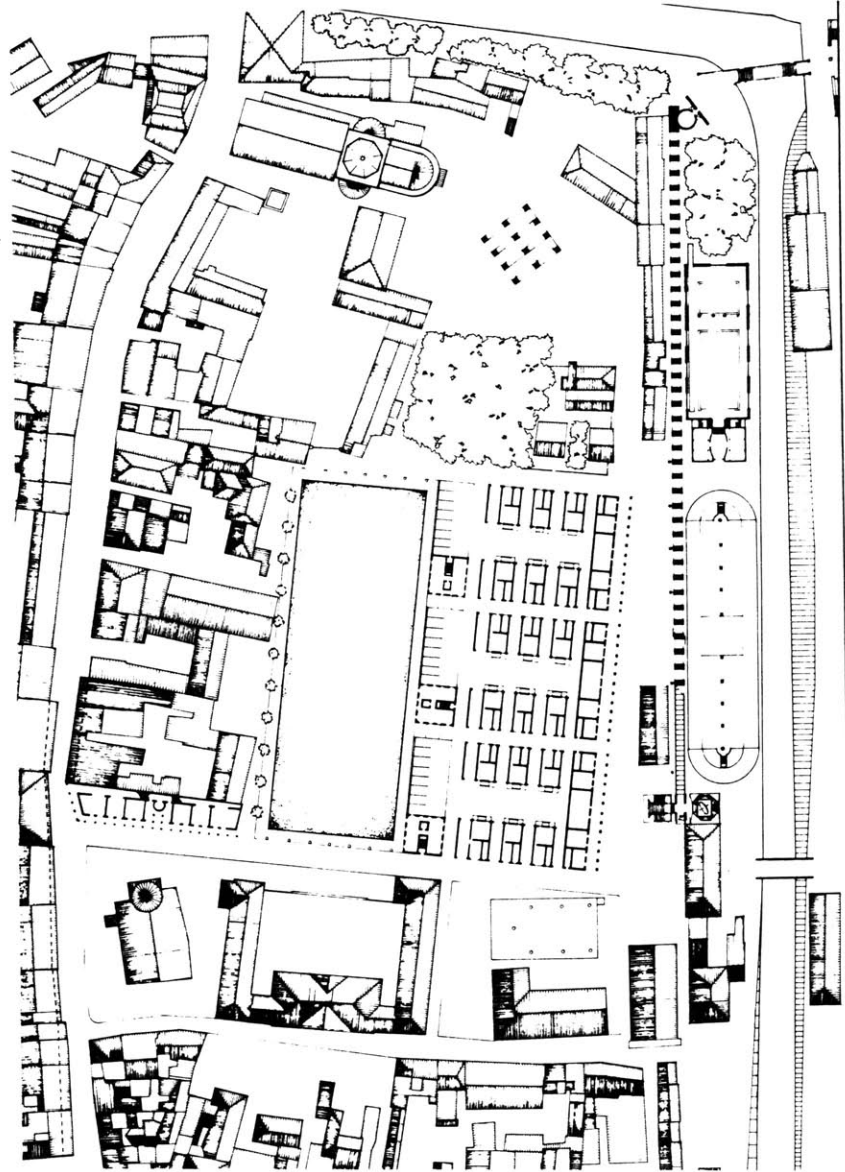
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<sup>158</sup>The project for Este was designed by Rodolfo Machado and a team of ten students from the Rhode Island School of Design, as a submission to the Biennale di Venezia of 1985.

<sup>159</sup>Rodolfo Machado

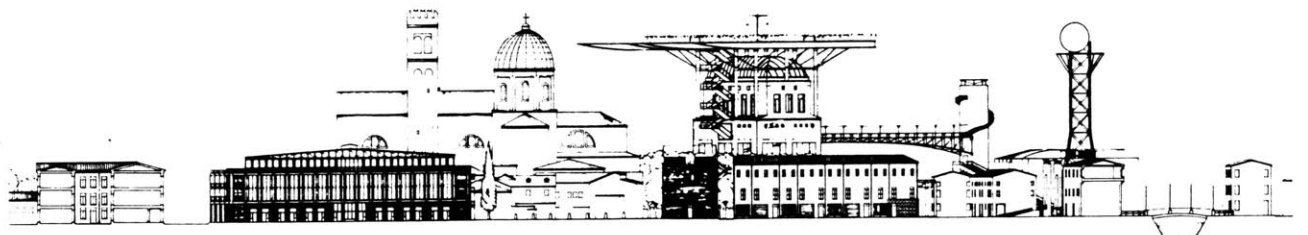
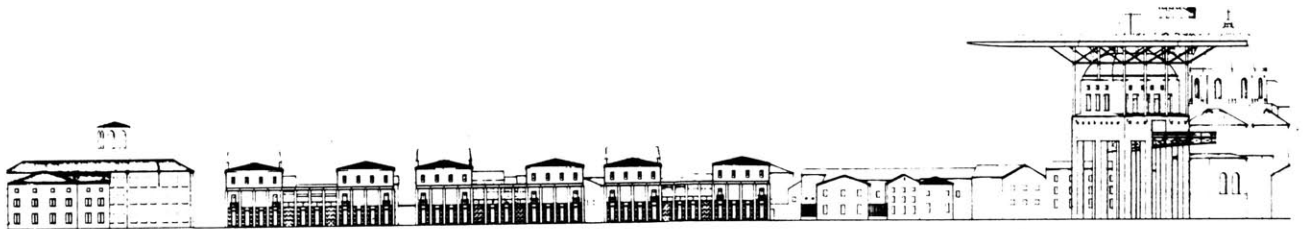
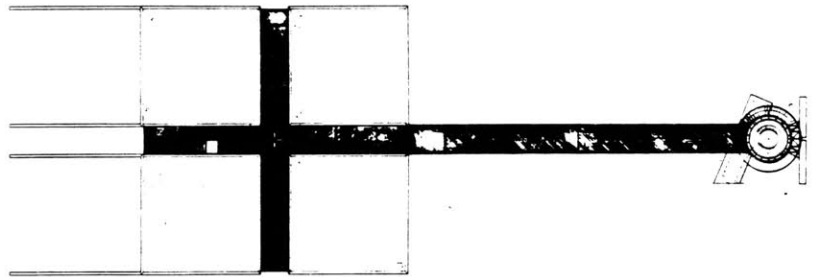
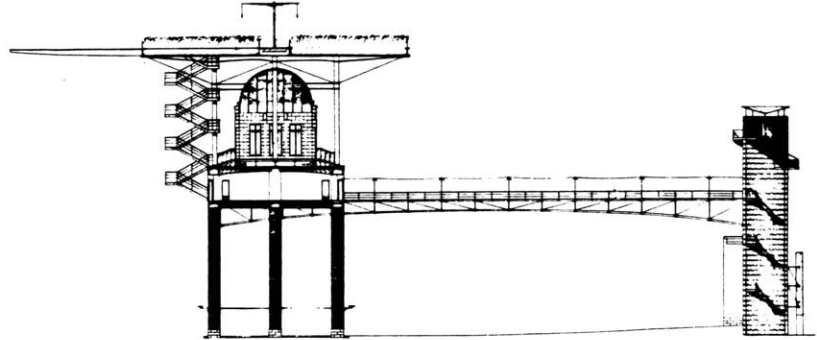
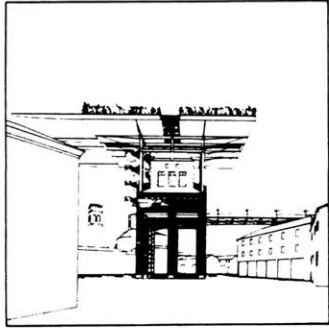


Rodolfo Machado, Urban Design Proposal for Este, 1985.



Este Town Plan and Perspective View of Tower.

*Montage: Material, Procedures, and Constitution*



Este Tower, Elevations



a. Montage Appropriates *Reality Fragments*.

The examples just listed all depend on anonymous pictorial or photographic reproductions, depleted cultural icons, mass-produced ready-mades or *objets trouvés* for the raw material of their transformative operations. The monteur-allegorist "does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter. And in his hands the images become something else (allos= other + agoreuei = to speak)."<sup>160</sup> The material of montage is already culturally encoded, always ideologically tainted; the "reality" of montage is "always already implicated in a system of cultural values which assigns it a specific, culturally determined position."<sup>161</sup> Accordingly the "reality" and raw material of architectural montage are to be found in Colquhoun's typology: a "given" system of iconic representations embodying conventional values; a set of "fixed entities which convey artistic meaning within a social context."

b. The connections between different elements in a montage are formally resolved.

A montage can be assembled from different fragments, like a collage. However, they are not collided, superposed, or overlapped in order to exacerbate the heterogeneous character of the construction. On the contrary, montage tends to abolish the material 'gaps' between seemingly irreconcilable elements and 'fits' disparate fragments in tight connections. As the

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<sup>160</sup>Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism. Part 2," in *October* 13 (1980), p. 69.

The appropriations of montage have to be clearly distinguished from the postmodernist predilection for historical quotation which leaves the original meaning of the quoted material unaltered and serves to further naturalize (mythification) its innate authenticity and historical function -- its social "truth": the monteur-allegorist "does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured. . . rather, he adds another meaning to the image." (Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse," p. 69)

<sup>161</sup>Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism. Part 2," in *October* 13 (1980), p. 65

seams separating the various fragments tend to disappear, the physical traces of the technique ---montage--- is obscured or at least made difficult to spot. This formal resolution has traditionally been understood as a conciliatory nostalgia for the organic totality of classical 'illusionism' and relegated montage to a secondary position in theories and histories of modern art where the explicit and necessary fragmentation of reality in collage is paradigmatic. <sup>162</sup>

Let us consider as an example the 'bicycle wheel' by Marcel Duchamps. This three-dimensional montage consists basically of a generic bicycle wheel mounted up-side-down on a generic stool. No 'gaps' can be discerned between the juxtaposed fragments, no formal tension exacerbating the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition. The 'properly' crafted connection between the two fragments tends to 'momentarily' abolish the heterogeneity of the artifact with the persuasive logic of a 'tectonic' assembly.

A similar resolution can be observed in Machado's monument in Este. Juxtaposed here are building fragments seemingly irreconcilable in their initial physical differences (quantitative and qualitative). Their formal and material incompatibility seems however to be ingeniously resolved in the cohesive syntagms of the structure. Indeed, the appropriated elements (loggia; basilica; garden; aqueduct; etc...) are strategically chiselled, distorted, transubstantiated and 'finely tuned' in order to properly 'fit' in their new context without,

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<sup>162</sup>Except in the history of film where montage acquires a privileged position. However, montage is a basic technical procedure in film. "It is not a specifically artistic technique, but one that lies in the medium. Nonetheless, there are differences in its use. It is not the same when natural movements are photographed as when simulated ones are created by cutting (for example, the leaping stone lion in Potemkin which is edited from shots of a sleeping, an awakening, and a rising marble lion). In the former case, there is also a montage of individual shots but the impression created in the film only reproduces illusionistically the natural sequence of movement, whereas in the second case, it is montage that creates the impression of movement." (Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 73)

however, loosing their formal autonomy or morphological identity.. While for instance, the transition between the underscaled basilica and the accordingly distorted loggia is totally resolved, the two elements remain clearly distinct in their separate identities. And the tensed connection between the garden and the basilican roof only painfully --- but exquisitely --- resolves an inherent geometrical and constructional incompatibility among a pitched copper roof --- an indispensable characteristic feature of the 'type', and a flat garden surface

Furthermore, an obsessive precision in 'realistically' detailing surfaces and structure can be also seen to rhetorically argue with the persuasive power of sound construction and substantial materiality for a 'tectonic' resolution. Indeed, the precision and specificity in the material (re)treatment of the surfaces dilutes even further any physical differences entailed by the diverse fragments. And while the extensive trusses and beams significantly help in formally resolving a difficult connection, their tectonic effect also dispels any doubt about the plausibility of such an 'impossible' juxtaposition. This deliberate attempt to 'smooth-out' any gaps or discrepancies in construction can be compared to a photo-monteur's efforts in hiding with the precision of his craft any material evidence of the subversive operations and their characteristic disjunctions.<sup>163</sup> For the effectiveness of montage greatly depends upon the plausible integrity of the alternative 'reality' it seeks to construct : "The descriptive, realistic drawings produced for the project are intended to convince the viewer that what has been imagined can be made concrete and tangible."<sup>164</sup> In other words, the effectiveness of montage depends upon a *simulation* of the seamlessness of "reality" itself.

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<sup>163</sup>*Adolph the Superman* remains for instance one of Heartfield's most critically effective photomontage because of a skillful 'masking' of the artifice of its making:

...the montage is so skillful, the airbrush so discreetly used, that the impression of a real figure, even down to the to the unnaturally puny shoulders, is perfect, and all the more successfully punctures the illusions of hitler's rhetoric. (Ades, in *Photomontage*)

<sup>164</sup>Rodolpho Machado, in peter Rowe (ed.), *Rodolpho Machado and Jorge Silvetti: Buildings for Cities* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989) p. 46.



John Heartfield, *A Pan German*; Nov., 2, 1933.



Stuttgart Police Photo of a Peacetime Murder Victim.  
(used by John Heartfield)

c. Montage assembles fragments into a coherent whole.

In contradistinction to collage's dislocated ---and often random --- compositions that resist any recognizable or 'naturalized' order, montage displays an intelligible syntax. This ordering structure is provided by the 'reality' that montage seeks to analogically simulate. For instance, the machine parts in Heartfield's photomontage are tightly structured by an anthropomorphic analogy aiming to construct a 'simulacra' of man in the language of the machine.<sup>165</sup> The constituent fragments of montage are thus subordinated to the structuring principles of a *ready-made* syntax 'appropriated' from 'reality' --- the reality of previous and possible representations. In other words, by simulating the appearance of 'reality', *montage assembles fragments in the semblance of an organic totality.*

The 'reality' represented or simulated in montage is not necessarily derived from nature, concrete models or familiar images and forms. The 'reality' of montage can be entirely fabricated, unprecedented, as long as it is coherent and plausible, meaning possible within the defining parameters of a particular genre or within the taxonomy and imaginary field of 'common knowledge'. For montage does not seek 'truth' but rather verisimilitude. Duchamps' "Bicycle wheel on a Stool" for instance does not ground its 'realism' in the imitation of nature or any previously known artifact. Indeed, this montage re-assembles heterogeneous fragments into a plausible and even vaguely familiar object strangely evocative of wind mills or esoteric machinery. Duchamps' 'montaged' work thus achieves the effect of an organic whole by re-presenting a coherent image of an unprecedented but possible reality.

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<sup>165</sup> throughout this analysis the discussion of the *effects* of montage and its corresponding mode of reception will be deferred in order to allow a concentration on the *mechanisms* of its characteristic operations.

The apparent organicity of the montaged work allows the assembled fragments --- now subordinated to the structuring integrity of the whole --- to be 'read' dialectically against the whole, the newly fabricated totality. The fragments can thus be substantiated in their new positions and functions according to the logic and coherence of the new totality.

Picasso's famous "Bull's Head" offers here a pertinent example. In this three-dimensional construction, two fragments, a bicycle seat and a bicycle handlebars are tenuously assembled in an unorthodox way. Here, a 'bull's head' stands for the anticipated reality the assemblage can only distantly simulate with its inadequate fragments --- bicycle parts ! The analogy, however, provides the assemblage with an organic coherence allowing the fragments to momentarily suspend their incongruence and be assimilated and accounted for in their respective functions and positions dialectically, in relation to the completed --- organic --- image.

The 'reality' of the architectural montage can be found in 'type' --- a point extensively argued in the previous chapter. Typology, strategically and broadly redefined in terms of both, a notion of 'genre' and 'common knowledge,' provides the disparate fragments with the structuring principles and functional programme that insures their congruence in the new totality. Accordingly, the constituent parts of Machado's tower in Este can thus be shown in our analysis, to analogically conform in their assembly to the ready-made syntax of a particular type or shall we say, the rules of a given *genre*.

Although entirely 'unprecedented', Machado's building in Este exhibits some unmistakable typological affiliation in its formal attributes, functional and symbolic programs and particular position on the site. This 'unprecedented' artifact thus structures its coherence and intelligibility after the characteristic features of a familiar type: the monumental

tower/belvedere.

Machado's building displays indeed all the features of the 'genre.' First, in its colossal scale and proportions (dominance of the vertical over the horizontal), the building at Este immediatly evokes a kinship with a family of multi-functional monumental structures towering over the surrounding urban fabric, always visible and immediatly recognizable from distant locations in the city. The Eiffel tower in Paris and the space needle of the American cities are the paradigms of the genre.<sup>166</sup> The formal clarity, articulate hierarchies, rigid symmetry, and figurative quality of the artifact --- being also the characteristic features of monumental towers --- further substantiate a typological analogy.

Functionally, the 'unprecedented' artifact also tightly conforms to the programme of the genre. The typl public function is provided by the market place in the loggia; the more ceremonial and semi-private space, a necessary condition for the orthodoxy of the type, is met in the civic space of the basilica, and the belvedere --- indispensable again in the definition of the genre --- is generously represented in the elevated 'garden.' The symbolic programme of the genre is also respected in the solemn civic presence and the ceremonial quality of an elaborate architectural promenade both convincingly realized in the artifact. Also, the particular position and orientation of the artifact on the site (the orientation of the *centuriato romano*), establishes a "silent rapport of opposite presences" with the facing distant mountains thereby symbolically reinforcing the monumentality of the building while grounding its pertinence in the history and topography of the site.

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<sup>166</sup>See Roland Barthes, "The Eiffel Tower," in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). Barthes describes the tower in terms of a "familiar *little world*" that "can live on itself: one can dream there, eat there, observe there, understand there, marvel there, shop there; as an ocean liner(another mythic object that sets children dreaming), one can feel oneself cut off from the world and yet the owner of the world,"

Finally, this particular genre also requires from artifacts to display some extraordinary quality. The highly unprecedented and figuratively tormented reconfiguration of building fragments in Machado's structure can be thus argued to fulfill this function. Thus, even in its most radical features, Machado's structure --- we can now safely refer to it as a *tower* --- can be seen directing its operations and articulating its fragmentary elements in the semblance of 'reality' --- the reality of the genre. In turn, this semblance allows the tower, just like Picasso's "Bull's Head", to set a dialectical rapport between the parts and an anticipated integral 'whole' --- the integrity of the whole guides and is simultaneously corrected by the position and function of the parts --- thereby achieving their organic congruence.

Henceforth, every fragment in the assemblage acquires necessity, and justification in the new totality. And while a fragment's 'situation' in the new context might appear to be uncomfortably contrived when considered independently, the tension remains however in 'suspense' under the correcting influence of a cohesive whole.

The 'basilica', for instance, is only accessible in a highly unorthodox manner, from a bridge concluding an elaborate processional ascension --- via formal stair-ramp-stair tower. It is lifted high of the ground on top of a gargantuan loggia and supports with an elaborate structural system a 'strange' garden on top of its copper roof. The 'fitted' basilica might thus locally protest its 'incorrect' *position* in an inadequate and newly fabricated context. This 'mistake' is corrected when this position is considered within the overall structure and the ordering principle of its built-in syntax. Accordingly, the highly contrived access to the basilica only 'starts making sense' when conceived within the processional programme of the overall structure and the rhetorical exigencies of its particular *genre*, i.e. the monumental genre.



Because the elements of Machado's tower are figured within the channeling constraints of a genre and thereby articulated according to the inflections and hierarchies of a tight syntax, they become more readily legible in their semantic dimension. And as they acquire meaning according to their new position and function in the analogical structure, the newly fabricated content will dialogically reiterate, distort contradict or even radically subvert the initial condition of the object. Simultaneously organic, and dialogical it is always pregnant with the moment of immanent disjunction.

d. The montaged work does not achieve total synthesis

Although the constituent elements of a montaged work tend to resolve the differences that would maintain their formal autonomy in a collage, they never achieve among themselves the complete synthesis that characterizes the organic work. Indeed, each 'montaged' element breaks the continuity or the linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its context of origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality. When the two readings intersect, the apparent coherence of the new totality crumbles --- along with the naturalized truth-like authenticity of the original context. And the fragment is released from the subordinating influence of the new order to project onto its tenuously held syntagms the disjunctive effect of difference.

For instance, as Picasso's montaged artifact achieves a certain coherence in the image of a bull's head, the resulting congruence among parts and whole is immediately contradicted when the fragments are perceived in their relation to the context of origin. The two fundamentally incompatible totalities --- the bicycle and the bull --- are superposed at this

moment in an endlessly explosive mixture that shatters the integrity of both realities. The montaged work can thus be conceived in terms of an uneasy stratification of multiple *systems* of representation dynamically engaged in constant clashes and tensions. Each of the systems comes to represent a 'norm' from which the others deviate, setting up a code of expectations which they transgress.<sup>167</sup>

Duchamp's "Bicycle Wheel on a Stool" offers here a vivid illustration of the clashing systems in the tensed confrontation of contradictory elements within and simultaneously against the image of a coherent totality. Indeed, as argued earlier, the smoothly assembled bicycle wheel and stool form in their carefully organized juxtaposition an integral whole in the image of a plausible reality. However, the syntactic equivalence of these elements in the newly fabricated order only serves to foreground, sharpen and finally violently confront in a paradoxical juxtaposition contradictory connotative fields reconstructed from original contexts, functions and use (sitting/ traveling; rest/movement; static/dynamic; furniture/vehicle; etc...). Behind the formal serenity of a coherently structured artifact, the semantic battle of incompatible orders is constantly being waged. And while the artifact is never threatened in its formal integrity, its content remains hopelessly divided.

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<sup>167</sup>The montaged work can tentatively be compared to the to Jakobson's notion of the poetic text. According to Jakobson -- and Prague structuralism in general -- metaphor and metonymy characterize the polarity of the two-fold process of *selection* and *combination* in which the linguistic sign is formed. He thus contends that the poetic function of language draws on both the selective and combinative modes as a means for the promotion of *equivalence*: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination," Jakobson can thereby associate the dominance of the metaphorical mode with poetry and metonymy with prose and realism:

The primacy of metaphoric process in the literary schools of Romanticism and Symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called "realistic trend. . .

The montaged work remains thus fundamentally heterogeneous, realizing the organic congruence of part and whole; form and content, only to violently shatter again into a multiplicity of irreducible differences. Accordingly, Machado's tower in Este constantly fluctuates between a synthetic resolution toward an integral whole and a total fragmentation into discreet and anomalous parts. These parts, simultaneously integrated and isolated "proffer and differ a promise of meaning; they both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete --- fragments or runes which must be *deciphered*."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism. Part 1," in *October* 12 (1980), p. 70

## Chapter Five: *Montage and the "Aesthetic Effect"*

The real difference between art and science lies in the *specific form* in which they give us the same object in quite different ways: art in the form of 'seeing' and perceiving ' or 'feeling', science in the form of *knowledge* (in the strict sense, by concepts)

Louis Althusser

Earlier redefined as a quasi-organic work, the montaged artifact was metaphorically presented as a 'trojan horse' in an attempt to figuratively demonstrate the process by which montage achieves its critical effect. A detailed examination of the mode of reception entailed by the quasi-organic work shall now further define the nature and mechanisms of montage's "aesthetic effect".

Theories of the avant-garde have assigned a 'positive' function for art only when the artwork negates the specific society in which it is produced. They leave no room for an affirmative and progressive art, since art in general is defined by its opposition to social practices. According to Adorno, only art that stubbornly affirms its autonomy and non-communicative function in the face of a reified culture, severing thereby its ties with the ideologically tainted language and images can be "authentic" art.<sup>169</sup>

Accordingly, the non-organic work produced by collage methods acquires its 'authentic' critical power only in positing the impossibility of meaning and thereby *silencing* the discourse of dominant ideology. Indeed, with the negation of synthesis and the emancipation of the part from the superordinate whole in collage, the traditional hermeneutic approaches are disabled and the interpretation of meaning is renounced. Ideology is

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<sup>169</sup>Jauss refers to this general tendency as the "aesthetics of negativity" in his *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* and identifies Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* as the paradigm of this negational theory of art. The aesthetics of the Tel Quel group is subjected in Jauss' account to a similar though less extensive critique. The one-sided heritage of the nineteenth century, summarized in the formula *l'art pour l'art*, survives in the 'materialist' aesthetics of this group in the valorization of works that stand in irreconcilable contradiction to social hegemony. But the uncompromising posture of this theory is purchased only at the price of a total absence of efficacy:

One cannot see how, with recipes of pure negativity, that is recipes that deny the identification with the social condition -- which is also the greatest wisdom for a negative aesthetics like that of the *Tel Quel* group -- a new scheme of social praxis could be grounded.

silenced as meaning is renounced.

By virtue of its institutional distance from social praxis, the critical effectiveness of 'negation' is, however, inevitably undermined by a mode of reception which tends to dilute the 'shock effect' and finally neutralize the radicalness of avant-garde works in a reductive and passive consumption of styles. The shortcomings of the 'aesthetics of negation' have already been extensively discussed throughout this paper along with the commodification of collage and the institutionalization of shock. I shall now argue for the possibility of an artistic practice that renounces the literal formal fragmentations of negational art, allowing for the reproduction of a *problematized* 'social totality' in the simultaneous coherence and heterogeneity of a quasi-organic work. While the formal coherence opens the work for interpretation, its fundamental semantic heterogeneity breaks up an ideology that is always crystallizing into a naturalized systems of representation.

As demonstrated by the previously discussed examples, montage achieves on one of its multiple planes of representation a congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole --- a necessary precondition in appropriating intellectual objectification in the traditional hermeneutic manner. Montage thus invites the recipient to proceed in his quest for meaning, through the nexus of whole and parts according to the hermeneutic circle, allowing him thereby access beyond the materiality form, into the unstable territory of its interpretive schemes where he can *experience* the critical *effect* of its distancing representations.

The potential for art to distance *from within* the categories of dominant ideology is grounded in an ability to *defamiliarize* the habitual forms of cognition which condition habitual perceptions of the social world. Through the process of defamiliarization, art is

held to effect a transformation on such habitual forms of cognition, which, so to speak, turns them inside-out, revealing the stitch work by which they are held together. Initially introduced by the Russian Formalists, the notion of 'defamiliarization' resurfaced with structuralism to become a central feature in Althusser's tentatively sketched aesthetic theory. I shall now examine the notion of 'defamiliarization' in greater detail, and in both historical interpretations (Formalist and materialist) in order to argue, with montage and the quasi-organic work, for a synthetic revision of this concept.

### *Formalism and Defamiliarization*

. . . If scientific poetics is to be brought about, it must start with the factual assertion, founded on massive evidence, that there are such things as "poetic" and "prosaic" languages, each with their different laws, and it must proceed from an analysis of those differences.<sup>170</sup>

According to Shklovsky, the essential function of poetic art is to counteract the process of habituation encouraged by routine everyday modes of perception. The aim of poetry is to 'defamiliarize' that with which we are overly familiar, to 'creatively deform' the usual, the normal, and so to inculcate a new vision in us:

We do not experience the familiar, we do not see it, we recognize it. We do not see the walls of our rooms. We find it very difficult to catch mistakes when reading proof (especially if it is in a language we are very used to), the reason being we cannot force ourselves to see, to read, and not just "recognize," a familiar world. If it is a definition of the "poetic" perception or of "artistic" perception in general we are after, then we must surely hit upon this definition: "artistic" perception is a perception that entails awareness of form (perhaps not only form, but invariably form).<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>V. Shklovsky, cited in Eichebaum, Boris. "The theory of the formal method," in *Readings in Russian Poetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) p. 14

<sup>171</sup>V. Shklovsky, cited in Eichebaum, Boris. "The theory of the formal method," in *Readings in Russian Poetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) p. 12

The poet thus aims to disrupt 'stock responses', and to generate a heightened awareness: to restructure our ordinary perception of 'reality', so that we end by *seeing* the world instead of *recognizing* it: or at least so that we end by designing a 'new' reality to replace the ---no less fictional--- one which we have inherited and got accustomed to.

This new attitude to objects in which, in the last analysis, the object becomes perceptible, is that artificiality which in our opinion, creates art. A phenomenon, perceived many times, and no longer perceivable, or rather, the method of such dimmed perception, is what I call 'recognition' as opposed to 'seeing'. The aim of imagery, the aim of creating new art is to return the object from 'recognition' to 'seeing'.<sup>172</sup>

Art can thus be distinguished from other forms of cognition, most importantly, from the way reality is spontaneously experienced in prosaic discourse. Accordingly, the reality which literary works are said to 'defamiliarize' is not some presumed raw, conceptually unprocessed, 'out-there' reality but 'reality' as mediated through some other forms of cognition. Art is construed as a mode of cognition that subverts these ideological, perceptual and cognitive forms which conventionally condition our access to 'reality' and which, in their taken-for-grantedness --- their false innocence, present the particular 'reality' they construct as *reality* itself. Therefore, what art makes appear strange is not merely the 'reality' which has been distanced from habitual modes of representation but also those habitual modes of representation themselves. The art of Russian Formalism not only offers a new insight into 'reality', but also reveals the formal operations whereby what is commonly taken for reality is constructed.<sup>173</sup>

The habitual modes of perception are to be defamiliarized by effecting with art a semantic shift in relation to prosaic discourse, by playing on and subverting the conventional

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<sup>172</sup>V. Shklovsky, *Mayakovsky and his circle* (London: Pluto, 1974), p. 114.

<sup>173</sup>See Tony Bennett, "Russian Formalism: Clearing the Ground," in *Marxism and Formalism* (London: Methuen, 1979)



relationship between signifier and signified, form and content, opening the web of signification into a play of multiple meanings excluded from ordinary representations. Furthermore, art was to manipulate the codes and conventions of previous traditions which previously served as a means of perceptual dislocation but have since dulled to become the source of perceptual numbness. "the fate of the works of bygone artists of the world," Shklovsky maintained, "is the same as the fate of the word itself: both shed light on the path from poetry to prose; both become coated with the glass armour of the familiar."<sup>174</sup>

While the Formalist notion of 'defamiliarization' certainly provides a theoretical basis for a cognitive and *critical* art that foregrounds the agency of ideology in mediating our experience of 'reality', its almost exclusive reliance on *formal novelty* to establish value and critical effectiveness promotes the aesthetics of "shock" and perpetuates a variety of the same negativity found in Adorno and later in the *Tel Quel* group.<sup>175</sup> I shall here evoke Jameson's scepticism toward the validity and effectiveness of stylistic innovation --- with its connection to consumer capitalism --- in resisting the commodification and expropriation of public language: "For modernism --- radical in its rejection of realistic discourse and of the bourgeois world to which the latter corresponds --- imagines that if ... seeing the world through the old 'bourgeois' categories is bad, a change in style will help us see the world in a new way and thus achieve a kind of cultural or countercultural revolution of its own."<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Shklovsky, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>175</sup> As noted by Robert Holub, the addiction to novelty seems to be an integral part of a modernist paradigm related probably to the influence of market mechanisms on aesthetic norms:

Originality and genius were latecomers to the roster of favored evaluative categories, and it is quite possible that the sweeping change in the system of production -- from feudalism, with its emphasis on hierarchy, regularity, and repetition, to capitalism with its ideology of ingenuity and its demand for constantly revolutionizing production -- played a large part in the creation and reception of art as well. (*Reception Theory*, p. 63)

Furthermore, by fanatically insisting upon the possibility of a scientific analysis of objective formal devices, the necessity of an autonomous level of theorizing, concerned solely with the formal properties of artifacts --- in those features which uniquely distinguish art works and literary texts, Formalism tends to bracket out the ideological ramifications of works of art thereby denying for the category of defamiliarization any substantial claim for ideological significance. This implicit "art for art's sake" tendency in the Formalist program is particularly relevant, for instance, in Mukarovsky's notion of "foregrounding," the mechanism whereby the poetic word function so as to merely signify itself, its own usage, and not any content beyond itself, "to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself."<sup>177</sup> Another instance of this reductive tendency can be found in Jakobson's construsion of the "six functions of the message" where the poetic function is said to be dominant only when the communication focuses on the nature and materiality of the message itself. Meaning, when the words themselves, rather than what is said, by whom, for what purpose, in what situation, are foregrounded in our attention. Formalist critics accordingly end-up capitalizing upon the "palpability of the sign," or privileging form over content, i.e., the signifier over the signified: art does not have to point to anything outside itself; art must "not mean/But be." I shall, however, argue with Lee Lemon that the Formalist position does not necessarily exclude "meaning" or a hermeneutical approach to the objectification of the artifact: "to the extent that a work of art can be experienced, to the extent that it *is*, it is like any other object. It may "mean" in the same way that any object means; it has, however, one advantage --- it is designed especially for perception, for attracting and holding attention. Thus, it not only bears

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<sup>176</sup>Fredric Jameson, "The Ideology of the Text," *Salmagundi* 31/32 (1975/76), p. 242. quoted in Schulte-Sasse.

<sup>177</sup>J. Mukarovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language" in D. C. Freeman (ed.), *Linguistics and Literary Style* (New York: Rinehart & Winston, 1970), p. 44.

meaning, it forces an awareness of its meaning upon the reader."<sup>178</sup>

*Ideology and Distanciation*

In contradistinction to the Formalist concern with the distinctive organizational qualities of a work in the way they *signify* reality, orthodox Marxism valued art works, according to the "reflection theory," in terms of their resonance with the dynamic tendencies of historical development; their correspondence to the "essence of things"--- the class struggle within the model of reality proposed by Marxism.<sup>179</sup>

If a dialogue is now possible between Formalism and Marxism, it is mainly due to the the structuralist reorientation of Marxist criticism effected in the late sixties with the theoretical revisions of Louis Althusser. His reinterpretation of the Hegelian notion of social totality is central to this 'reform' and particularly relevant in our discussion.<sup>180</sup>

In *Reading capital*, Althusser analyses the theory of expressive causality which he identifies at the center of Hegelian Marxist doctrine:

[The Leibnizian concept of expression] presupposes in principle that the whole in question be reducible to an *inner essence*, of which the elements of the whole are no more than the phenomenal forms of expression, the inner principle of the essence being present at each point in the whole, such that at each moment it is possible to write the immediately adequate equation: such and such an element. . . = the inner essence of the whole. Here was a model which made possible to think the effectivity of the whole on each of its elements, but if this category --- inner essence/outer phenomenon --- was to be applicable everywhere and at every moment to each of the phenomena arising in the totality in question, it presupposed that the

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<sup>178</sup>Lemon, Lee and Reis, Marion J. (eds. and trans.), *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) pp. 4-5 (introduction to Victor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*)

<sup>179</sup>Lukács is primarily responsible for the Marxist revival and reorientation of the Aristotelian concept of Mimesis where art is construed as a mode of representation that captures and reflects the 'essence of things' underneath the surface of appearance.

<sup>180</sup>Tony Bennett analyses the possibility and limits of such a dialogue in *Formalism and Marxism*.

whole had a certain nature, precisely the nature of a "spiritual" whole in which each element was expressive of the entire totality as a "pars totalis."<sup>181</sup>

In the Hegelian interpretations of Marxism, the social whole is accordingly represented as a totality whose parts are conceived as "so many *total parts*, each expressing the other, and each expressing the social totality that contains them, because each in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the social totality itself."<sup>182</sup> The essence of the social totality is said to be defined by an essential contradiction --- present in each of the constituent parts which, taken together, comprise the social totality --- usually construed as a clash between the dynamic momentum of new forces of economic production and the restraining old social relations of production. Althusser, by contrast, construes the social totality as a multiplicity of autonomous but interrelated "practices." Accordingly, change occurs when "contradictions which are unique to the ideological level of social practice overlap and combine with those which are unique to the economic and political levels of social practice, yielding a situation in which contradiction is said to be 'overdetermined'."

Therefore, as Bennett observes,

the central problem which has had to be tackled in order to sustain this formulation has thus been to determine precisely what distinguishes each of these levels of social practice and to analyse the nature of their interaction in concrete historical societies. In the case of art, this has meant that any analysis which sets out to interpret works so as to reveal the essence of the social whole to which they refer must prove irrelevant. Another sort of analysis is required which attempts to reveal the precise nature of art's specific difference with reference to other ideological or cultural forms and to articulate the precise place it occupies in relation to other levels of social practice which, together with it comprise the social totality. Furthermore, rather than the concern being with how art 'reflects' social reality, attention is focused on the effects which it is possible to attribute to art as an autonomous level of social practice.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup>L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 186-87

<sup>182</sup>L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 94

<sup>183</sup>Tony Bennett, *Marxism and Formalism* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 41.

According to Althusser --- and closely following Russian Formalism --- the specific nature of art is to be found in the transformations to which it subjects the categories of dominant ideology, distancing them from within, providing a 'vision' of them at work so that, within the work, the recipient is to an extent divorced from the habitual mental associations which the forms of dominant ideology foster.<sup>184</sup>

Art thus occupies an equivocal position between science and ideology.<sup>185</sup> Whilst it does not form 'knowledge' in the strict sense, art — 'authentic art', that is "not works of an average or mediocre level"<sup>186</sup>— is assigned a special relationship to science in that it enables us to 'see', something that alludes to reality. That 'something' is the "ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*."<sup>187</sup> With Althusser, art becomes a practice which, using instruments of

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<sup>184</sup>Althusser's theories concerning ideology are outlined mainly in two essays — "Marxism and Humanism" (1965) and "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1969) -- Althusser's concern in this essay is not with 'ideology' as a synonym for the concept of society's intellectual 'superstructure' comprising the totality of cognitive forms or signifying practices. He rather articulates a concept of 'ideology which refers to one particular form of cognition as the product of one particular particular type of signifying practice. Ideology is not constructed here as a reflection of of society's material base but as a *practice* which has its own material means and relations of production. With Althusser, ideology becomes a practice which works on the raw material of social relationships with the instruments of ideological production provided by its 'subject centered structure'. In so doing, it transforms those relationships into representations of 'imaginary' relationships to them which, defining the terms in which we 'live' our relationship to the conditions of our social existence, induce in us a 'misrecognition' of those conditions. Individuals are related in ideology, to the conditions of their existence through the imaginary concept of their own selfhood and of the place they occupy within 'the order of things' as governed over and given sense and coherence by the Absolute Subject of God, Man, Nation, etc. (See Bennett, *Marxism and Formalism*)

<sup>185</sup>Althusser has sketched out the implications of his position for the way in which art and literature should be viewed in three essays: "The "Piccolo Teatro": 'Bertolazzi and Brecht' (1962), 'A letter on Art' (1966) and 'Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract' (1966)The first of these is in *For Marx* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1969) the others in *Lenin and Philosophy* (London: New left Books, 1971).

<sup>186</sup>Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, p. 204.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

production of its own, works on and transform the material provided by ideology to produce, not the "knowledge effect"<sup>188</sup> of science but the aesthetic effect of "making visible" (*donner a voir*), 'by establishing a distance from it, the reality of the existing ideology',<sup>189</sup> transfixing it so that we might see its operations at work. Art and literature do not deal with a sphere of reality peculiar to themselves; the object on which they work and which they transform is "the spontaneous 'lived experience' of ideology, in its peculiar relationship to the real."<sup>190</sup>

Art, then, 'gives us' ideology in a way that is different from the knowledge of its objective class functions as proposed by Marxism. It enables us, in a vocabulary which recalls that of Shklovsky, to 'see', to 'perceive' or to 'feel' it. In Shklovsky's terms, it bestows a perceptibility on ideology, returning it from 'recognition' to 'seeing' by 'foregrounding' its operations. How does it do this? In part, by working on and turning our habituated ideological forms through a liberation of the sign from the naturalizing grip of ideology. Althusser's position is here virtually indistinguishable from that of the Russian Formalists.

In a more specific sense, however, art and literature are said to achieve their 'aesthetic effect' by virtue of their ability to 'decenter' the concept of the Absolute Subject which constitutes the focal point of identification with an ideology.<sup>191</sup> In so doing, they disrupt the 'imaginary' forms through which individuals' relationship to the conditions of their social existence is represented to them.

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<sup>188</sup>The term "knowledge effect" was introduced by Althusser to characterize the product of a theoretical practice that opens up a new conceptual space without necessarily conforming to 'reality'. Theory is distinguishable from ideology by its production of problems in contradistinction to ideology's effect of reducing them: of limiting inquiry by advancing claims of false knowledge.

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*, 205

<sup>191</sup>See note no. 15

Rather than discussing the now acknowledged idealist prejudice and theoretical shortcomings of Althusser's trilogy of the superstructure,<sup>192</sup> I shall argue that Althusser's notion of "aesthetic effect" --- via Shklovsky --- can be successfully made to more *specifically* function as a central category in a theory of montage and the quasi-organic work of art. So far, our schematization has demonstrated the analytical usefulness of this category in the sphere of reception (*defamiliarization/distanciation*). Supplementary elements are now needed in order to translate this category into the sphere of production aesthetics: to relate the "aesthetic effect" to a specific treatment of the material in montage and to the very constitution of the quasi-organic work. The ground has already been prepared for this task in preceding discussions around the montaged work (chapter 4, part 2). We now need to recapitulate the major arguments.

Montage begins with the isolation of significant fragments from a functional context. This initial operation entails at the outset an ideological *distanciation*: the fragments are severed "from the hermetic totality of the ideological discourse."<sup>193</sup> Next, the fragment(s) is reinserted within a new context exacerbating thereby the initial *distance* while investing the fragment with *another* or *additional* meaning.<sup>194</sup> The montage procedure can be limited

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<sup>192</sup>Althusser's "trilogy of the superstructure" seeks to distinguish "science", "art" and "Ideology" as different forms of practices characterized by different "effects" -- the "knowledge effect", the "aesthetic effect" and the "ideological effect": eternal and unchanging forms of cognition. "The result of approaching the matter in this way is, effectively, a denial of the materialist premises from which Althusser sets out. Particular sciences, particular literary texts and particular ideological forms turn out to be not the result of materially conditioned practices so much as the mere manifestations of invariant structures." (Tony Benett, *Formalism and Marxism*, p. 112)

<sup>193</sup> Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," p. 152

<sup>194</sup>While Owens argues that this process replaces the original content by adding a *supplement* -- the allegorical text: "the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. This is why allegory is condemned, but is also the source of its theoretical significance." ("The Allegorical Impulse" p. 69) My contention is that in a montaged work, the fragment's newly fabricated meaning coexists with the original in an "explosive mixture." The new content is not an allegorical supplement to the work, it is rather structurally internal to the work. The concept of the quasi-organic work thus refers to such integral

to these procedures (*appropriation* and *reinsertion*). It can however involve a construction of more complex artifact from disparate material. In this case, the quasi-organic coherence of the fabricated whole provides a new functional context for signification, a catalytic chamber and sounding board for the anticipated semantic slippages. Within this unprecedented but accessible whole, the dislocated fragments are semantically restructured and ideological distancing effected. Levi-Strauss, commenting on Duchamps' ready-mades, describes the operation in the following terms: "You then accomplish a new distribution that was in the realm of the possible but was not openly effected (in the primitive condition of the object). You make then, in one sense, a work of learning, discovering in the object latent properties that were not perceived in the initial context; a poet does this each time he uses a word or turns a phrase in an unusual manner,"<sup>195</sup> The reference to poetry in Levi-Strauss' comment is neither coincidental nor metaphorical, for the montage process hereby described *literally* reproduces the mechanisms of the poetic function in Jakobson's analysis of the poetic language.<sup>196</sup> A brief recapitulation of Jakobson's construction of the poetic function is now due in order to further substantiate this claim and possibly suggest a model for the mechanisms of signification in a montaged work.

According to Jakobson, metaphor and metonymy characterize the polarity of the two-fold process of *selection* and *combination* in which the linguistic sign<sup>197</sup> is formed. Jakobson

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yet ideologically divided entities.

<sup>195</sup>George Charbonier, *Entretiens avec Claude Lévi-Strauss* (Paris: René Julliard et Librairie Plon, 1961). Translated By Jorge Silvetti in "The Beauty of Shadows."

<sup>196</sup>Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss shared this particular understanding of the poetic function and actually collaborated on certain project devoted to its testing and articulation. ( See Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Les Chat," in De George (eds), *The Structuralists: From Marx to Lévi-Strauss* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1972).

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thus contends that the poetic function of language draws on both the selective (paradigmatic) and combinative (syntagmatic) modes as a means for the promotion of *equivalence*: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination," or in a different phrasing, "one might state that in poetry similarity is superimposed on contiguity, and hence, "equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence."<sup>198</sup> And in Terry Eagleton's more accessible formulation, "When we speak or write, we select signs from a possible range of equivalences, and then combine them together to form a sentence. What happens in poetry, however, is that we pay attention to "equivalences" in the process of combining words together as well as in selecting them. We string together words which are semantically or rhythmically or phonetically or in some other way equivalent."<sup>199</sup> This is precisely how the *monteur* proceeds in assembling the work. Significant elements are strategically *selected* according to resonant semantic and formal characteristics and then *combined* into configurations that construct a system of relationships among the parts; they activate, amplify and confront their connotative fields so as to transform their signification, i.e., foreground and restructure the conventional relation between signifier and signified. A fragment may relate to another through syntactical equivalence (symmetry, repetition, rhythm, etc.), to yet another through morphological similarity, or semantic parallelism, etc. "Each sign thus participates in several different 'paradigmatic patterns' or systems simultaneously, and this complexity is greatly compounded by the "syntagmatic chains of association, the 'lateral' rather than 'vertical' structures in which the sign is placed;" Each fragment in the assemblage is thus related by a set of formal structures to several other parts, and its meaning is thus always "overdetermined," always the result of several different determinants acting together.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," p. 258

and "Grammar of Poetry and Poetry of Grammar," p. 602

<sup>199</sup>Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory -- An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 99.

A montaged work can therefore be construed as a pictorial or sculptural concretization of Jakobson's poetic text, even more precisely as a stratified *system of systems* (Lottman) constantly rehearsing and foregrounding the mechanisms and material processes of significations.<sup>201</sup> Accordingly, the montaged work continuously shakes the ideological ossification of the material in an endless battle against naturalized (mythological) meaning by breaking apart the abstracted, mythical sign and reinscribing it in a countermythical system, generating new significations in the "clash and condensation of its various levels." The montaged work can be described in Silvetti's words as a "signifying system in which the content is itself a signifying system: that is to say, the form and the content of the original object are both, in turn, the content of another form (the transformed object). Furthermore, the montaged work can be distinguished from the Post-Modernist pastiche where "mythification, conversely, institutes a new signifying system in which its form remains almost untransformed, but by subtle accents, a new content covers the object."<sup>202</sup>

In this sense, montage executes Barthes' strategy for resisting mythological appropriation/signification:

Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language why not rob

<sup>200</sup>Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory -- An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 102

<sup>201</sup>Craig Owens has identified the same structure in the allegorical work: "Allegory concerns itself, then, with the projection -- either spatial or temporal -- of structure as sequence . . . In this way allegory superinduces a vertical or paradigmatic reading of correspondences upon a horizontal or syntagmatic chain of events. . . This projection of structure as sequence recalls the fact that, in rhetoric, allegory is traditionally defined as a single metaphor introduced in continuous series. If this definition is recast in structuralist terms, then allegory is revealed to be the projection of the metaphoric axis of language onto its metonymic dimension." ("The Allegorical Impulse, part 1" p. 72).

<sup>202</sup>Jorge Silvetti. "The Beauty of Shadows," in *Oppositions* 7 p. 52.

myth? All that is needed is to use it as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth."<sup>203</sup>

According to Barthes, myth "is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second order semiological system*. That which is a sign. . . in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second."<sup>204</sup> Myth is therefore "speech stolen and restored;" it erases historical contingency and transforms the specific signs of contradictory social discourses into empty signifiers in a normal, neutral narrative which *naturalizes* history and *resolves* contradictions:

Mythification appears as a continuum in history; it is the most basic, rudimentary, and unavoidable manner of signifying of any object of the material culture. The prevailing forces in architectural ideologies, throughout history, are those that try to "naturalize" the cultural constructs of architecture, to justify and rationalize it through mythification. The forms of objects are thus constantly wrapped and veiled with secondary meanings, establishing chains which can only be interrupted momentarily by the reversing act of criticism.<sup>205</sup>

The secondary mythification proposed by Barthes reproduces the process; only this time, the mythological sign is reappropriated as a starting point for a third semiological chain.<sup>206</sup>

The following diagram *metaphorically* spatializes this process:

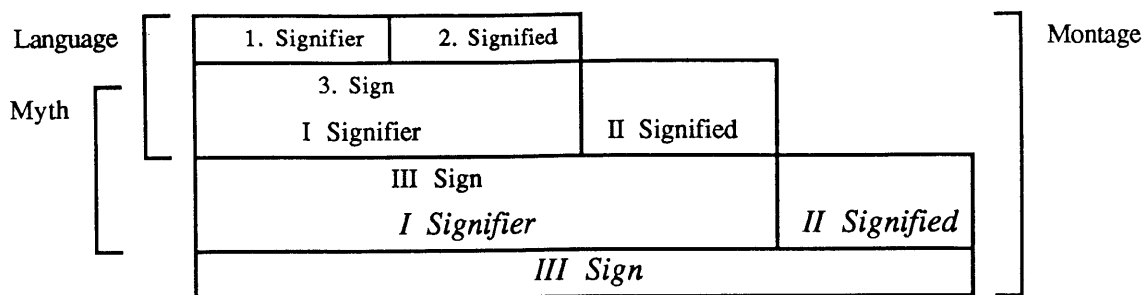
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<sup>203</sup>Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, (1957), trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 135

<sup>204</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>205</sup>Jorge Silvetti. "The Beauty of Shadows," in *Oppositions* 7 p. 54.

<sup>206</sup>We encounter here another area of intersection with the allegorical procedure. Allegory subjects the confiscated artifacts, for a second time, to the depleting processes of appropriation: "The allegorical mind sides with the object and protests against its devaluation to the status of commodity by devaluating it a second time in allegorical practice." (Buchloh, *Allegorical Procedures*, p.



The same mechanisms are activated in montage where confiscated items (mythological signs) are reprocessed through the displacing inflections of new system of signification (the quasi-organic work) to be finally delogged for their naturalized status. The mythification of myth in montage thus brackets the distortion and reduction effected in the processes of mythological signification, unravels the semiological genealogy of the appropriated icon and exposes the multiplicity of meanings that lie hidden behind it. This secondary mythification informs the deconstructive approach of the criticism of ideology in recent works concerned with the dissolution of aura, the commodification of art, and the privileged myth of originality and intentionality.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup>See Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* p. 169. Again, Foster distinguishes here between countermythical appropriation and less critical "historicist" appropriations which "even when extra-artistic, are subsumed under the discourse of art or fashion and so aestheticize rather than politicize. This aestheticization is finally a mask: "an auratic disguise for the commodity" (Benjamin Buchloh) and/or an avant-gardist alibi for turning the historical into a consumable." Needless to argue, most of the current appropriations or quotations in contemporary architectural production, whether Post-Modernist, Populist or Deconstructivist, fall under this heading. More importantly, Foster also discredits the aestheticizing appropriations of "textuality": "Though it may reappropriate signs, it fails to reground them materially. Thus displaced from its original system but not to a countermythical one, the sign becomes a mere signifier in a textual play of the same. This "play" -- an ideological aspect of (post)structuralism -- ignores the materiality of meaning and so repeats the abstraction of myth in another register." (*Recodings*, endnote no. 30 p. 227.)

A practical discussion of these procedures and effects is now in order; another project by Machado/Silvetti will serve to illustrate it. The project in question is an ambitious urban proposal for the city of Palermo in Sicily, described as follows:

. . . the design proposal "guides" the via Maqueda to its logical destiny, the mountains to the south, following a historical imperative as well as organizing part of the city's new territory. The proposal uses a contemporary public park, the Parco del Mareddice, to provide a place for leisure, while indicating a simple and clear order for urban growth and natural preservation. The design gives Palermo another monument, the Belvedere of the Crown of Palermo, which in its excessiveness as a belvedere for automobiles makes the city once again intelligible and manegable, giving back to the citizens the power to possess the city. The design proposes three buildings and two parks laid out along the continuation of the via Maqueda/via Oretto, which we now call the via Coronata. . . but via Coronata is also a building, blue and gold; a road running between the brick retaining walls of the park; a large ramp piercing a building; and finally, a tower.<sup>208</sup>

If this description is recast in terms of montage procedures, the project is revealed as a set of *appropriated* objects --- identifiable types or icons, i.e., complex signifying (mythological?) entities --- linearly assembled into --- or "grafted" upon --- a monumental avenue (via Coronata). The seamless coherence of the resulting construction (via Coronata) totally obscures the disjunctive processes of its formation (appropriation, distortion and recombination) and effectively --- but momentarily --- integrates the disparate elements into a functional and plausible whole. Plausibility is further substantiated by means of an "obstinate corporeality of things" achieved in "technical veracity and proficient detailing."<sup>209</sup> Therefore, via Coronata, the newly fabricated whole presents a resolved image of an unprecedented but possible reality while simultaneously threatening to shatter it again, under the tenuously suspended weight of its repressed contradictions, into autonomous and irreconcilable fragments. The fragments thus endlessly oscillate between the restructuring --- and conciliatory --- influence of the new context, the superordinate

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<sup>208</sup>Peter Rowe (ed.), *Rodolpho Machado and Jorge Silvetti: Buildings for Cities* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989) p. 66.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*

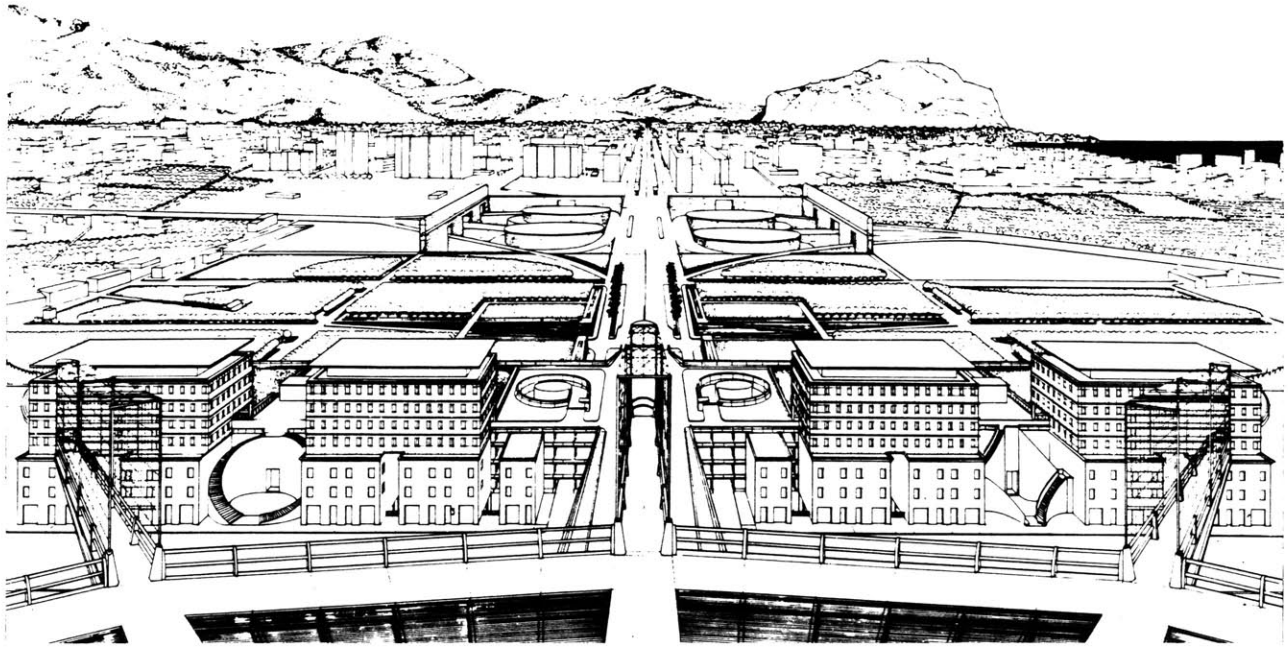
whole and the disjunctive --- liberating ---effect of its inherent contradictions. Allegorically, via Coronata counters the processes whereby architectural icons or types are naturalized and devalued in mythifying architectural practices by critically rehearsing and strategically reorienting their disjunctive operations.

In structuralist parlance, each firmly integrated --- and syntactically inflected --- part participates in the syntagmatic (horizontal) chain of association while simultaneously engaging a network of paradigmatic (vertical) relationships. When two parts --- say for instance, the ramp and the tower --- are equated because of their spatial contiguity or structural equivalence (the tower is perfectly aligned with the road and, when viewed frontally, appears as a mere extension of via Coronata), a sharper awareness of their formal and functional similarities or differences is produced. The collisions and resonances of previously unsuspected associations effects a semantic avalanche among the assembled parts: the contours are blurred, the identities are confounded, the semiotic integrity of the signs are shattered, and finally, the type is *reinvented*.

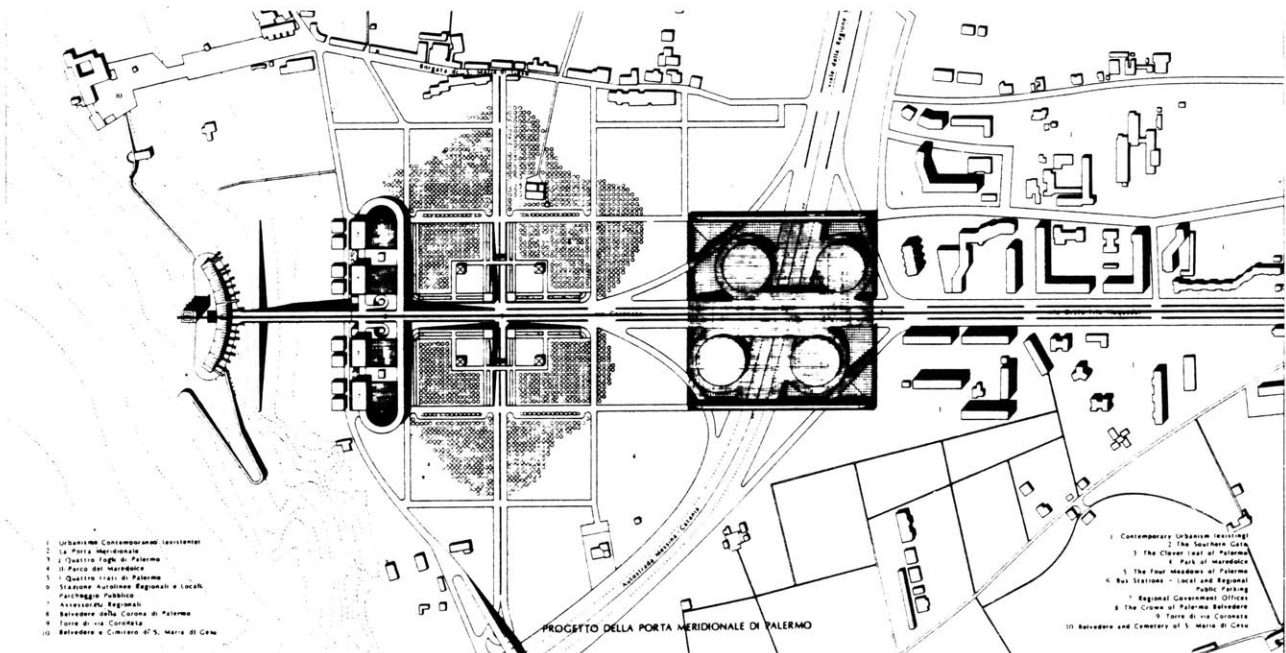
From the recipient's side, the intelligible but constantly shifting meaning of via Coronata imposes a new attentiveness to *reality*. Formulated in the concept of Formalism, this means that the experience of the object is defamiliarized from habitual modes of perception with the distancing effect of splintering signs. The subject of this defamiliarized experience is thereby temporarily released from the anaesthetizing grip of ideology and precipitated into a disengaged mental space within which a new attitude to reality might be produced. Via Coronata does not provoke a revolutionary consciousness, nor does it reproduce the "knowledge effect" of science; rather, by temporarily prising apart the restraining chains of ideology its "aesthetic effect" restores to the subject an intense and non-jaded experience of reality



Machado/Silvetti, Urban Design Proposal, Palermo, 1987.

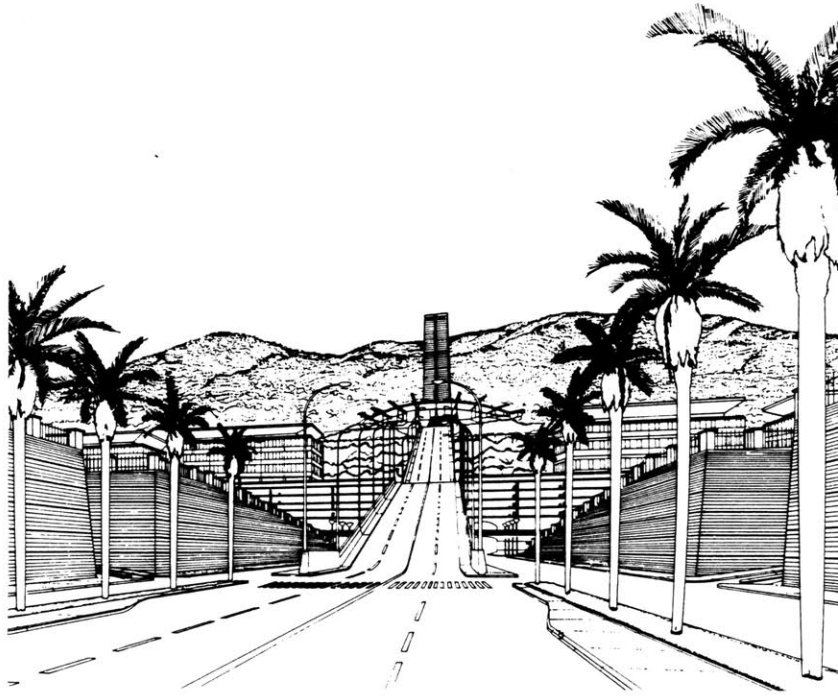


Perspective View of Via Coronata, Palermo.

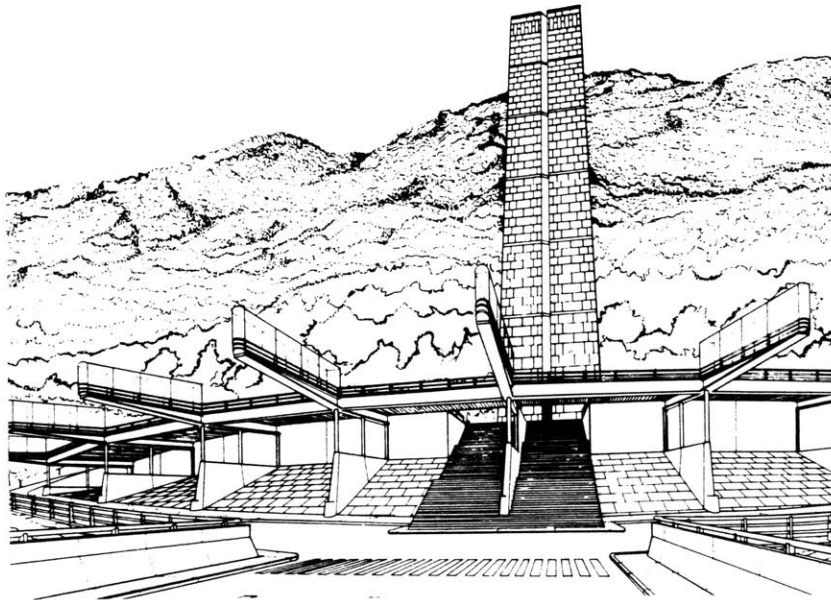


Plan of Via Coronata, Palermo.

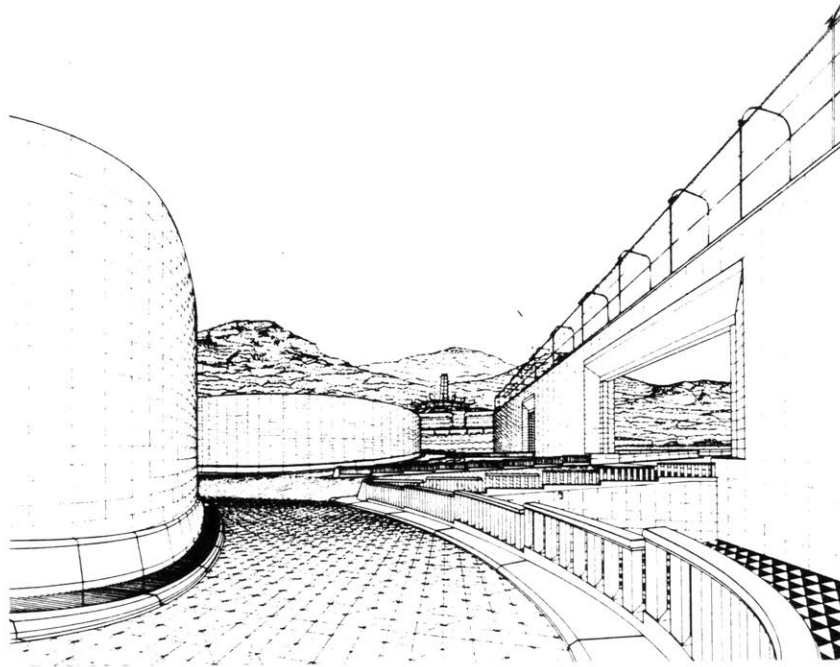




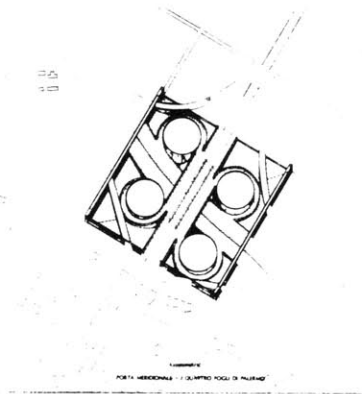
Perspective View of *Belvedere* from Via Coronata, Palermo.



Perspective View of *Belvedere*, Palermo.



Perspective View of Cloverleaf at the *Porta Meridionale*, Palermo.



Plan of Cloverleaf at *Porta Meridionale*, Palermo.

One particular event in via Coronata, the cloverleaf of the *Porta Meridionale*, deserves now, a greater attention. This event marks the intersection of via Maqueda/via Oreto/ (now renamed via Coronata) --- a historically and urbanistically prominent artery --- with the beltway around Palermo. The proposal avoids the predictable gate-type building, here considered "inappropriate, nostalgic, and ineffectual."<sup>210</sup> Rather, the cloverleaf is *appropriated* from the typology of transportation engineering and reinserted in this context "as a free standing building set in the landscape and framed by walls."<sup>211</sup> The authors describe the object as follow:

A Variety of ramps and elevated roads are designed as solids; they are constructed of local tufa stone and ceramic tiles and balustrades from Caltagirone. The building's floor is a flat inverted pyramid finished in glazed ceramic brick. The proposed via Coronata passes through the building undisturbed until it reaches the mountain.

Again, the characteristic operations of montage are here performed. They proceed by *isolating* and *appropriating* the cloverleaf from its original context: the super-highway of the modern megalopolis. The confiscated type is recast in a different architectural language --- one which is usually associated with local monuments --- without however being significantly altered in its formal structure or function. This operation recalls standard Surrealist strategies which aimed to dramatically defamiliarize the apprehension of banal objects by changing one of their characteristic features.<sup>212</sup> The *transformed* type is *reinserted* as an intersection on a major artery and accordingly *reframed* as a significant event by surrounding monumental walls --- among other things. The reinvented cloverleaf finally presents behind a unified and resolved image evoking the simplicity and *realism* of the monument,<sup>213</sup> a heterogeneous content that imposes upon the recipient an *oeuvre de*

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<sup>210</sup>Ibid., p. 69

<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

<sup>212</sup>Numerous instances of this operation can be found in the work of Magritte.

*connaissance* (Levi-Strauss).<sup>214</sup> The recipient thereby "encounters a decentralized text that completes itself through his or her reading and comparison of the original and subsequent layers of meaning that the text/image has acquired."<sup>215</sup>

Upon entering the cloverleaf we experience an abrupt change in the materiality of the road. As the smooth ride on black asphalt is suddenly interrupted by vibrating tires upon shimmering blue and gold tiles, we are immediately shocked into a new recognition of a strange but familiar object. "Our initial feeling of disturbance gives way to a pleasurable sensation of intellectual complicity between the architect(s) and ourselves after we have, not without effort, succeeded in disclosing the building's arcane messages. The object appears as a revelation, not of sacred but of heretical nature because it confronts us with a subversive meaning whose opaque effect proposes and obliges us to perform a certain intellectual task of deciphering. The object cannot be consumed, but must be interpreted; indeed, we must wander along the same path the architect followed we must work with it."<sup>216</sup>

Finally, the montaged via Coronata seems to perform very much like the belvedere which, concluding its chain of events, rehearses its critical functions. Recalling that belvederes are

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<sup>213</sup>"The image of the monument is, perhaps, what everybody can grasp more easily, and it is because of this that we will use its realism as an indication of simplicity." (Massimo Scolari, cited by Jorge Silvetti in "The Beauty of Shadows")

<sup>214</sup>In its "natural" context, the cloverleaf has always been a prey for mythological signification, whether as a sign of progress or mobility toward the modern suburb, or an emblem of fragmentation and dispersal in the postmodern megalopolis. The montage procedure hereby described *robs* once more the cloverleaf this time however, not as an empty signifier to be *filled* with a mythifying content. Rather, the cloverleaf is explicitly *reframed* as an *appropriated artifact*, to be *re-experienced* and *deconstructed in its mythological content* by a sensitized recipient.

<sup>215</sup>Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," p.

<sup>216</sup>Jorge Silvetti. "The Beauty of Shadows," in *Oppositions* 7 p. 51.

I have here *appropriated* a fragment of Silvetti's account of Giulio Romano's Mannerist subversions which I find particularly relevant -- if not more pertinent -- in discussing the effects of montaged architecture.

usually outlooks upon nature, Barthes claims that the Eiffel Tower makes the city into a kind of nature, by virtue of its very position of a visited outlook: " To visit the Tower, then, is to enter into contact not with a historical Sacred, as is the case for the majority of monuments, but rather with a new Nature."<sup>217</sup> In a similar fashion, via Coronata's belvedere offers to the panoramic gaze of the visitor the city of Palermo as a *simulacrum*, an object already *prepared*, "exposed to the intelligence, but which he must construct by a final activity of the mind."<sup>218</sup> Barthes gives a name to this activity: "decipherment." Thus, from the belvedere, the "incomparable power of intellection" assigned to the panoramic view allows the built world to be *deciphered* and not only be perceived. The belvedere and via Coronata thus perform analogous functions. They both *distance* the viewer from habitual vantage points or automated modes of perception (one with altitude, the other with montage), in order to inculcate in him a new attentiveness about a reality that can be *experienced, deciphered, conquered, i.e., repossessed*. Bürger's interpretation of the Surrealist activity --- according to Benjamin's allegory concept --- shall close this argument with a most evocative echo:

The Surrealist self seeks to recover pristine experience by positing as natural the world man has created. But this means making social reality immune from any idea of social change. It is not so much that the history man made is transformed into natural history as that it turns into a petrified image of nature. The metropolis is experienced as enigmatic nature in which the Surrealist moves as primitives do in real nature: searching for a meaning that allegedly can be found in what is given. Instead of immersing himself in the secrets of man's making of his second nature, the Surrealist believes he can wrest meaning from the phenomenon itself.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup>Roland Barthes, "The Eiffel Tower," in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., p.

<sup>219</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 71

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There are those who want a text (an art, a painting) without a shadow, without the "dominant ideology"; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text... The text needs its shadows; this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject: ghosts, pockets, necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro.

Roland Barthes

This paper posits the quasi-organic work -- sometimes figuratively or metaphorically -- as a fundamentally heterogeneous system of references or uneasily stratified "texts," constructed upon, or supplemented to a simulation of an integral whole. Whether as an appropriated icon (Levine's rephotographed photographs -- a simulation of simulacra), or a cohesive assemblage of appropriated and transformed fragments (Machado/Silvetti's architecture -- a simulation of unprecedented typologies), the quasi organic work invariably remains divided in its content, endlessly rehearsing the contradictions between "original" and subsequent layers of meaning gradually acquired in distorting cultural appropriations, depleting commodifications, and redeeming transformations. Collapsing the whole genealogy of restructured signs into one intelligible site, the quasi-organic work invites the recipient into this familiar but unstable territory where he or she can lose him(her)self in the euphoria of representation while simultaneously (and dialectically) struggling to *decipher* its distancing web of contradictory signs. Here lies the ambivalent nature of the quasi-organic work: in order to problematize representation and resist mythification it *must represent and signify*. In Craig Owens words, "we thus encounter once again the unavoidable necessity of participating in the very activity that is being denounced *precisely in order to denounce it.*"<sup>220</sup>

In terms of conclusion, a few additional remarks concerning the nature and function of the quasi-organic work are due. The usefulness of this category for a theory of montage, in both spheres of production and reception aesthetics shall be argued and perhaps justified.

The reception of the quasi-organic work can be distinguished from the formal and hermeneutic modes characterizing the traditional categories of organic and non organic

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<sup>220</sup> Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," Part 2. p. 79  
Owens identifies this complicity with the deconstructive impulse of postmodernist art.

works. The organic work of art is defined as a coherent entity where a congruence between whole and parts is realized. This congruence, as previously discussed, allows the recipient to proceed according to traditional hermeneutic methods in his objectification of the work. In contrast, the destructured nonorganic work eludes any attempt to grasp a meaning through the nexus of whole and parts, and redirects the recipient's attention to the structure and materiality of the work: "a formal totality that reflects critically on the putatively total system of capital."<sup>221</sup>

Critical modernism condemned the organic work because it promotes in its very coherence and homogeneity an illusion of a world that is whole, instead of bearing out with clashing reality fragments, the contradiction of capitalist society.<sup>222</sup> On the other hand, Lukács and other socialist critics argued that the nonorganic work of art merely reflects or expresses the alienated self in late capitalist society, and avoids in its hermetic formalism any engagement with concrete historical counterforces in the transformation of society. From this perspective, only "realist" works (organic works) are considered "authentic," while avant-gardist works (nonorganic works) are recognized as decadent.<sup>223</sup>

This paper introduces -- retrospectively -- the quasi organic work as a third element into this debate, with a two-fold aim: First, the new category is meant to define an alternative field of operation for interpretive strategies confronting montage/collage procedures in the historical avant-garde -- and postmodern practices of appropriation/recombination. The quasi-organic category informs, thereby, a possibility for reconsidering montaged works outside the traditional dichotomy (organic versus nonorganic) and its entailed separation of formal and hermeneutic procedures of interpretation. These works -- epitomized by Heartfields photomontage, Duchamps' ready-made constructions or Magritte's paintings --

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<sup>221</sup>Hal Foster, *Recodings. Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), p. 169

<sup>222</sup>Adorno's writings epitomize this position

<sup>223</sup>For a survey of the debate, see Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 83 -94 .



do not present the characteristic formal disjunctions and abstractions of nonorganic works nor do they assume the transparent discourse of "realist" modes of representation. Rather, they contrive with montage a *paradoxical* congruence of whole and parts in order to exacerbate, in the recipient's reading, the contradictions between the various layers of the work. The recipient thus encounters behind the "realist" imagery of these works "a decentralized text" that *requires* his or her participation for completing its "deconstruction" of ideological closure.<sup>224</sup> Both formal and hermeneutical procedures seem inadequate for this task. The quasi-organic category therefore demands a new approach to the work, one that Bürger glimpsed in the possible synthesis of hermeneutic and formal methods:

The condition for the possibility of a synthesis of formal and hermeneutic procedures is the assumption that even in the avant-gardist work, the emancipation of the individual elements never reaches total detachment from the whole work. Even where the negation of synthesis becomes a structural principle, it must remain possible to conceive however precious a unity. For the act of reception, this means that even the avant-gardist work is still to be understood hermeneutically (except that the unity has integrated the contradiction within itself. It is no longer the harmony of individual parts that constitutes the whole; it is the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements.

Second, and most importantly, the quasi-organic category undermines the "reflection theory" whereby art or architecture pushes beyond the world of surface appearance to capture, crystallize and reflect "the essence of things" -- in their social contradictions, or works via devices of typification so as to yield concrete and translucent representations of the dynamic tendencies of historical development. Rather, the quasi-organic category renounces -- via Althusser -- the monadological "expression" of social truth with a necessary agreement between form and content in the "motivated" symbol, and focuses, with the "unmotivated" signs of montage, upon "effects" attributed -- via Althusser -- to art or architecture as semi-autonomous levels of social practice.

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<sup>224</sup>See Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art."

Furthermore, the quasi-organic work rejects the critical modernist (formalist) retreat into the opacity of an autonomous medium as a necessary step in countering the appropriations of ideology. Instead, the quasi-organic work recognizes and embraces the ideological contamination of its figurative (intelligible) representations as an instrument and condition for cultural resistance in montage. The quasi-organic work coincides here with Craig Owen's view of postmodernist art:

Postmodernism neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works instead to problematize the activity of reference. When the postmodernist work speaks of itself, it is no longer to proclaim its autonomy, its self sufficiency, its transcendence; rather it tells of a desire to narrate its own contingency, insufficiency, lack of transcendence. It tells a desire that must be perpetually frustrated, an ambition that must be perpetually deferred; as such, its deconstructive thrust is aimed not only against the contemporary myths that furnish its subject matter, but also against the symbolic, totalizing impulse which characterizes modernist art.<sup>225</sup>

As a semi-autonomous instance of social practice, proceeding *in the midst* of ideology silently nudging it into a betrayal of itself, montage distances *from within* the categories of dominant ideology. It divorces the recipient from the habitual cultural association which the forms of dominant ideology foster, making them visible in contradictory layers of meaning, endlessly condensing in the quasi-organic work.

Nevertheless, by virtue of its compromised relationship to ideology, "it cannot escape the destiny that our culture reserves for its objects: its critical meaning becomes consumable after its operations are discovered. It is possible to transform these operations into techniques, or into normative principles . . . and *l'enfant terrible* becomes a desired connotation with time."<sup>226</sup> Indeed, having been opened up by the operations of montage, ideology soon reasserts itself within the quasi-organic work itself, recuperating the

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<sup>225</sup>Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," Part 2. p. 80.

<sup>226</sup>Jorge Silveti, "The Beauty of Shadows," p. 53.

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disjunctive transformations which initially distanced it. Nevertheless, although fundamentally ambivalent, caught in a two way movement from ideology and back to it again, the quasi-organic work, *momentarily*, shakes the solidity of a constantly congealing system, offering furtive glimpses into its fault lines and fissures.

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*Biographical Notes:*

Rodolfo Machado

Rodolfo Machado was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1942 but has resided in the United States since 1968. He received his Diploma in Architecture from the Universidad de Buenos Aires. From 1967-1968, he studied urban design at the Centre de Recherche d'Urbanisme in Paris. Then, in 1971 he received his Master of Architecture degree from the University of California at Berkeley.

Rodolfo Machado has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Carnegie-Mellon University, and the Rhode Island School of Design, where he was chairman of the department of Architecture from 1978 to 1986. He has conducted seminars and given lectures, and he has been a visiting critic at numerous schools of architecture both in the United States and in Europe; most notably, he has been the Bishop Professor of Architecture at Yale University and the Smith Professor of Architecture at Rice University. Currently, he is Adjunct Professor of Urban Design and Architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Rodolfo Machado serves regularly as a juror on panels for national institutions, state art programs, and the American Institute of Architects awards programs.

Rodolfo Machado has practiced professionally in San Francisco, California, and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He has been in partnership with Jorge Silvetti since 1974 and is a principal in Machado and Silvetti Associates, Inc., in Boston, Massachusetts. His written as well as designed work has been extensively published and exhibited in museums and galleries internationally. His firm's work represented American Architecture at the Venice Biennale and American urban design at the 1980 Paris Biennale; the firm has also received five *Progressive Architecture* awards and citations as well as design awards from Argentina, France, and Germany.



## Jorge Silvetti

Jorge Silvetti was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1942 and is a citizen of the United States of America. He studied music theory at the Music Conservatory of Buenos Aires and Architecture at the University of Buenos Aires. He received his Master of Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley.

Jorge Silvetti has taught at the University of California at Berkeley and Carnegie-Mellon University, and he has served as a visiting professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Zurich and the University of Palermo, Sicily. Since 1975, he has taught architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design where he became Professor of Architecture in Design and Design Theory in 1983. Since 1985 he has been director of the Graduate School of Design's master programs in architecture, and in 1988 he became head of a research project on the architecture, urbanism, and landscape of the island of Sicily, Italy.

Jorge Silvetti received an NEA individual grant in 1984, the Grand Prix de Rome in 1985-86, two *Progressive Architecture* awards, and second prize in the first international competition in 1976 for renovation of the La Villette sector of Paris (in partnership). With Rodolfo Machado, he has received three other *Progressive Architecture* awards and an awards for the design of the new DOM corporate headquarters in Cologne.

Jorge Silvetti's projects and those of Machado and Silvetti Associates, Inc., have been published in international professional magazines and displayed in numerous exhibitions in the United States, Europe, Latin America, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Biennale di Venezia, the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., the I.B.A. Exhibition of 1984 in Berlin, and at the XVII Triennale di Milano in 1987. Jorge Silvetti writes frequently on theory and criticism in architecture.