

“Minding the Gap” in Architectural Speculation

Design as scholarship or scholarship of design? “No” to a forced choice of ideology but “yes” to a new model of architectural critical theory. These twinned aspirations of scholarship are frozen by ideological mandates that control signification and visualization. First, we must understand how ideology creates metaphors in teaching and research; then, we must spatialize this same logic to see the inner workings of our synesthetic experience of architectural space as an act of reception.

Background: Discourse in the Age of the Split Screen

There is today an implied “forced choice” in the coupling of the expressions “scholarship of design” and “design as scholarship.” This may stem from the resemblance of the expressions to the rhetorical figure of chiasmus, where the reversal of one term makes psychological room for its opposite and some appeal comes from the resulting sense of symmetry. While it seems to be the only way to articulate these fundamental impulses of architectural education, the Fox News aspect of the pairing invites a comparison to that network’s notorious rhetorical ploy. The motive to be “fair and balanced” involves an infomercial version of the straw man argument between theorist-historians and those who, in whatever way, regard design itself as a form of inquiry. The sharp and aggressive designer, played by Sean Hannity, will always triumph over the stand-in liberal theorist-historian, Alan Holmes, if only for the reason that architecture’s material realities are, after all is said and done, the ground for anything and everything that follows. Who, in any architecture school, would support the argument that design not somehow count as inquiry?

Theorists cannot win in the split-screen technique. In this specific application the equal time they must cede comes out of a journal, where insult is added to injury by judging design as research by

separate rules. There is no principle of reciprocity that requires registered architects to maintain a resident critic on the payroll, although that is a comically appealing idea, and of course some famous architects have employed an in-house Tiresias, sometimes with spectacular results. In short, if there has always been something of a war between theory-history and design as inquiry inside academia, outside there is no war but, rather, distant nations who do a little trade and rarely fight.

Where scholarship means, at its heart, “what happens in school,” then the question of pedagogy cannot be avoided. There are many ways to learn, fewer to teach. In the fields of art and architecture, it is clear that some things can be learned but cannot be taught and that the apprentice model works well (learning by doing). The generic allure of the studio is its experiential immersion. Because the studio lies at the heart of architectural education, it seems inconceivable that at least some version of it would not count as scholarly inquiry.

Ah, the split screen! This is where a certain ideological framework takes over from the natural assumption that studio-style learning itself establishes authenticity. Every ideology is based on two fantasies. One fantasy is the positive, utopian fantasy that aspires to a better world. In architectural education, the positive fantasy is architecture engaged in doing good for people. The best example of this was Samuel Mockbee’s witty and

compassionate return of architecture to ordinary communities. The other side of the positive fantasy, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, is a structurally required negative counterpart.¹ To give a brutal example, the 1930s German nationalist utopia of a recovering homeland necessitated the dirty fantasy of the concentration camps. The dirty fantasy of the studio is to banish the need for theory, whether in the form of the commentary or the reference to history or critical condition. This is the rhetoric of the new, process in action, the open source, the flow, the blur, the blob, the flash.² In the dirty fantasy, “text” means captions, quick quotes, advertising-copy-style promotion, and white ink overprinting page-size wallpaper.

Anti-intellectualism is a strong force in our field. The relative prosperity of the 1980s and 1990s recast theory as an exotic university side-show run by Francophiles. After all, this period witnessed the ascendancy of architects whose truncated texts, mercurial public appearances, and avant-garde forms made it look as if the building ate theory for breakfast. Years after the construction of Frank Gehry’s museum in Bilbao, Spain, the question was “Have you been to Bilbao?” as if to say that theoretical discourse had reached the end of its tether, and it was time to learn from “the thing itself,” in the full Kantian and (Robin) Evanstonian gravity of that phrase. More recently, the idea of the “design research studio” has lived up to

the argument that publicity is architecture's primary mode of existence.³

The *JAE* web site suggests alternative ways of framing design as scholarship, such as "interviews and other forms of collaborations between designers and critics, writers, or scholars." However, the problem of how to advance a critical idea through a design begs the question of just how architecture as architecture advances any critical idea apart from the perception most people have that works of art or architecture unavoidably seem to embody some kind of idea. But, how can this idea become "critical" or "scholarly"? Captioning requires architecture to connect with anything except itself; once a designer takes over the role of caption control, we have nonarchitecture: a work of art telling you what to think of it.

Ideology enforces patterns of thinking in lieu of seeking good reasons. Ideology is everywhere; it is the main ingredient of culture. If discourse gets trapped inside the fantasies it projects of its own and other positions, there is no discourse, and without discourse, there can be no education. Some already argue that architecture determines its own necessary informational context and "goes from there"; that education is simply a matter of acquainting students with useful tools and resources. In this view, Google.com would be a far more productive place to study architecture than schools (I admit to being a little attracted to this idea). But, more sadly, many interesting connections will be forgotten and relations to other fields will deteriorate. Worse, discourse will give way to propaganda promoting ideology rather than ideas.

What is ideology? In the standard joke form of "You know it's 'X' if . . .", you know it is ideology if there is a forced choice that reconfigures mental possibilities, leaving an "impossible gap" to be envisioned as a compromise, reunion, solution, or blend.⁴ The symmetry of scholarship of design and design as scholarship is already a "forced choice" imposed by the situation of architecture pedagogy. While it would be impossible to imagine teaching

architecture without the studio as its own intensive form of inquiry, it would be equally impossible to imagine it without the kind of scholarship found elsewhere in the liberal arts.

Ideological Structuring: The Master Signifier

Because my view has been that essays in this special issue should develop some polemical position, I feel obliged to give an account of how ideology operates. I might credit many masterful insiders who have already written on this subject. But, rather than produce a *collage* of things already said by other architectural theorists, I need to create a "mental exercise" that everyone can do on their own.

I am against metaphor. This ridiculous statement has shock value, but the point is that metaphor creates what the psychologist Jacques Lacan would call the "King's position" in the situation where there is an unexploded bombshell in the form of a letter lying on a table and the Queen (to whom it is addressed) and the Minister (for whom possession would mean extensive power) notice it but the King does not.⁵ Lacan drew on Edgar A. Poe's short detective story, "The Purloined Letter," to distinguish three kinds of visibility based on the roles of the King, Queen, Minister, and detective Dupin. This division of "attention" or "glance," in my view, is more useful than Foucault's or Derrida's monodirectional gaze of power.⁶ Metaphor creates a blindness by seeming to make things fit into a preconstructed allegorical frame. Although metaphor is often identified with "poetics" and thought to be a counterbalance to Enlightenment-style rationality, its widespread use in everyday discourse typically creates occasions for "doing the right thing for wrong reasons." For example, "green architecture" functions both as a general awareness of the environmental consequences of building design and as a *metaphor* that allows designs to subscribe directly to the atmosphere of social and environmental goodness. As a metaphor, green architecture becomes ideology through the nega-

tion of its opposite term: who in their right mind would advocate "nongreen" architecture? The "No one!" answer shows that, as a metaphor, green has become an empty signifier operating as a mandate. A (Lacanian) idea close to that of metaphor, the "master signifier," shows how this happens. Let me explain master signification first in order to develop a picture of how ideology activates metaphor.

The master signifier is about how some pervasive idea, once adopted by a culture, gets "stuck in the head" like an annoying tune. The master signifier is not just any idea that takes hold of the popular imagination. It works by creating a logical lock or knot that, though fundamentally irrational, resists refutation. This lock is created in two steps. First, there is a "summing up" or condensing of some series or set of conditions; then, the term becomes the *cause* of that set of conditions. By being both a cause and an effect, the master signifier becomes impermeable to critical objection. Rex Butler has cited the Žižek example of the Stephen Spielberg film, *Jaws* (1975).⁷ At first, the shark's presence is explained from a number of angles: revenge for incursion on the natural realm of the ocean? Moral retribution for teenagers having sex in the water? Punishment of the greedy businessmen who want to keep the beach open at all costs? The shark summarizes these situations, but at some point, the shark idea shifts gears. The shark becomes the cause of everyone's problems; and, therefore, it must be destroyed. Fredric Jameson put it this way:

[T]he vocation of the symbol—the killer shark—lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together. As a symbolic vehicle, then, the shark must be understood in terms of its essentially polysemous function rather than any particular content attributable to it by this or that spectator. Yet it is precisely this polysemousness which is profoundly ideological, insofar as it

allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently “natural” ones, both to express and to be recontained in what looks like a conflict with other forms of biological existence.⁸

Whenever theory gets expelled from the schools as a result of the split-screen demonstration, it hangs out in the streets. That is, theory ends up as practice because of ideology. The downside comes when theory never forms a part of the discourse of the academy: the “dirty fantasy” is allowed to develop into cultural mandate. Israeli architect Eyal Weizman has noted how the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—along with Christopher Alexander, Bernard Tschumi, Georges Bataille, and Clifford Geertz—are popular among the military, who use concepts such as “smooth” and “striated” space. Where architectural “deconstruction” once had a refreshing political edge, it is now popular with those who literally deconstruct architecture with tanks and mortar fire! Gordon Matta-Clark’s disassembled houses have provided models for invading Palestinian spaces from the inside, tunneling through apartment walls rather than exposing troops in the street.⁹ The point is not that Deleuze or any of the others on the list intend to justify military terrorism, but rather that they underwrite both the critiques of capitalism and capitalism’s worst manifestations. The brigadier general interviewed by Weizman could have easily been describing a design research studio project.

The choice between discussing ideology in the theoretical terms of the academy or putting it into practice in war-torn streets seems obvious to me, but this requires a program and not just elective seminars here and there. Marco Frascari, John Hendrix, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, and others have continued Manfredo Tafuri’s legacy of documenting the intimate transactions between philosophy and architecture, so there should be no surprise to the readers of this journal that Deleuze and Matta-Clark’s most avid readers are in bunkers and tanks

or that Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was the most commonly found book in the backpacks of German casualties on the Eastern Front.

Recent encouragements to generate forms in an “autonomous,” theory-free zone of automation almost inevitably retain Deleuze and Guattari’s *Thousand Plateaux* or *Anti-Oedipus* as the main handbooks on a very small bookshelf. Lacan is, in contrast, difficult to appropriate for ideological uses because he is mostly about how thinking develops into ideology in the first place. There are of course many ways to establish key parallels in the works of scholars inside the architectural establishment without using a Lacanian framework. These are relevant and, with any particular study, essential. But, at this point, it is necessary to view with clarity the links between the master signifier and culture. This requires an account that is as free as possible from discipline-dependent examples that may involve anyone’s (including my own) ideological motivation. When Lacan distanced himself from standard “ego-psychology” interpretations of Freud, he forged relationships with linguistics, popular culture, politics, and art that are useful for any direct attack on the presuppositions behind architectural discourse. Lacan’s accounts of the gaze, ideology, and varieties of symbolic behavior offer significant advantages for critical theory, and Slavoj Žižek’s connections to other thinkers and popular culture multiply these advantages.

What are the structures of ideology? Everyone should be able to think through this issue using a few standard questions. Objectivity must always yield to some kind of subjectivity—i.e., there is no “metalanguage,” as Lacan liked to say—but our subjectivity should be grounded in experiment and debate. Before theory hits the street, we should have a chance to talk it over! Here are my suggestions for this “set of standard questions.”

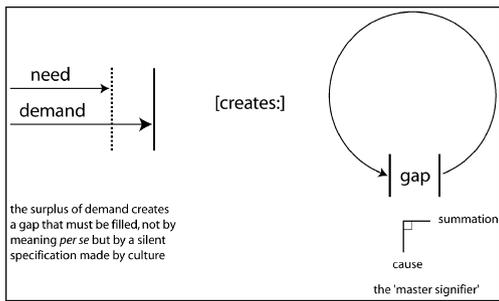
Spatializing the Master Signifier

My title, “Minding the Gap,” borrows from the advice familiar to all riders of the London tube. I

advise not tripping over a void (getting stuck in an ideological formation) but also of not getting rid of it either (that is, recognizing that there is no non-ideological, neutral possibility). We encounter the gap first between such forced choices as scholarship of design versus design as scholarship. But, isn’t the gap really the question of desire? Master signifiers such as Spielberg’s shark (one could add the more sinister master signifier of “the Jew,” the dirty fantasy of the anti-Semite, or the equally sinister “Palestinian-as-terrorist” in the heads of military planners). The gap is central to the architectural imagination. The *Jaws* shark minds the gap, too, swimming between summation and causation.

Our questions should begin with these issues: is the gap simply a logical one, or is there a spatial counterpart? Is there some map of the master signifier that would help us understand such “unanticipated applications”? Doesn’t “minding the gap” simultaneously engage issues of dimensionality, ideology, and the synesthetic relation of the senses (and sense organs) to each other in a “body” that is no longer restricted to the imagined spatial isolation of the subject?

Desire is the engine of ideology. It creates the gap and sustains it through strategies that return desire to its origin—always a gap, always unfulfillable and, hence, (negatively) self-sustaining. It is useful to return to examples where desire is created, where demand exceeds needs and materializes a marginal surplus space and time that can be filled with material representations of desire—another name for art! Diagrammatically, the margin created by demand outrunning need becomes a site for self-sustaining returns—which have many implications for our use of architecture and the landscape (Figure 1). The gap in the self-sustaining circular process can, in turn, be identified with the master signifier’s “orthogonal” linking of summation and cause. Orthogonality allows each term to be invisible in the other. The logical linkage implies an alternating current, a short-circuiting between



1. Demand exceeds need and creates a marginal remainder that is converted into a self-sustaining “loop” that returns to the surplus/lack as a gap that can be materialized by the process of master signification. The master signifier functionally joins the processes of summation and cause as “orthogonal,” allowing each to operate silently within the other. (Diagram by author.)

summations done to interpolate experience within a matrix of expectations and ideological mandates to act on the basis of those interpolations.

The Garden of Eden—a marginal space and time if there ever was one—could be regarded as the primary example of this structure of desire, where the theological command to avoid the one most attractive object in the garden becomes the key to a topological conversion of garden to wilderness and the concomitant desire to return to precisely that central kernel of marginality.¹⁰ The perfect match between desire and demand is reflected by Adam’s “perfect” language, where words automatically manifest their objects. Once demand accelerates past need, however, the margin that opens up becomes the space for God’s strangely troubled voice (“Adam, where are you?”) as well as the internal frame of the ambiguous serpent. In Gnostic versions of the story, the serpent is a magus, not an evildoer. And, the expulsion from Eden is more of a topological flip than a spatial evacuation.

Another Biblical example, the Tower of Babel, places the margin above the clouds and is ambiguous about it being invisible, unfinished, or destroyed. Here, the gap aligns with other mountains in iconographic lore: it is a boundary of initiation, divine transformation, and perfect wisdom. Unlike the Biblical Babel, the top is Temple, below is the Labyrinth. The cloud is an apotrope warning the unprepared pilgrim to turn back.

Both of these “primal” examples involve language issues: word and object coincide in Adamic speech, God is present only as a voice; in Babel, languages are multiplied and set at odds, but the voice as remainder continues its alliance with the apex above the obfuscating clouds. In both Eden and Babel, Mladen Dolar’s argument is a critical guide: the voice is the surplus of speech, the part that escapes phonemic definition and is, thereby, technically meaningless although it is the one element that makes the voice human.¹¹

Space and Voice

Visual perception has enjoyed a special relationship to architecture theory. It is the main ingredient of Vitruvian *venustas* and *sciagrafia*, the guiding force behind Renaissance perspectivalism, the target of antiscopic criticism that aligns optics with phallogocentric imperialism. This marginalizes other senses and makes any attempt to view perception “synesthetically” difficult if not impossible. For example, Ann Bulckin and Ernest McClain have demonstrated the debt of Classical Greek architecture to the peculiarities of the Greek musical scale.¹² Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter have made a compelling case for reconsidering the question of acoustics from a much broader theoretical base. Michel Chion, Kaja Silverman, and Mladen Dolar have focused on the intriguing philosophical-architectural value of the “acousmatic” voice.¹³

One might say, ironically, that the voice is the “silent” component of speech. It is an excess, a remainder, yet it is the one factor that humanizes speech. Even in the case of automated speech, such as the electronic voice that gives traveling directions in global positioning (GPS) devices, users imagine a voice element that, though not technically present, is cultivated within the act of hearing instructions and obeying them. Key to this projection is the function of obedience: what the philosopher Louis Althusser called “interpellation” (the voluntary compliance of a subject, with or without the presence of an authoritarian enforcer). “I obey a voice and nothing more—even if I must imagine it!”

The voice element guarantees that the multidimensionality of the master signifier will be maintained throughout the process of adding spatial and temporal dimensions. With the voice come notions not just of obedience/interpellation but also of location. Special meaning is assigned to the voice that cannot be located. In film studies, the “acousmatic voice” refers to an off-screen voice,

a voice that brings location into question. Whispers shorten the distance between an actor and the audience. The stage whisper is aimed directly at the spectral audience member. In philosophy, there is the voice of reason—soft but insistent—and the voice of conscience. Socrates claimed that his inner demon could never tell him what to do but was always there to prevent him from undertaking some inadvisable action.

The voice escapes phonemic definition and, thus, is “meaningless” in the same way that a password is in itself meaningless but nonetheless gains passage across some boundary. The password function of the voice invites comparison to other devices that grant passage but are themselves “empty” or “meaningless.” In the films of Alfred Hitchcock, the McGuffin was a famous device that justified the action of the plot but which was a minimal support. The McGuffin was born of a joke. Hitchcock himself explained,

It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men in a train. One man says, “What’s that package up there in the baggage rack?” And the other answers, “Oh that’s a McGuffin.” The first one asks “What’s a McGuffin?” “Well” the other man says, “it’s an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.” The first man says, “But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands,” and the other one answers “Well, then that’s no McGuffin!” So you see that a McGuffin is nothing at all.¹⁴

Meaning is demolished through a symmetrical self-cancellation: no lions, no McGuffin. The key is that the exchange “bought time” by suspending, through question and answer, the issue of identity. Thanks to a bit of nonsense, we get duration and free passage. The nonsense parallels the self-cancellation aspect of the master signifier and desire. The creation of ideological interpellation

2. Albrecht Dürer, [Artist and Model in the Studio], woodcut, published in *Underweysung der Messung* (Nuremberg: Hieronymum Andreae, 1538).



“out of nothing” is for us the element of passage, a password.

A graphic formulation of the passage/duration made possible by empty (circular) meaning would be a “cut” of a line at a right angle (Γ). The cut is the condition and material support of the line’s continuation, just as the picture plane is an imaginary cut that permits the eye to travel into the virtual space of the visual representation. This could be regarded as simply a way of diagramming a visual relationship, just as one diagrams a sentence to parse the function of its grammatical parts.

I propose a more ambitious application. The cut needs to be related to the master signifier, whose reversal of summation into causality occurs because some “operator” has, like the stage whisper, directly addressed the audience and its relationship to enunciation. In the example of *Jaws*, the shark has become the operator that “must be destroyed” because it simultaneously sums up a polysemous-synesthetic-anamorphic state of affairs and, irrationally, becomes the cause of that same state of affairs, a reorganization of the multiple meanings generated, an “anamorphizing” of the situation. The shark’s silence, its middle position, and its semantic emptiness are key conditions to its ideological position in the midst of events and terms that, themselves, are stuffed with conventional meaning. We need to find the sharks.

The Cut Creates Three “Internal Corners”

We have many opportunities in our midst. The famous woodcut illustration by Albrecht Dürer, “The Artist and Model in the Studio,” is used to illustrate the research process in one of the most widely used textbooks on architectural research methods (Figure 2). Here, it is surprisingly easy to demonstrate the cut, whose conversion of summation to causality creates a silent ideological passage.

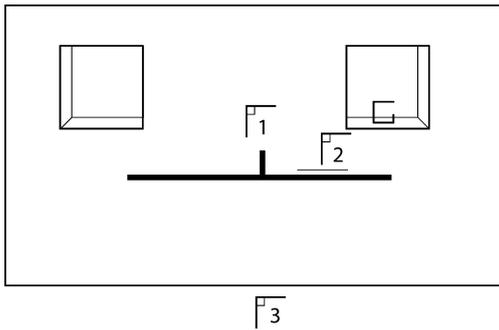
Like the woodcut, which moves from an allegory of “sense” on the left through “method” in the middle (the “lucinda” viewing device) to

descriptive “ideographics” on the right, the authors argue that data are captured by tactics, tactics are organized by strategies, strategies are framed by theory, and theory is supported by philosophy.¹⁵ Adjustments made back and forth are hierarchical, from tweaking the design of tactics to the more cautious adjustment of theory or reconsideration of philosophy. Even though it seems to fit the image perfectly, I do not agree with the authors’ analogy. Even less do I agree with the countless commentaries that have made this image play the role of a sixteenth-century split screen, feminism on the left and phallogocentric masculinity on the right. These are two (three, counting Dürer) paid professionals employed in a textbook project.

Simplifying, the lucinda (method) separates the theoretical from the evidentiary, but the boundary allows for overlap, since method also includes the procedure of fixing the artist’s eye by means of the tabletop obelisk and the technique of transferring observations from the lucinda’s squares to the gridded paper at hand. Reading the image from left to right, the woodcut forms a visual syllogism connecting sense (SE) and thought (TH), with the middle term taken up by the lucinda (LU): $SE > LU$, $LU > TH$, therefore $SE > TH$. The lucinda is the silent middle term (the cut) where summation crosses into causation. By virtue of its silence (lack of meaning; transparency), the lucinda claims access to any visible thing. It works technologically and ideologically as a “theory of space.” But, is this really an emblem of the kind of empiricism the authors promote through their linear concatenation of facts-tactics-strategies-theory? Dürer himself provides the irony that demonstrates the ideological qualities of the lucinda. There are two artists involved in the production of this woodcut: artist₁, who performs as the visible practitioner we see on the right, and the artist₂ of this woodcut, Dürer, who invisibly instructs and theorizes. The woodcut was in fact a part of an instructional manual for draughtsmen—an important contextual detail (Figure 3).

The process of visualizing the world of the model begins with the creation of a “face” of the visible with the insertion of the lucinda. A face is not simply a surface but an active *facing* of one subject to another, which presumes a left-right organization, a “handedness” of space and our knowledge of it (stereognosis). The grid works to divide and summarize the scene; the scene itself is generated by the sagittal lines of sight that are directed through the lucinda to the fixed observer, instructed (interpellated) not to move. Artist₁’s hand automates the transfer of visual data to graphic lines on the gridded paper. The right angle (Γ) in each case joins a vector of “summation” to a vector of “causation.” A similar angle of summation and causation takes place between the eye and the hand of the artist₁. The mapping of the lucinda’s evidence onto paper involves a machine-like use of the hand, converting the summation of the artist’s eye into the “cause” of marks on the paper.

A third operator completes the ideological statement of the image. It “rotates” out to connect the image’s sight line with the “cut” of our picture plane, beyond which our eye, dislocated from the body, engages in a synesthetic collation of the room and space beyond. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty says, it is the world we see, not just one side, pressed into some flat stage scenery. The fullness of the objects invites us to complete them inferentially with an anticipated use of muscles, motion, and touch. Ironically, we are also invited to compare our travel through the transparent cut to objects in our field of view that create anxiety because they do not clearly fit: the artist who sits “in our place” and the objects on the windowsill. The artist₁ does what we do, creating a kind of “seeing².” The vase and topiary plant on the windowsill may seem casual to us, but for the sixteenth-century audience, they were McGuffins of the first water. They bring to mind the resemblance of this long image to other long images with angles on one side, a virgin on the other, and a lectern in the middle. Annunciation



3. A diagram showing the “cuts” in the Dürer illustration. Each angle orthogonally joins a (sagittal) line of sight with a process of interpolation and reassembly. The spiral indicator on the right windowsill flags the self-referential role of the iconic objects, the vase and topiary plant. (Diagram by author.)

paintings are, like Dürer’s image, “sectional.” They are sequential, temporal, and causal in their left-to-right time section, which juxtaposes the supernatural and the human.

The sequence of summation-causation angles cycles through the hierarchically nested spaces—the space of the studio, the space of automated drawing, the space of the flat representation, and the space of the audience. Each of the angles initiates a new spatial-temporal logic: (1) dislocation, the division of space into observer-observed parts, activated by the process of collation and causation; (2) interpellation, the automation of the visual by the linear segmentation and interpolation of the “cartographic” transfer; and (3) the emergence of a complex countergaze, an ironic rather than a circumstantial gap, a face-to-face condition achieved through triangulation of the audience with the several kinds of the visible. This constructs a vanishing point analogous to the perspectival one. Instead of being the result of a geometric construction, this new antipode arises from the anamorphic and ideological instability of the image. Through the illusion of the artist₂ image, the audience is “reinserted” into the space of the studio (as evidenced by the windows), returning the end of the series to its beginning. The difference is that the audience can now grasp the irony of being able to see the spectacle of the artist₁ pinned to the automation apparatus, a duplicate of the same process that may have been used by artist₂. Because we, the audience, occupy the same position in front of the page as artist₂, this irony is deepened: we underwrite its validity by taking up this ideologically available point of view. Our look is an act of consensus based not on continuity but on the surpluses/kernels/gaps that resist interpretation and reassembly.

The gaps constituted by the three “corners” of this presentational space are tokens of binocular visibility in general and its “parallax” view in the midst of this explicit homage to monocular viewing. The paired windows, like two eyes, are embellished

by a topiary plant and pitcher on the sill to the right. In Late Medieval iconography, both were to be found in paintings of the Annunciation: the pitcher a symbol of purity and the plant (sometimes a carnation) a symbol of birth but also a token of the passage from interior to exterior. Annunciation iconography can back-inform this image, especially where Mary’s lectern works as a lucinda that collates divine text. “Impregnation” is the ideology guiding the reading of Antonello da Messina’s *St. Jerome in his Study* (1475), just as the Immaculate Conception makes the same synesthetic connection between reading, hearing, and conception¹⁶ (Figure 4). Also, Antonello’s “conditional edge” at the bottom of the painting, marked with rebus-like icons, charges the interior space with iconistic *Prägnanz*. Penny Howell Jolly makes the point that impregnation is the only way out of the “impasse” of how to translate holy text: the partridge’s reputation for being able to be impregnated by the wind matches Jerome’s impregnation by the *afflatus* of divine voice. Again, the voice authenticates by transcending literal meaning!

Only experts can play these games, but both Dürer’s woodcut and Antonello’s *St. Jerome*, which favor naive readings, can be given more complete entries in *The Encyclopedia of Professional Fantasies*. Because ideology materializes itself through the physical furniture of space, we should be able to find all the paradigms we need at the humble left end of the sense-method-theory spectrum. As Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Fox Mulder noted in *The X-Files*, “the truth is out there.”

Minding the Gap Between Design as Scholarship and Scholarship of Design

Design as scholarship might take up an interest in explaining master signifiers, anamorphy, and the like, but why should it? Wouldn’t it be sufficient simply to “have” the phenomenon of art, as in the case of the mute sublimity of Gordon Matta-

Clarke? The all-too-obvious answer is: whatever else we do, we teach. Teaching requires principles and procedures that are not required by architectural practice or architectural enjoyment. The “why” of either cannot be just a matter of making explicit what is experienced in some “natural” way.

My “manifesto” would advocate an art of topics based on (1) synesthesia, or a reassignment of senses to a body dispersed in time and space, (2) identification of the dimensions of experience as ideological-cultural, and (3) a mobilization of the idea of the voice, specifically the “acoustic” voice. Any art of topics, like the *ars topica* of Medieval rhetoric, has its own motives. My motive is to restore theory and history as the “twin eyes” of architectural pedagogy and to activate the studio as event-based rather than product-based. The topic is a place (*locus, topos*) but place is not to be understood empirically. Rather, empirical place should be interpreted “topically” as a rhetorical construct involving manipulations of dimensionality, framing procedures, and the activation of wit. Again, I cite Žižek, who observes that Einstein’s second version of relativity moved from seeing curvature as an exception to “normal space” to the idea that curvature was the inner resistant kernel of space itself.¹⁷ Thus, visual space is already synesthetic, already bent by the presence of self-reference, already anamorphed by the twin-eyed parallax of history and theory, and already haunted by an unlocatable voice.

What Does This Mean for Architecture and Architectural Education?

For the past fifteen years or so, the question of architectural relevance has been directed to the products of architecture rather than to process or comprehension. In the aesthetics of art, this is the standard problematic question of “Do you call that art?” By focusing on the object as the source of value, subjectivity is taken out of the world and made to confront it through various representations, even when the subject and object stand face

to face. But, the world is where subjectivity belongs: organs that leave the body to engage material conditions directly. As the dependent variable of a standard regression model, the subject is reactive and indeterminate. One could trace this tendency to place value in the object rather than the subject to some Positivist or, ultimately, Enlightenment identification of objectivity with authenticity, but my point here is to suggest that there is a broad range of architectural subjectivity that should constitute a more accountable basis for architectural education. This range includes not just the processes leading up to final designs but the “architectural consciousness” that develops around buildings and spaces, a common cultural possession that is evident whenever a building is destroyed or threatened. Just as space’s curvature is pervasive and intrinsic, architecture and consciousness of architecture are coincident. It is the experience that counts, and an understanding of this experience calls for a new kind of reception theory that, unlike classic reactive theories, establishes the subject’s active, synesthetic engagement with material conditions.

Just as in an event, where what happens involves a point of view (an imagined report from a participant of some kind who is a part of the event and thus a part of the question from the start), the question of what architecture is or how it is affected cannot avoid this circularity of points of view. So, in a sense, circularity itself is the issue. Self-reference, iconicity, and the use of frames that fold and suture space into a topography that incorporates the subject culturally, historically, and personally are at the heart of what architecture is. I would pose this as a manifesto slogan: architecture is the same as the imagination of architecture. This is not an idealism that evaporates the material reality of architecture but rather the incorporation of the subject at the heart of materiality in the first place.

Study Methods

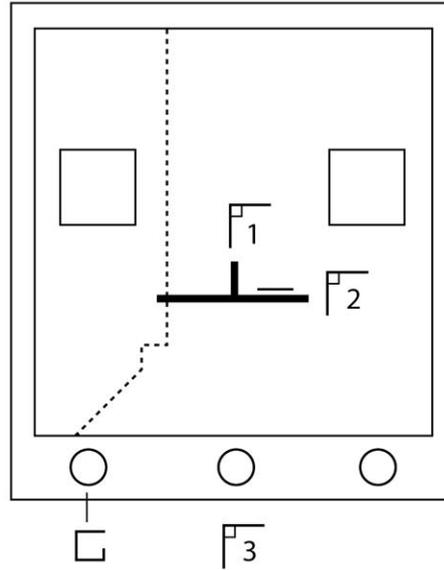
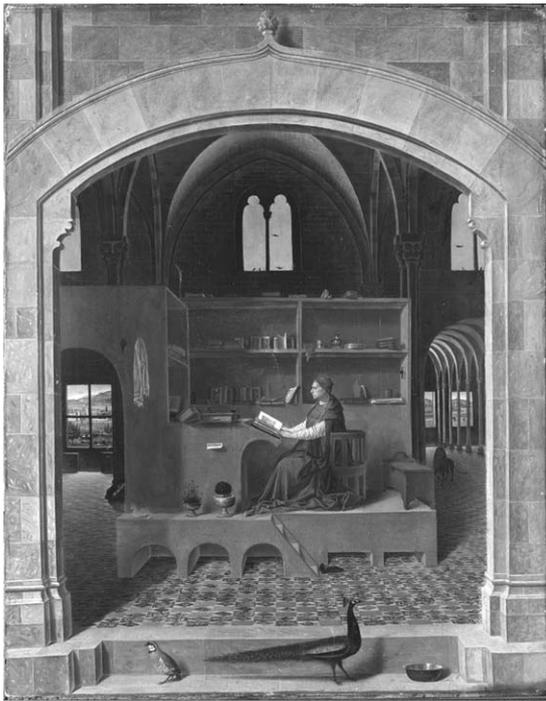
It is often forgotten that Bernard Tschumi’s project *Manhattan Transcripts* involved an imaginary

archeology centered on a murder mystery. The trench dug across Manhattan with snapshot-style images calls to mind other intentional restrictions of dimensionality occasioned by death and detection.¹⁸ Since Hitchcock is the obvious master of dimensional restrictions, I will mention *Rope*, where editing created long takes in a single room to build tension; *Lifeboat*, whose title gives away the ambition of the restricted set; *The Lady Vanishes*, an exercise in visibility-invisibility played out in the one-dimensional tube of a train (worse than *Flatland!*); and *Rear Window*, an inverted Babel filmed, with only one reverse-angle shot, from the position of an apartment in a New York urban courtyard. Because filmmaking itself involves its own internal rules of dimensionality (lines that the camera cannot cross, etc.), film study is a good place to start if architecture theory wishes to restore the role of reception in the heart of material circumstances. Like Tschumi’s *Manhattan Transcripts*, film automatically includes temporality, and here, another side of Deleuze can be applied: his study of time in film involving a critique of Bergson’s work on matter and memory.¹⁹

Manhattan Transcripts had its own spooky relationships with the 1966 film by Michaelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up*, a story about murder evidence that “disappears before the eyes” of a photographer who inadvertently snapped the image of a body on the margin of a London park. This movie was taken from a short story, “The Droolings of the Devil,” by Julio Cortázar (1959), but it more generally engaged the logic of the more famous Cortázar novel, *Hopscotch* (*Rayuela*, 1963). *Hopscotch* in turn had borrowed its device of skipping around from the thirteenth-century mystic, Ramón Llull (1232–1315) whose memory devices used combinatorial wheels-within-wheels to maximize the role of contingency. Llull’s famous memory theories were paralleled by later demonstrations of how the reader was already/always included in the text as an uncanny vanishing point, such as Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759) and works grouped under the heading of “romantic irony.”

Blow-Up reveals its architectural heart through its ability to fit within the topology demonstrated by the Dürer’s drawing lesson and confirmed by Antonello’s account of voice as impregnation. For “artist and model,” we have Thomas (David Hemmings) and Jane (Vanessa Redgrave). For artist₂, we have Antonioni, who interpolates the film’s story for us just as Thomas interpolates clues of the murder to fill up a matrix through photographic enlargements. Like the photographer, we will be given our own blind spots. What else, after all, is the process of constructing a film but an interpolation of scenes on behalf of creating an enigma relationship between two principal characters? Jane both reveals and conceals herself to manipulate Thomas’s investigation, and her passive-aggressive interpellation brings the investigation-interpolation to a halt. The “matrix” of clues cannot be completed. In the final absurdist tennis game, where Thomas watches a team of hippy-mimes play without rackets or balls, he reaches the vanishing point, his own antipode, in the form of the invisible ball knocked out of the court, which he obligingly throws back. Like the objects on Dürer’s artist’s windowsill and the partridge at the edge of St. Jerome’s study, this “object-cause of desire” is the black hole threatening to swallow the whole landscape, a silent scream embedded within artistic tradition from Antigone’s “No!” to Creon, through Edvard Munch’s famous frightened figure on a bridge, to Bertold Brecht’s Mutter Courage’s final silent scream. Antonioni pulls back the camera at this moment to shrink Thomas to a black dot in a green field (Antonioni painted the grass to get just the right anamorphic effects), city, and sky.

Do film and literature count as architecture? No, but as in the case of *Manhattan Transcripts*, they make it possible for us to develop workable critical theory through discoveries of parallel conditions found in all arts. Because art intensifies ideas of the subject through the phenomenon of the audience, its formal strategies can illuminate architecture’s more diffuse employment of the



4. Left: Antonello da Messina, *St. Jerome in His Study* (ca. 1475). Oil on lime. The National Gallery, London; Right: a diagram showing the “cuts” within the painting. The device of reframing a painting to indicate the view of God (*porta caeli*) offers the opportunity to construct a rebus of objects, one of which is out of place (the partridge) and a key to the meaning of Jerome’s translation-through-impregnation. (Diagram by author. Painting reproduction Courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London, UK.)

same practices. I do not wish to promote the idea of “interdisciplinarity” per se. Within all art lies, in the most serious and literal sense, an *architecture* of reception. Reception is the space in which design develops, and when design becomes inquiry, it more than ever requires an account of the collective-subjective-cultural space that envelops every material instance of architecture. In this sense, I agree with the brigadier general whom Eyal Weizman interviewed when he said, “Travelling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice.” Read in reverse, theory and practice mean little outside of such “simple mechanical solutions” that, in too many cases, are the intensive and not-so-simple monads of our political conundrum of how to live on earth in peace and good will. Ideology? We cannot avoid it. Forced choices? Just say no.

Notes

1. Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, Rex Butler and Scott Stephens eds. (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 63.
2. The demise of theory can be seen in the tendency in many programs to teach theory as history and/or to reduce courses on theory and history to the status of electives. The death of theory is usually proclaimed rather than argued. Robert E. Somol: “Criticality exists by producing legibility and distancing effects. Both are linked to an intellectual problem of the 1960s and 1970s that is no longer viable. Through its own success, the critical project has reached its condition of limitation. The returns are no longer worth the investment.” Sylvia Lavin and Helene Furjān, with Penelope Dean, eds., *Crib Sheets: Notes on the Contemporary Architectural Conversation* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), p. 165.

3. My primary source is George Dodds’ multidimensional discussion of Mies’ Barcelona Pavilion as architecture-cum-image in *Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 143–47 and passim. For a contemporary demonstration, see Lavin and Furjān, *Crib Sheets*, p. 152.
4. Such a gap was created by numerous interpreters of Hegel’s dialectical process, who created without Hegel’s help the famous “thesis, antithesis, synthesis” that, as the Hegel scholar J.N. Findlay tirelessly points out, mischaracterizes Hegel’s notion of the spirit. J.N. Findlay, *Hegel, a Re-examination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).
5. Left out of the popular translation of Lacan’s *Écrits*, this original theory was not widely recognized as central to Lacan’s thinking. Bruce Fink’s recent translation corrects this omission. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, Bruce Fink, trans. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp. 6–50.
6. Lacan was famous for the prominence he gave to the gaze and the voice. This is why I regard his work as useful for architecture: there is the promise of an integration of topics of “acoustics” (where voice and the issue of location/distance are combined) and “anamorphosis,” which goes well beyond its current historicist categories.
7. Rex Butler, “What Is a Master Signifier?” in *Slavoj Žižek: Live Theory*, ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 31–65.
8. Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 26–27.
9. Eyal Weizman, “The Art of War,” Frieze.com, http://www.frieze.com/feature_single.asp?f=1165, accessed 3 May, 2007. I am grateful to Nadir Lahiji for pointing out this interesting source. Weizman writes: “I asked [Brigadier-General] Naveh why Deleuze and Guattari were so popular with the Israeli military. He replied that ‘several of the concepts in *A Thousand Plateaux* became instrumental for us [...] allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise. It problematized our own paradigms. Most important was the distinction they have pointed out between the concepts of ‘smooth’ and ‘striated’ space [which accordingly reflect] the organizational concepts of the ‘war machine’ and the ‘state apparatus’. In the IDF we now often use the term ‘to smooth out space’ when we want to refer to operation in a space as if it

- had no borders. [...] Palestinian areas could indeed be thought of as ‘striated’ in the sense that they are enclosed by fences, walls, ditches, roads blocks and so on.’ When I asked him if moving through walls was part of it, he explained that, ‘In Nablus the IDF understood urban fighting as a spatial problem. [...] Travelling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice.’”
10. This may be true in ways that exceed our wildest expectations: Jay Kappraff, “The Vortex Defining the Living Fruit,” in *Beyond Measure: A Guided Tour through Nature, Myth, and Number, Series on Knots and Everything*, vol. 28 (NJ: World Scientific, 2002), p. 265–77.
11. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
12. I am indebted to the mathematician Jay Kappraff for introducing me to Bulckin’s ideas and the work of Ernest McClain, *The Myth of Invariance: The Origin of the Gods, Mathematics, and Music from the Rig Veda to Plato* (New York: N. Hays, 1976).
13. See Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter’s *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Michel Chion’s *The Voice in Cinema*, Claudia Gorbman, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Kaja Silverman’s *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); also Ted Sheridan and Karen Van Lengen, “Hearing Architecture: Exploring and Designing the Aural Environment,” *JAE* 57, 2 (November 2003): 37–44.
14. François Truffaut *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), p. 138.
15. Linda Groat and David Wang, *Architectural Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), pp. 73–75.
16. Penny Howell Jolly, “Antonello da Messina’s Saint Jerome in His Study: An Iconographical Analysis,” *The Art Bulletin*, 65, 2 (June 1983): 238–53.
17. Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, p. 209.
18. Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994).
19. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema, 1: The Movement Image, 2: The Time Image*, Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, c1986–c1989).