INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
Architecture and media as viewed through feminist criticism: A television station in Houston

Bonnette, Paul David, M.Arch.

Rice University, 1992
ABSTRACT

Architecture and Media as Viewed Through Feminist Criticism:
A Television Station in Houston

by

Paul Bonnette

This project takes a look at the evolving way in which we perceive ourselves and our architecture today. From research into ways in which art and architecture in turn affect, and are affected by what goes on around us, to an exploration into the more socio-political concerns which go along with feminist discourse, this project culminates in the design of a television station. By addressing feminist discourse as a social issue, the goal is to achieve new meaning within an existing building, within a television station and within architecture.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to: my research director, Mark Wamble, for his inspiration and patience, as well as the additional members of my committee, William Cannady and Richard Ingersoll; to my family for their constant support; also, to all of the 1992 candidates for Master of Architecture for their friendship and creativity.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... ii.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................................... iii.

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................... 1.

2. THE MODERN ............................................................................................................................ 4.

3. PURE THOUGHT: HEGEL, ART, ARCHITECTURE ............................................................... 7.

4. MODERN TO POSTMODERN .................................................................................................... 13.

5. FEMINIST DISCOURSE .............................................................................................................. 16.

6. LANGUAGE AND TEXT IN FEMINIST ART ......................................................................... 19.

7. CINDY SHERMAN, DERRIDA, AND THE FRAME ............................................................... 23.

8. TOWARD AND ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION .................................................................. 25.

9. EISENMAN / DERRIDA .............................................................................................................. 27.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................ 35.

APPENDIX I: Illustrations ............................................................................................................. 38.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The topic that I wish to discuss in regards to the research semester of thesis is the relationship between art and architecture. The two disciplines have at times shared in their concerns, and have at other times diverged greatly in what they attempt to accomplish. My concern is what the relationship is now, and what the implications are for an architecture based on social and cultural difference/change.

My own attitudes regarding the compatibility of art and architecture are derived from several design projects that I participated in during my undergraduate education. In the design projects, the precept was that works of the modernist tradition would be housed by architecture, that the architecture would be the provider of display space for the painting. The buildings were museums and shrines to the various stages of the modern movement in art. The spaces were formed through an analysis of the particular artist's work and/or formal elements from a specific painting. As they were carried out, however, the projects seemed to be very one-sided and simple, and led me to ask, "what else can be brought into the picture?"
I contend that there is much more that can be brought into architecture from painting and art. The questions that I am especially interested in involve the place that contemporary artwork holds in today's society, as well as the capacity for architecture to express the same intentions. The roles that artist and architect play in the expression of the conditions of today's society become of key importance.

It is clear that the art world has had a fascination with architecture and vice versa. In an essay by Bernard Tschumi, entitled "Architecture and Limits," this fact is recognized, but not condoned.

Such reciprocal envy is based on the narrowest limits of outmoded interpretations, as if each discipline were inexorably drawn toward the other's most conservative texts. Yet the 'avante-garde' of both fields sometimes enjoys a common sensitivity, even if their terms of reference inevitably differ. It should be noted that architectural drawings, at their best, are a mode of working, of thinking about architecture. By their very nature, they usually refer to something outside themselves (as opposed to those art drawings that refer only to themselves, to their own materiality and devices.)

In order to better understand the previous relationship that has occurred between the artist and architect, I believe that first we

---

must look to the example of modernism. From the foundation of modernism, we can observe the growth of this relationship and determine the causes and effects of changes in attitudes toward architecture and art. It is not my intention in this thesis to claim that architecture can draw directly from the art world formally, rather that each art may contain similarity in the way they address critical questions in today's world.
CHAPTER 2
THE MODERN

The project of mainstream modern art was of a social nature. It was believed that the artist was able to project the image of the progression of the society he/she lived in. The reason that this is the case is explored by Jose Ortega y Gasset in *The Dehumanization of Art*.

I have pointed out that it is in art and pure science, precisely because they are the freest activities and least dependent on social conditions, that the first signs of any changes of collective sensibility become noticeable. A fundamental revision of man's attitude towards life is apt to find its first expression in artistic creation and scientific theory.²

In modernism, this was the task of the avant-garde; to keep in touch with the human condition as it changed day by day. As modernism developed, artists were emboldened by the amount of social change that was occurring. They discharged old ways of seeing and explored new perspectives in the viewing of the world. Edward Soja sums up the spirit of modernism in his book *Postmodern Geographies*.

---
In its broadest sense, modernism is the cultural, ideological, reflective, and ... theory-forming response to modernization. It encompasses a heterogeneous array of subjective visions and strategic programmes in art, literature, science, philosophy, and political practice which are unleashed by the disintegration of an inherited established order and the awareness of the projected possibilities and perils of a restructured contemporary moment or conjuncture. Modernism is, in essence, a ‘reaction formation,’ a conjunctural social movement mobilized to face the challenging question of what now is to be done given that the context of the contemporary has significantly changed. It is thus the culture-shaping, programmatic, and situated consciousness of modernity.\(^3\)

Modern architecture reflected this view of the world. It reveled in the newfound technology of society and called for a continuation of progress. It shared with art in its becoming a symbol of social reality which was revealed through forms or artistic representation. Architecture became its own art, not remaining neutral surfaces upon which to display ideas, but becoming internalized, obeying its own laws. This argument is exhibited by Alan Colquhoun in *Essays in Architectural Criticism*, in which he maps out the progression of history through modernism and into the postmodern condition.

In one sense, modernism was a continuation of the positivistic traits of nineteenth-century thought. According to this view, architecture possessed meaning as a reflection or symptom of a particular stage of historical development. This interpretation of history implied that meaning in architecture did not depend on

---

the memory of its own past. The spirit of the age demanded that architecture be absolutely new.\textsuperscript{4}

\footnotesize
CHAPTER 3
PURE THOUGHT: HEGEL, ART, ARCHITECTURE

The thinker that is the source for the words "spirit of the age" was one of the most prolific and profound historical thinkers within modernism; Georg Friedrich Hegel. His historical philosophies have provided us with arguments in support of many of the theories of modern architecture. Hegel's view of history is one of universality, that there exists a World Spirit that drives all individuals and cultures. "The realm of Spirit is all-comprehensive; it includes everything that ever has interested or ever will interest man." This Spirit is ever-present in the Zeitgeist, or an overarching feeling of progress related to a specific time. He perceives the Zeitgeist to be leading toward an ultimate purpose.

In contemplating world history we must thus consider its ultimate purpose. This ultimate purpose is what is willed in the world itself. We know of God that He is the most perfect; He can will only Himself and what is like Him. God and the nature of His will are one and the same; these we call, philosophically, the Idea. Hence, it is the Idea in general, in its manifestation as human spirit, which we have to contemplate.6

---

6Ibid., 21-22.
The role that the individual takes in the manifestation of this spirit is an active one, but in any individual's passion, Hegel maintains, the universal spirit is in some way affected.

Hegel's views on art are widely known mainly through two of his works; Aesthetics, and Philosophy of Fine Art. He believes that, in the course of history, art progresses through a number of stages, and once one stage becomes incapable of advancing human knowledge of the nature of the Absolute, it dies. Ultimately, he believes that we will no longer need visual images, but abstract philosophy will be able to fulfill our craving to be closer to the Absolute. In Hegel's philosophy of art, there are three stages of development, the Symbolic, the Classical and the Romantic. Each stage produces a heightened state of consciousness of how the Idea manifests itself. The Symbolic stage is represented by architecture, the Classical by sculpture, and the Romantic is represented by painting, music, and poetry.

E. H. Gombrich, in his book In Search of Cultural History, begins to question whether Hegel's opinions regarding art and history are relevant. He does not completely agree with many of Hegel's conclusions, but admits their influence on the ways that we view history. He envisions Hegel's philosophy as a wheel with eight spokes, each of which "represent concrete manifestations of the national Spirit, in Hegel's words 'all the aspects of its consciousness and will.' They are the nation's religion, constitution,
morality, law, customs, science, art, and technology."\textsuperscript{7} Gombrich
seems to accept Hegel's viewpoint as valid. However he qualifies
himself by stating that:

it was the technique itself which exerted a tremendous
appeal. Those who accepted Hegel's logic now had the
proof of what had before been a mere matter of intuition,
the feeling that each art and each culture existed in its
own right and could not be judged by other standards; and
yet this proof did not invalidate the equally intuitive
conviction that the history of civilization was and
remained a history of growing values, a history of
progress.\textsuperscript{8}

In Hegel, then the changing styles of art became the window through
which the changing of the spirit could be viewed.

Although Gombrich accepts Hegel's ideas for the influence they
had, he has difficulty accepting some of Hegel's assumptions. He has
particular problems with the argument that the Absolute and
universal became a measure for the criticism of art.

What stupidity it is to measure works of art against
some imaginary universal standard ... These sentiments ...
anticipate much of the philosophy we may call
Modernism. In this philosophy the critic explicitly
renounces any claim to criticism in the sense of the
application of absolute standards. There can be no such
standards because the artist is like a sleepwalker, his
work wells from his unconscious inspired by that divine

\textsuperscript{7}E. H. Gombrich, \textit{In Search of Cultural History} (London: Oxford University
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 13.
breath that breathes through history. All the critic can do is to try and interpret the oracle to the public. He no longer says this is good or bad, he says this is passé and this is the coming thing.⁹

Gombrich then goes on to study how cultural historians as well as art historians might be able to better use Hegel's philosophy. This seems to be the project of In Search of Cultural History, which contains a chapter entitled "Hegelianism without Metaphysics." Alan Colquhoun takes interest in these issues in an essay entitled "E. H. Gombrich and the Hegelian Tradition." Colquhoun's view is that Gombrich:

accepts Hegel's general concept of historical development and the need to study the actual events of history as if they were all part of a tapestry of meaning rather than acknowledge or ignore them according to an a priori scheme. But he rejects Hegel's reintroduction of the a priori on the higher level at which all events must be shown to be the necessary effects of the 'will of history.'¹⁰

Another point at which Gombrich diverges from Hegel is over the difference between movements and periods. Whereas Hegel may have seen all periods as movements in that they were manifestations of a progressing spirit, Gombrich believes that the belief "supra-individual collective spirit" may have hindered the growth of a "true cultural history." Gombrich believes that in order to assure the

---
¹⁰Colquhoun, 153.
progress of cultural history, more attention should be focused on the individual human being. "Movements, as distinct from periods, are started by people. Some of them are abortive, others catch on."\textsuperscript{11} Gombrich proposes that we should look at the "syndromes", the visible events that lead up to and cause the movement to occur. However, we shouldn't attempt to explain everything in terms of hidden causes, we should observe the other events which go along with the movement being considered. To Colquhoun, the advantage of using this method of inquiry is that by examining the events that go along with a movement, you leave that movement and its characteristics intact. "The event [the movement that you wish to study] is no longer considered as a symptom and therefore reducible to another event at a lower level."\textsuperscript{12} Colquhoun goes on to give a good summation of the notion of the symptom and syndrome.

The view that all the cultural phenomena of a period are symptoms of the spirit of the age would imply that a work of art "reflects" an idea and is capable of only one interpretation. Gombrich's notion of the work of art as part of a syndrome implies a different theory of signification according to which the relation of forms to their meanings is, in a certain sense, arbitrary. Meanings cannot be deduced from forms. These can only be deciphered if we know the social and artistic context within which they have been produced.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11}Gombrich, \textit{In Search of Cultural History}, 37.
\textsuperscript{12}Colquhoun, 156.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 156.
While this discourse is helpful in defining the past attitudes toward production and art within our culture, it has been faced with considerable resistance through contemporary criticism. As with any philosophy that offers some pure or totalizing form of reason, Hegel’s ideas become unprotected targets for critical thinkers. As will be discussed later in this paper, Jacques Derrida is just one example of such a critical thinker. Nevertheless, by asserting these ideas, Hegel gave us a base from which we could decide whether to build or to deconstruct.
CHAPTER 4
MODERN TO POSTMODERN

While it may have been an ambitious pursuit that some artists would attempt, this responsibility to culture, as is hinted by Gombrich, became an extremely heavy burden for artists to bear. As Ortega y Gassett states, "art laden with "humanity" had become as weighty as life itself."14 The definition of the artist in our culture began to exclude the serious matters of humanity, and became much less a thing of great consequence. The departure of the artist from modern ideals of political radicalism, of the notion of the artist as "a dissenting outsider who abhorred the philistinism of the masses,"15 began to give the artist a degree of freedom. Freedom from the need for social commentary in the work, freedom from inevitable progress.

In the modern period the authority of the work of art, its claim to represent some authentic vision for the world, did not reside in its uniqueness or singularity, as is often said; rather, that authority was based on the universality modern aesthetics attributed to the forms utilized for the representation of vision, over and above

14Ortega y Gassett, 43.
differences in content due to the production of works in concrete historical circumstances.\textsuperscript{16}

'For Late Modernism, the really advanced work of art was private, obscure, distant, even idiosyncratic.'\textsuperscript{17} What, then, is the role of the artist after modernism, and which groups are to define this role?

The thrust of postmodernism lies in the attempt to differentiate that which can be represented and that which cannot. It begins to break down the oppositions of representation/represented, signifier/signified, identity/difference. Andreas Huyssen, in his book \textit{After the Great Divide}, speaks about this postmodern sensibility.

The postmodern sensibility of our time is different from both modernism and avantegardism precisely in that it raises the question of cultural tradition and conservation in the most fundamental way as an aesthetic and a political issue. It doesn't always do it successfully, and often does it exploitative. And yet, my main point about contemporary postmodernism is that it operates in a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art, in which the second terms are no longer automatically privileged over the first; a field of tension which can no longer be grasped in categories such as progress vs. reaction, left vs. right, present vs. past, modernism vs. realism, abstraction vs. representation, avantgarde vs. Kitsch. The fact that such dichotomies, which after all are central to the classical accounts of modernism, have


\textsuperscript{17}Kearney, 23.
broken down is part of the shift I have been trying to describe.\(^1^8\)

Within this breakdown and shift lies the dilemma of art's relationship to society. It has continually become more difficult to place, being more removed from the institution, and becoming more and more commercialized within our capitalist society. It is elusive in its categorization. Politically, it has escaped the stigmatizing affects of modernity and entered the innocuous realm of "otherness." Andreas Huyssen points out four realms of otherness that are "constitutive of postmodern culture." Acknowledgement of inner and outer imperialism, ecology and environment, primitive cultures, and the women's movement. The impact of the latter is of particular interest.

CHAPTER 5
FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Feminism and feminist criticism begins to attack the most poignant questions about today's society. Huyschen points out that "the ways in which we now raise questions of gender and sexuality, reading and writing, subjectivity and enunciation, voice and performance are unthinkable without the impact of feminism."\textsuperscript{19} The voice of feminism lashes out against the ways in which women have historically been represented, viewed, and, in essence, overlooked. According to Craig Owens, the feminist condition exists:

\begin{quote}
in order to expose that system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting or invalidating others. Among those prohibited from Western representation, whose representations are denied all legitimacy, are women. Excluded from representation by its very structure, they return within it as a figure for -- a representation of -- the unrepresentable (Nature, Truth, the Sublime, etc.).\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Thus, within postmodernism the feminist movement is one that directly addresses the issues brought about in the wake of modernism.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] Ibid., 220.
\item[20] Owens, 59.
\end{footnotes}
Feminist discourse today does not usually attempt to stand autonomously in the search for redefinitions of our culture. Most often, feminist discourse is combined with a more mainstream discourse such as "postmodernism", psychoanalysis, or deconstruction in their attempt to reconstitute the subject. Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, in their book *Feminism / Postmodernism*, ask what the relationship is between the two. As separate political-cultural phenomena, each shares a common thread of social criticism while maintaining its own separate concerns for legitimation. In the text, they posit the possible relationship between feminism and postmodernism while examining the differences between each philosophy. Their argument calls for "an encounter between feminism and postmodernism ... which integrates their respective strengths while eliminating their respective weaknesses. It is the prospect of a postmodern feminism."²¹ Their basic premise is that postmodernists could benefit from feminists strength in social criticism and political perspectives, while feminism could gain in the fact that postmodernism is strongly based in foundationalism and essentialism.

A similar attempt at a communion between two concepts can be found in the Lakoff and Johnson entitled *Metaphors We Live By*. In

their discussion of objective and subjective myths (chapter 25-30), each is diagnosed as having its own positive and negative attributes. Objectivity is the realm of reason, science and rationality while subjectivity is the realm of imagination, personality and feeling. Lakoff & Johnson's argument is that while each of these views of the world exists today and can be justified, a view that combines the two is most desirable. The link between the objective and subjective myths is the myth of the experiential: the metaphor. "Metaphor is one of the most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness."^{22}

---

CHAPTER 6
LANGUAGE AND TEXT IN FEMINIST ART

Support for the statements made in Lakoff and Johnson may best be seen in the work of some of the more prominent feminist artists such as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer. In their work, they frequently employ metaphor in making political and cultural statements consisting of both word and image. Barbara Kruger's work particularly engages the use of metaphor in much the same manner as is discussed in the text by Lakoff and Johnson. The title of one of the catalogs of Kruger's work is entitled Love for Sale. The title alone suggests that their may be parallels between her work and that which is presented in Metaphors We Live By. Among her works that are particularly appropriate to talk about are "Your body is a battleground," "You kill time," or "I am your reservoir of poses." Other images carry the titles "Your gaze hits the side of my face," and "We won't play nature to your culture." In the text accompanying the catalog, Kate Linker explains:

the binomial oppositions of active/passive, surveyor/surveyed, standing/supine, like the conceptual category culture/nature, are means by which society imposes its authority so as to subject one half to the privileged term. Although Kruger employs - even accentuates - these images, she suspends their
masculine pleasures with the impertinences of superimposed texts.\textsuperscript{23}

In this way, Kruger’s work engages sets of oppositions that are experienced in everyday life. Taking as our starting point the opposition between male/female, we can see that her images and words begin to break down some of the ties between this opposition and those of representation/represented, signifier/signified, subjective/objective, self/other, master/slave, ruler/ruled, culture/nature, revealed/hidden, absence/presence, reason/passion, death/life. She breaks down these relationships with her use of the linguistic shifter, or the pronouns "I", "you", "we", etc., which call into question who she is actually talking to or about. The question becomes "who is the viewer and who is the author?" Her use of these pronouns "work to dislocate the mastering effect of the image, showing that the viewer's place can shift, be indefinite, and refuse alignment with gender."\textsuperscript{24} The question of whether or not we act and think in terms of consistent sets of metaphors is posited by Lakoff and Johnson.

To operate only in terms of a consistent set of metaphors is to hide many aspects of reality. Successful functioning in our daily lives seems to require a constant shifting of metaphors. The use of many metaphors that are inconsistent with one another seems necessary for


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 62-63.
us if we are to comprehend the details of our daily existence.\textsuperscript{25}

This seems to be the method that Kruger employs in order to provide a better understanding of the image and of our world.

Jenny Holzer engages a similar discourse, but in an entirely different media. She uses primarily LED readout messages, signs through which to confront the viewer with sharp, biting statements. These statements may then be displayed in public, either on/near park benches or in Times Square. Statements such as "Money Creates Taste," and "Protect Me From What I Want" take jabs at the commercialization that inhibits artistic invention today, and invite commentary from people passing by on the street. In her more recent work, she addresses many of the same relationships as Kruger, but in particular she attacks the dichotomies of permanence/change and presence/absence. In a recent installation at the Dia Art Foundation entitled \textit{Laments}, marble and granite "sarcophagi" are inscribed with powerful prose, while in the next room, LED readouts mounted on columns flitter and disappear into the ceiling, stop, and then begin again disappearing into the floor. As the words flow into the floor, the observer begins to feel as if they are rising in an elevator, whereas, when the words are rising into the ceiling, one would perceive that he/she is in some amazing freefall. The moving words in one space transform it into a "new

\textsuperscript{25}Lakoff and Johnson, 221.
gravity" and begin to designate the differences between two forms of media; moving images vs. those carved in stone. The differences in presentation begin to speak about difference among humans, and more importantly, among the sexes. They also speak about history, in that the carved marble slabs are an ancient method of conveying information, while the LED readouts are like the "postmodern" sound bytes that we are presented with today through television. Still, the language that is employed addresses the position of the privileged, of subject/object, viewed/viewer, and author/reader.
CHAPTER 7
CINDY SHERMAN, DERRIDA, AND THE FRAME

Another artist who deals with similar issues is the photographer Cindy Sherman. In her photographs, she subjects herself to the gaze of her own camera, blurring the conception of the male as viewer and female as subject. She blurs the traditional conception of authorship, a subject that has been taken up in the writings of contemporary thinkers such as Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva and others. Of particular interest to me, though, concerns the implications of Sherman's use of the frame. After some speculation over her early work, it becomes apparent that Sherman's glance rarely confronts the camera. Her eyes are always focused either beyond the camera or toward some peripheral interest. Frequently accompanying this focus beyond the edge is an implied feeling of danger. This feeling is often interpreted as representing the male gaze.

Through this idea of the frame, Derrida enters the discourse. In his work entitled The Truth in Painting, he explores the implications of the frame on art and philosophy. He does so by entering into the discourse of pure thought and deconstructing/reformulating the argument. While critiques of
some of Hegel's views on aesthetics are implied within the text, the particular work that Derrida enters into is Emmanuel Kant's Third Critique of Judgement. He breaks into the discourse between theory and art "not in order to destroy all notions of aesthetic specificity, but to conceive of specificity in some other manner; not in order to diminish the status of theory, but to make it more critical and effective, less dogmatic." The question that Derrida pursues in his essays on art is how to break out of the enclosure determined by the inside/outside opposition seen in Cindy Sherman's photographs.

The opposition of inside/outside is explored through Kant's usage of the term parergon. Parergon is defined as an entity that:

comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done [fait], the fact [le fait], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [au bord, á bord]. It is first of all the on (the) bo(a)rd(er) [il est d'abord l'á-bord].27

---

CHAPTER 8
TOWARD AN ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION

With the introduction of issues of frame and of authorship, architecture can begin to engage the debate. The position of power is embodied by the historical role of the architect. In the past he (and the architect was undoubtedly assumed to be male) was given the title Master Builder, and held ultimate power over the entire building process. While this is far from true today, the architect (he/she/they) still controls the design process and holds a position of power in regard to the image that will ultimately be presented. This power oftentimes is evident by the use of an architect's "stamp of authorship" upon a building. In other words, some architects today would impose a style or a trademark in order to claim power within their design. In a collaborative effort that was outlined in Assemblage 10, architects, landscape architects, artists joined hands on a project in an attempt to deal with the issue of authorship in architecture, among other issues. Barbara Kruger was included in this group along with several other distinguished members of the academic and professional community.

Through a collaboration it was hoped that the displacement of the stereotypes attached to each discipline would be displaced in
order to create a fluid process rather than an object. In this sense, authorship was broken down due to the multiple voices that become present in the final product rather than the signature of an "omnipresent" architect.²⁸

CHAPTER 9
EISENMAN / DERRIDA

In order to further bring the topic of this paper into the realm of the architectural, it is relevant to consider the ideas of a single architect who deals with many of the same issues. Peter Eisenman, a well known "academic" architect, uses many of the principles, relationships, and systems that are discussed in this paper, although he may not admit his alignment with feminist arguments. In his built and unbuilt projects he wrestles with problems of authority, language, oppositions, and frame. He argues against totalizing architectures which assert the authority of the architect, and in this sense aligns himself with the preceding feminist discourse.

In Eisenman's earlier work, particularly in House I - X, he carried out explorations of ways in which he sought to further explore the conditions that were set up by modernism. The methods by which he did this, however, were innovative, calling into question predetermined notions of "houseness." Eisenman brought into his architecture "syntactical relationships, carefully coded as abstract structures, instead of by the perception of their functional attributes," and "set out to expose the incompleteness of any 'perfect' system, and to build a new order out of this very
incompleteness."²⁹ Through various interpretations of this approach to architecture, he began his association with a newly developing theory of philosophy called deconstruction.

Through this association with deconstruction, Eisenman begins to engage himself with a number of important issues that are shared with feminist critiques. The issues that I wish to discuss here are those of authorship (and contained within this subject the oppositions presence/absence, place/noplace), and the combined attributes of dislocation/decentering/separation/betweenness.

The question of authorship has been addressed by many contemporary thinkers, but the one who is best known for dealing with this issue is Roland Barthes. In his canonical work The Death of the Author, he raises questions about the relevance of the almost sacred image of the author as viewed in literature.

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author ... A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination ... The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.³⁰

The text, as referred to by Barthes, is treated in a similar sense by Eisenman, and applied toward architecture. Eisenman also addresses the questions of the necessary authority of the architect by arguing against the practice of producing totalizing architectures which impose the will of the architect, and in this sense aligns himself with some factions of feminist discourse. In his essay "Architecture as a Second Language: The Texts of Between," Eisenman speaks of his attitudes toward power/authority/presence as well as his use of text in conjunction with architecture.

The idea of presence and the representations of presence represses all other interpretations, represses textuality. The idea that the classical orders or a functional type is natural to architecture is an example of the representation of presence. The dislocating text attacks the terms by which presence is represented, that is that origin, beauty, function, truth are "natural" (i.e. authentic) and not conventional to architecture. The dislocating text does not deny function or beauty but denies their authority and thus shifts the perception of them. A dislocating text in architecture confronts this idea of originary (or what is thought to be the originary) or authorial value; i.e., that there is a correct way to read the object.31

The use of the dislocating text, a third text that is neither architectural nor necessary theoretical, is a key to many of Eisenman's projects. For example, in one of the firm's most recent projects for the Frankfurt Rebstock Competition, the idea of the fold

---

"as a non-dialectic third condition" is fused with typical housing blocks to create a new reading. "In other words, through the concept of the fold it is possible to refocus or reframe what already exists in Frankfurt, to suggest how what exists could be something other than that which was repressed by former systems of authority such as figure and ground."\textsuperscript{32}

Derrida applies his language of deconstruction to Eisenman's architecture through a collaboration by the two, in which the product is a design for a park at La Vilette. This collaboration is very well documented through a series of articles and letters written by Eisenman, Derrida, and Jeffrey Kipnis. In his article "/Twisting the Separatrix/," Kipnis interprets the role of deconstruction, as invented by Derrida. He says of Eisenman's process:

A general positioning of (deconstruction's) motifs for architectural design: Do not destroy; maintain, renew, and reinscribe. Do battle with the very meaning of architectural meaning without proposing a new order. Avoid a reversal of valued aimed at an unaesthetic, uninhabitable, unusable, asymbolic, and meaningless architecture. Instead, destabilize meaning. To destabilize meaning does not imply progression toward any new and stable end, and thus can neither mean to end meaning nor to change meaning. Nor, obviously, does it mean to conserve a "true" meaning. To destabilize meaning is to maintain (a respect for) all of the

\textsuperscript{32}Peter Eisenman, "Viel/Faltig/Field/Feld," \textit{Architecture and Urbanism}, v. 252 (September 1991), 16-55.
meanings possible, as a consequence of the congenital instability of writing.³³

Derrida lends his voice to the ideology of Peter Eisenman just as he has entered the texts of other thinkers.

The initial concept for the park was provided by Derrida; the concept of *chora* which was in turn provided to him by Plato's *Timaeus*. This concept of *chora* thus becomes the dislocating text. *Chora* is "The unfathomable (abyssal) enigma with which Plato speaks of the architect-demiurge, of his place, of the inscription that he carries within himself of paradigmatic images, etc."³⁴ It is theoretically the place where the Demiurge formed the material universe while contemplating the Forms. It was a temporary vessel and in that sense embodies both a "absence of presence" and a "presence of absence." Derrida explains his reading of *chora*.

Everything happens as if the yet-to-come history of the interpretations of *chora* were written or even prescribed in advance, in advance reproduced and reflected in a few pages of the *Timaeus* 'on the subject' of *chora* 'herself' ('itself'). With its ceaseless relaunchings, this history wipes itself out in advance since it programs itself, reproduces itself, and reflects itself by anticipation. Is a prescribed, programmed, reproductive, reflexive history still a history?³⁵

---

³³Jeffrey Kipnis, "/Twisting the Separatrix/" *Assemblage* 14 (April 1991), 31-32.
³⁵Jacques Derrida, unpublished work, cited in Kipnis, "/Twisting the Separatrix/," 34 - 35.
This concept then brings architecture further into questions of gender. *Chora*, is the receptacle of all Becoming, which Plato compares to a mother.

Within the limits of the project, *chora* takes on relevance in that "since *chora* is the meeting place in which things that are not together in time or space nevertheless participate in one another in time and space, the place in which others co-inside, it reflects a law of analogy, anachrony, and coincidence that is not only their possibility but their necessity. *Chora* makes inevitability of what we call mere accident and error."\(^{36}\)

In his article, Kipnis also likens *chora* to the separatrix, the diagonal divider which separates sets of oppositions. He refers to each as containing an it/she gender identification. "Like Derrida's Socrates, the separatrix is not *chora* but it/she would look a lot like it/her if *chora* were something."\(^{37}\)

Eisenman uses the separatrix quite literally in the La Vilette project and his Wexner Center, but a pair of current architects, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, experiment with gender issues as well as literal and phenomenal separation in their project *A Delay in Glass*, or *The Rotary Notary and His Hot Plate, a Probe into the*.

\(^{36}\)Kipnis, "*Twisting the Separatrix*," 51.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., 51.
Instability of Gender. This project is an adaptation of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* to performance art/architectural investigation. The Bride and the Bachelor each inhabit one half of the stage. The actors are engaged with apparatus which physically separates them, but connects them virtually. It does this by use of a separating plane and a revealing plane, one a "wall" constructed of surgical rubber stretched on a frame, separating the sexes from view of each other. The revealing plane, a mirror at 45 degrees, reflects the image of the actor that is obscured behind the rubber frame, allowing the two actors to engage in a dialectic performance which denies their physical separation. The two are united, in their separation. "Top and bottom, violence and attraction, male and female are purposefully confused, thus 'dis-integrating the singular in favor of the more fertile multiple.'"\(^{38}\)

These issues are becoming much more important to our culture as roles between genders change. Although effective arguments can be made against the comparison, the work of Eisenman begins to speak about what can be done to address the concepts in an architectural sense. The amount of interest in this area of study is growing rapidly both among professionals and students, and it will lead to some interesting re-definitions in the future.

\(^{38}\)Betsky, 162.
I would like to conclude the paper with a quote that seems to sum up the difficulty with which we deal with the image.

The constitution of subjectivity is much like the acquisition of language. Speakers who acquire a language are constrained by the available vocabulary of that language and the rules that govern its use. Yet part of learning that language is acquiring the ability to be creative within those constraints.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{39}Susan Heckman, "Reconstituting the Subject: Feminism, Modernism, and Postmodernism," \textit{Hypatia}, vol. 6, no.2 (Summer 1991), 59.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX I

ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate 1: Aerial Site Photograph.................................40.
Plate 2: Site Plan: Ink on mylar..............................40.
Plate 3: Building Plans: Ink on mylar..........................41.
Plate 4: Descartes Illustration, 1637, showing the eye
as a camera obscura........................................42.
Plate 5: Dürrer Illustrations, showing artist
constructing drawing of model.............................42.
Plate 6: Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #54,
1980..................................................................43.
Plate 7: Jenny Holzer, Laments, 1989..........................43.
Plate 8: Cindy Sherman Analysis: Ink on mylar with
photoreproductions............................................44.
Plate 9: Cindy Sherman Analysis: Ink on mylar with
photoreproductions............................................45.
Plate 10: Jenny Holzer Analysis: Ink on mylar with
photocopies......................................................46.
Plate 11: Studio Schemes: Ink on mylar.......................47.
Plate 12: Sectional Schemes: Ink on mylar...................47.
Plate 14: Camera Obscura: William Storer, 18 c. "Royal
Accurate Delineator"......................................48.
Plate 15: Transverse Building Section: Ink on mylar.....49.
Plate 16: Building Section: Ink on mylar....................50.
Plate 17: Building Section: Ink on mylar....................50.
Plate 18: Building Plan, first level: Ink on mylar.........51.
Plate 19: Building Plan, second level: Ink on mylar......52.
Plate 20: Building Plan, third level: Ink on mylar.........53.
Plate 21: Building Plan, fourth level: Ink on mylar.......54.
Plate 22: Building Plan, fifth level: Ink on mylar.........55.
Plate 23: Building Plan, sixth level: Ink on mylar........56.
Plate 24: Perspective from Live Studio: Ink on mylar.....57.
Plate 25: Perspective from Newsroom: Ink on mylar......58.
Plate 26: Site Model from Southwest: Basswood and chipboard.................................................................59.

Plate 27: Detail View of Framework: Basswood and chipboard.....................................................................60.

Plate 28: View of News Studio Model: Cardboard, chipboard, wood, brass, glass, mirror, piano wire.................................................................61.

Plate 29: View of News Studio Model: Cardboard, chipboard, wood, brass, glass, mirror, piano wire.................................................................61.

Plate 30: View of News Studio Model: Cardboard, chipboard, wood, brass, glass, mirror, piano wire.................................................................62.

Plate 31: Model View from Southwest.................................................................63.

Plate 32: Model View from Northwest, with studios.................................................................63.

Plate 33: Model View from Northwest, without studios.............................................................................64.

Plate 34: Model View from Southwest.................................................................64.

Plate 35: Model Interior.........................................................................................65.

Plate 36: Model Interior.........................................................................................66.
Plate 1: Aerial Site Photograph

Plate 2: Site Plan: Ink on mylar
Plate 3: Building Plans: Ink on mylar
Plate 4: Decartes Illustration, 1637

Plate 5: Dürer Illustrations
Plate 6:  Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #54*, 1980

Plate 7:  Jenny Holzer, *Laments*, 1989
Plate 8: Cindy Sherman Analysis: Ink on mylar
Plate 13: Television Camera Lens Diagram

Plate 14: Camera Obscura: William Storer, 18 c.
Plate 16:  Building Section:  Ink on mylar

Plate 17:  Building Section:  Ink on mylar
Plate 20: Building Plan, third level: Ink on mylar
Plate 27: Detail View of Framework: Basswood and chipboard
Plate 28: View of News Studio Model

Plate 29: View of News Studio Model
Plate 31: Model View from Southwest

Plate 32: Model View from Northwest, with studios
Plate 33: Model View from Northwest, without studios

Plate 34: Model View from Southwest
Plate 36: Model Interior
APPENDIX II
TRANSCRIPT: ORAL DEFENSE OF THESIS

The oral defense of the thesis was held on Friday April 17, 1992 in the Jury Room at Anderson Hall.

JURORS PRESENT: Mark Wamble, William Cannady, Richard Ingersoll, Steven Harris, and Ellen Whitmore.

Steven Harris: I have questions with parts of your argument, because your argument began following, as far as I'm concerned, two bases, one having to do with perception and what is the studio going to do, what's the nature of one particular kind of media from another. Of information like with that model. And you're saying in very general terms that I can subvert this operation merely by showing something else. And that that something else is not specific, but just the act of having a mirror behind. That that categorically calls into question the nature of this objectified reader and that relationship. The implication to that is that it is in the device, the machine, the apparatus that supports the camera that those things are possible. Ironically, probably not as much in the apparatus that holds the camera as in the apparatus that holds the mirror and the degree to which the
camera and the mirror are coincident. Then it becomes an issue of the mirrors and how the mirrors reveal, conceal, divert and change the meaning. I have some confusion about that as a mechanism for deploying either the camera or the mirror relative to the use of the lens. At least I can't quite figure out how the lens is intimately related to that apparatus. The lens seems to be being used more representationally, which is, iconic. The lens means vision, means seeing. It is the only thing in your scheme which is iconic in that way. It is the only thing that is specific in that way. When that also supports a camera that moves through it, I think it undercuts the mechanism in some way. You would be hard pressed to convince me that that particular volumetric and spatial description would be the most effective way to subvert the issue of the Western male gaze argument. And as soon as I'm suspicious about that, I'm suspicious about a lot of it and all of a sudden the rooms for editing and production and stuff like that, while graphically seductive, lose the ability to convey some other kind of meaning other than volumetric agitation.

Paul Bonnette: Would your perception of the space change if there wasn't a camera with a mechanism, but monitors hanging within the space that don't necessarily but are about seeing?

S. H.: Think about a lens. It mediates, it inverts, it changes the view through it, and I think as a result of that one has to see
through it or move through it or in some way ... I use the analogous argument because you've given us a straight representational notion of a lens.

P. B.: I was aware of that, and I think if I were to continue this process, I might use a more amorphous form.

Mark Wamble: The thing that was interesting in this image here was that it was the last diagram in a series of diagrams that explained the evolution of the camera. The difference was that this piece had been added, so that image's last step through the box is a re-mediation. So that sort of expresses the fact that, in many ways, the high appropriation of the diagram is limiting that. Not necessarily limiting, it's too easy. But it made it an attempt to find that first foothold into how one begins to cut into a building. And appropriation of space by cutting, in itself, is an aggressive, powerful move.

Ellen Whitmore: I actually think this is a good project, and I'm prefacing what I'm saying with that because I am going to argue against some of the things you've done. I think it's important to talk about the use of analogy in architecture. It's problematic you're being so literal. Let's go back, because I think it's very interesting for serious consideration about how we've been subject to such a singular view of the world for so long. That somehow is attached to feminist text, rightly or
wrongly. Now you're attaching that very literally to the ability of a camera lens and mirrors to cause simultaneous views. And for me, that undermines the strength of your first observations. Actually, I wish, to increase the strength of your project, that, one, it wasn't a TV station. Then the building as architecture begins to be understood as something that's not a parti, in all the ways that it's not similar, in the ways that it tests boundaries by questioning conventions. Viewing, making boundaries, considering from a perspective. That, for me, is where it becomes more analogy and less literal in its connection, and, maybe, suggests more promise in real architectural terms of how to get at the big question that your first observations are asking. For me, it's more moving when, really, in an architectural sense, you begin to question what is perceived as a whole space and then not. The double reading type space.

S. H.: I agree with Ellen about the program. In that I think you could benefit from not having the coincidence of the reporting, the kind of broadcast medium. The straight program itself in coincidence with the subversive program. And I also mentioned that I thought there was a kind of generality about the nature of your subversion which, I think I can give you a counter-example; The courthouse. They're seriously questioning the role of the judge and the authority of that individual in our culture. The courthouse ostensibly resolves
issues of the lease and housing, bringing interest to the document of the lease itself. Then this concern about the relationship where the lease is based on handshakes. That brings in the choreography that in turn leads to the spectator of this court who no longer looks at the court frontally, but looks through a mirror at it in plan. So what we traditionally understand to be a court is now transferred in plan view where the lease, the hand, those pieces begin to take primary importance in a planimetric view. That is a courthouse where you use a way of seeing and a particular inversion of a way of seeing through a lenticular form. I am most interested in the news studio. I think because of the mirror in the back and the mirror and the camera. But that does not interrogate what you mean to interrogate, because control is in the hands of the camera operator. It's just extending into space of that circumstance.

M. W.: You mention circumstance, which is interesting because of the proximity of this studio to this lozenge shaped space which has a camera that moves at a different rhythm, and that their interface is somehow circumstantial.

S. H.: They pass by each other occasionally.

M. W.: Right. And the preparation of the diagram goes back to how does one begin to make these first incisions into something
that is stable without projecting yourself as yet another individual from a position of power.

S. H.: If you're trying to resolve the hegemony of one group over another, that clearly becomes the problem with being a male feminist.

Richard Ingersoll: It depends whether you see male and female as opposition. There are many who don't. I want to get to something else. One could question whether you can destabilize hegemony's rule thru the mechanism, the camera itself, when the power of the medium ... This is essentially telling you that the medium is the message. It makes you very aware of the medium, so you'll see the prompter notes, you'll see all those things, the gestures that are manipulating the information. But the real power is in the editing, and montage.

S. H.: The ultimate power is to own the studio, to own the camera.

R. I.: But I'm just saying the production of the thing that we see, the clips that we see, it all has to do with how you manage information, how you edit it. And that is not always here. You haven't attacked the editing process. Well, in the circulation system. I got at you with this panoptic question with the camera. Panopticism is the reinforcing of this central vision. So if in fact it is just a camera going through space, it defeats
itself, in some ways, because it is a sort of a spy camera. The
problem is to fracture that process.

P. B.: I wrestled with that problem, between the camera as
surveillance and being a moving 'new perspective.' But this
space itself, without the camera does it, in a sense, too, as
these people begin to see the production process exposed from
both sides.

S. H.: If the camera were controlled by, let's say, a random program,
then this operation could take place. One could eliminate this
idea of control. If that were one's goal, I think we can predict
how one could accomplish that kind of thing. I would suspect
that to the degree that certain aesthetic and philosophical
agendas are politicized, to the degree that they are attached to
marginalized groups of people. Then, conceivably, that critique
is directed toward some outcome of sorts. It's one thing to
call into question the problem itself, but it's another thing to
call it into question in such a way that it becomes something
else. I think that there's a point in there where you don't want
to break control of one group, you want to expand access to
that control, or represent access to that control, or represent
the fact that there is no access to that control.

P. B.: That's a difficult thing to do.
R. I.: Well, you tried to represent by splitting open the edges of the building. It seems to say and to invite visual access.

M. W.: I appreciate a point you made, also, during your presentation about ... You were talking about the implication of the subject of this hopeful indeterminacy, of the way in which the final image is projected into the satellite. And I think it's pretty critical, because I think that it's important that we understand the media versus being mediated, given the interpretation as well as the information. That seems, to me, to be that space where this thesis, or this sort of objective can begin to operate. For me, the only place, at this point, that I see it operating is in that indeterminacy and the understanding that there exists this indeterminacy about the way in which images are collected and regenerated for us. But I think the thesis operates in that space, the place where it operates so far. I think, though, that this is a larger project, and it's going to last for awhile. And that eventually the literalness of the diagrams will be set aside and perhaps the fact that it's not a television studio won't make that much difference.

S. H.: I think that you could go back and look again at Liz Diller and Scofodio's exhibition. All of the apparatus that were a part of that exhibition seemed to be parasitic. The actual places where the camera operated were utterly mundane. But the control began to be what is the focus of this frame as opposed
to that frame. So, again, the interrogation through all of that stays on very, very specific issues. Very tightly framed, if you will, not only by monitor. The chair is upside down, so you sit in it and you can read the text and your ass. All those kinds of things are set into it in such a way, perhaps as local issues among issues that are tied together, but at least each one of those issues is very clear. I would also make the argument that the clarity of that depends upon a relatively benign envelope in which it applies itself. I think that when you're dealing with issues of vision, of presentation, perception, one has to be very, very careful that you don't trivialize your gesture by doing something else somewhere else.

E. W.: I think that in some ways, what you're doing almost makes architecture irrelevant. When Diller and Scopidio placed their camera, they did it very carefully in order to directly engage architecture. Like mounting the camera in the door, so that as you enter a room, it sweeps the view of that room. And it takes a very architectural and ritualistic idea about the threshold and gives a new perception. You need to think about ways you can more effectively do this in the television station.