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ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

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A flaw in the use of difference in the semiotic basis of deconstruction is exposed. The finer grained, flexible notion of difference described by Gilles Delueze is inserted in its place. Freed from illustrating difference as a goal, deconstruction becomes a flexible method of analysis that can inform a wide range of architectural solutions. Reinterpreting deconstruction focuses attention on extant architectural discourse.
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Preface

This thesis seeks to make sense of the rapidly evolving discipline of architecture.

As we approach the close of the twentieth century it is clear that we are in a period of tremendous cultural transition. I am struck by the similarity of our time to the period prior to the Renaissance. The coalescence of cultural phenomena known as the Renaissance was preceded by a dismantling, questioning and recomposing the institutions that defined the Western world.

As recently as the 1950s a cohesive set of ideals described as "modern" guided the pursuit of philosophy, economics, poetry, architecture, art and manufacturing in the United States and Western Europe. Modernism began to be questioned and recomposed in the early 1960s. As a result a series of short-lived architectural movements have emerged. They have been embraced and discarded with such rapidity that their impact on the profession has been limited. Yet, I suspect that this reduced "shelf-life" of ideas is more a result of developments in communications technology than of the relative worth of the ideas themselves.

How then are we to make sense of the changing architectural landscape? How can an architect develop an approach to working that is not simply personal or
retrograde but takes part in the current discourse?

While current discourse focuses on generating new ideas-on the "cutting edge"-on the growth plate, I seek potential in ideas that are no longer at the fore. Deconstruction and Folding have been examined briefly by the discipline of architecture. I believe that re-examination of these ideas will yield further salient work.

Strict deconstruction as described by Jacques Derrida is neither a method of analysis nor a process that has an end (termination). Yet, by distilling a methodology from it and assuming that it has an end deconstruction can be flexibly applied to architecture. The written portion of my thesis examines a design process developed from deconstruction. I look at deconstruction's origin and how the design methodology differs from other architectural readings of deconstruction, allowing the methodology to be understood in the larger context of architecture.

After reading 'Ex Libris Architecture', by Lars Lerup (see Appendix) two years ago I began to assemble the primary elements of the methodology discussed herein. The second item in the Appendix, 'Pavilion Housing', describes a project in which I test and hone the methodology. The text of the paper is the latest development of the process.
Folding in architecture has been developed as a continuation of discourses by Gilles Deleuze and Rene Thom. Peter Eisenman and other architects involved in this work were less compelled by the formal and spatial consequences of Folding than by the theoretical aspects. The formal language of Folding is the starting point for the design portion of my thesis (see Appendix: "Form, Folding and Architecture"). In order to develop the formal language of folded architecture, I first define the unique characteristics of folded forms. I then suggest a strategy for siting in relation to an existing physical fold as a way of developing an interaction with the site that earlier projects lacked. The project, a bayou park, reflects the programmatic limitations of an architecture that is personal, expressive and sculptural.

My intent is not to insist that I have the answers to how deconstruction and Folding should inform architecture. Rather, I suggest that a fruitful way of pursuing current architecture may be to search among and re-examine the ideas already generated. This approach may not directly produce a cohesive architecture for the 21st century -a new order-if indeed one is possible( see Appendix: "Koolhaas, Cool house"). But I believe such introspection will yield perspective on the our current cultural condition and will generate new ideas that are informed by this understanding.
Introduction

The past thirty years have been marked by a search for cultural definition. As recently as the 1950s a cohesive set of values loosely described as "modern" guided the pursuit of philosophy, economics, poetry, architecture, art and manufacturing. Although modernism has ceased to be as pervasive as it once was, its influence is undeniable. It is presently a backdrop which is not fully engaged in generative activity. Still, the cultural memory of a single, active ideology remains.

"In his seminal book Space, Time and Architecture, S. Giedion used as a subtitle 'The growth of a New Tradition', intending that the various currents of Modernism, in spite of their differences, have a common denominator, and that they imply a new kind of 'development'" (CN-S p.92.).

"(Le Corbusier in his 'Five points to a new architecture represents) the first deliberate construction of the New Tradition...(where) the new conception of space was related to the 'most primitive things'"(CN-S p. 93.).

In the absence of modernism a search for a defining cultural ideal is underway. The pace of this quest is increasingly frantic. In architecture the past thirty years have seen a string of increasingly ephemeral "theories" attract attention. Brutalism, Contextualism, Post Modernism, deconstruction, Folding, BIGNESS et.al. have gained ascendance and displaced their antecedents. In their turn each has captivated the academic and professional architecture communities.
The speed of the search is increasing. With this acceleration the depth of the
examination of each theory suffers. The movement of these ideas resembles
that of clothing fashion more than architectural theory. Ideas proffered in this
milieu will be short-lived and quickly replaced by a new concept.

"Architecture has been marked by short-lived fashions such as Brutalism,
Structuralism....Post Modernism, Neo-Rationalism and Deconstruction." (CN-S p. 83.).

I do not think we can simply dismiss the current state of architectural theory. It is
a reflection of profound changes in communication technology, the emerging
non-reductive sciences and global politics. It is unlikely that a single "new order"
will result from this cultural quest as was the case with modernism. This period
of cultural investigation may produce a lattice of dynamic approaches. This
lattice could be assembled and reassembled within the course of a project or
within the course of a career depending on the architect's disposition. It may
cohere into legible movements, or fragment into a mass of individual
approaches.

The challenge for architects is to make sense of the current situation in a way
that is neither retrograde (returning to earlier ideals which have ceased to be
salient) nor a blind search for the new. Architects must make sense of the
current situation if any hope of taking control of an architecture that is of our time
is possible. During the past thirty years much intellectual ground has been covered which warrants close examination.

This paper proposes a method of approaching design; a method derived from ground already covered. It mines the practice of deconstructivist architecture to develop a methodology. Fundamentally this methodology differs from deconstruction in that it does not dictate content.

I began this study over a year ago as I sought to become familiar with the recent history of architectural theory. I found that after a brief period of acceptance, the "architecture of deconstruction" was virtually abandoned. Yet its formal aesthetic remains influential in current design. The vocabulary, issues and de facto procedures associated with deconstruction also remain at the heart of a much current architecture. Rather than accept deconstruction's demise, I felt obligated to become familiar with deconstructivist theory and the discussions surrounding it in order to reach my own conclusions. As I read more, I came to believe that Derrida's project of deconstruction as manifest in architecture, contains a valuable methodology. I felt that the agenda deconstruction was developed to serve is less valuable.

"(The) arbiters of academic fashion, with a finality usually reserved for tie widths, have taken to pronouncing deconstruction 'dead" (NYT MAG p. 22).

" 'It is not like it was,' Derrida does admit, 'but psychoanalysis has taught that the dead-a dead parent, for example-can be more alive for us, more scary, than
the living" (NYT MAG p.22).

Deconstructivist methodology is a process of selecting and analyzing specific aspects of a text, transforming and finally reassembling them in a manner that forwards a position. The position is always the same: uncover repressed meaning, instability, impurity, conspiratorially suppressed potential, "drawing out previously unnoticed disruptive properties and making them thematic" (DA p. 16) in short illustrating difference. The following discussion shows that this methodology can be transformed by subtly shifting the role of difference. This modification frees the method from its predetermined agenda, making it a more powerful, flexible system.

Deconstruction

When I speak of deconstruction in this paper it is the particular strain of deconstruction acquired through architectural projects (built and unbuilt). When architect Mark Wigley states, "an architectural reading of deconstructive discourse must be an abusive one" (AOD p. 206) he means abusive to deconstruction as developed by Jacques Derrida.

The type of "text" an architect is likely to deconstruct is vastly different than the textual institutions Derrida had in mind when he began his "deconstructivist
project." Architecture, by necessity has molded Derrida's notions to its own end. Derrida claims deconstruction is not a method; it is not a form of analysis. Suspension of these titles is possible where written ideas remain conceptual, when they are taken up in the verbal realm. The physical nature of architecture negates this possibility. If one is to design and build a building, ultimately a form of analysis and a methodology must be adopted.

"Deconstruction is neither an analysis nor a critique. Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one" (NYT MAG p. 23).

"Deconstruction guards against the belief that the world is simple and can be known with certainty" (NYT MAG p. 22).

In 1988 the Museum of Modern Art in New York mounted a show called, "Deconstructivist Architecture. "It was among the first large exhibitions of architectural projects inspired by the ideas and growing formal aesthetic of deconstruction. In his book about the show, written with Philip Johnson, Mark Wigley describes the work and philosophy:

"(Deconstruction) challenges the values of harmony, unity and stability and proposes instead a different view of structure: the view that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure. A deconstructivist architect is one who locates the inherent dilemmas within buildings...identifies symptoms of repressed impurity. The form is interrogated to bring forth the impurities Each project activates some part of the context to disturb the rest of it, drawing out previously unnoticed disruptive properties and making them thematic" (DA p. 11 & 16).
How is this accomplished in architecture? The most basic issue in deconstruction is metaphysical: the world is not as it appears. We are not able to understand what the world is, based on our traditional apprehension of it. It is different than it appears. Given this assumption, I have found that there is a series of steps architects commonly use in deconstructivist designs.

**Text**

**Methodology:** Select a text (any subject that can contain or suggest cultural meaning or symbolic content). In an architectural project this could be a building, a common form or space, a typology, institution, geographical feature or cartographic pattern.

**Intention:** The subject is selected based on suspicions or intuition that it contains veiled structures or hidden potentials.

**Analysis**

**Methodology:** Analyze the text. Locate "inherent dilemmas. Symptoms of repressed impurity. Unnoticed disruptive properties."

**Intention:** Find the unfamiliar in the familiar. Identify what is different than expected in the subject. Locate actual structures or organizing principles that are not apparent in traditional or cursory observation of the text.
Re presentation

Methodology: Represent (compose) the subject(s) of the analysis in a manner that is born of and guided by its discoveries.

Intention: The difference between what is expected and what is presented becomes the generative principle of the new form. The composition of the form is based on difference. Thus, difference is the content of the design.

The premise of deconstruction is weak when used in architecture. Showing the world as different than it appears is not imparting useful information. The content in deconstructivist architecture is born of the individual instances of difference and the manner of their unveiling. There are as many "inherent dilemmas" and "repressed impurities" as there are texts to analyze.

"Deconstruction creates a disturbance at the signifier's level, employing a strategy of différence (the term being a word-play upon the (French) verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer') whereby meaning differs and is deferred from an expected definition" (DOV p. 7).

"(the) representation (of difference) does, after all, shift our meaning-making machine of difference into the neutral gear of différence, where not only is meaning, but action, endlessly deferred" (SEB p. 198).
Indeed, Derrida would suggest that the project never ends. The result of a deconstructive iteration is, itself, open to being deconstructed. Derrida developed the concept of *différance* in response to this notion. *Différance* leaves each deconstructive discourse eternally open. It is a way of acknowledging the further deconstruction that could take place. *Différance* is not difference. It should not be confused with difference which is instrumental in the following discussions of semiotics.

Where and how does the further deconstruction take place in a built project? It never does. Architectural design must end in every project. Design often continues until the final fastener is in place but ultimately terminates in every single building. Architecture by its nature requires such a conclusion.

When designing by deconstruction one is confronted with the impossibility of conclusion and the predetermined agenda of ferreting out and illustrating difference.

**Difference**

The agenda of deconstruction is limiting and, I believe, based on a misplaced understanding of the role of difference in the semiotic assumptions of the process. Difference is at the heart of the semiotic school of thought known as
'structuralism'. Derrida is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure who is considered the founder of structuralism.

"Difference is a meaning-making machine" (SEB p. 187).
"In language there is only difference." (CIGL p.120)

Although Derrida's work is described as "post structuralism", he is thought of as, "extend(ing) de Saussure's thought to logical conclusions that de Saussure did not anticipate" (CTS65 p.645). The following digression describes structuralism and Derrida's relation to it. I will then introduce the structuralist-based semiotic ideas of Gilles Deleuze. His vision of the role of difference in the communication of meaning can be combined with the architectural process developed in service of deconstruction to create a methodology that provides a basis for a broader analytical agenda than simple deconstruction.

Saussure believed that language could be described as a science or a mathematics. In order to develop this approach he subtracted the referent or speaker from the linguistic equation. He described what remained as a binary system of signifier (the sound image/word) and signified (concept/idea). A third term, sign, is comprised of the signifier and the signified. The sign functions by expressing difference from other signs. Thus, difference organizes and groups signs. This develops a basis for cognition of specific content for individual signs.
He argued that there is no relation between a word and the idea it signifies. Their grouping is arbitrary: it occurs simply by chance, habit or convenience (CTS65 p.7). A sign is identified by the meaning or value it may be associated with and its position relative to other signs. It can become disassociated from one value and still retain a certain identity as a particular type of sign relative to other signs (CIGL p. 114).

The roots of Derrida's deconstruction lie in his responses to structuralism. He accepts language as a system of difference but rejects the implied privileging of speech over writing. He believes that this does not allow the complete loss of the referent (subject, speaker). Language is more purely abstract when there is no verbal inflection, no physical person making sounds (CTS65 p.8).

He further reads into the arbitrary nature of the alliance between signifier and signified. If there is no intrinsic relationship, neither is privileged over the other. One can be certain that they differ from each other but the issue of order, or eminence is deferred, endlessly. This is the genesis of *différance* (CTS65 p.8). Derrida finds in this an instability that undermines the presumption of order in structuralism (and ultimately in any "text"). The recovery of actual order from falsely presumed order is basis for his 'project of deconstruction'.
"Derrida's philosophical position, like his method of analysis, systematically undermines the presumption of a stable interpretive context to which the reader may habitually appeal for the determination of meaning" (CTS65 p.79). In this position is the message: 'things are not as they appear'. I believe that in his response to structuralism, Derrida has become overly preoccupied with the notion of difference as a topic of inquiry. He finds that language as a system of difference is itself different from what it seems. The means by which the system operates is translated into the end to which his philosophical position works. This conundrum confuses the role of difference as a semiotic instrument. Difference becomes the signified rather than a means by which the signified (as 'sign') is understood.

"Every text submitted to deconstruction will yield the same theme, which may be true enough but remains only that story: the allegory of uninterpretability." (CTS65 p. 21).

The structuralism of Saussure that Derrida "carries to it's logical conclusion," is closed and self-referential (CTS65 p.7). It is born of Derrida's insistence that writing be the linguistic mode examined in semiotics. When the discussion is extended to include the realm of the physical i.e. architecture, deconstruction is even less successful. The finality of the design and construction process disallows différence. Différance can only exist as a rhetorical conceit without physical consequences.
When difference is the signified, the range of what can be communicated is severely limited. What strict deconstruction as a design methodology makes possible is interesting in its first few iterations but quickly becomes redundant.

Gilles Deleuze suggests that communication be understood as an inclusive matrix of comparison. Related to Saussure but infinitely more complex, he suggests a much finer grain of cognition is possible (GDTP p. 248).

Deleuze is not directly reacting to structuralism or post-structuralism. He is involved in developing a theory that describes the nature of change and transformation he calls "pure becoming" (DR p. 4). In his decades long articulation of pure becoming he has had to develop and refine a system of semiotics.

Like Saussure and Derrida, Deleuze drops the subject from his discussions. He calls the ideas "pre-subjective", as they exist without relation to a speaker or referent (DR p.9). Unlike the structuralists and post-structuralist Deleuze insists that identity and meaning are irreducible elements and as such are intrinsic to a signifier. This is known as the "haecceity". They are like proper nouns. When a concept is its name; when it is irreducible from its name, it is a haecceity (DIA
p.vii). "Red" is a haecceity. These are the primary elements of the Deleuzian theory of communication.

The character of the haecceity is such that signifier and signified are understood as one. There is no hierarchy. "Significance and the signifier enjoy no privilege. We should simultaneously study all regimes of pure signs from the point of view of the abstract machines they put into play. A concrete semiotics is a mixture of several regimes of signs" (DIA p.113). The suggestion that it is possible to conceive of signifier and signified simultaneously voids the need for différence.

Organization within and between regimes of signs is the task of difference. Difference and identity (haecceities) operate together producing meaning or sense (GDTP p.46).

Difference operates by repetition, comparison and identifying variation. It travels between identities and between regimes of signs grouping, separating and relating them (DR p.7). Again, this notion is similar to the mechanics of Saussure but describes a system that develops more refined gradients of meaning.
"A regime of signs is never to be confused with either a language or a language system" (DIA p. 115). Regimes of signs set the relations and systems that are expressed in languages but carry on a metabolism that is distinct from that of languages. They are not always exactly or fully expressed in language.

In language it is possible, however, to observe the interaction of different regimes of signs. Words that change meaning or operate in different syntaxes are evidence of the flux of regimes of sign (DIA p.118). Consider how American English, for example, is continually being reinterpreted in regional dialects. This is evidence of the operation of regimes of signs that surface as linguistic variation. The actual regimes of signs exist as a sort of collective cultural subconscious in each region.

Haecceities interact by combining, breaking apart and recombining in a constantly flowing abstract machine called a regime of signs. The content or meaning of a haecceity is modified by its association with or difference from others in its group. This is similar to the mechanism by which Saussure’s system of communication operates. The nature of the elements doing the operating (haecceities versus signs) is what distinguishes Deleuze from Saussure.
The role of difference in Deleuze's semiotics is that of a mobile organizer. It is like a screen that makes relationships clear. This is at heart of a process of communicating information. Deleuze repositions difference as an instrument of communication. He returns it to the service of the signified as suggested by Saussure but in a semiotic system that describes a far finer degree of communication.

**Design**

The design process I propose combines architectural deconstruction and Deleuzian difference. If Derrida's notion of difference is replaced with Deleuzian difference architectural deconstruction becomes a series of analytic and compositional steps - a process - without a predetermined agenda. Free from Derrida's quest to uncover hidden structures the design project becomes a reflection of site and programmatic issues refracted through the lens the architect's design agenda.

The process is based on architectural deconstruction. But the process is free from the Derridean agenda of illustrating difference. It is a flexible, universal system of analysis, interpretation and composition. This process can be described in a series of steps similar to those of deconstruction in architecture. It
is guided by the personal agenda of the designer rather than a search for overlooked order.

The steps are:

**Source**

**Methodology:** Select a topic or area or inquiry that will inform the project. Owing perhaps to my previous degree in history, I tend to look to social history as a source for design material. Other architects might be interested in color theory; others may look to geometry or mathematics, chaos theory or evolution. There will likely be broad, thematic sources and smaller, program or form-specific sources operating in the same project. In the Pavilion Housing project (see Appendix) we looked at the social history of our site. The Ramada imagery is thematic. The out buildings (smoke house, well and privy) are a series of subjects that inform small programmatic moves.

**Intention:** The source is a broad guide for the project. It establishes a set of topics that inform the design. Working within a broad theme provides the project with a coherence, a sense of legibility. It also creates a standard or reference by which design responses can be judged.
Analysis

Methodology: An aspect of the source is scrutinized for ways its reinterpretation can inform the design. The Ramada (from Appendix) is an ad hoc structure built as needed from materials found on site. The form of our modern Ramada (pavilion) was based on the saw-toothed pattern of shot gun house gables found on our site. Analysis of the Ramada gave us an idea of how to go about composing the pavilion.

Intention: Material for interpretation is located. Certain subjects may be deemed unsuitable and discarded at this point. The process of selection and examination continues until there is sufficient material to manipulate in service of the design goals.

Composition

Methodology: The resulting form or space is based on an interpretation of the source material. It may be composed based on formal manipulation, or it may be developed according to organizational principles or other ideas recovered from analysis of the source material. The final composition of the pavilion (Appendix) was generated by a series of formal
manipulations: we inverted the gable roof-form, rotated it, then stretched it across the footprint of the building.

**Intention:** The designer's agenda becomes the mediating force between the source and the final form. Thus, the agenda can be traced and developed through the project.

As is true with all design, this process is not necessarily serial. The designer may begin with an idea about a certain type of analysis, or composition, and search out material that supports this end. A project can be analyzed at various points in terms of these steps and guided by them. They may be employed as a means of interpreting a project -ex post facto- rather than generating it.

By making the source traceable throughout the project the designer maintains control over the coherence of his/her architecture. The flexible nature of the methodology I have arrived at is essential. It allows the designer to cull through source material and test it in design until a project is assembled that contains a comprehensible series of issues.
Conclusion

Deleuze presents a credible and flexible semiotic theory that I propose in place of Derrida's. The design process I propose is, in essence, deconstruction without Derrida's agenda. It operates within the Deleuzian system and is endlessly interpretable by each designer that uses it.

Rather than proposing the new methodology as a theory of communication (which is the basis of deconstruction) I offer it as a way of designing. It is derived from a critique of a system that has semiotic implications. By tracing this system (deconstruction) back through its philosophical roots I have isolated what I believe is the basis of deconstruction's problematic operation in design: the misplaced role of difference in Derrida's semiotic model. I offer Deleuzian semiotics as the model for communication and cognition that operates both in deconstruction and in the methodology I distill from deconstruction.

This methodology was born by misreading of deconstructivist architecture. I found that certain deconstruction projects (works by Lars Lerup are chief among them—see Appendix 'Ex Libris Architecture') were interesting in terms of content but were not formally part of the predictable decon aesthetic (non-right solids, skewed grids, etc.). I took these as my case-studies in deconstruction. The methodology I learned through these projects focuses on an agenda
external to the simple exposition of difference as prescribed by Derrida. The
formal aesthetic of this approach is more potentially varied than that of straight
deconstruction projects. As I read further into the lexicon of deconstruction I
began to realize that whatever the intentions of Lerup et. al., they (and by now I)
were operating outside the realm of deconstruction. This paper has attempted
to define how this approach is distinct from deconstruction.

It might be suggested that I have deconstructed architectural deconstruction in
this paper. Although it is tempting to defer answering this I will not. The
difference between my work and deconstruction is that I am not simply exposing
the true nature of the issues and representing them in a fashion that is born of
the difference between the true and the false perceptions. I am mining
deconstruction for a more useful and universal methodology that is from
intended for use in design from the start.
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Appendix

Koolhaas, Cool house
Pavilion Housing
Ex Libris Architecture
Form, Folding and Architecture
I began to suspect that this MoMA show might really be something big. Could it be the herald of the new order? I arranged for a weekend visit from New York and bought a copy of "Building the New York". On the train from Boston, I read the book and dreamed of the new order.

When I arrived at Penn Station, however, it was clear that the show was not the herald of the new order. It was an opportunity to indulge in nostalgia. The whole show was full of "yesteryear".

The New York Order

Architectural plans are tough, and I am not a professional in the field. But the plans for the new order look very different. They seem to be dominated by the architects themselves. Yet the spirit is evident in Fried's work going to the show. In his "American Dream," there is a sense of the new order. In his "American Dream," there is a sense of the new order.

This is a time of cultural rejuvenation. The fashionable designers are out there, and the public is ready to adopt new ideas. I am feeling optimistic about the future. I am looking forward to the show.

The New York Order

This is my general view of the New York Order. The show was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. _Cultural Order_ was the name given to the exhibition, and it was presented with great enthusiasm. The show featured models of the new order, including a model of the "New York Order." The models were displayed in a large glass case, along with the plans and drawings of the architects.

This show was perhaps a mistake, but it was not the celebration of the new order. It was the unveiling of the new order. As we left the show, I noticed a model of the Falling Water, a new scheme from the past of the old order. It was a mistake, but it was a mistake that I should have been."
EX LIBRIS ARCHITECTURE

Lars Lerup

So I have erected one of [the Collector's] dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting.
3. In the Margin

In the Distillation universe, Deconstruction is the mode of analysis, while writing is the mode of composition. Design as composition is a form of writing that lies beyond the analytical concerns of Deconstruction. The reader may see no relationship between the work discussed here and work of the architects of Deconstruction; however, the basic concern of Derrida's project—to invert the way we think by radically displacing the understandings of our thought processes—is shared by both Deconstruction and grammarology.

The formal difference between my work and theirs may be due to the apparent preoccupation on the part of the architects of Deconstruction with the representation of the analysis implied by Deconstruction, its decentered and dispersed representation. I am instead preoccupied with grammarology and its "interrogation of the relationship between knowledge and metaphor."

My concern is with the poetics of modern composition, and with Derrida's suggestion that writing is no longer the representation of what we say. In architectural terms, form is no longer the representation of what we do (what the user or occupant does as represented by the program), but is rather a autonomous independent process that weaves new webs of potential meaning with its own history and metaphorical parallels. This suggestion underlines the very basis for design as we have known it, opening the door to a new play of form and meaning.

Now on to the scene of writing.

2. Firewood

While driving through the Alps to see an old house, site of a new library extension, I notice stacks of firewood in the periphery of my vision. The stacks, on closer inspection, lean against extreme walls of houses, protected by the overhanging eaves, or sometimes form entire houses of firewood. piled like bricks, they are as a building material: the selection of a tree, the sawing, the hauling, the cutting, the transport, the chopping, and the piling.

Masturizing in their pristine manors, under each of the eaves, next to each house, each stack of firewood is in a passive production, beyond both style and representation. Added to a house's walls, a stack gains thickness and weight. When a stack fills an entire wall, the roof of the house belongs to the stack and—reduced, whitened, mute, compact—it seems in its rudimentary stack-formation—the pile of wood becomes a house without an interior, a monolith, as a model of a house is more like a house than the house itself.

When held up as a pedestal or comparison with the thousands of books in the old house, firewood surreptitiously moves into the lib-realm of writing, next to Derrida's gummic or -wood, paper, books, texts, words, and the spaces in between.

3. Library

The old house used Palladian and villa-like, against the surrounding Alps. The books that the owner obsessively and painstakingly cut and stacked against the walls and in little piles on the floor are his fuel. In love there. They are an integral part of the house. This pedaled by the great and ever present multitude of books and their contents, the house becomes thicker, more processed against the chill of the winter and the rains, while the rooms become smaller and cozier.

Books, too, like these place as building material.

There is a striking parallel between the stored physical heat of the nearly stacked firewood outside the house and the stored intellectual heat of the nearly stacked books inside the house.

Books, like firewood, are bound, held, hand-shaped, and hand-sized, ready to be lifted, shifted, and stored away for a rainy day. Such knowledge, housing in the synonymous fold between the body and firewood, induced me to respond enthusiastically to the book collector's request for drawings for a private library adjacent to his house.

4. Conclusion

Returning to America, I am haunted by the plans, the books, the firewood, the stacked wall tissue, books, and firewood, and the mysterious light that dominates the interior of the house. This is an ordinary house. This is an ordinary house. This is an ordinary house.

Instead, the more I can imagine, the more I see that literature is the only true way to understand the human condition and the way we think.
behind the house, showering light down its slopes into the rooms. Here it intertwines with the thousands of fires lit by the books.

Architecture, like alchemy, engenders in me a desire to forge an alloy of form and content. Until the project is finished I play with rules that may be set, but whose destiny is uncertain. When the collector adds his books to the walls of his house, he (unknowingly) gives them to architecture. The metaphysical and actual proximity between wood, book, and wall produces a smoldering fire that consumes into one material in the new library.

More obliquely, when the collector gives his books away, his personal needs and desires are set aside in favor of the books and architecture. Now he must work for architecture as I do.

5. Transformation

If the present villa is a house with space for books and their collector, the new library addition must (in the spirit of fusion) transform this triad, so that book and house become inseparable, and the collector (the reading subject) becomes but an uneasy visitor. The displacement of the reader in favor of the book becomes my obsession, part of a general strategy to overthrow the hegemony of the subject, architecturally and economically speaking, as well as to explore the potential relationship between subject and object.

The severance of subject and object is not intended to demonstrate some modern malaise, but rather to free them both from dependency. Curiously, this may allow the subject to inhabit the previously inaccessible solid of the surrounding woodpile, however briefly and fleetingly. He may become like Sir John Soane, who gladly removed himself to the attic of his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields because his collection of fragments left no more
space in which to live. The house and the books are no longer an expression and extension of the subject, they
are a world by themselves.

5.1 Compression

The first strategy in transforming the villa is to make a
new compound wall of concrete (thinner but as strong, as
sound) and books within the thickness of the existing wall.
Compression is not of the powerful signs of modernity—
what Karl Popper called "the epiphenomenalization of tech-
nology"—and becomes the leading theme of the project.
The old villa is squeezed like a lemon, and its subject, like
the pipe, is expelled to the outside.

5.2 Rotation and Shuffle

The villa, with its central hall (the Polladian role) and sur-
rounding esplanade of rooms, holds another secret that
leads to a second compression. The A-B-A array of rooms
reveals that the As are larger than the Bs. When the plan is
rotated to provide the ground for the Bookhouse, it is also
shuffled (like a card trick) to produce a new esplanade B-B-A-B,
a compressed version of the old plan.

Rotating the plan (turning the page) reveals a desire to see
the old villa as the mana and source of the new. Turning
the page on the old villa allows the new to emerge. The
Bookhouse is a shadow of—or a direct quotation from—
the old villa, since I have deliberately taken a bite out of its
façade. This bite, with its quotations marks-cum-rebus, is a
monaural that is now in the process of digestion.

5.3 Flattening and Squeezing

Rotated and shuffled, the house of the new plan is reas-
sembled, but the symmetry bothers me. It suggests closure,
finally, and a simple repetition of the old.

Beneath this symmetrical ground lie more complex, open,
and yet another room architectural strata. They can be 
be seen as a means to figure or space; that more or less 
obscurely within a whole web of potential space and 
associated strategies. Two strategies are selected: flattening 
which makes it look like a box wall and squeezing to make a box 
towers.

A series of realizations occurs at this point. First, I begin to 
see the interior of the Boukhoub as a geography—the 
artificial dualism of the landscape that itself is a virtual inte-
nior because of its enveloping quality, the sky is its ceiling.

Secondly, I realize that in handling the architectural 
substance is much like cutting, shaping, and stacking 
wood. The architect's gesture is in the landscape's 
'substance' as parallel (in more than one way) to 
the box wall within the interior of the Boukhoub; the 
box towers become the Alps.

The symmetrical plan of the old villa, once unraveled, is 
put under compositional tension: the outline of rooms to 
the right is flattened into a thick solid wall, while the rooms to the 
left are gathered and individually squeezed into three 
box towers—a symmetry without likeness. The air, the 
atmosphere of the old villa, is compressed into the new 
corridors of wall and tower, and the old unified walls 
become the empty space of the subject, leading to the last 
transformation.

5.4 Transformation

The great hall in the old villa is the central communication 
core, organizing the rest of the spaces and organizing 
the vision; the hall offers up the villa to its visitors. 
This serving quality, as in served and serving spaces in 
Rahn's vocabulary, becomes the metaphorical conduit for 
its transformation into the great "table" in the new library.

Entering from the main tower of the villa, the potential
The reader steps onto the giant table that stands in the center of the new space: the reader is literally served up on the mouth of the space. Thus made smaller, the reader encounters the compressed space of the villa that flows inside the new, large, booklike open space. The old space and mass, parked into wall and towers, and the uneasy subject all swim in the aquarium of modern space.

The best view of this play of space and subject is from inside, in the garden, in front of the giant picture window, looking in.

6. Finally

Other transformations of the staff tower, facades, and roof are performed. However, the dominating image of the Bookhouse is the casehens sited as the sign of the book by occasionally substituting it for firewood. This thought foregrounds the book as object, as stackable unit, as subject, rather than as book.

A giant closet, the Bookhouse will swallow the books, which, like hats, shoes, and coats, will find their suitable resting place at the top, in the thickness of the wall reached by ladder only, or in the depths of the tower, lit by the sickle moon barring in the ceiling of the outer space, the Alpstein.

The collector will not build the Bookhouse. The fire engines of Trufaut’s Fahrtenheir 451 roar onto my scene of writing. Books are burning. Like another casehen, the Bookhouse remains a “blind smush” of space.

7. Afterthoughts

For me, architecture is a branch of philosophy in its widest and widest sense: the pursuit of wisdom. Architecture has played this role as one discipline within another, living more or less clandestinely in the shadow of the pedistrum and the business.
But better or worse, architecture is always driven by reason. I have come to see reason and rationality in architecture as a branch of rhetoric rather than of truth. In this sense, the Bookhouse is a system of persuasion. The architectural transformations of compression, rotation, shuffling, flanging, and upsetting are similar to the transformations in figures of speech—addition, subtraction, expansion, inversion, and rearrangement—that the possibility for “figures of space.” Figures of space can be traced to Palladio and his “geography of villa,” which I have hinted at elsewhere. The Bookhouse claims a place in this geography.

This overt gesture of belonging to a geography has been underscored by recent work of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. Vattimo’s claim that everything is interpretation radically displaces truth and has helped me to cope with my own innocent desire to interpret rather than suspend. This writing has also reinforced my skepticism of the new. My difficulty has been to find a course between what is new and what is nostalgic, for I am equally skeptical of the recourse to nostalgia.

The Bookhouse is thus a great extent “about” villas. Philosophically, it is an attempt not to overcome but to get used to the history and weight of villas as present in the old house. It is a Verwindung—Heidegger’s term—which in Vattimo’s interpretation suggests a going beyond that is both acceptance (reappropriation) and a deepening, also suggesting a convalescence, a cure, the healing and distortion or twisting of the old house-cum-villa. The Bookhouse is an attempt to remember, to think about—Andréu—of the old and to see it as material for the new.

This gesture to the villa and its history is ironic, mocking the symmetry of the old plan, flaunting asymmetry as the necessary other, and disclosing the human subject as
Leece of the book. It is also constructive, signaling the transformation of a new literary text of the old, questioning
the value and the possibility of what is truly new.

For those of us who are steeped in the直径 of the new, this step is a very difficult one. It is an attempt to
create the modern architect’s eye, while sidestepping the
mechanical architect’s, as we try to turn Truth into com-
mentary tool and see-value. The bookhouse is therefore
not simply a failed project but also a chapter in my mur-
ning scene of writing.

What is new is contaminated not only by the old house
but by burned books, the act of theater, movies, philos-
ophy, and so on, which threaten the autonomy of
architecture—it exists to be a specific fact.”

The Bokhouse is propelled, since it attempts to persuade you, the
reader, to participate in a fiction in which architecture
is a branch of writing, in which the bookhouse writes
itself via figures of space (the death of the architect), in
which the books have become building blocks (the death
of the book), and in which the reader is no longer in the
center but propelled to a place just outside. For me the
bookhouse is at best a funerary monument; like a mausole-
num, it is here to “bear the traces and the memory” of
the geography of life “across time, for others.”

These relations in the writing of the project—on the
strategy as well as on the narrative from which the field
of meaning in the form of metaphors—ultimately disap-
pear from the project as drawn. All commentary fades to
the background, becoming a curious abstraction, while the
object itself stands massively more, leaving the viewer to
his or her own imagination.

It would come as no surprise to me if the essays remained
completely drawn on the score of writing and the object,
like the phrenetics, emerged inscrutable, open to the next
interpretation.

2. The novel was never intended for the purpose of a Michael Belford and dramatic
purposory, 1961. The interpretation of this text has been published in
4. Ibid., 11.
5. “Commentary” appears to be a significant feature of the book, but
the term is not defined or further explained in the accompanying text.
6. Ibid., 11.
8. Ibid., vol. I, n. 46, n. 10.
10. Ibid., vol. I, n. 46, n. 10.
Pavilion Housing
May, 1934
Matthew Jobs 
Stephen Eggleston

This project creates a framework for infill housing and rehabilitation in Houston's fourth ward. The unique context of this neighborhood has been eradicated by economic conditions which propagate a "run-down" mentality. This situation not only destroys a vital link in the social and architectural history of Houston, it diminishes the existing housing stock. One approach, therefore, is to reinforce and build upon the existing architecture and the strength of the society surviving therein.

Why a Pavilion? In a climate as drastic as Houston's, the provision of overhead protection is vital. Witness the variety of similar structures utilized in Navajo. Protection from the sun and rain is provided for parked cars, games of basketball and suburban committees awaking next month. In the fourth ward these is a great deal of open space between the existing structures where pavilions could provide shelter for a variety of activities.

The Navajo Indians in the southwestern region of North America built all purpose structures they called Namaskin (Navajo, "shapes"). These were ad hoc structures erected where needed from materials found on site. This is the spirit in which we employ the pavilion. Our pavilion might exist alone on a vacant lot. It may cover a rehabilitated home or a newly built one. In a sense there is a connection between the nomadic roots of the Navajo form and the intended occupants of the new units (who may presently be homeless).

The Pavilion Form

The development of the pavilion roof form originated in our desire to work with the saw-tooth pattern of the existing shotgun structure. It is manipulated and adapted to form the fabric covered planes of the pavilion. The operations performed on the original pediment are as follows: The gable is pitched, inverted, rotated 90 degrees and situated across the footprint of the building. The pavilion roof creates a virtual room above the living space. It affords a unique quality of light passing through the fabric, ventilation and protection from weather. It also offenses wind out from under the roof.

Living Space

The dwelling unit is located in part on a study of housing unit types. By examining the relationship between typical apartment shoots and the areas they serve we developed a series of sub-compartments. Kitchen adjoins Dining, Bathroom adjoins Bath, etc. Communicationssemi-depart Living room, see are passing that the integrated controls of the home will be contained in an instructive, interventional entertainment center, electronic library and computing/communications system: the Communication Node.

Service Notes

The shotgun houses of the fourth ward originally had service facilities located outside the living area. They house, well and cooking installation were separate structures. We were interested in this idea because it preserves the living area as a positive element.
The functions found in the existent buildings of old are located adjacent to the living area and suffused with new technology and materials. The living unit maintains the assembly 'free plan' of the original Shotgun while providing direct access to the utility elements. Service nodes can be spread into existing buildings as part of a rehabilitation system that includes position tools, or by components of new construction.

The Wall

The wall between the service nodes and the living areas, thus, became a key element. We abstracted the Wall as a list of elements and an organizational diagram. Usually walls divide space (indoor and outdoor, etc.) provide structural support, contain doors for passage and windows for light, ventilation and views. Walls are also generally a thick line as a plan - a space occupied by utilities, structure and weather proofing, not people.

We reconceived The Wall, here, as an inhabited zone akin to the Japanese 'ma' (a neutral, transitional area, neither in nor out). The structure is pulled away from the wall. The wall itself is glass. It is transparent, fired or heated at different locations so that there is a play of light, shadow, and color along the length of the wall. Passage through the wall can be made directly in the case of the utility nodes. The path to the reference space outdoors is indirect. It requires one to peer through panels perpendicular to the axis of the wall. Conditioned air is produced and distributed within the space of the wall. Discharge occurs at the apertures between living and utility.

Our strategy wasular the neighborhood with symbolic and functional richness drawn from local and universal sources. We wanted to avoid designing a building that 'fits in' with the context as a means of solving the housing problems of the decade. Instead, we tried to mine the meaning of the elements that comprise the neighborhood for ideas that we could reinterpret as the components of a flexible system. This system would be manifest as total conditions require. We believe this approach is especially appropriate for such a culturally rich subject.
FORM, FOLDING and ARCHITECTURE

Design Thesis
Matthew E. Juros
27 April, 1996
In this project, I am interested in folded form in architecture. I began my investigation with a series of abstract studies looking at the formal possibilities of folded planar material. I used paper as the medium of the study. I developed a formal vocabulary which is the basis of all folded forms.

- **Crease-** one plane is divided by a single axis into two planes.
  
  The planar material's structural capacity is enhanced.

- **Fold-** the angle of the two planes that bound the crease is increased - further enhancing structural capacity.

- **Pleat-** a combination of folds, and creases. can create a rigid structural element.

When Crease, Fold and Pleat are used in combination they have the ability to enclose space and hold themselves up.

Unlike the philosophically based folded architecture of Peter Eisenman and others, my interest is in the formal possibilities of folded material and how they can be deployed as architecture.
My formal strategy recognises that in built form folding never occurs in time (four dimensional folding) as it does in paper folding. The essence of folded built form is that its material remains constant across changes in plane. (corners). The change in plane does not coincide with normal construction joints. ie. a fold in a window wall is a butt-glazed condition rather than a mullion condition.
I developed a siting strategy where I locate physically folded conditions in the landscape that will provide cues for generating the project. Programmatically, a public project seems appropriate as it can support an expressive, abstract, personal, sculptural folded project.

I was attracted to the linear park along Brays Bayou where it adjoins Hermann Park. The bayou is a meandering condition that folds the flows of water, auto, pedestrian and wild life together. In section it is a fold in the tableau of the flat Houston landscape. It is a thin green belt that wanders through the city which has trails frequented by cyclists and joggers. Yet there is no place where its reason for being-water- and those who enjoy the space are able to interact except from afar.
The length of Brays Bayou that passes through Houston is essentially a concrete trough. Generally following the course of the natural waterway, the bayou in its present state is a highly rationalized system designed by the Army Corps of Engineers to drain runoff water.

The site I selected is a stretch of bayou between a pair curves. I located the center points used by the engineers to describe the curves and measured the straight segments between them. So I abstracted the bayou into a series of geometrically determined arcs connected by straight lines.
I did an experiential survey of the site and found that it contains a sheltered area that affords a uniquely serene atmosphere—entirely unlike any of the more typical Houston landscape/cityscapes. At water's edge your views are bounded by trees, grass and water. Three tall buildings-landmarks- are the sole reminders of the city.

In order to act on the site I located the center point of the two arcs at the crest of the bayou's sloped edge. From each of these points I drew a pairs of lines that bracket the view of each of the three landmark buildings. I then drew a series of
additional lines that intersect in the vicinity of the quiet, serene area. These lines became planes of vertical shear which I used to develop the project.

The main formal elements of the project are 2 pleated elements that stretch between the generating points and dip down into the water way. There are a series of auxiliary folded elements on either side + between the pleated straps. The 2 pleated elements form a pair of cataracts and cause pooling at low water disturb the water at higher levels.
While I use continuous pleated elements that span the bayou I strove to develop distinct conditions on either bank. The east bank has a series of tall vertical planes above linear, folded elements. The west bank is made up of a series of gently sloping planes. The conditions of enclosure, exposure, wind, light, sight and sound vary on either side.
My intention with this project is that it be programmed through use. Unlike the adjacent Hermann Park, where every square foot is programmed, this project presents an opportunity for rushing water and people to pause and interact.
Footnotes


