shifting archi(text)ure
notes on a discourse

by

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ABSTRACT

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The final issue of Assemblage marks a new form of discourse in architecture: compilations of short responses to general provocations about architecture from numerous writers active in the field.

Why are polls of this nature being taken now? The provocations imply a fundamental uncertainty, a gnawing existential angst.

This trend relates to a current fascination in the broader architectural discourse with self-organizing systems.

Yet self-organizing discourse fails to resolve the fundamental issues concerning architecture. In fact, soliciting input and disseminating it in this fashion, with no attempt at synthesis, provides a false sense of accomplishment. This shifts focus away from the question generating crisis and may contribute to dissolution of the discipline of architecture as we know it through appropriation by an emerging body of thought on the broader role of creativity and aesthetics in culture.

The question then becomes, who cares? Architectural autonomy and critical practice are at stake.
For Jimmy, Seattle, and Magnolia

Thank you for supporting this endeavor and always keeping it interesting.

This table lists all of the individual texts under consideration and/or used to generate metrics in this analysis. In order of publication, with title, publisher, journal or collection it was included in.

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Lewis Mumford  19  52  1947 The Skyline [Bay Region Style]*The New Yorker

Frederick Kiesler  20  51  1947 Magical Architecture*Paris

Gaston Bachelard  21  64  1948 The Chimetic House*Jose Corti

High de Cronin Hastings  22  6  1949 Townscape: A Plan for an English Visual Philosophy*Architectural Review

Henry van de Velde  23  86  1949 Forms*Werk

Helena Syrkes  24  49  1949 Art Belongs to the People*Harvard University Press

German Democratic Republic  25  1950 Sixteen Principles for the Restructuring of Cities*Planen und Bauen

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe  26  64  1950 Technology and architecture*Chicago

CIAM  27  4  1951 Summary of Needs at the Core*Pelligrini and Cudahy
introduction and basic argument

The final issue of the journal, Assemblage, from April of 2000, marks the emergence of a new form of discourse\(^1\) in architecture. Published in periodical texts, this discourse is characterized by the compilation of short statements from a large sample of the professionals, educators, and theoreticians active in the field. These statements are the writers' responses to a set of provocations and/or questions asking them to comment on the present and speculate on the future function and role of architects, architectural projects, and the discourses associated with them.

Generated by three different editorial groups\(^2\), this convergence of format is peculiar. Typically one thinks of editors as gatekeepers, weeding through submitted material for the most interesting or salient essays and critiques. Or maybe developing a particular topic for an issue and asking people with an expertise or experience in that area to contribute, or agree to an interview. Yet these texts are large-scale solicitations sent out to a diverse group of people, asking them to weigh in on the fundamental state of the field of architecture. Like hits on a massive Google search for 'architect opinion' respondents are not pushing their ideas into the discourse, but allowing themselves to be pulled by the editors' questions and provocations.

The resulting diversity of response is expected, and even seems to be the point. Besides maybe adding their own submission to the collection, no attempt is made on the part of the editors to situate the responses or synthesize them in any fashion. They are just incorporated into the format of the publication (or lack thereof where the case may be) and published; laid out like jumbled ceramic fragments and it is left up to the readers to build their own mosaic, make their own associations, cross-references, and conclusions.

Why are polls of this nature being taken now? The remarkably similar content of the questions implies a fundamental uncertainty, a gnawing existential angst. What is an architect? What should it be? What are we doing? What should we be doing? Who am I? Why am I here? As

\(^{1}\) **discourse** n.-Verbal expression in speech or writing.
   - Verbal exchange; conversation.
   - A formal, lengthy discussion of a subject, either written or spoken.
   - *Archaic* The process or power of reasoning.

\(^{2}\) **discoursed, discoursing, discourses**
   - **v. intr.** To speak or write formally and at length.
   - To engage in conversation or discussion; converse.

   **v. tr.** *Archaic* To narrate or discuss.


at *Assemblage, Hunch, and Harvard Design Magazine*
This dissertation will not result from some cataclysmic rupture, but from an emergent body of thought on the discipline by emerging bodies of thought in the broader roles of creativity and aesthetics in culture.

While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it certainly has implications for any chance of architectural autonomy and the relevance of critical practice. Yet the translation of this idea into a fixed text format, itself organizing discourse, does nothing to resolve the fundamental issues concerning the discipline raised within. In fact, soliciting input and synthesizing it in this fashion, while it is certainly a flawed attempt at this false sense of accomplishment, may contribute to the dissolution of the discipline of architecture.

I believe this discursive approach can be related to a simultaneous fascination in the broader architectural discourse and beyond with self-organizing systems and emergence. This fascination imagines our future as a highly adaptive world full of loosely affiliated networks of designers, engineers, and consultants sharing and advancing knowledge by collaborating remotely on interdisciplinary projects. Certainly this is a compelling idea.

Hans Belting in one of the few responses which directly questions the Bellagio Institute's version of the questions states: "If all this is not evidence of an identity crisis, it certainly points to an image problem."
breakdown of the recent discourse: a sequence of formats

entry point and approach

I did not set out to find something wrong with recent architectural texts, what is interesting about my observations is that I arrived at them accidentally while in search of current thinking on the practice of architecture. I was curious about the conceptual underpinnings and practical logistics of organizing an approach to delivering architectural services and thought there would be a body of information published on the topic. I did find some interesting studies undertaken and published in the nineteen seventies and eighties; thorough analyses of the (then) current dynamics of architectural practice which attempted to place the activities of architects in the broader society in which they worked. But the last such study was completed in the early eighties.

Literature searches on 'architectural practice' uncovered some more recent texts, certainly, but of a very different nature. No longer attempting to be analytic in any quantitative sense, the same questions begin to be addressed from a more personal perspective in some book-length opinion and experience pieces serving as soap boxes for authors with enough connections to or involvement in the discourse to get published by it. And then, the most recent texts, the ones published since I started my architectural education, are all these heterogeneous collections of responses.

Searching for current ideas on practice unexpectedly led me to analyze the discourse around it and try to position the resulting observations in the broader architectural discourse. What does it mean that more questions are being asked in the present discourse than are adequately being answered? Who are the people chiming into it, and why do they feel the responsibility to do so? What are the implications for a discipline which suddenly seems so unsure of itself?

Architectural discourse in the beginning of the 20th century primarily consisted of a series of manifestoes 'pushed' onto the broader field of culture by individuals practicing architecture. These manifestoes were typically brief, to the point, and could be directly illustrated in the work of the architects who authored them. After WWII, as Joan Ockman states in Architecture Culture, the modernism declared in the early manifestoes, "became dominant while being subjected to increasingly intense questioning." With the arrival of critical theory,

3 Hunch 6/7 p.248-249
4 See Blau, Cuff, and Gutman
5 Ockman, p.13
the seventies and eighties formalized this period of questioning as the emerging body of thought was applied to architecture. This phase was reflected in the emergence of critical journals like *Oppositions* and, later, *Assemblage*, dedicated to the editors' concerns for, "formal, socio-cultural and political discourse," and drawing a wide body of discourse into the field of architecture. Now, as the writers of the critical generation have grown up and started to produce buildings and train the next generation(s) of architects, the momentum has shifted, these journals have ceased, and a new terrain of discourse is emerging.

In the material I identified for analysis, I focus primarily on how the texts are conceived and organized, and what form they take. This is my approach for two related reasons. First, it is the most readily accessible aspect of the material and reasonable characterizations can therefore be made without requiring a close reading of the entire text(s). Secondly, it allows for examination of a much larger number of texts and therefore proportion of the relevant discourse.

I did make an effort, however, to limit the texts to those with a primary content aimed not at describing a particular project or architect, but more generally at practice in the field of architecture overall, texts that aim critique at the current situation and propose predictions and prescriptions for the future of architectural activity.8

The primary texts under examination divide into three categories: empirical texts, individual meditations, and inverse mosaics. Accompanying these are two categories of secondary texts, symposia documentations and anthologies which relate closely to the primary texts in a number of important ways.
1. empirical texts

The first are empirically researched examinations of architectural practice conducted and written by individuals. As I alluded to earlier, these texts were published between 1983 and 1991 and are the culmination of data and observations gathered from 1972 to 1990.

Three strong examples of this type of text are: Judith R. Blau's *Architects and Firms* (1984), Robert Gutman's *Architectural Practice* (1988), and Dana Cuff's *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (1991). A fourth, less clear member of this category is Andrew Saint's *The Image of the Architect* (1983) which is also extensively researched, but draws its method from more historical than empirical analysis. Carefully researched and documented in mostly reproducible ways, these texts are the most objective that I encountered in their analysis of the profession.

2. individual meditations

The second category comprises polemics, assertions, and musings on the field of architecture put forth by individuals based on their personal experience and observations. Very subjective in content and tone, these texts argue a particular view and approach to the field of architecture in general or a specific area of it. The format of material in this category is diverse, ranging from extensively formulated ideas conceived in book form to book-length collections of relatively brief ideas initially published in journals or presented in lectures.

The examples I identified appeared about once a year between 1994 and 2000 and include the ideas of (in order of publication), Paul Shephard, Bill Hubbard, Jr., Vittorio Gregotti, Alejandro Zaera-Polo, and Thomas

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7 Oppositions ran from September, 1973 to March, 1984; Assemblage from December, 1986 to April, 2000.
8 This analysis could have taken a different approach and focused on a detailed exploration of current experimental architectural practices. I resisted that endeavor at the outset for two reasons. First, access to detailed information that would allow for any kind of meaningful comparison across different practices, more than just high-level sound-bites is understandably difficult to attain. If for no other reason, these are businesses which compete for projects and acclaim and while they gain from publicity, stand only to lose from published scrutiny. Secondly, that type of research, though interesting, too often and too easily results in just another architectural monograph or collection of successful 'young' architects incorporating interviews where nobody answers the questions, and accompanied by beautifully crafted images of compelling projects. It would be very difficult and controversial to generate anything more than a public relations tool, or in my case as a student, a compilation of unattainable beauty providing no more means of access to the real content of the practices than one gets through the superficial bios of centerfold lingerie models.
9 For a detailed description of the content and main arguments of Cuff and Gutman, see annotation in the bibliography at the end of this document.
Fisher. The text by Alejandro Zaera-Polo is the exception in terms of format, appearing not in a separate book, but as a very long article in the 1998 edition of El Croquis entitled, “A World Full of Holes.”

It is interesting to note that three of these writers have or have had extensive relationships with widely circulating and influential architectural journals. Gregotti worked on the editorial staff of the Italian journal, Casabella in its second incarnation from 1949 to 1958. Thomas Fisher was the editorial director of Progressive Architecture before it ceased publication in 1995. And Zaera-Polo wrote extensively for the Spanish periodical, El Croquis in the 1980s. In order to publish a text of this nature, it makes sense that it helps to have extensive experience within the discourse already.

3. inverse mosaics

The primary focus of this analysis, collective works, which I characterize as ‘inverse mosaics’, make up the third category. These are the collected individual responses to a specific question or set of questions asked by the publication about the practice and future trajectory of architecture which led me to the present analysis. They have the inverse effect of conventional mosaics because the fragmentary pieces which make them up do not generate a pattern or picture in the resulting text.

The first example of this that I found appeared with the final issue of Assemblege in April 2000 (Volume 41). The Japanese journal A + U followed with a series entitled “Architectural Theory and Education at the Millenium” which ran with approximately one article per issue from June 2001 to April 2002. In 2003, the Berlage Institute published Hunch 6/7 with its “109 Provisional Attempts to Address Six Simple and Hard Questions About What Architects Do Today and Where

With the exception of the pieces in *Praxis* and *A + U*, these texts organize responses alphabetically by last name of primary author or, in a few cases, company name. Arrangement or relationship by content is left entirely up to the reader.

The contributors to these collective texts are more various than the formats. The editors invited people who were previously published in *Assemblage* to contribute to the final issue, *Assemblage 41*. There were 79 respondents and 3 editorial commentators published in the issue. *Hunch* seems to have asked almost everyone they know, given the large number of predominantly European and Dutch contributors (109), and their accusation in the acknowledgments that non-responders, “didn’t have the guts…” The contributors to *Harvard Design Magazine’s* “Stocktaking” all seem to have a relationship to the Graduate School of Design at Harvard and the mixture of voices seems to be an attempt to include as diverse a set of specializations as possible.

When the examples identified above are placed on a timeline by publication date, these three categories of publications line up, surprisingly, in three temporal phases:

![Timeline Image]

While this suggestion of progression from one type to another is hardly significant from any kind of statistical perspective and there are almost certainly texts I have failed to locate which might fall outside of these phases and could suggest something different, it is still a remarkably neat and tidy sequence. All caveats about the potential to arrive at a different looking timeline aside, there is strong evidence here encouraging an examination of the texts I have identified in terms of broader shifts in the architectural discourse over time.
I call the remaining text groupings 'secondary' because they are comprised of material that was first generated in another text or context and these represent the collection of that material in a secondary documentation.

published symposia papers and discussions

Very similar in effect to the inverse mosaics in their published text form, these texts contain participant papers and discussions from conferences and symposia collected into books (some time after the event occurred, necessarily). While a number of symposia occur all the time, I limit my analysis to those which I happened upon while looking up 'architectural practice'; those which claimed to be questioning the basic premises of the field versus those themed around a trendy aspect of or approach to design. This is a subjective distinction perhaps, because any given contributor at a conference on any subject might address the bigger picture I am exploring, but for the purposes of this analysis it will have to suffice. Conference documentation, as a category of text, is also a very different animal than the work described above in format, intention, and editorial content, but I include it here because the issues raised at this subset of conferences is so directly in line with my interest in theorizing architectural practice and the format offers some interesting comparisons with the inverse mosaics described above.

Relevant examples of this type appear over more than a decade with the earliest instance I found dating from 1990: Thinking the Present. This is followed by, in 1996: Reflections on Architectural Practice in the Nineties and in 2003: The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century. These examples are generated from symposia held at major US architectural schools. Outside of academia, the ANY corporation coordinated a series of ten annual symposia in different cities around the globe in the decade...
before the millennium which not only produced ten compilation volumes but also spawned a more frequently published journal¹¹ to handle excess material and ideas generated by the discussions around the conferences.

From the perspective of format, there are interesting parallels between the ‘inverse mosaics’ and symposia publications. Both include a more or less closely related body of writing from numerous contributors who may or may not have a lot of published written work already. And both compile these texts in more of a collection than a coherent whole.

Yet there is a critical difference. The publication of symposia material is secondary to the event itself. Symposia bring people together in one (or many) location(s) at one (or several) point(s) in time. Depending on the location, format, and schedule of a symposium, the bulk of the interaction between contributors may or may not happen in the scheduled discussions or panels in front of the wider public. But even if the real exchange of ideas happens over dinner or in shared taxis from and to the airport, at least there is the potential for divergent ideas to be affected by an interaction with other contributors.

analyses of influential practices

This category of text is the least clearly delineated of the ones I identified, but I include because it is illustrative of another approach to answering some of the questions raised in the inverse mosaics. Comprised of collections of material addressing the work of a particular firm, these texts are attempts to analyze the impact the firm has had on the practice of architecture generally. Though these texts break with my exclusion of texts about specific firms or projects, the two primary examples of this seemed relevant because they contain essays by some of the same authors that appeared repeatedly in the other texts identified for analysis.

Reading MVRDV, and What is OMA: Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, are two examples I found of this type. Since both are edited by Véronique Patteeuw and published by NAi Publishers in the same year (2003) in conjunction with traveling exhibitions, they might more appropriately be considered a single instance of an emerging category that focuses on two different (though regionally proximate) firms/practices. Alternately they might be considered an incomplete subset of publications accompanying exhibitions, a potentially relevant format I did not explore in a larger way because I am not aware of any recent exhibitions broadly addressing the subject of architectural practice.

¹⁰ Thinking The Present and Reflections at Harvard and The State of Architecture at Columbia.
¹¹ ANY magazine, 26 issues running from April 1993 to July 2000.
On the other extreme (of the critical/practical continuum) but generating by an astonishingly similar intention (albeit with a much more narrative approach), is the 2002 CRS and the Business of Architecture which describes the history of CRS and the impact the firm had on the business practices of architecture. The juxtaposition of this text with the two previous is surprising, because CRS is credited with pretty anti-theoretical advances like the invention of project management as a separate activity within construction, but interesting when the contributors and style of the publications are contrasted.

From a different angle, this category could be termed retrospective analyses of previous architectural production.

anthologies of previous text

Retrospective compilations and analyses of previously published or presented architectural texts make up the final category of text. I sought out the four anthologies listed below initially in an attempt to establish and understand the way that the architectural discourse has changed over time, essentially to provide me with a shortcut to the historical version of my analysis. But when explored alongside the previously described texts—especially the ‘inverse mosaics’, I can’t help but wonder where the impetus to generate these particular anthologies at the time they emerged came from. The material provides opportunity for comparison on multiple levels which I will describe in detail in the next sub-section.

The anthologies I used are, in order of publication: Ulrich Conrad’s Programs and Manifestoes of 20th Century Architecture (1970) containing texts from 1903 to 1963, Joan Ockman’s Architecture Culture: 1943-

These texts explicitly bear relationships to each other. In his introduction, Jencks’ references Conrad’s Programs and Manifestoes, crediting it with showing that the architectural manifesto in the 20th century is a predictable event. He also adopts a very similar format both in terms of layout and editorial commentary on the individual essays included. In an interesting example of potential editorial conflict of interest, Jencks is the only anthology editor to include his own writings in his collection.

Likewise and more explicitly, Hays acknowledges the work of Ockman in a footnote to his introduction:

It should be apparent that Architecture Theory since 1968 also claims to be both a continuation and a modulation of Joan Ockman’s Architecture Culture 1943-1968; in a certain sense, this is a companion volume. And yet, however much I may have tried to emulate Joan’s effort, I have not made a sequel, for this is a very different time and this had to be a very different kind of book.

The periods covered by these anthologies overlap and a number of the essays appear more than once.

contrasting ‘inverse mosaics’ with anthologies

Before I go into my analysis of the inverse mosaics in more depth, I find it interesting to take a moment and examine them alongside the anthologies.

Both text categories are in some ways marking a point in time. The inverse mosaics operate in some ways like instant anthologies, or snapshots of a moment. Where the anthologies are cherry-picked texts included because they contribute to the argument the editor is trying to make about the progression and influence of the discourse, the inverse mosaics seem to accept all comers and aim to support no argument. Instead of offering a historical or retrospective look at ideas related to architecture, the inverse mosaics claim to tell us about the ‘current’ situation.

Where the anthology contents are organized and situated with respect to each other, the inverse mosaics are just documented and presented to take or leave as they appear.

Given the historic nature of the endeavor, anthologies necessarily seem nostalgic. Why is it interesting to pull together old ideas? Are they looking back at a time when writing had more impact? The exercise has to be academic in nature, both in the need for access to

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12 Jencks, p.6
historical resources, but also in intent—let’s study this body of thought, examine texts alongside each other, now that we know what happened in architectural production after its ideas were disseminated, let’s try to come up with an explanation for what we see and saw.

Generating very similar content, some of the inverse mosaics are attempting on the other hand to be relatively main-stream affairs: almost theory-lite. Instead of nostalgia, they exude a sort of pessimism—what’s going wrong, what should be different than it is, what would you change? Let’s take an opinion poll of the profession and see who sits in the red or blue camp.
observations on the content of ‘inverse mosaics’

Diving into the content now, in addition to the structural similarities of the recent collections of text, the ‘inverse mosaics’, there is a remarkable consistency of professed intent.

questions to resolve an identity crisis

what are the issues left out of the theory of the Assemblage ‘generation’...? what do you think are, in your country, the most important current issues or challenges for architects, landscape architects, and/ or urban designers and why?

what are the issues emerging today? what recent architecture, landscape architecture, and/or urban design projects or kinds of projects do you consider best and/or most important, and why?

what are the possible new formats, other than journals, for the exposition and dissemination of theory? what recent design projects or kinds of projects do you consider overrated, and why?

what are the possible modes for theory other than drawing and writing? do you think the social and cultural influence and power of designers are increasing, decreasing, or steady? How would you describe the level and kind of that power and influence? How far apart are the realities and the ideal?

reflect on your practice, situate it within current theoretical positions, and speculate about future ones. to what extent can and does design (all other factors being equal) affect the quality of life of individuals, small groups, and/ or large groups (such as the residents of a city)?

do you think designers can and should play an important role in preventing and/ or reversing degradation of the natural environment? If so, what role? If not, why not?

what is an architect in today’s society? what seem like promising new roles, activities, and territories for architecture, landscape architecture, and/ or urban design in the next decade?

define “innovative architect.” what do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of design education? How might it be improved?

how should one practice architecture? do you think that design is any more subordinate to profit-driven business than it was thirty years ago? If so, what, for you, are the implications?

what are the architect’s responsibilities? what or where is architecture’s laboratory?

how can architecture be taught today?
Assemblage 41 asks the most restrictive version, relating the questions most explicitly back to theory:

What...are the issues left out of the theory of the Assemblage 'generation'...? What are the issues emerging today...? What are the possible new formats, other than journals, for the exposition and dissemination of theory...; and what are the possible modes for theory other than drawing and writing?...we would like to enlist you...to reflect on your practice, to situate it within current theoretical positions, and to speculate about future ones.\textsuperscript{14}

The ninety responses received each occupy a page and vary from personal anecdotes akin to journal entries\textsuperscript{15}, through comic strip adaptations and mysterious graphics\textsuperscript{16}, to serious considerations of the questions in light of the author's area of interest\textsuperscript{17}. The different length of responses is handled through a compression of font size and line spacing so that the more text submitted, the harder it is to read. This has the effect of diminishing the apparent importance of the content of text by people who had the most to say.

Initiating this format, the Assemblage version explains itself the most directly, relating the issue to the entire editorial intent of the journal over its fifteen year run:

As a journal and as a group project, Assemblage never promoted a singular position. Rather, it provided a registration plane for a discourse in the process of finding its legs, developing its skills, suffering its growing pains...Commited as we were...to the exposition of new forms of practice and new ways of practicing forms and space, to the couplings and transcodings and the blurring of boundaries that gave the journal its name in the first place, to refuse to affirm a position, a single, static stance, seemed right. Indeed, the historicity of our endeavor seemed to demand that we occupy several positions, even contradictory ones, simultaneously.\textsuperscript{18}
Here we have an explicit rationale for the diversity of the content and a strong defense of the exercise. Assemblage didn’t define the discourse within, it just gave it an orientation, a point of reference—the ‘historicity’ of the endeavor ‘demanded’ it.

‘Historicity’, according to the dictionary: historical authenticity; fact. So the fact of their endeavor demanded multiple and contradictory positions—I’m not entirely sure what this means. Maybe because they were publishing new ideas, and the new ideas were going in many different directions and coming from many different sources, they had to just let them sit there without the judgment involved in synthesis or they risked missing them altogether. Perhaps. Yet even here, this feels like an excuse: It was too hard, it was risky, so we didn’t even try.

But the attitude presented may be an important clue. After all, the non-Assemblage collections were spawned after the final issue was published. But more relevant to what I am getting at here is the explanation of the fifteen years of Assemblage that came before issue 41. If a discourse was nurtured by Assemblage, what was that discourse and where is it now that it has left the shelter?

Is this entire category of text an imitation of Assemblage?

Hunch

Hunch 6/7’s ‘provisional attempts to address six simple and hard questions about what architects do today and where their profession might go tomorrow’ is unique in that so much is made of the six questions but the reader is not privy to exactly what those questions were or how they were presented to contributors. Many contributors, helpfully, include what may be (how do we know?) abbreviated versions of the questions in their responses, these are from Manuel Gausa’s entry:

What is an architect in today’s society?
Define “innovative architect.”
How should one practice architecture?
What are the architect’s responsibilities?
What or where is architecture’s laboratory?
How can architecture be taught today?

Actual responses vary in length from the few sentences of Jacques Herzog’s, “Lonely” to Charles Jencks’, “The New Paradigm in

14 Assemblage 41, p.3
15 see Bloomer and Segrest p. 14 or Cololina p.19, ibid.
16 see Lindy Roy p.70
17 see Biln p.13 and Last p.39, to highlight a few by Rice faculty with whose interests I have some familiarity through the courses they teach
18 Hays and Kennedy in Assemblage 41 p. 3
19 Dictionary.com
20 Hunch 6/7 p.207
Architecture” which fills ten pages of text with accompanying project images. Additionally, the ninety-nine responses are all over the map in their content. Many writers organize their responses in direct relationship to the questions yet still fail to answer them. Some make good-hearted attempts to cover the many nuances of the questions asked, while many others don’t even pretend and use the forum as a chance to promote their own world view and design strategy or most recent idea. An interesting few read like the journal entries found in Assemblage, suggesting a cozy informal relationship with the editors.

Some of the most interesting submissions are interviews with designers or artists;21 interesting because they reproduce a dialog, an interaction, and also because they stand out as exceptions to the format. Was it so important to include Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown that Hanno Rautenberg was asked to interview them for the issue? No, the interview was originally published in Die Zeit, the German newspaper where Rautenberg works. A Die Zeit interview with Frei Otto by Rautenberg is included here as well. The only other interview included is by Hans Obrist with Claude Parent.

None of the interviews include any of the six questions, yet their responses are included in the total of 109. In fact, the total of 109 is hard to find. There are only 99 separately titled essays and interviews. If you separately count the people who co-wrote the submissions, you get to 106. The other three must be the interviewees, which means that Rautenberg, asking different questions than the six in the title, counts for two responses even though he never responds at all. Okay, so I’m nitpicking here, but it illustrates that the text is not doing exactly what it says it is doing.

So what is the text doing? When it all comes together, given the number of contributors and the length of some submissions, the text
is extremely unwieldy with 444 pages devoted to responses and the cropped images of newspaper pages in various languages which interrupt and divide them. The effect of this massive tome, too heavy to comfortably hold in one hand, certainly does not encourage detailed digestion and comparison of the views represented. To paraphrase a classmate’s confession when I asked how much of her copy she read, “I read the contributions from people that I am interested in”22; the format does not encourage in-depth consideration of ideas with which you disagree—it is too easy to skip on to another entry that is more familiar.

In his introduction, “Beyond Wonderland,” Roemer van Toorn attempts to explain the intention of the issue:

The six “simple and hard” questions asked in this issue are not a quest for an absolute truth, a purification, or an abstraction of architecture’s purpose; on the contrary, they are straightforward attempts to provoke multiple, simultaneous, concrete reactions in the face of the transformations in our society; to catalog the diverse voices of the architect; and to stimulate the reader to seek out connections, contradictions, and new paths. In an attempt to peel back of [sic] the layers of accumulated narcissistic architectural discourse, they urge even the most sophisticated among us to get a new grasp of the essentials and to overtly take sides. It is no longer acceptable for an architect to be ambiguous.23

Apparently editors of architectural journals get to be ambiguous though.

If we take him at his word, van Toorn’s questions are trying to do quite a lot. They are provoking reactions, cataloging voices, and stimulating readers. Yet he starts out with the questions are not doing, they are not looking for anything absolute, pure, or abstract. God forbid. In fact they are trying to “peel back” the previous discourse, as if to unearth some forgotten treasure buried under the “accumulated narcissistic” weight. So here is an explicit critique of and at the same time alternative to the ‘accumulated’ architectural discourse. Yes, they are published on different continents, but I think we have to assume that the editors of Hunch 6/7 had seen Assemblage 41 before embarking on their effort, which is interesting because Assemblage seems to have been one of the major accumulators of the previous discourse.

Taking this idea further then, leads me to believe that this issue of Hunch is intended as some sort of counterweight or alternate to the discourse represented by and included in Assemblage. But if so, why does it adopt the almost identical format? If the end of Assemblage marked the death of the critical project in architectural discourse, how is another take on a similar set of questions sent to an overlapping24 population going to delve beneath that discourse and arrive at something new?

21 see Venturi and Scott-Brown, “We’re for the Impure” p.455
22 conversation with Susanna Hohmann, December 2004.
23 Hunch 6/7 p.11
24 by about 10 % according to my analysis of the contributors
One answer might lie in the differences that do exist in the questions the two publications ask. *Assemblage* 41 is definitely framed around theory and the way it might operate in the future. The 'practices' the question refers to are assumed to be theoretical and the contributors are heavily weighted towards people who mostly write.

But while the questions asked by *Hunch* 6/7 might be fairly described as 'straightforward' attempts to provoke many 'concrete' reactions, not 'to', but 'in the face of', the transformations in our society, they do nothing in themselves to discourage theoretical responses. They don't seem to expect practical details, they're still focused on 'essentials.' In fact, the questions exhort, "even the most sophisticated among us" to gain a new understanding and "overtly take sides." If this isn't an invitation to write a manifesto, what is? This positioning oneself to do happen, van Toorn writes, because "it is no longer acceptable (to whom? we have to ask) for an architect to be ambiguous." In my (albeit somewhat limited) experience, it seems that the opposite of ambiguous in architecture is something like the absolute, invariably abstract and attempting to be pure.

In trying to get down to what these questions are really supposed to be doing, I keep getting myself twisted up in circularities like that one. If the text says it is doing something it is not, might it not be a little narcissistic in its own right?

If we take van Toorn at his word, this issue of *Hunch* is definitely meant as a snapshot, an opinion poll, but also as a discursive device. As readers we are supposed to be 'stimulated' by this text, 'to seek out connections. The format is explicitly intended as a tool. Because the editors thought of the right questions and got enough people to answer them, the entire
discourse will reach a new plane of understanding and we will all know exactly where everyone stands. All of this is also going to happen at the same time, even though the issue took the editors two years to generate.  

What is so frustrating to me about all of this positioning and ambiguity about what really drives the overall publication is precisely that the content of so many of the individual contributions is so interesting. The editors succeeded in gathering a compelling collection of contemporary thought on issues that I couldn’t find addressed as directly in more than one or two other places and nowhere at this length. Yet the takeaway is that now architects can’t be ambiguous, we have to take sides? And the format invites the casual flip. I’ve been obsessed with what this issue was doing for months and I only really read the articles closely at all because I was flipping through the text methodically to gather the biographical information on the contributors.

Harvard Design Magazine

In “Stocktaking 2004”, Harvard Design Magazine’s contribution to this type of text, there is no introduction to give us insight into the editor’s expectations when raising the questions (and therefore nothing for me to deconstruct critically), in fact we’re given no information at all on what compelled the devotion of the larger part of an issue to the cause. Yet, while references to specific projects are requested, and the issue of the environment is raised, the questions otherwise align very closely with those asked by Hunch 6/7 and to a lesser degree, Assemblage 41:

1. What do you think are, in your country, the most important current issues or challenges for architects, landscape architects, and/or urban designers and why?
2. What recent architecture, landscape architecture, and/or urban design projects or kinds of projects do you consider best and/or most important, and why?
3. What recent design projects or kinds of projects do you consider overrated, and why?
4. Do you think the social and cultural influence and power of designers are increasing, decreasing, or steady? How would you describe the level and kind of that power and influence? How far apart are the realities and the ideal?
5. To what extent can and does design (all other factors being equal) affect the quality of life of individuals, small groups, and/or large groups (such as the residents of a city)?
6. Do you think designers can and should play an important role in preventing and/or reversing degradation of the natural environment? If so, what role? If not, why not?
7. What seem like promising new roles, activities, and territories for architecture, landscape architecture, and/or urban design in the next decade?
8. What do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of design education? How might it be improved?
9. Do you think that design is any more subordinate to profit-driven business than it was thirty years ago? If so, what, for you, are the implications?

25 according to Penelope Dean, the editor of the next issue of Hunch, and a critic in a very early review of this project
26 HDM 20, pp.5-49
This version of the questions is more specific, directly addressing some of the issues which are allowed for but not mentioned in *Hunch 6/7* and *Assemblage 41*. The respondents' opinions are also more explicitly sought: 'what do you find overrated', 'do you think', 'do you consider'. Instead of asking the writers broad questions in the third person (like, 'what is an architect today'), these are much more precise and acknowledge how personal the answers must be.

There are ten respondents included, but not all respondents answer every question. Instead of compiling the various responses into single essays and arranging them by contributor, the answers to each question are laid out one by one after the questions. This greatly facilitates a comparison between responses and more closely resembles an actual conversation on the topics. In fact, the collection resembles in many ways the transcription of a panel conversation at a symposium when a question is asked by the moderator and then each panelist is given an opportunity to respond.

While a lot of really interesting things are said in the forty pages of the article, precisely because the questions are so specific and the contributors so diverse, I still find myself cherry-picking the content instead of really wrestling with the conflicting ideas. Stan Allen offers a really extensive and compelling argument for the specific why's and how's practice needs to change, then Peter Davey starts off about the importance of environmental responsibility, and Andres Duany gives one line about the importance of environmental and social reform. We get the voices and the perspectives, well supported by images where appropriate, but there is still no compilation, no attempt at synthesis, and no comforting coherence in the whole.
In aggregate, the most striking characteristic of these collections of ideas is their collective incoherence. Individual submissions are, for the most part, carefully crafted and composed. Yet there are so many different viewpoints represented, that the point almost seems to be the cacophony. There is publication of ideas from a wide range of perspectives, but no exchange of these ideas and no attempt to reconcile the often diametrically opposed arguments. If the content is so critical to the field that this wide a range of editorial forces are generating energy behind its publication, why is there no attempt to align, resolve, or even summarize the divergent views? The suggestion is that it is enough for the discourse to just put the thoughts out there.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanford Kwinter</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Emergence: or the Artificial Life of Space*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacques Derrida</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Faxiture*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bin Kimura</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>On the Place of Dwelling*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Shusaku Arakawa, Madeline Gins</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Person as Site in Respect to a Tentative Constructed Plan*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Bloomer</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Abodes of Theory and Flesh: Tabbies of Bower*Hays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank O. Gehry</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Site to Anywhere*Anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arai Isezaki</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>The Demiurgos in Anywhere*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Eisenman</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Uums' Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media*Dumas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Virilio</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Grey Ecology*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Eisenman</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>K Nowhere to Fold*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredric Jameson</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Allegories of Anywhere*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shigehiko Hasumi</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Signature and Space*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rafael Moreo</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>The Murmur of the Site*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosalind Krauss</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>The Sacology of Anywhere: Modernism Against the Grain*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthony Vidler</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>From The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unholy*Rizzoli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tadao Ando</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Architecture in a Simulated City*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Kazin Karatanı</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Genius Loc*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Ignasi de Solé-Morales</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Place: Permanence or Production*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Rem Koolhaas</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Gridding the New*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Daniel Libeskind</td>
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<td>Potsdamer Platz: Daniel Libeskind with Daniel Libeskind*Anywhere</td>
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<td>Mark C. Taylor</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Terminal Space*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Kipnis</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Four Predicaments*Anywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Seefzido</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Tourism suitCase Studies*Anywhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
what else is going on

Maybe it is naïve to take editorial intention at its word. Perhaps the problem I am encountering with these texts is not that they aren’t doing what they’re saying they so desperately need to do, but more that I’m missing the ulterior motives behind each publication.

furthering institutional agendas

In a particularly acerbic contribution to Hunch 6/7, Hans Ibelings challenges the motivations of the Berlage Institute in posing the questions it does:

It is a well-worn cliché that to ask a question is to answer it. This is particularly true of the six questions posed here, and the battalion of sub-questions that follow them...
...This entire exercise is evidently based on the argument that architects in present-day society should be something other than what they usually are now, and that it is the task of the Berlage Institute to train them in that direction. This is a legitimate argument, but why am I being asked to endorse it?...
...If all this is not evidence of an identity crisis, it certainly points to an image problem. Another good example is Question 5: if the Berlage Institute wants to call itself a laboratory, fine, but then why ask me to define what a laboratory is? Most disturbing of all is the final sentence of the last question, in which I am asked what I would like to teach students at the Institute. The sentence begins with two statements—“we educate beyond the generic profession, we have a mission”—and ends with the question “What should this mission be?” Let me answer this question with a question of my own: what is one to make of a training institute that asks me to formulate the mission it already claims to have?  

Maybe the solicitation of responses to fundamental questions by the various institutions involved is nothing more than a well-veiled attempt to promote and advertise the specific agendas of the institutions themselves with no genuine concern for the discipline of architecture that doesn’t relate back to institutional goals like increased attendance and grant money.

This is a cynical idea perhaps, but it is unrealistic to expect an institution to generate a publication which doesn’t promote its own goals and ambitions. This critique might apply pretty well to the Berlage Institute’s Hunch 6/7, but doesn’t really explain Assemblages 41, given that the ‘institution’ behind it was dissolving itself with the issue.

publicity

An alternate explanation lies in the potential these texts offer to contribute to what R.E. Somol calls “architectural Darwinism: survival of the most publicized”27. Mark Pimlott also contributes some text to this cynical view of the endeavor in his response to Hunch 6/7:

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28 Assemblage 41 p.92.
One, after all, has to have a distinct product, a USP (Unique Selling Point). But as in the art world, the product has to be relatively free of risk, free of the possibility of alienating clients, buyers, critics, institutions. The research, whatever it is, is a means to an end: publicity. And here is where the activity of the architect segues into the space that has been created for his activity—the space of criticism—where, coincidentally, the USP begets the unique product that yields notoriety, fame and (hopefully!) celebrity. So, I tend to be suspicious of this kind of “research.”29

While the suggestion that architectural discourse serves only to publicize the participants is not very productive—of course one result is publicity, but there are a lot more direct and effective channels available if that is the primary purpose—a cursory examination of the space devoted to contributor biographies provides a little bit of insight into the relative importance of that activity in the various publications under consideration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Total Page Count</th>
<th>Pages Devoted to Bios</th>
<th>% 'Publicity'</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Assemblage 41</td>
<td>~100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstructing Her Practice³⁰</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunch 6/7</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>~1&quot; per</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Architecture at the Beginning of the</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on Architectural Practices</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking the Present</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in this table suggests that, from a pure real estate perspective, The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century places a lot of relative importance on its role in providing publicity for the contributors.

Sexy in format and trendy in selection of contributors, the implication here is that the texts ask very serious questions and then lay out the answers like so many counterfeit Rolexes on the colored blanket of a
street vendor. The effect is to increase the cult of personality around the contributors and the institutions sponsoring their publication without requiring that the result amounts to anything comprehensible or lasting—it looks like a Rolex from a distance, but don’t expect it to work like one.

reluctant writers

That characterization is not entirely fair. As an example from a closely related type of discourse that appeared in Praxis 5 and 6 shows, editors might set out to do one thing in an article or series of articles and fall short through no lack of good intentions on their part.

The articles in question originate in the issue of Praxis entitled, “Architecture After Capitalism”, and center around an excerpt from Hal Foster’s recently published book, Design and Crime. Foster provides an excerpt of the argument from his book, and then four other writers and critics offer their reactions to it. They are: K. Michael Hays, Felicity D. Scott, Michael Speaks, and Sanford Kwinter.

Laid out in parallel across a double-wide page spread, comparison across and between the responses is invited. Subsequent to their reactions (which finish on the same page despite differences in length because the columns dedicated to each writer vary in width after the first page—letting us know quite directly who had the most to say), Foster is given the opportunity at rebuttal and it seems like a lively conversation is underway with lots of thinly veiled insults and defensive posturing to go along with it.

Only by looking at the next issue of Praxis do we get a picture of what happened versus what was intended through an interesting follow up by Sanford Kwinter: In his essay, “J’Accuse”, in Praxis 6 which immediately follows the editorial introduction to the issue, Kwinter discusses the forum of the previous issue and his disappointment that it does not continue:

I have learned considerably from the texts and viewpoints put forward by my colleagues. But the second round that was originally planned for this exchange, which was a precondition of my participation, was renounced by the other discussants in the progress of phase one. This greatly disappointed me since—as every news reporter knows—the first question in an exchange elicits only pat (and protected) response, the second the real one. My colleagues’ abdication might also be seen to throw their other deeper and unspoken complacencies into sharper relief. (How satisfied do they deserve to be with their responses to have felt no further necessity

30 Francesca Hughes, ed. This is a collection of essays by women about their practice of architecture. I include it in this analysis as another data point. In some ways this is an early (1998) example of an inverse mosaic.
31 it is interesting to note for the previous discussion on the role of discourse as publicity that this exchange happens after the book is already published
33 J’Accuse" Praxis 6, p.5-7
to speak? And since the primary text was meant only to trigger exchange, not to anchor our attention, there is no justification for the embarrassed silence and averted gazes.) Satisfaction among critics and writers is always troubling. To find it among such good ones, and ones of such influence, is more disquieting still. Although Foster was not initially invited to respond, who could hold against him his adamance in doing so? Although he is correct in noting that my own participation was a last minute fill-in, he is wrong to suggest that it was the product of eagerness: He knew from Praxis's editors that I turned down their request twice.34

Here is a window into the world of architectural writing and publishing—at least at the level of well established critics like these. Clearly there are some intricacies involved in trying to host a real exchange of ideas. Whether or not the silence is embarrassed (could they just have been too busy?) the pulling out of the exchange by all the other writers is almost certainly not what the editors intended.
when is a discourse broken (or how do they work)

Here I find myself trying to argue that the discourse is broken without any theoretical basis for how a healthy discourse operates. As it turns out that there are a number of published writers who have attempted to build theoretical models for understanding discourse.

This is a happy realization maybe, but not a coincidence.

a larger theoretical movement

The theoretical project referred to in Assemblage 41 that used the journal to ‘find its legs’, derived from a movement in architecture, starting with Oppositions in the late 1970’s, that was an attempt by the younger generation of the time, dissatisfied with modernisms failures, to apply the emerging body of critical theory to the field of architecture. This was a very dramatic upheaval in the field and marks a point when the string of ideas behind architectural production really started to fragment and fray.

One simple demonstration of this can be seen in the shift that happens between Conrad’s and Jencks’ anthologies of manifestoes in the 20th century. Conrad’s manifestoes by no means agree with each other, but when taken together, they represent a series of ideas that can generally be traced around if not along a single thread. Jencks, starting at roughly the point when Conrad stops, feels the need to collect the texts in his anthology into five different streams of thought.35

the discourse did some 'branching' out in the 1970's

34 Ibid., p.5.
35 Admittedly, this type of categorizing seems to be a major obsession of Jencks, but he’s not fabricating associations out of thin air.
The generation espousing critical work did so in resistance to what they saw as the dominance of a corrupted modernism. They prided themselves in conceiving and arguing for practices that were entirely divorced from the built environment and subsequently produced almost anything other than buildings. The major voices in that movement have now grown up and most of them have attained substantial status within the broader aesthetic community for completed buildings and other conventional architectural projects.

As Stan Allen, in his contribution to “Stocktaking”, notes, when describing a moment from the conference captured in Bernard Tschumi’s *State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (one of the texts included in the current analysis):

Many of the younger audience members at the Columbia conference — those born, let’s say, in the 1970’s or later — may not remember the history. In those years Libeskind was a student of John Hejduk, that paradigm of resistance and withdrawal, whose most significant projects awaited realization by others. At Cooper Union and later as a teacher at Cranbrook, Libeskind emerged as a forceful advocate and exemplar of a radical architecture that began and ended in drawings, intentionally disengaged from the complexities and compromise of implementation. Stern, then, as now, was a defender of traditional architecture and conventional means of realization. That he would emerge as an advocate of Libeskind, or conversely, that Libeskind would be producing work that Stern could comfortably stand behind, represents a significant realignment.36

So the discourse in question is happening in the context of a much broader shift in the intellectual forces around architecture. A shift which in some ways marks a completion of an effort to incorporate critical thought into the field of architecture. As Joan Ockman describes in her contribution to *Assemblage 41*:  

---

36. The same realization could be made about the other younger architects who would have figured in the conference, such as Rosemary Felske, Peter Eisenman, and Peter Rice. The shift towards a more traditional approach was also evident in the work of architects such as Richard Meier and Robert Venturi, who had previously been associated with the New York schools of architecture. The shift towards a more traditional approach was also evident in the work of architects such as Richard Meier and Robert Venturi, who had previously been associated with the New York schools of architecture.
If *Oppositions* served to introduce theoretical sophistication into American architecture, Assemblage has been an effective and important instrument of its naturalization...the evolution from *Oppositions* to Assemblage indeed exemplifies the ascendency of "theory" to an almost autonomous discipline...\(^{37}\)

This quest for an autonomous discipline is precisely what I speculate is at risk in the failure of the current discourse.

my approach to the body of knowledge

To examine how a discourse ought to work, I found it helpful to at least skim the surface of some of the ideas derived from the body of knowledge developed in the critical theory movement from outside of architecture.

Immediately it should be apparent to anyone, especially someone who has spent decades trying to understand this discourse as many current architectural faculty have, that I'm not going to be able to do justice to the breadth, complexity, and depth of this body of thought.

But even if I could, that is not what this project is about. I am trying to understand something and draw some conclusions about the current architectural literature focused on a pretty specific, if conceptually huge, area. In this effort, I am not interested in adding my two cents to the morass of material being written around the ideas of cultural and literary philosophers. I did, however, find some really compelling ideas presented by the somewhat random set of writers whose work was recommended to me as potentially relevant. And, going through the process of trying to collect those ideas into a single, if personal and necessarily flawed, understanding of how to think about discourses and how they operate, informed my analysis of the current architectural discourse.

As I intimated above, there is no way for me to do justice to the writings I use. They are complex and varied in and of themselves and I am going to pull pieces of them out of context and use them to make the points I want to make. Is this a valid approach to the material? Maybe, maybe not, but even here I find an idea from within the literature to position what I will attempt.

As Michel de Certeau, a French philosopher with primary works published in English during the 1980's, writes in the introduction to his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

> the activity of reading has...all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance. But since he is incapable of stockpiling (unless he writes or records), the reader cannot protect himself against the erosion of time (while reading, he forgets himself and he forgets what he has read) unless he buys the object (book, image) which is no more than a

\(^{36}\) *Harvard Design Magazine* p.6

\(^{37}\) *Assemblage* 41 p. 61.
substitute (the spoor or promise) of moments “lost” in reading. He insinuates into another person’s text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumbles of one’s body... A different world (the reader’s) slips into the author’s place.  

Through a quick reading of the texts—my own ‘silent production’, I have stockpiled the ideas that seemed relevant to my analysis and by arranging these fragments will lay out an idea of discourse within which to situate my observations. So while I will use ideas written by others and attribute them accordingly, the ‘world’ I create must be understood to be entirely my own attempt at connecting the dots. I claim no external legitimacy for this endeavor except to the extent that it provides useful.

some ways to think about discourse — using Derrida, Last, and de Certeau

I am conducting, or maybe performing, a discourse in my effort to analyze one. This is one of the explicit ironies of this endeavor, and a circularity that keeps miring me down. As Jacques Derrida observed—one can’t adequately theorize a frame from within that frame. But, after ruling out the efficacy of communicating my ideas through an interpretive dance, I sat down to write and found a starting point in the discussion around theory and practice. More specifically, the tendency to oppose the activities to each other in an either/ or duality. This seemed like a good place to locate an argument that started with practice and somehow found itself in theory.

As Nana Last thoroughly examines, in her article “Of” from *Assemblage* 39, within and in reference to architecture, this opposition is extremely problematic. Describing the different views of historically distant architects like Loos and Alberti, Last summarizes:
Here, though, arises another form of the question, one that much more specifically suggests why this split is so problematic. Consider that each of these architects, these practitioners, found it necessary to turn to writing, to language, to shore up the practice with which they were involved.\footnote{p. xxi.}

Whether willingly or not, ‘practicing’ architects engage the realm of the ‘theoretical,’ when they enter into the ‘discourse’ through verbal expression or discussion of their projects, ideas, methods, etc. We are all contributing to the discourse in our presentation and discussion of the architectural projects generated as masters theses.

Another way to look at discourse can be found in the writing of Michel de Certeau, who defines discourse while reframing the distinction as that between procedure and discourse,

The distinction no longer refers essentially to the traditional binomial set of “theory” and “practice,”...; rather the distinction concerns two different operations, the one discursive (in and through language) and the other without discourse.\footnote{Assemblage 39, August 1999, p.109.}

Instead of ‘practice’, de Certeau calls it ‘procedure’. To make his point the operative definition is more useful, and he defines procedure as antidiscursive: without language and through a means other than language.

It is important here to note that discourse, the use of language, should not be understood as a necessarily passive or secondary documentation of ideas. The action of discourse operates precisely because it is a mode of communication, through language. We engage in discourse when writing or speaking, but also in reading or listening. As articulated in the quote from de Certeau that I used to position my approach to this line of thought\footnote{de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, p. 65}, texts and, even more so, speeches, become interventions beyond the control or intent of the author and in this way the action of discourse is not restricted to its production, but includes its reception and digestion.

Accepting this additional complexity provides a new orientation of discourse and production aligning them on a parallel intersection of reception and creation.

Okay, so we all engage in the discourse, it is an operation in and through language, and can be understood as productive in both creation and reception. Maybe this is starting to help explain what the agglomerations of disparate ideas in architecture that I’m worrying about are trying to do anyway. The format of these texts, the passing along of ideas without structure, is a quixotic attempt to resolve the issues raised through the silent production of the reading public. Alright, but I’ve taken this idea of productive reading to an extreme and still haven’t resolved the issues the texts raise.

\footnote{see quote on p. 34 above}
The key here is that, as Wlad Godzich in his foreword to de Certeau’s Heterologies points out, 

...discourses constitute forms of actual social interaction and practice. As such, they are not irrational, but they are subject to the pulls and pressures of the situations in which they are used as well as to the weights of their own tradition.²

A discourse does not work in isolation, it requires interaction. Perhaps a little bit of theory on productive social interaction is in order.

the role of community — using Kuhn

Taking de Certeau’s characterization of discourse as a form of social interaction and practice brings up the role of communities in the production of discourse. Discourse produced in isolation is merely text languishing on a shelf or computer somewhere. To understand the complex discourse around architecture we need a model for understanding communities organized around fields of knowledge and how these communities operate.

Thomas Kuhn, in his seminal work from 1962 on and titled, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, provides an extensive analysis derived from his observations of scientific advancements. Most famous for its identification of paradigms and their role in scientific progress, Kuhn’s theory has been widely embraced and interpreted for use outside of conventional science—especially in popular business literature. This re-packaging of Kuhn’s argument tends to focus on paradigms themselves and fails to consider that the argument is constructed almost completely via a detailed analysis of scientific communities.

Most of Kuhn’s text examines and characterizes the way that scientific communities in his exploration are organized, function, and occasionally
break down and Kuhn even acknowledges this in the postscript added to later editions of the text: "If this book were being rewritten, it would... open with a discussion of the community structure of science," and:

To discover and analyze [normal science and revolutions], one must first unravel the changing community structure of the sciences over time. A paradigm governs, in the first instance, not a subject matter but rather a group of practitioners. To Kuhn, "Communities...are the...producers and validators of scientific knowledge." In other words, without the community to produce and validate it, knowledge does not accumulate. While this seems obvious, the insight has to do with the makeup of the community in question and Kuhn is arguing that multiple, dispersed communities within a given field are much less effective at generating new knowledge around that field:

Before [the transition from the pre- to the post-paradigm period]...occurs, a number of schools compete for the domination of a given field. Afterward, in the wake of some notable scientific achievement, the number of schools is greatly reduced, ordinarily to one, and a more efficient mode of scientific practice begins.

This more efficient mode of practice is characterized by:

The way members of the community frame their pursuit and the extent of communication they share:

[The members of a scientific community see themselves and are seen by others as the men uniquely responsible for the pursuit of a set of shared goals, including the training of their successors. Within such groups communication is relatively full and professional judgment relatively unanimous.

The pursuit of goals which are attainable within the efforts of the community:

43 Godzich in de Certeau, Heterologies p.xx
44 Kuhn, p.176
45 ibid., p.179-180
46 ibid., p. 178
47 ibid., p. 178. In drawing: Pre-paradigm school names are from Jencks', "The Century is Over, Evolutionary Tree of 20th Century Architecture". 'United Architects' was a large team of normally independent architects and firms that collaborated on a submission to the competition to rebuild Ground Zero
48 ibid., p.177
An agreed upon set of methods considered appropriate for community work:

Science does not deal in all possible laboratory manipulations. Instead, it selects those relevant to the juxtaposition of a paradigm with the immediate experience that the paradigm has partially determined. As a result, scientists with different paradigms engage in different concrete laboratory manipulations.

And an assurance, or belief, that the established set of beliefs and methods will ultimately resolve all of the outstanding issues within the community:

The source of resistance [to change of lifelong beliefs] is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides. Inevitably, at times of revolution, that assurance seems stubborn and pigheaded as indeed it sometimes becomes. But it is also something more. That same assurance is what makes normal or puzzle-solving science possible. And it is only through normal science that the professional community of scientists succeeds, first, in exploiting the potential scope and precision of the older paradigm and, then, in isolating the difficulty through the study of which a new paradigm may emerge.

Scientific knowledge is by no means identical to architectural discourse, and yet I believe that Kuhn's descriptions of how science operates are productive for the analysis of architectural discourse. This is largely because Kuhn's analysis is ultimately optimistic, founded upon the idea that creative work is done for the purpose and with the expectation of progress:

Viewed from within any single community...whether of scientists or non-scientists, the result of successful creative work is progress...No creative school recognizes a category of work that is, on the one hand, a creative success, but is not, on the other, an addition to the collective achievement of the group.
Yet the rest of this passage can also be read as a critique of the apparent stalemate in architectural innovation, especially from the perspective of outsiders:

If we doubt, as many do, that non-scientific fields make progress, that cannot be because individual schools make none. Rather, it must be because there are always competing schools, each of which constantly questions the very foundations of the others. The man who argues that philosophy, for example, has made no progress emphasizes that there are still Aristotelians, not that Aristotelianism has failed to make progress. I'm suggesting that architecture as a discipline has failed to progress as quickly as it might because there are so many different and competing schools of thought included in the term ‘architecture’. Obviously the idea of progress is troubling here: what kind of progress? in what way? why is progress good? etc. but I want to focus instead on this idea of the fragmentary nature of the discipline because it is more relevant to my argument here.

how can we think about ‘discipline’ — using Foucault

Here, Michel Foucault’s seminal paper delivered to the College of France in 1970, “The Discourse on Language”, provides a productive starting point. Note that even here, he’s talking about ‘discipline’ from within a ‘discourse’.

Foucault introduces the concept of ‘discipline’ as a principle of limitation, “one which enables us to construct, but within a narrow framework.” He goes on to write:

a discipline is defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments.

49 ibid., p. 37
50 ibid., p.126
51 ibid., p.151
52 ibid., p. 162
53 a good characterization of this stalemate can be found in Kieran and Timberlake’s recent book, Refabricating Architecture, 2004.
54 Kuhn, p.162
55 Foucault, p.222
A graphic depiction might look something like this:

When applied to a conventional practice of architecture, this description of a discipline seems obvious. The 'objects' are the buildings architects design and oversee the production of, the 'methods' are the techniques for spatial planning and organization combined with structural limitations taught in NCARB required coursework, the 'true propositions' are the ideas about formal palettes and site planning handed down from experienced practitioners to architectural interns and so on.

Yet a closer consideration reveals that defining the discipline of architecture by even these guidelines does little to bracket a set of
activities as operating exclusively within and therefore defining the discipline of architecture today. Many contemporary architectural practices produce gallery exhibitions and widely publicized but never-built competition entries before ever working on a conventionally defined building project. And then what about the writing, is architectural discourse best thought of as one of the ‘techniques’ defining the discipline? It seems not to fit in this model.

To clarify these issues we can return to Foucault:

...in a discipline, unlike a commentary, what is supposed at the outset is not a meaning which has to be rediscovered, nor an identity which has to be repeated but the requisites for the construction of new statements. For there to be a discipline, there must be the possibility of formulating new propositions, ad infinitum.\(^5^6\)

So a discipline is not exclusively defined by the established activities undertaken under its purview, but can also be thought of as the framework within which new ideas and assertions about the activities can be constructed. This has the effect of simultaneously broadening and narrowing the potential limits of a discipline. If a discipline can be understood as the framework for the generation of new ideas, then any agent, regardless of relationship to the field in question, can contribute to the discipline and therefore enter it by appropriating the relevant framework. In this way a discipline can be much broader than the official or legitimate participant pool.

\(^5^6\) ibid., p. 222
Yet this conception also narrows the operation of a discipline in effect: it does not allow for changes in the framework, construction which can continue to be formulated ad infinitum.

Given the propensity for architects to question the basic framework in which they work, this interpretation of discipline is too static. A final statement from Foucault regarding disciplines provides a more fruitful starting point for this analysis of architectural discourse:

It is always possible one could speak the truth in a void: one would only be in the truth, however, if he obeyed the rules of some discursive policy which would have to be reactivated every time one spoke.
Disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking the form of a permanent reactivation of the rules.\textsuperscript{59} Adding this concept to my model of ‘discipline’ shifts the limitation away from the specific content of the statements generated from the framework. Instead, the limit is more actively generated by the mechanisms of control over discourse produced within the discipline. In the diagram, this adds another layer to the definition or conceptual boundary of the concept: ‘discipline’. And also establishes a relationship between discourse and discipline.

This is a useful characterization for the current study because it suggests a way to limit the material under consideration. One ‘system of control’ in the production of architectural discourse is the architectural press. In my analysis here, I found that the MIT Press is currently the most active single publisher in the US of texts related to my analysis (see metrics gathered in section XX on publication source). So one cross-check I did to avoid missing a text relevant to my analysis was skimming through the entire list of publications by the MIT Press. Using this technique I found several relevant texts which I had not encountered previously.\textsuperscript{60}

Similarly, by identifying Brazos Bookstore as a local retail venue popular within the academic architectural community at Rice, an intermittent

\textsuperscript{57} Note that to read it this way I am equating ‘discourse’ with ‘statement construction’
\textsuperscript{58} that I will use, there are many others written by him available
\textsuperscript{59} ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{60} see Gregotti and Stevens in the bibliography
examination of the texts available at Brazos provided another source of relevant material. Therefore, identifying mechanisms of control over, or ‘gatekeepers’ to, architectural discourse in this manner provides another avenue for locating texts relevant to my analysis.

The main problem with this simplified characterization of the discipline of architecture’s role in the production of discourse, however, is also probably a relevant element in the shift I am identifying. At the time Foucault was writing, discourse relied exclusively on official publication for dissemination within that discipline. Increasingly, as desktop publishing and internet interconnectivity erodes established publication channels, the agents of dissemination are less closely related to a given discipline and there is much greater potential for extraneous or subversive material to reach a wide audience. Players like the MIT Press and others have not and probably will not disappear, but the field of idea dissemination is more crowded as architectural newsletters and forums proliferate on the internet. These forces act to circumvent disciplinary boundaries not by destroying them but by rendering them irrelevant.
conclusion

Attempting to position this analysis of the current discourse on architecture within the philosophical thinking of de Certeau and Foucault is both a search for legitimacy for the endeavor, and also an attempt to satisfy my own uncertainty about the role and importance of discourse in architecture. Similarly, introducing Kuhn's characterization of productive communities was intended to provide a legitimizing basis for speculation on both the importance of effective community interaction (through discourse) and the analysis in the next section which speculates on the makeup of the communities involved in the architectural literature in question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ünal Nalbantoglu</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Homecoming after the Time-collapse*Anytime</td>
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<td>Nezat Sayin, Serhan Ada</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>How to Make a Shuttle with Dust and Wind*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Goulthorpe</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Hystera Protesa*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeynep Memnan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Mehmet Kutukçüoğlu and Kerem Yargan, Delayed*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uğur Topçu</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>The Emergence of Modern Time-consciousness in the Islamic World and the Problematics of Spatial*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akram Abu Hamdan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Thematic Architecture: Significance + Urban Interaction*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubert Damisch</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Three Minus Two, Two Plus One: Architecture and the Fabric of Time*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahul Mehrotra</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Working in Bombay: The City as Generator of Practice*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkrishna Doshi</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Give Time a Break*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Eisenman</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Time Warps: The Monument*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredric Jameson</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Time and the Concept of Modernity*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Jencks</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Architectural Time - Between Melancholy and Narrative*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jule Eren</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Time and Self Incarnated*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernard Tschumi</td>
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<td>Dissym*Anytime</td>
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<td>René Koolhaas</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Netherlands Embassy*Anytime</td>
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<td>Suha Öskan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Anytime in Anatolia*Anytime</td>
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<td>Michael Serkin</td>
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<td>Telling Time*Anytime</td>
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<td>Ayşe Erzen</td>
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<td>Abstract Machines and Calculable Grammars of Geometrical Shapers*Anytime</td>
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<td>Saskia Sassen</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Juxtaposed Temporalities: Producing a New Zone*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zaha Hadid</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>The Ambition of the New*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Rajchman</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Time Out*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akira Asada, Arata Isozaki</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Simulated Origin, Simulated End*Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winny Maes</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Beginning*Anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Mau</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Getting Engaged*Anytime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
metric comparison: format and participant characteristics

Arguing for a shift in the current discourse requires an ability to access and derive an understanding of the nature of the discourse before the shift occurs. An ideal and more objective version of this analysis would conduct an exhaustive literature mining over the entire period I describe in order to make very confident statements about the mechanism of the historic discourse. Unfortunately that is beyond the scope of this work, and instead I use the four extensive and overlapping anthologies of the historic discourse identified earlier as a window into some aspects of the discourse over the entire 20th century.

Comparing texts which are deemed important after the fact to the maelstrom of current publications is problematic on many levels from historical revisionism to selection bias. However, given that I am interested in texts which address the fundamental nature of the field of architecture and how it might or ought to change, by using this proxy I have some confidence that at least the compelling and influential publications of this type are included.

The intent here is not to recreate or reinvent people like Jencks’ efforts to categorize the content and intellectual underpinnings of the various movements. Instead, having observed the apparent emergence of a new format, I am looking for shifts in external mechanism which might accompany, follow, or explain this emergence. When looking at the historical timeframe in comparison to today, are there other externalities which coincide with the rise of solicited response or ‘pulled’ discourses?

This table\textsuperscript{60} compares the contents of the anthologies in aggregate, to the contents of the major ‘inverse mosaic’ texts: *Assemblage 41, Hunch 6/7*, and *Harvard Design Magazine*’s “Stocktaking”. The center column contains statistics on the writers that appear in both.

As we would expect in any historically male-dominated field, the proportion of writers who are women is greater in the more recent collection, rising from eight to twenty-six percent. Also, the average age of the writers at time of publication has increased from 42 to 51. This probably reflects some selection bias because I could not find birth years for all of the participants and younger people are less likely to admit their youth (or have been around long enough for somebody to publish it on the internet anyway). But it is almost definitely indicative of people continuing to write and publish over a

\textsuperscript{60} see next page
### Anthology Data Table

#### Unique Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anthologies</th>
<th>Overlap</th>
<th>Inverse Mosaics</th>
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<tr>
<td>232</td>
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#### Author Age at Time of Publication

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<th>Texts</th>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Authors Writing Multiple Texts

- Peter Eisenman
- Mary 4 McLeod
- Bernard Tschumi
- Catherine 4 Ingraham
- Greg 10 Lynn
- George 4 Baird
- Charles 8 Jencks
- Steven 4 Holm
- Anthony 8 Vidler
- Jennifer 3 Bloomer
- Beatriz 7 Colomina
- Georges 3 Teysot
- Zaha 7 Hadid
- Eric 3 Owen Moss
- Sanford 7 Kwinter
- Kenneth 6 Frampton
- Tadao 3 Ando
- Robert 5 Venturi
- Jean-Louis 2 Cohen
- Rob 5 Krier
- Stanford 2 Anderson
- Mark 5 Wigley
- Robert 2 Segrest
- Denise 4 Scott Brown
- Andres 2 Duany

---

*Note: The table includes data on the number of unique authors, the overlap between anthologies, and inverse mosaics. The authors listed are those who have written multiple texts across these categories.*
longer period of time. This is most clearly seen in the large degree of overlap between the two, writers who have texts in both categories.\textsuperscript{61}

The older age of writers in the recent group of texts is probably a combination of a search for legitimacy on the part of the recent publications by working hard to include the established voices in the field, and the fact that there are so many older writers who are still very active in the field.

When viewed on histograms by number of people at each age, the conclusion can be more confidently drawn. Especially when comparing the top and bottom graphs, the age at time of writing in the new texts under consideration is definitely older, as indicated by the shift to the right.

\textit{distribution of author age at time of writing by publication subset}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c}
  & 20's & 30's & 40's & 50's & 60's & 70's & 80's \\
  \hline
  anthology & & & & & & & \\
  inverse mosaics & & & & & & & \\
  all recent texts & & & & & & & \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{61} listed underneath in decreasing order of total number of texts in the analysis (shown in red)
texts by age of primary author at time of publication

- texts by repeat authors
- texts by first-time authors

- 36-50
- <= 35
texts at time of publication by gender of primary author

- texts by repeat authors
- texts by first-time authors
texts at time of publication by if first-time author

- texts by repeat authors
- texts by first-time authors

1943  1950  1960  1970
Another way to look at this data is spread out on a timeline for each text by date of publication which allows us to make observations on whether the difference in the two aggregate datasets appeared gradually or if there appears to be a sudden shift.62

First looking at the age data more closely, we can see that the proportion of authors age fifty and older increases suddenly in 1991. This is especially true of the oldest age group, older than sixty-five. The timing corresponds with the first of the ANY conferences. The trend was not specific to that series of publications, though, because it continues with the Hunch 6/7 spike in 2003. Clearly the writers in the more recent texts are older on average.

Turning to look at the gender of authors by timing of publication, there is a more pronounced shift within the recent texts. The increase in female authorship does not begin in 1991, with the ANY conferences, but in 1996 with the conference at Harvard published in Reflections. The other spike in percentage of female authors coincides in 2000 with the publication of Assemblages 41. This is the most 'theoretical' text included in my analysis and the corresponding increase in female authorship as a proportion of the whole suggests a greater than average participation in theoretical writing by women.

The final cut of the data looks at first-time authors. Note that this graph shows 1942 through 2004, but I tabulated data from 1903 which explains how there could be so many repeat authors in the first year of this view. The spikes here correspond with those in the gender graph and the symmetry makes sense—if there are more women published and this is a shift, then they have to also be first-time authors. So on the surface, this is not very interesting.
When this information is related back to the timeline in
Section 2, part 3, the spikes and shifts in these three metrics
become evidence for precisely that—new voices are entering
the discourse on practice. The question is: why?

Maybe an answer goes something like this: there are a set of forces working
on society at large (globalization of markets, instant messaging, ubiquity
of cell phones, desktop publishing) rattling our basic understandings
of how things work and generating a lot of unease. There are new
opportunities, sure, but many old ways of operating seem to be going the
way of the dodo bird (like hand drafting). Architects, a group of people
with the fatal combination of a tremendous creative ability and a deeply
held conviction that a better solution to any problem can be reached if
they just keep beating themselves up about it, feel especially threatened
by the acceleration of change in methods and relationships. There just
isn’t time anymore to painstakingly design every aspect of practice
from scratch, if ever there really was—whether or not that idyllic time
ever existed, we hold a deeply rooted belief that it did. So people who
take the pulse of the profession, editors being the best example I can
think of, found a lot of questions being asked and passed them along.

62 see charts on pages 50-55
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larger concurrent shift: finding a context

Unbeknownst to me until I started digging around in the texts I found, it turns out that there are many writers within the discourse describing a shift in the field of architecture as a whole at the present moment. Driven mostly by advances in technology and the assimilation of complexity theory into many different aspects of society, there is a lot of anticipation from writers within the architectural discourse. Sanford Kwinter, in his response to Hal Foster in Praxis 5 points out:

The last decade has produced transformations in economics..., knowledge..., and society... that are deep and sometimes decisive, and which have already been significantly reflected in the design archive. To understand how these new relationships have become incarnated in the material world is a principal task of the architectural imagination.

While I believe a shared set of indicators is marking the shift, there are two pretty different conclusions drawn. The first sees the changes as a wonderful new world of constantly adapting complexity, exhorting us to get on board or get left behind. The second translates the abundance of information into a rallying cry for more and better critical work.

wonderful new world

The wonderful world idea is the one most extensively explored in the texts I saw and relates to the emergence and adoption of new technologies for form generation and architectural production. Charles Jencks provides a thorough examination of the various veins of this shift in his contribution to Hunch, “The New Paradigm in Architecture”:

...one can discern the beginnings of a shift in architecture that relates to a deep transformation that may, in time, permeate all other areas of life. The new sciences of complexity-fractals, nonlinear dynamics, the new cosmology, self-organizing systems-have brought about the change in perspective. We have moved from a mechanistic view of the universe to one that is self-organizing at all levels, from the atom to the galaxy. Illuminated by the computer, this new worldview is paralleled by changes now occurring in architecture...
...a wind is stirring architecture; at least it is the beginning of a shift in theory and practice.

Through the rest of his essay, the evidence Jencks assembles makes a convincing argument for a shift of some sort that relates to the forces enumerated above, though even he acknowledges that it is too early to be sure of the permanence of this shift.

63 Complexity theory is currently being extensively used to study and improve manufacturing, for example. See Michael L. George, Conquering Complexity in Your Business.
64 Sanford Kwinter in Praxis 5, p.19-21
65 Hunch 6/7, p. 251
For insight into how this emergent complexity is shifting (or ought to shift) modes of architectural practice, Brett Steele's contribution to *Hunch 6/7* offers a compelling perspective:

Architects, like many others, need to confront McLuhan's equivocation regarding the consequences of our technological connectivity and its extensions, not by avoiding such systems, or by forcing their use to follow prescribed, historical modes, but instead by further adapting themselves, including their institutions and practices (from the rigid vertical hierarchy of traditional architectural offices to the monolithic curricula of courses directed at imaginary individuals). A century-long emphasis on the formation of individual professional identities and singular design personalities needs to give way to increasingly group-based, collective, and self-organizing formations. Only by doing so will a generation of profoundly interconnected, interactive, and geographically dispersed architects be able to fully capitalize on the machinic potentials, and not merely mechanical limitations, implicit in this condition.66

In a related identification of the shift, Mark C. Taylor sees the inherent complexity of the current situation as a necessary but temporary state of confusion while we adjust to the ever increasing rate of change ushered in by technological advances:

> We are living in a moment of unprecedented complexity when things are changing faster than our ability to comprehend them. This is a time of transition betwixt and between a period that seemed more stable and secure and a time when, many people hope, equilibrium will be restored… What distinguishes the moment of complexity is not change as such but rather the acceleration of the rate of change.67

This characterization of the shift in the field focuses on the practical implications of the technological forces impacting architecture with an almost utopian belief in the potential of self-organization to eradicate all of the current malaise.

**fertile field**

In the second general characterization of the shift, Sarah Whiting and Bernardo Secchi weigh in on the simultaneous shift occurring in the theoretical project in architecture.
Secchi provides a lyrical description of the pivot point that discourse is poised upon when he writes (again in Hunch), "We are now confronting the outcome of a fertile season of pervasive descriptive effort."\(^6\) Whiting, also very optimistic in her observation of the fields’ fertility, exhorts us to action:

Thanks to decades of intellectual effort—the acumen of certain architects, theorists, curators, schools, and publication such as Oppositions and Assemblage—we are surrounded by a remarkably fertile field of stuff... Rather than lose ourselves among its heterogeneity, we should aspire to change this field’s topography. In order to do so, architects must engage, lead, catalyze—act, rather than only react. Unlike other disciplines in the liberal arts, architecture’s relationship to critical theory is not entirely concentric. Rather than bemoan this fact or conclude that theory has no bearing on architecture—two options that guarantee architecture’s intellectual suicide—architects interested in the progressive project have no choice but to take advantage of our ability to slip in and out of critical theory’s rule. After all, hasn’t critical theory itself defined the rule-zone as, at best, a fuzzy entity?\(^6\)

Again, the shift is an opportunity to be grasped. Architects can take the vast amount of material they have access to and fundamentally alter the proverbial landscape of design.

This optimism is not entirely representative and there are a number of writers identifying the theoretical shift from a more neutral perspective. In her contribution to the final issue of Assemblage, Joan Ockman describes the explosion of ‘stuff’ as leading directly to, “the pronouncements of “the theory death of architecture.”...[and] a certain exhaustion or impatience with an often ponderous and obscurantist theoretical discourse may be sensed.”\(^7\) For Ockman this excess is now due for a correction in the form of a deconstruction of the theoretical.

Bringing together the two shifts described above—to a more complex, technologically advanced and self-organizing discipline and a more fertile (or overgrown) field for critical intervention—Michael Speaks aggressively\(^7\) concludes that the only answer is a new form of endeavor which he has coined, ‘Design Intelligence’:

In architecture, as in other fields, we have witnessed a shift in the intellectual dominant—from philosophy and its search for absolute truth, to theory and its retreat into the “truth” of negative critique... As theory and the vanguard architectures it enabled have fallen into desuetude, new architectural practices have arisen. These are better suited to prosper in the uncertainty and chatter created by the reality that first came to our attention in the 1990s with the onset of a new round of globalization, fully inaugurated by the events of September

\(^{66}\) “Disappearance and Distribution: The Architect as Machinic Interface” p.435
\(^{67}\) Hunch 6/7 “Network Architecture” p.443
\(^{68}\) “Changing with the Change” p. 405
\(^{69}\) Hunch 6/7 “Going Public” p.502
\(^{70}\) Assemblage 41, p. 61
\(^{70.5}\) I say aggressive because, based on the frequency of his involvement in the current discourse and the consistency of his message, he seems bound to realize his view of the shift if he has to make it happen
11. What separates post-vanguard practices from their vanguard predecessors is their reliance on design intelligence. To understand what this means for architecture, it is first necessary to draw a distinction between problem-solving and innovation.71

This primacy of innovation over problem-solving is a not-so-subtle excoriating of the critical project itself as is made clear when Speaks chimes in alongside K. Michael Hays, Felicity Scott, and Sanford Kwinter in the Praxis discussion on Hal Foster’s Design and Crime I described in detail above:

Rather than adhering to a political agenda or program determined in advance, is it possible that they are a new form of experimental practice that requires no project or mission beyond innovative design, beyond adding value through design?22

Whether or not the shift being debated marks the end of the critical, given the prevalence of his contribution, Speaks certainly believes that using the vehicles of discourse to promote your worldview is necessary.

While there is certainly more that can be said and more voices with an opinion about the shifting nature of the architectural discipline at the present juncture, I think it is clear that there is some momentum behind the belief that there is a pretty profound change underway in the nature of the discipline.
architectural discourse at risk: a conclusion

It is precisely here that I see a crisis in the discourse. If the collected responses are the only discursive vehicle grappling directly with these issues right now, then the profession is truly at a perilous juncture. Borrowing again from Thomas Kuhn's observations on the structure of scientific revolutions, if we view the shift in format as a relaxation of the editorial function in the architectural discourse, he states: "All crises begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research."73 These texts are questioning the very foundations of the field-suggesting a blurring of the existing understanding of it-and yet stopping short of the resulting opportunity to synthesize a new direction.

I believe that the emergence of the inverse mosaic in the architectural discourse coincides with, and is to some degree driven by, the broader shift from a mechanistic to self-organizing view of the world and our discipline. Yet, instead of advancing the collective production of architectural discourse, this particular decent into hand-wringing cacophony is contributing to its disintegration.

The cult of self-organizing systems abdicates the need for synthesis in its promotion of 'smart' network culture. Non-hierarchical and adaptive systems serve as constructive models for managing the complexity of practice and design, but when applied so directly to the discourse have an atomizing affect on the discipline.

I derive this assertion partially from an observation that Sarah Whiting makes in her contribution to the final Assemblage, she is talking here specifically about the rise of the personal narrative, but I think the argument can be similarly applied to the strategy of letting everyone weigh in on a topic in general, regardless of the literary voice used:

Recent architectural writing is laced with the intricacies of a highly personal excursus. Assemblage, ANY, the "Arts and Leisure" section of The New York Times, Metropolis-actually, most recent architectural theory publications, lectures, and conferences-are built of tales revealing a willfully assertive subjectivity. This reliance upon the personal narrative signals the ultimate strategy of an ever more thorough diversification of architectural possibilities: every person has a voice. So when does a voice equal a position? The answer lies in the curious flip side of the narrative strategy, for while the personal accelerates atomization, it simultaneously proffers a synthesis.74

For Whiting, synthesis happens in the unconscious absorption of a sea of ideas, that "wash over you, enter your pores, rest in your memories, and resurface in your dreams."75 While this is a beautiful image, it hardly

71 Hunch 6/7, "Design Intelligence" p.417
72 Speaks, Praxis 5, p.19
73 Kuhn, p. 84
74 Assemblage, p.88
75 ibid., p.88
inspires confidence. If this is the way that self-organization applies to the discourse then it does not present the desired advancement into ever greater interconnectedness and collaboration, but rather perpetuates one of the oldest misconceptions and romanticizations of the field of architecture; the ideal of the independent creative genius, operating like so many Howard Roarks walking through the pages of unlimited *Fountainheads*.

In conclusion, I assert that the discursive attempt to develop a self-organizing discourse does nothing to resolve the fundamental issues concerning the discipline that are raised. In fact, soliciting input and disseminating it in this fashion without even a necessarily flawed attempt at synthesis provides a false sense of accomplishment that, by shifting the focus away from the sense of crisis which raised the question, may contribute to the dissolution of the discipline. This dissolution will not result from some cataclysmic rupture, but the successful appropriation of the fundamental tenets of the discipline by an emerging body of thought on the broader role of creativity and aesthetics in culture.

Admittedly, this is not necessarily a bad thing, but it certainly has implications for any chance of architectural autonomy and the relevance of critical practice: two issues that appear to be extremely important to a large number of the writers sampled in the texts under analysis here.
autonomy, critical practice, and why we need discourse

Why should we, or anybody, care about the discourse?

What unique service does it provide for the discipline?

To address the unique ways that discourse operates within the field of architecture, I find it most productive to stick with ideas contained in the discourse itself. This is the obvious and most passionate field of battle. And, given the self-reflexive nature of architectural writing, I encountered an abundance of discussion of the role and importance of architectural discourse within the texts I was analyzing.

Loosely organized into the earlier text groupings I draw from, the following is meant as a sampler and provocation.

empirical texts

Unsurprisingly, the empirical texts don’t address the idea or role of discourse. When theory is mentioned, it is in the context of the sociological research theory being used to conduct the analysis.

individual meditations

The writers of the individual texts describe the role and importance of discourse with respect to the specific efforts they are undertaking in publishing a book-length version of their ideas. In his introduction, Vittorio Gregotti apologizes while arguing for the necessity of writing theoretically:

> These writings take a form that might a bit pompously be defined as theoretical reflection. This is not a choice but a necessity for our projects. It is not directed against talent; rather, I believe it is an indispensable condition for the cultivation of talent. Many have pointed out how difficult it is to find a suitable platform for the issue of theory that serves our specific problems as effectively as did architectural treatises of the past. Until now, we have failed at this task, and our theoretical reflections have often become a subspecies of philosophy or a simplification of historical or epistemological thought. At some times, such reflections serve as a posteriori justification for architectural work. At others, they produce a metaphoric interference between different languages that instead need to maintain open but clear identities in order to communicate.\(^77\)

Gregotti argues here that theory is necessary for the cultivation of talent but has been failing when compared to a ‘past’ he does not identify. He bemoans the use of philosophical, historical and epistemological ideas, suggesting they do not serve architectural

\(^76\) a reference to the fiercely perfectionist and independent hero of Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company: New York, 1943)

\(^77\) Gregotti, p. 3
problems well. Gregotti is still striving to complete what he calls the ‘modern project’ and he asserts that, “the highest possible level of critical reason, which even with its well known limits should be considered suitable material for construction.” Clearly for Gregotti, the theoretical is still only useful when directly relatable to construction.

Thomas Fisher, formerly the editor of the journal, Progressive Architecture, also focuses on the potential for miscommunication. He writes about the different jargon and language required depending on the audience and how architects often use their specialized version as a barrier:

Unfortunately, most disciplines, including our own, use language to build walls... rather than to communicate. If anything, those who do try to translate the ideas of the discipline to others are charged with pandering to the public or trivializing the field.

More specifically, Fisher describes the use of critical theory:

Generated mostly by and for the architectural academy, such criticism has questioned Modernism’s abstractness, its neglect of context, and its cultural insensitivity, and yet it perpetuates the very same sins... It, too, is often ridiculously abstract, with rarely anything concrete for readers to hold on to as they wade through its swamp of words. It, too, largely neglects its context, making references to text that only a few readers will know or understand. And it, too, remains insensitive to the cultural differences between, say, architecture and continental philosophy, using the language of the latter in a vain attempt to shore up the former. Few clients—few architects, for that matter—read such criticism, and so it has had relatively little effect, despite its frequently revolutionary tone. But the critical theory of architecture breeds bad habits among some students, who, in imitating their professors, graduate unable to write a clear sentence. Likewise, this form of criticism hampers the ability of architects and academics to share ideas and information, of vital importance to both.

It is consistent with the sense of mission necessary to pull enough ideas together to form an entire book of publishable discourse that both examples from this category of text reflect the authors’ deep dissatisfaction with the status quo of theoretical architectural discourse.
published symposia

Theory was obviously very much on the mind of the organizers of Columbia's conference in 2003. In the editor's introduction to the section of Tschumi and Cheng's *State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* entitled, 'Globalization + Criticism', the juxtaposition of these two ideas is explained in reference to the contributions of participating authors.

The pairing of globalization and criticism might appear lopsided and odd at the beginning of the twenty-first century. After all, globalization is ubiquitous, inexorable, and ascendant, whereas criticism, by most accounts, is ineffectual, disappearing, and on the retreat. Globalization is the high school quarterback, and criticism is the pimple-faced geek. Globalization is advancing and nothing can stop it—criticism least of all. This is the conventional wisdom, at any rate. But the match-up may be the most important one of the century, and the results are bound to affect architecture.

Joan Ockman...debunk[s] the idea that the fight is already over and that we are now in a "postcritical" era...

Mark C. Taylor...argues that globalization itself give rise to a new kind of structure—complex adaptive systems...that require novel critical and theoretical models. Architects might have a new role to play in developing and understanding the network structures of these new systems.82

It is completely fascinating to me that there is so little consensus on whether or not critical theory is still relevant.

anthologies

In the introduction to his collection, *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, published in 1997, Charles Jencks focuses primarily on manifestoes, and weaves a compelling, if tongue-in-cheek, description by comparing architectural manifestoes of the twentieth century with what he calls the earliest example of the form, the biblical Old Testament. He finds a lot of material for comparison and provides us with these tidbits on:

Why architects write — here we have our publicity accusation again:

Unable or unwilling to advertise, an architect must become well known in other media besides building.

The literary style and content of manifestoes:

the manifesto...is a curious art form, like the haiku, with its own rules of brevity, wit and le mot juste.

The good manifesto mixes a bit of terror, runaway emotion and charisma with a lot of common sense.

The writers' voice:

Those who write manifestoes are jealous prophets who call the class to order by damning other teachers.83

78 ibid., p. 3
79 *Progressive Architecture*, previously titled Pencil Points, and New Pencil Points began publication in 1942. The last issue was published in July of 1995.
80 Fisher, p. 110
81 ibid., p. 112
82 Tschumi and Cheng, p.77
83 Jencks, p. 6-7
The relationship between theory and manifesto—
not an attractive comparison:

Theory is a kind of congealed manifesto, its violence subtracted to become acceptable to
the groves of academe. Since there are more academic architects alive than ever before,
there is more theory produced, much of it written in a turgid and impenetrable style.\textsuperscript{84,85}

And finally:

Manifestoes are poetry written by someone on the run...directed at other
architects, to hypnotize them. The general public would stop reading—but
that does not deter the polemical, who is looking to tantalize a sect. To read a
polemical, you already have to want the expected outcome since the manifesto
is made more to keep an audience united than to convert the heathen.\textsuperscript{86}

In the volume containing the text quoted above, Jencks is editing an
anthology of the theories and manifestos he deems important to
the field dating from the mid nineteen-fifties. His driving interest,
evident in his organization of the book by architectural movement,
is the identification and categorization of texts into these movements
within architectural production. This is a long time pre-occupation
of Jencks who is credited\textsuperscript{87} with providing the name for and initial
description of post-modern architecture. He calls theory, "an engine of
architecture...and the machine which invents new types of building, new
responses to the city". He also credits [Peter] Eisenman with showing
that, "theory can keep architecture honest as well as inventive."\textsuperscript{88}

inverse mosaics

Of course, there are those who argue quite convincingly
for the pointlessness of my whole endeavor: Who
cares because discourse doesn't matter?
Elia Zenghelis, one of the original founders of OMA with Rem Koolhaas, makes a very eloquent argument against the utility of discourse in his, the final contribution to *Hunch* 6/7 "Our Profession":

The slow but sure march of history reserves for architecture alternating sequences of an approximately 30-year duration in which each generation denies its predecessor. We are experiencing one of its cyclical recurring moments, in which established paradigms gradually lose their time reference, eventually run out, and are replaced by their opposites. A new era is being incubated in which architecture will return (and be confined) to its former formal, self-referential identity. No doubt this cycle will in turn exhaust itself, but in its course, architecture in itself will be the exclusive concern of the primary discourse... Architecture is matter, and architects need only work with the vocabulary and syntax of matter. Their role is to design buildings, the acknowledged quality of which will be their sole value and, as always, the only reason for architects to be remembered. In the face of the festering remnants of past pleasures, the pointless celebration of a reality that is increasingly distasteful, and the clanger produced by a surfeit of literary proclamations that owe their inspiration to spent experience, it is time for architecture to liberate itself from its post-coital agony. This is the moment in which architecture must turn its back on a monumental superstructure of "nothingness," and start again.  

It's hard to add anything to an assertion with such clarity. It is an interesting note to end such a hopeful project on. An accident of alphabetization, or a reflection on the futility of the endeavor added late in production, we don't know.

I conclude with the most fruitful and direct discussions of the role of architectural discourse: *Assemblage 41*. In their introduction, the editors, K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy extol the role of discourse in architecture:

Theory..., is anachronistic, often radically so. It uncovers aspects of architecture practice that, while not useful or even correct for building now, may become a resource for future architectures. The theoretical text seeks out for us what we cannot otherwise imagine (this is its properly utopian vocation), but it does so not by presenting us with a concrete representation, or even a guide to one, but rather by exposing the gaps and holes in our discipline and our discourse that are our own inability to see beyond the present and its ideological closures. ...After the dust settles, let the Assemblage project be, above all, a reminder of the extreme generosity of theory, its working thorough the immense variety of cultural production and offering new ways of thinking and inhabiting.  

'Theory' here refers again to the specific trajectory of critical theory that emerged with the genesis of *Oppositions* as described in the beginning of chapter 4 above. Hays and Kennedy provide

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84 ibid., p. 8  
85 Jencks ought to know, he has produced a substantial volume of the theory himself.  
86 ibid., p. 11  
87 and credits himself in this text  
88 ibid., p. 11  
89 *Hunch* 6/7, p. 508  
90 *Hunch* 6/7's “109 provisional attempts”  
91 *Assemblage* 41, p. 7  
92 It is interesting to note that Alejandro Zaera-Polo attempts to do precisely what Hays and Kennedy are alluding to in another text included in this analysis which appeared in *El Croquis* entitled, (and I'm not kidding), "A World Full of Holes."
such a compelling characterization: 'the extreme generosity of theory'. For them, theory feels like a benevolent tinkering grandfather generating whimsical inventions to please us all.

Some contributors to the final issue of Assemblage dwell directly on the supposed end of the critical that the end of the journal marks. The most direct example of this is R.E. Somol's article mentioned above. While Somol's stance is irreverent to a genre in which he has benefited from participating, he provides some interesting counterpoints to the rosy image depicted above.

In terms of how the discourse in architecture is functioning, Somol claims that very little reading of the critical discourse is actually done.

...I take some perverse pleasure in being among the hundred or so people for whom this stuff is written. Out of the 240-odd items published, I read about twelve all the way through. No shit. Five percent. Three of those twelve were mine. Three others were by Sanford [Kwinter]. So since I like to think of myself as a guy with typical reading habits and a no greater than usual appetite for faking it, let's face it: most of us can't exactly say that we're going to miss Assemblage.

Five percent is twenty-five pages of Hunch 6/7 and five essays in Assemblage 41. Maybe this isn't an indicator of irrelevance, but a suggestion as to the best way to digest material of this complexity. But, if reading is a form of production separate from the writing, then might the inverse be true in architecture? Could there be a role for the act of writing, the process of generating the ideas which inform the authors and inspire them to new forms of architectural production without regard to the digestion of their ideas by others? In many ways this is a given, but as I described in section four, practice of this nature in isolation is not discursive in any useful sense of the word.

Continuing his critique of the critical, Somol allows that the critical project was important at the time:
To its credit, Assemblage and advanced criticism generally initially contributed to the liberation of architecture from the moralism of need. Unfortunately, critical theory itself then came to assume the mantle of high necessity. And we are continually reminded of the virtues of criticism, precluding any critique of the critical, assumed in the consensus that without it we would be awash in self-expression and know-nothingism.

...Today, however, the critical industry has become famously adept at assigning subjects to pre-scripted narratives. In its desperate search for subjects (or suspects), the institutions of criticality have forgotten how to develop interests (our own or those of others). In short, we're letting the seeming obligation of our day jobs (in the academy) dictate the terms of our evening and weekend affairs. Fun became work. But the potential radicality of an uncertain endeavor that included teaching, writing, design, and whatever else came our way was always less to establish rules, award prizes, or issue citations for practice, than to set an example as a practice. Writing and design under the regime of criticality have become commoditized, and it remains for future configurations to see whether they can be rechanneled to the new economies and ecologies of experience and engage new audiences.95

It is tempting here to continue on the present trajectory and enter into the collection of ideas that play across the final few submissions to Assemblage, but that is another project in itself and the conversation feels like it is too far along for someone with my limited experience to enter with perspicacity*. I do, however, think it relevant to introduce the basic ideas around critical practice and architectural autonomy because I believe those are the ideas most at risk if the shift proves true.

critical practice and autonomy

The notion of critical practice is very closely aligned with the question of architectural autonomy. Can architecture view itself as a completely autonomous field which solely depends on internal values and beliefs for the legitimation and valuation of architectural projects? If this is the case, then the discipline and by extension the discourse, need not answer to any external measures of effectiveness and can instead be completely free to develop its own projects. Like critical practice, there are many competing perspectives on this and the issue continues to be hotly debated. I present two competing viewpoints on this matter:

A (if not the) major driver of this discussion is Peter Eisenman who holds very strongly to the belief that autonomy is crucial to the, “survival of the discipline.” He builds his argument around the need to break away from legitimation through subjective judgments of taste or value. This present mode of legitimation relies on originality, or “the idea of the original and its copy” whereas autonomous practice negates this distinction and therefore the need for legitimation by deliberately employing repetition alongside a willful de-motivation of the sign.

While this is a difficult concept, the gist is that if we deliberately remove any vestige of representation and focus architectural production on the repetitive application of a stated method for generating form, then the

93 “In the Wake of Assemblage”, Assemblage 41, p. 92-93.
94 Assemblage 41, p. 92
95 ibid., p. 93
need for legitimacy is avoided entirely because there will be no value judgment related to the work. The only measure of project success will be its conformity to the method employed. When this is true, then architecture will be truly free to pursue the 'critical project' whereas any incursion upon this architectural autonomy prevents the generative action of criticality and forces it to become "reactive or resistant."\textsuperscript{96,97}

Alternately, in a pragmatic rejection of the possibility for architectural autonomy Kenneth Frampton asserts that,

...Despite the ubiquitous triumph of technological modernization, the practice of architecture is still to be more properly regarded as a craft, one that, at its full range, is dedicated to the significant formulation of the human environment. In this respect, it is always as much an ontological presence and an embodiment of societal value in spatial terms as it is an abstract or symbolic representation. Hence, it is doubtful whether it can ever be appropriately rendered as "fine art writ large." Unlike literature, music, painting and sculpture, or even theater, photography and film, architecture cannot legitimately aspire to any kind of cultural autonomy since it is too intimately involved with the processes of everyday life. \textsuperscript{98}

Throughout the discourse and more often than not coming from people who are intimately involved with the production of that discourse, this pragmatic reigning in of the runaway theory horse serves to remind us that somewhere all of this originated in building design.
conclusion

In an arguably fruitless attempt to bring the ideas I’ve gathered together, this agglomeration of ideas about the role of discourse within architecture might result in a diagram that looks something like the diagram on the next page.

Here, written critiques of projects ‘pull’ ideas out of the production of architecture and into the realm of discourse while published manifestoes ‘push’ their ideas for architecture out of the discourse and into the realm of production, attempting to effect the way architectural projects are produced. Within the realm of discourse, ideas may gain clarity, direction, or purpose from passage through one or several ideal filters which bring in theories from other disciplines which can be related to or inform the architectural project.

The attempt at positioning the ideas of the writers discussed above onto the diagram of architectural discourse illustrates the complexity of the discourse as it currently exists. While I believe the model of discourse suggested is reasonably comprehensive in general, it could easily have been otherwise.

96 Assemblage, p. 91
97 Here my hope is that I have clearly described Eisenman’s argument for autonomy, but here it is in Eisenman’s words as well:

...the critical does not rely on an external, subjective judgment of taste or value, but a necessary internal articulation of a figural condition, which is singular to architecture’s autonomy. While a choice of one thing over another will always involve a judgment—how and why one chooses—architecture’s autonomy presents no need for judgment. It is precisely autonomy’s inexorable will to manifest its singularity as the becoming unmotivated of the sign, and the cutting off of the object from previous modes of legitimation, that becomes a constant repetition within architecture. This repéitition becomes a critical vehicle that disrupts the economy of the idea of the original and its copy, which exists as a present mode of legitimation. Architecture’s singularity is, in a sense, an autonomy from which there can be no copy. Instead, it generates a constant iteration of internal difference between its sign and the form of its being. Here autonomy is seen in a new light, as engaged in the survival of the discipline. The discipline is critical within its own project when it detaches itself from other projects rather than from difference in itself. Here, the critical becomes generative as opposed to being reactive or resistant. It becomes part of a dynamic internal condition, continually opening architecture’s discourse.

98 Hunch, p. 177
areas for further analysis: theoretical journals

An exercise of this nature, arguing for a change in the mechanism of a large and loosely defined body of work, is necessarily incomplete. Given more time, I believe that a detailed analysis of theoretical journals around architecture, their format, content and contributors would support the arguments I have made above. In conducting the analysis above, I came across many references to the role that the end of *Oppositions*, *Assemblage*, and *ANY* played in the development of current modes of discourse.

In the place, or at least absence, of these journals, new efforts like *Praxis* and *Log* have emerged with compelling new mandates for the exploration of the discipline.

Additionally, I observed a significant change in the format of *Perspecta: Yale Architectural Journal* which loosely coincides with the emergence of inverse mosaics I have described. I would like to examine the potential relationship this move may have to the observations I have made.

Finally, I would like to explore the timing of the demise of *Progressive Architecture* and see how it relates to changes in the published writing about architectural practice. This journal contained a lot of writing by people like Dana Cuff, and Robert Gutman and there does not seem to be a forum for their ideas in the journals still in production today.
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Glossary:

In writing this text, I often found myself struggling to find the right word, or make sure I was using an unfamiliar word correctly. These are the ones I looked up, as a reference.  

Abdicate □ To relinquish (power or responsibility) formally. 
Atomize □ 1. To reduce to tiny particles or a fine spray. 2. To break into small fragments 
Comprises □ To include; contain: “The word ‘politics’... comprises, in itself, a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude” (Charles Dickens). 
Critical Theory □ a theoretical approach developed by the “Frankfurt School” of social thinkers, which stresses that all knowledge is historical and biased and thus claims to “objective” knowledge are illusory 
Current □ published within the last decade, focusing on publications from the past five years, with general comparison to the material published in the last twenty-five years 
Discourse, discursive □ in and through writing (de Certeau). 
Empirically □ 1. Relying on or derived from observation or experiment: empirical results that supported the hypothesis. 2. Verifiable or provable by means of observation or experiment: empirical laws. 
Excoriate □ To censure strongly; denounce 
Existential □ Of, relating to, or dealing with existence 
Extol □ To praise highly; exalt. 
Heterogeneous □ 1. Consisting of dissimilar elements or parts; not homogeneous. 2. Completely different; incongruous 
Inchoate □ Imperfectly formed or developed: a vague, inchoate idea. 
Manifest □ To show or demonstrate plainly; reveal; To be evidence of; prove. 
Operation □ an instance or method of efficient, productive activity 
Productive □ yielding favorable or useful results, constructive 
Published □ widely distributed in a format intended for sale 
Subjective □ 1. a. Proceeding from or taking place in a person’s mind rather than the external world; a subjective decision. b. Particular to a given person; personal: subjective experience. 2. Moodily introspective. 3. Existing only in the mind; illusory. 4. Expressing or bringing into prominence the individuality of the artist or author. 5. Relating to the real nature of something; essential. 
Valorize □ 1. To establish and maintain the price of (a commodity) by governmental action. 2. To give or assign a value to

99 unless otherwise noted, my source was the website: www.dictionary.com, which provides definitions from publicly available dictionaries for free.
Harm Tilman  49  2003 Architecture and Engagement*Hunch 6/7
K. Michael Heys  49  2003 Inventories of Suspicion*Hunch 6/7
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Ole Bouman  43  2003 What Do You Want: Some Hope or Just Difference?*Hunch 6/7
Riems Dijkstra  42  2003 Ladies and Gentlemen, We are Floating in Space*Hunch 6/7
bibliography

Material Under Analysis

1. Empirical texts


Based on research conducted over six months spent in three different architecture offices, Dana Cuff tells the story of the work of architects in terms of what she calls, “a culture of practice”. Characterizing her work as primarily an ethnography in keeping with contemporary cultural studies, Cuff’s descriptive analysis sometimes includes prescriptions for the way architectural practice ought to function. The text concludes by presenting a, “view of practice as a series of dialectical dualities,” in which the, “profession tends to favor one component of each duality while neglecting the other...creating an imbalance that can lead to certain problems” (p.11). The four key dualities she identifies are:

1. Through emphasis on the traditional role of the creative individual, the profession masks the growing significance of collective action

2. Design is believed to sprout from a series of independently made decisions rather than from the emergent sense made of a dynamic situation

3. Design and art have been separated from business and management concerns, in spite of the fact that the two domains are inextricably bound in everyday practice

4. The image of the architect as a generalist...is countered by the challenges facing practicing architects who specialize in their market for services (p. 249)

These can all be broadly described as a, “contrast between beliefs and practice, or ideology and action” (p.11). The text is organized into chapters covering different components of the cultural system of architectural practice, starting with vignettes taken from actual practices and used to embark on analysis of underlying patterns of practice. Cuff finishes by concluding how the profession and architecture schools, “might respond to this re-visioning of architectural practice” (p.16).


Gutman discusses “important trends within the architectural profession and the building industry, as well as among clients and the public at large, that are leading architects to question their values, self-conceptions, and methods of practice” (p.1). Using census and AIA data, interviews with practitioners, clients and various types of public entities, studies of other producer service businesses, biographic and historical data related to the profession, and information from market experts, builders, developers, interior designers, landscape architects, and civil engineers, Gutman creates a text about practice which is grounded in research (unfortunately this is mostly outdated, as it was published in 1988). His intention is to demonstrate the, “unreality of the espoused view of the world of practice,” and thereby, “make it easier for the profession to liberate itself from conventional points of view and ideologies, and confront modern conditions of architecture and building in a positive light.” (p.2). Gutman asserts that the distortions he is combating, “make it more difficult for architects to deal creatively and constructively with the problems the profession faces,” (ibid.).
Gutman discusses, "ten trends that have been transforming the subjective experiences of architects:

1. Expanding demand for architectural services
2. Changes in the structure of the demand
3. The oversupply, or potential oversupply, of entrants into the profession
4. The increased size and complexity of buildings
5. The consolidation and professionalization of the construction industry
6. The greater rationality and sophistication of client organizations
7. The more intense competition between architects and other professions
8. The greater competition within the profession
9. The continuing economic difficulties of practice
10. Changing expectations of architecture among the public (p.1)

Gutman concludes his research by condensing these issues to five challenges which he characterizes as especially salient to architects at the time of publication:

1. The need to match the demand for practitioners to the supply of architects, and to adjust the number of architects to the potential demand for services
2. The need to develop a philosophy of practice that is consistent but that also corresponds to the expectations, requirements and demands of the building industry
3. The need to maintain a secure hold on the market for services, in a period when the competition from other professions is increasing
4. The need to find ways to maintain profitability and solvency when the costs of running a design firm are steadily increasing
5. The need to have a competent organization exhibiting high morale and motivated to produce good work

2. Manifestoes, assertions, musings on the field of architecture by individuals


A compilation of lectures and unpublished journal articles, this text by Thomas Fisher, an editor of Progressive Architecture and dean of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, addresses the practice of architecture through a series of polemical discussions around specific aspects of architectural practice, culture, and education. Presenting many compelling ideas about how the discipline of architecture, understood broadly, needs to change, Fisher challenges some of the basic tenets of the profession with an informed, reasoned discussion of the obstacles, attitudes, and beliefs which are challenging the reality of practice today.


Based on personal experience and observations from ten years of architectural practice, Hubbard proposes an alternate way of thinking about the way architecture is practiced. He asserts that architects “think wrong” about how they work—that they labor honorably but do so under theories that force them into untenable claims and judgments, and that those theories are the source of their problems” (p.16). The theory Hubbard presents starts by identifying three equally valid perspectives on what a building is for: the architect views it as an instance of order that can come from design, the community sees the building as a way to embody personal or shared values, and the market views the building as a way to bring about results. Asserting the equal validity of these three perspectives, Hubbard proceeds by establishing the discourses in which they operate and proposes a way for them to work together. The book concludes with a chapter that illuminates how this new approach is “not only more tenable in its relations with the larger world than the vision of practice currently embraced, but is more attuned to-is indeed derived from-the values by which architects actually lead their daily lives” (ibid.).


3. Collected individual responses to a specific question or set of questions asked by the publication about the practice and future trajectory of architecture


4. Participant papers and ensuing discussions from conferences and symposia conducted with the intent of addressing questions relating to the field overall


The Department of Architecture at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design took on, “a detailed examination of architectural practices, primarily in the United States since 1930, and the implications to be found there for design education” (p. 1). This was done through a series of four public colloquia involving the participation of forty-eight speakers selected to, “present a large yet representative sample of the voices, perspectives, and modes of action found in the architectural community” (ibid.). Faculty members, alumni, and an assistant dean held discussions following each colloquia to synthesize the material and pose new questions. The book manuscript reflects the colloquia and subsequent discussions as well as additional material produced and collected as deemed necessary by the editors.

This endeavor was justified on four grounds:

1. The sense of crisis among design professionals concerned with professional well-being.

2. Evidence that the profession is changing accompanied by uncertainty as to where it is going.

3. Where should practices go, regardless of where they are actually going

4. It seemed important to, “make informed decisions about the mission of architectural education, and to articulate the role of design in society” (p.2)


5. **Collections of critical essays on the nature of a particular individual or firm's impact on the profession overall**


Compiled from oral histories and interviews generated and preserved by the CRS Center for Leadership and Management in the Design and Construction Industry at Texas A&M University, this text chronicles the rise, growth, and ultimately failure of Caudill Rowlett Scott. In the foreword, Ronald Skaggs asserts that, “CRS embodied what the practice of architecture would evolve into during the postwar decades” (xi). CRS originated the problem-seeking approach to programming, the use of concept cards, and the team approach to project delivery. The “squatter’s” approach to immersion in the clients needs and fast track project delivery-both term and technique are also CRS derived methods which are widely used today across the profession. The now mostly separate business of construction management evolved from a component of CRS under the management of Chuck Thompson, now Chairman and Chief Executive of 3DI. In the form of a chronological (text derived from) oral history, this text describes the initiation and propagation of many of the changes in practice that other writers are confronting in their discussions of practice.


6. Anthologies of previously published architectural writing


Material Included in the Analysis:

Published texts currently available for purchase online, held at the Brown Fine Arts Library, listed in the publications of the major architectural presses, or revealed in a search for 'architectural practice' that purport to make observations, recommendations, or characterizations of the field of architecture in general. In the course of my research I found reference to additional texts which might have proven relevant, but was unable to procure them or gain access to them in a timely fashion. I am confident that the sample included, while not therefore exhaustive, is sufficiently representative to support the analysis and conclusions made.

Analytic Resources

Directly Utilized


To organize my ideas, I mimicked Krauss's organization in initial layouts of my final document while trying to collect my thoughts.


Referenced


According several sites on the internet, 'Architecture' is a trademarked product line of scrapbooking supplies "inspired by historic architectural styles and building hardware that challenges crafters to experiment with new materials and styling" ([http://www.scrapbook101.com/productline/architecture/default.htm](http://www.scrapbook101.com/productline/architecture/default.htm)). My combination of 'architecture' and 'text' in the title is in no way meant as a reference to this or any other product bearing the name or variant of the name.