

FORUM : DESIGN AND CRIME

IN THIS ISSUE OF PRAXIS, WE ARE INTERESTED THE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT THEORY AND PRACTICE CAN OPERATE WITHIN, AT THE FRINGES, OR OUTSIDE THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL MODEL OF CAPITALISM. IN ORDER TO STIMULATE A FOCUSED DISCUSSION ON THESE ISSUES, WE HAVE EXCERPTED HAL FOSTER'S RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK **DESIGN AND CRIME** (VERSO, 2002). WE ENLISTED FOUR ARCHITECTURAL CRITICS WITH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND A HISTORY OF DIFFERING OPINIONS TO USE THIS FORUM TO NOT ONLY REFLECT ON CURRENT PRACTICES, BUT TO PROJECTIVELY SPECULATE ON POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES. **K. MICHAEL HAYS IS ELIOT NOYES PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURAL THEORY AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND ADJUNCT CURATOR OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART. SANFORD KWINTER SANFORD KWINTER IS A NEW YORK-BASED WRITER AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT RICE UNIVERSITY. HE IS CURRENTLY TEACHING AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN. FELICITY D. SCOTT IS CURRENTLY A J. PAUL GETTY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW IN THE HISTORY OF ART AND THE HUMANITIES AND AN EDITOR OF GREY ROOM. MICHAEL SPEAKS IS ELIOT NOYES PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURAL THEORY AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND ADJUNCT CURATOR OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART. HAL FOSTER IS TOWNSEND MARTIN PROFESSOR OF ART & ARCHAEOLOGY AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND CO-EDITOR OF OCTOBER MAGAZINE AND BOOKS.**

DESIGN AND CRIME HAL FOSTER

The turn of one century calls up others, and 2000 was no exception. Over the last few years Style 1900 or Art Nouveau had returned with a vengeance in museum shows and academic books. It all seems long ago and far away, this pan-European movement pledged to a Gesamtkunstwerk or “total work” of arts and crafts, in which everything from architecture to ashtrays was subject to a florid kind of decoration, in which the designer struggled to impress his or her subjectivity on all sorts of object through an idiom of vitalist line—as if to inhabit the thing in this crafted way was to resist the advance of industrial reification somehow. As the aesthetics of the machine became dominant in the 1920s, Art Nouveau was no longer nouveau, and in the next decades it slowly passed from an outmoded style to a campy one, and it has lingered in this limbo ever since. Yet what struck me, in the midst of this recent parade of Art Nouveau manifestations, was its strong echo in the present—an intuition that we live in another era of blurred disciplines, of objects treated as mini-subjects, of total design, of a Style 2000.

Adolf Loos, the Viennese architect of austere facades, was the great critic of the aesthetic hybridity of Art Nouveau. In his milieu he was to architecture what Schonberg was to music, Wittgenstein to philosophy, or Karl Kraus to journalism – a scourge of the impure and the superfluous in his own discipline. In this regard “Ornament and Crime” (1908) is his fiercest polemic, for there he associates the Art Nouveau designer with child smearing walls and a “Papuan” tattooing skin. For Loos the ornate design for Art Nouveau is erotic and degenerate, a reversal of the proper path of civilization to sublimate, to distinguish, and to purify: thus his notorious formula – “the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects” – and his infamous association of “ornament and crime.”¹ This anti-decorative dictate is a modernist mantra if ever there was one, and it is for the puritanical propriety inscribed in such words that postmodernists have condemned modernists like Loos in turn. But maybe times have changed again; maybe we are in a moment when distinctions between practices might be reclaimed or remade—without the ideological baggage of purity and propriety attached.

Loos began his battle with Art Nouveau a decade before “Ornament and Crime.” A pointed attack comes in 1900, in the

form of an allegorical skit about “a poor little rich man” who commissions an Art Nouveau designer to put “Art in each and every thing”:

Each room formed a symphony of colors, complete in itself. walls, wall coverings, furniture, and materials were made to harmonize in the most artful ways. Each household item had its own specific place and was integrated with the others in the most wonderful combinations. The architect has forgotten nothing, absolutely nothing. Cigar ashtrays, cutlery, light switches – everything, everything was made by him.²

This Gesamtkunstwerk does more than combine architecture, art and craft; it commingles subject and object: “the individuality of the owner was expressed in every ornament, every form, every nail.” For the Art Nouveau designer this is perfection: “You are complete!” he exults to the owner. But the owner is not so sure: this completion “taxed [his] brain.” Rather than a sanctuary from modern stress, his Art Nouveau interior is another expression of it: “The happy man suddenly felt deeply, deeply unhappy . . . He was precluded from all future living and striving, developing and desiring. He thought, this is what it means to learn to go about life with one’s own corpse. Yes indeed. He is finished. He is complete!”

For the Art Nouveau designer this completion reunites art and life, and all signs of death are banished. For Loos, on the other hand, this triumphant overcoming of limits is a catastrophic loss of the same – the loss of the objective constraints required to define any “future living and striving, developing and desiring.” Far from a transcendence of death, this loss of finitude is a death-in-life, as figured in the ultimate trope of indistinction, living “with one’s own corpse.”

Such is the malaise of “the poor little rich man”: rather than a man of qualities, he is a man without them (as another Viennese scourge, the great novelist Robert Musil, would soon put it), for what he lacks in his very completion, is difference or distinction. In a typically pithy statement of 1912 Kraus would call this lack of distinction, which precludes “all future living and striving,” a lack of “running-room”:

Adolf Loos and I – he literally and I linguistically – have done nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot and that it is in this distinction above all that provides culture with running-room [Spielraum]. The

others, the positive ones [i.e., those who fail to make this distinction], are divided into those who use the urn as a chamber pot and those who use the chamber pot as an urn.³

Here “those who use the urn as a chamber pot” are Art Nouveau designers who want to infuse art (the urn) into the utilitarian object (the chamber pot). Those who do the reverse are functionalist modernists who want to elevate the utilitarian object into art. (A few years later Marcel Duchamp would trump both sides with his dysfunctional urinal, *Fountain*, presented as art, but that’s another story.) For Kraus the two mistakes are symmetrical – both confuse use-value and art-value – and both are perverse inasmuch as both risk a regressive indistinction of things: they fail to see that the objective limits are necessary for the “running-room” that allows for the making of a liberal kind of subjectivity and culture. This is why Loos opposes not only the total design of Art Nouveau but also its wanton subjectivism (“individuality expressed in every nail”). Neither Loos nor Kraus says anything about a natural “essence” of art, or an absolute “autonomy” of culture; the stake is one of “distinctions” and “running-room,” of proposed differences and provisional spaces.

This old debate takes on a new resonance today, when the aesthetic and the utilitarian are not only conflated but all but subsumed in the commercial, and everything – not only architectural projects and art exhibitions but everything from jeans to genes – seems to be regarded as so much design. After the heyday of the Art Nouveau designer, one hero of modernism was the artist-as-engineer or author-as-producer, but this figure was toppled in turn with the industrial order that supported it, and in our consumerist world the designer again rules. Yet this new designer is very different from the old: the Art Nouveau designer resisted the effects of industry, even as he also sought, in the words of Walter Benjamin, “to win back [its] forms” – modern concrete, cast iron, and the like – for architecture and art.⁴ There is no such resistance in contemporary design: it delights in postindustrial technologies, and it is happy to sacrifice the semi-autonomy of architecture and art to the manipulations of design. Moreover, the rule of the designer is even broader than before: it ranges across very different enterprises (from Martha Stewart to Microsoft), and it penetrates various social groups. For today you don’t have to be filthy rich to be projected not only as designer but as designed – whether the product in question is your home or your business, your sagging face (designer surgery) or your lagging personality (designer drugs), your historical memory (designer museums) or your DNA future (designer children).

Might this “designed subject” be the unintended offspring of the “constructed subject” so vaunted in postmodern culture? One thing seems clear: just when you thought the consumerist loop could get no tighter in its narcissistic logic, it did: design abets a near-perfect circuit of production and consumption, without much “running room” for anything else.

Some may object that this world of total design is not new – that the conflation of the aesthetic and the utilitarian in the commercial goes back at least to the design program of the Bauhaus in the 1920s – and they would be right. If the first Industrial Revolution prepared the field of political economy, of a rational theory of material production, as Jean Baudrillard argued long ago, so the second Industrial Revolution, as styled by the Bauhaus, extended this “system of exchange value to the whole domain of signs, forms and objects . . . in the name of design.”⁵ According to Baudrillard, the Bauhaus signaled a qualitative leap from a political economy of the product to a “political economy of the sign,” in which the structures of the commodity and the sign refashioned one another, so that the two could circulate as one, as image products with “sign exchange value,” as they do in our own time. Of course this is hardly what the Bauhaus Masters, some of whom were Marxists, had in mind, but such is often “the bad dream of modernism” in the ruses of history (as T.J. Clark once termed it). Beware of what you wish, runs one moral of modernism as seen from the present, because it may come true – in perverse form. Thus, to take only the chief example, the old project to reconnect Art and Life, endorsed in different ways by Art Nouveau, the Bauhaus and many other movements, was eventually accomplished, but according to the spectacular dictates of the culture industry, not the liberatory ambitions of the avant-garde. And a primary form of this perverse reconciliation in our time is design.

So, yes, the world of total design is hardly new – imagined in Art Nouveau, it was retooled by the Bauhaus, and spread through institutional clones and commercial knock-offs ever since – but it only seems to be achieved in our own pan-capitalist present. Some of the reasons are not hard to find. Once upon a time in mass production, the commodity was its own ideology, the Model T its own advertising: its chief attraction lay in its abundant sameness. Soon this was not enough: the consumer had to be drawn in, and feedback factored into production (this is one origin-scene of modern design). As competition grew, special seductions had to be devised, and the package became almost as important as the product. (The subjectivizing of the commodity is already apparent in streamlined design and becomes evermore surreal thereafter; indeed surrealism is quickly appropriated by advertising.) Our own

time is witness to a qualitative leap in this history: with the “flexible specialization” of post-Fordist production, commodities can be continually tweaked and markets constantly niched, so that a product can be mass in quantity yet appear up-to-date, personal, and precise in address.⁶ Desire is not only registered in products today, it is specified there: a self-interpellation of “hey, that’s me” greets the consumer in catalogues and on-line. This perpetual profiling of the commodity, of the mini-me, is one factor that drives the inflation of design. Yet what happens when this commodity-machine - now conveniently located out of view of most of us - breaks down, as environments give out, markets crash, and/or sweat-shop workers scattered across the globe somehow refuse to go on?

Design is also inflated as the package all but replaces the product. Whether design object is Young British Art or a Presidential candidate, “brand equity” - the branding of a product name on an attention-deficit public - is fundamental to many spheres of society, and hence design is too. Consumer-attention and image-retention are all the more important when the product is not an object at all. This became clear during the massive mergers of the Reagan-Thatcher years when new mega-corporations appeared to promote little else but their own new acronyms and logos. Especially as the economy slumped under George I, the branding was a way to prop up stock value apart from the realities of productivity and profitability. More recently, the Internet has set a new premium on corporate name recognition for its own sake. For dot.coms such brand equity is necessary for survival, and part of the recent purge of these virtual companies stemmed from a Darwinism of the web-name.

A third reason for the inflation of design is the increased centrality of media industries to the economy. This factor is obvious, so obvious that it might obscure a more fundamental development: the general “mediation” of the economy. I mean by this term more than “the culture of marketing” and the “marketing of culture”; I mean a retooling of the economy around digitizing and computing, in which the product is no longer thought of as an object to be produced so much as a datum to be manipulated - that is, to be designed and redesigned, consumed and reconsumed. This “mediation” also inflates design, to the point where it can no longer be considered a secondary industry. Perhaps we should speak of a “political economy of design”.

The remaking of space in the image of the commodity is a prime story of capitalist modernity as told by Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, Benjamin, the Situationists, and radical geographers since (e.g., David Harvey, Saskia Sassen). Today it has reached the point where not only commodity and sign

appear as one, but often so do commodity and space: in actual and virtual malls the two are melded through design. The Canadian designer Bruce Mau, who came to prominence in the late 80s with *Zone Magazine and Books*, is in the vanguard here. In *Life Style* (200?), a mammoth monograph of his works, he writes of an “identity program” for a Toronto bookstore chain, describing a “retail environment...in which the brand identity, signage systems, interiors, and architecture would be totally integrated.” And of his graphic support for the new Seattle Public Library designed by Rem Koolhaas, he states: “The central proposition involves erasing the boundaries between architecture and information, the real and the virtual.” This integration, that erasure, is a deterritorializing of image and space that depends on a digitizing of the photograph, its loosening from old referential ties (perhaps the development of Photoshop will one day be seen as a world historical event), and on a computing of architecture, its loosening from old structural principals (in architecture today almost anything can be designed because almost anything can be built: hence all the arbitrary curves and biomorphic blobs designed by Frank Gehry and followers. As Deleuze and Guattari, let alone Marx, taught us long ago, this deterritorializing is the path of capital.⁷

Contemporary design is part of a greater revenge of capitalism on postmodernism - a recouping of its crossings of arts and disciplines, a routinization of its transgressions. Autonomy, even semi autonomy, may be an illusion or, better, a fiction; but periodically it is useful, even necessary, as it was for Loos, Kraus, and company a hundred years ago. Periodically, too, this fiction can become repressive, even deadening, as it was thirty years ago when postmodernism was first advanced as an opening out of a petrified modernism. But this is no longer our situation. Perhaps it is time to recapture a sense of the political situatedness of both autonomy and its transgression, a sense of the historical dialectic of The question thus is not whether architecture should be related to the emergent forces of capitalism—that is a given—but how that relation is formulated. The elision of a political dimension to much contemporary practice, its failure to produce what Foster terms *running-room*, is not of course solely the product of the processes of postmodernization but of architects’ self-positioning within that field and its contestation - to attempt again “to provide culture with *running-room*.”

Often we are told that design can give “style” to our “character” - that it can point the way to such semi autonomy, such *running-room* - but clearly it is also a primary agent that folds us back into the near-total system of contemporary consumerism. Design is all about desire, but strangely this

desire seems almost subject-less today, or at least lack-less; that is, design seems to advance a new kind of narcissism, one that is all image and no interiority – an apotheosis of the subject that is also its potential disappearance. Poor little rich man: he is “precluded from all future living and striving, developing and desiring” in the neo-Art Nouveau world of total design and Internet plenitude.

“The transfiguration of the solitary soul appears its goal,” Benjamin once remarked of Style 1900. “Individualism is its theory...[But] the real meaning of Art Nouveau is not expressed in this ideology...Art Nouveau is summed up by The Master Builder [of Henrik Ibsen] – the attempt by the individual to do battle with technology on the basis of his inwardness leads to his downfall.”⁸ And Musil wrote as if to complete this thought for Style 2000.

A world of qualities without man has arisen, of experiences without the person who experiences them, and it almost looks as though ideally private experiences is a thing of the past, and that the friendly burden of personal responsibility is to dissolve into a system of formulas of possible meanings. Probably the dissolution of the anthropocentric point of view, which for such a long time considered man to be at the center of the universe but which has been fading for centuries has finally arrived at the “I” itself.⁹

Frank Gehry’s early houses were often idiosyncratic, but they were also grounded in two ways – in an LA vernacular of common materials and against an International Style of purist forms. As these gestures began to lose the specificity of the former and the foil of the latter, they became not only more extravagant (almost neo-Expressionist or neo-Surrealist) but also more detached as signs of “artistic expression” that could be dropped, indifferently, almost anywhere – in LA, Bilbao, Seattle, Berlin, New York...Why this curve, swirl, or blob here, and not that one? Formal articulation requires a resistant material, structure or context; without such constraint architecture quickly becomes arbitrary or self-indulgent. The great irony is that Gehry fans tend to confuse his arbitrariness with freedom, that self-indulgence with expression. The New York Times greeted his recent retrospective with the banner “Gehry’s Vision of Renovating Democracy.”

So what is this vision of freedom and expression? Is it perverse of me to find it perverse, even oppressive? In this sense of Gehry as Our Great Living Artist, it is oppressive because, as Freud argued long ago, the artist is the only social figure allowed to be freely expressive in the first place, the only one exempted from many of the instinctual renunciations

that the rest of us undergo as a matter of course.¹⁰ Hence his free express implies our unfree inhibition, which is also to say that freedom is mostly a franchise in which he represents freedom more than he enacts it. Today this exceptional license is extended to Gehry as much as to any artist, and certainly with greater consequences.

In another sense this vision of expression and freedom is oppressive because Gehry does indeed design out of “the cultural logic” of advanced capitalism, in terms of its language of risk-taking and spectacle-effects. Long ago in “The Social Bases of Art” (1936) Meyer Schapiro argued that the Impressionist painter was the first artist to address the new modern world of speed and surface. “For this individual”, Schapiro wrote, “the world is a spectacle, a source of novel, pleasant sensations, or a field in which he may realize his ‘individuality’, through art, through sexual intrigue, and through the most varied, but non-productive, mobility.”¹¹ So it is still today – for our privileged artists, architects, and patrons – only more so. Yet “such an art cannot really be called free,” Schapiro cautioned, “because it is so exclusive and private”; to be deemed free at all, its “individuality must lose its exclusiveness and its ruthlessness and perverse character.”¹²

In a similar way Gehry evokes an individuality that seems more exclusive than democratic. Rather than “forums of civic engagement,” his cultural centers appear as sites of spectacular spectatorship, of touristic awe. In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) Guy Debord defined spectacle as “capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image.”¹³ With Gehry and other architects the reverse is now true as well: spectacle is “an image accumulated to the point where it becomes capital.” Such is the logic of many cultural centers today, as they are designed, alongside theme parks and sports complexes, to assist in the corporate “revival” of the city – that is, of its being made safe for shopping, spectating, and spacing out (more on which in Chapter 4). “The singular economic and cultural impact felt in the wake of its opening in October 1997”, we are told of the Bilbao effect, “has spawned a fierce demand for similar feats by contemporary architects worldwide.” Alas, so it has, and (terrorist targets notwithstanding) it is likely to come to your hometown soon.

Led by Rem Koolhaas, *The Project on the City*, a research program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, has its own insipient logic. It sketches a diacritical field of global cities that display different aspects of contemporary modernization: the advanced-capitalist mall of affluent cities in Shopping, the command-market hybrid of the Pearl River Delta in Great

Leap Forward, the informal economies that shape Lagos in the book to come. From his counterposition of Le Corbusier and Dali as enemy twins (and his unspoken ambition to reconcile the two) in *Delerious New York* (1978), and throughout his career, Koolhaas has mediated not only opposed avant-gardes, rationalist and irrationalist, but also different projects within modernity – projects, associated with Marx and Freud, of social transformation and subjective liberation. Such mediation was the mission of several avant-gardes after the war (Situationism prominent among them): to ride the dialectic of modernization in a way that might keep these projects alive for the future.

Koolhaas surfs this dialectic better than anyone in the present, but his very skill has made for some ambiguous moves. It has led him to critique the contemporary apotheosis of shopping, yet also to serve as house architect of Prada. It has let him to oppose the spectacle-architecture of the sort promoted by institutions like the Guggenheim Museum, yet also to design a Guggenheim gallery in Las Vegas. This is no simple story of cooption: architecture must attend to the Groszstadt, if not surf it, and it is difficult to imagine a politics today that does not negotiate the market somehow. If Situationist *détournement* is improbable in present circumstances, at least Koolhaas and company remain adept at critical insights and provocative schemes, though his deconstructive method of “systematic overestimation” and rhetorical reversal can lapse into glib conflation. (If the museum tends toward the store today, Koolhaas asks in the Prada book, why not a store that serves, at least in part as a museum. And in his New York Prada he has designed a display room by day that can be used as a performance theater at night, but this is likely to be more “Disney Space” than “alternative space.”) Finally, to what ends are these insights and schemes put?

The Project on the City sometimes calls to mind an impossible crossing of Situationist flaneur and Baron Haussmann. Living with such contradictions aligns Koolhaas once more with Baudelaire, especially has dandy. Baudelaire captured the political ambivalence of this figure in a passage that Koolhaas has also cited: “I understand how one can desert a cause in order to experience the sensation of serving another. It would perhaps be pleasant to be alternately victim and executioner.”¹⁴ Behind this bravado there is desperation: certainly great poetry can come of this ambivalence, and not a little critique; but that may be all. On this score Koolhaas should have the last word here, “a reply to my critics”:

I have never thought of our activity as “affecting change”. I’m involved with how “everything” changes in ways that are often radically at odds with the core values of architecture. In spite of its

apparent success, I see “Architecture” as an endangered brand, and I am trying to reposition it. To me, it is ironic that the (I would almost use the word “innocent”) core of our activity – to reinvent a plausible relationship between the formal and social – is so invisible behind the assumption of my cynicism, my alleged lack of criticality, our apparently never-ending surrender...¹⁵

NOTES

1. Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), p. 20.
 2. Loos, "The Poor Little Rich Man," in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p. 125. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from this source.
 3. Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel* (December 1912), p. 37, reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3 (Munich: Kosel Verlag, 1952-66), p. 341. See Carl Schorske, "From Public Scene to Private Space: Architecture as Culture Criticism," in *Thinking with History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
 4. Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 155.
 5. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p. 186.
 6. See Ash Amin, ed., *Post-Fordism: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
 7. Many young "Deleuzian" artists and architects seem to misunderstand this basic point, as they take up a "capitalological" position as if it were a critical one.
 8. Benjamin, pp. 154-55. I mean this trope of "master builder" to resonate in Chapter 3.
 9. Robert Musil, *The Man Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins (New York: Vintage, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 158-59.
- Master Builder
10. See Sigmund Freud, "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning" (1911).
 11. Meyer Schapiro, *Worldview in Painting - Art and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1999), p. 124.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 13. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 24.
- Architecture and Empire
14. Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, trans. Christopher Isherwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1983), p. 53. The desperation noted in my next sentence also speaks through the disguise of another Baudelaire line, from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, that Koolhaas has taken as a kind of motto: "Les charmes de l'horreur n'enivrent que les forts."
 15. *Assemblage*, p. 50. On 11 September "everything" changed once again, and more than ever we need designers able to reinvent the "relationship between the formal and the social" in non-defensive ways.

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THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 'POST CRITICAL' (ONLY GOOD AND BAD CRITICISM)

SANFORD KWINTER

Certain critics are enamored of the term 'Capitalism' because it presents to the conceptual predator in them a prey-object of exhilarating mutability and innovative capacity. These critics take both pleasure and inspiration in the intellectual 'arms race' that it triggers and they engage it like an evolutionary pressure to provoke ever-new adaptations in their own thought. Other critics are indebted to the word Capitalism because it supplies a reassuring and fixed backdrop to which every historical phenomenon can be reduced and explained away. These latter critics take pleasure in explaining that nothing significant ever changes—aside from the surface features of the "great ruse" within which we are all supposed to be trapped—and even if change does exist, why it is not interesting.

Architects have always fallen predominantly into the first category, often to a fault, while the excerpted texts presented above are examples of the second posture. It is not surprising therefore that architecture is having as hard a time to extract relevance from these texts as their author had in discovering insight into the world of design.

The first conceptual fallacy that needs to be dismissed (has this not already taken place in architecture?) is the neo-Baudrillardian posture that sees architecture as product of the putative 'late-Capitalist' world of sign-value, effectively superseding all that was most potent in Marx's dialectical materialism—notably the materialism. It is the kind of idea that infatuated graduate students in the 1970s but which rarely held up outside of the semiotic enclaves of literary and art historical gimmickry. Architecture, we know, had its corollary embarrassing phase in 'Post-modernism'. Yet these movements were equally—and deeply fraternal—endgames of the 'sign,' and it is gratifying that at least architecture has expunged its missteps from the active table. (Even the architectural deconstructionists have long since moved on.)

Is it possible that designers are again trapped in the fantastically sophisticated grip of a new semiotic anaconda that Capital has successfully obscured from our view? One couldn't be certain that the answer is no, but the analyses we are consider-

DESIGNING EMPIRE

FELICITY D. SCOTT

Hal Foster has been writing architectural criticism for over two decades. Whether we consider early reviews addressing the entry of architectural postmodernism into the commercial gallery space such as "Pastiche/Prototype/Purity: 'Houses for Sale'" of 1981 or his recent anthology of essays, *Design and Crime*, Foster has been casting his critical eye over the discipline to reveal the vicissitudes of its relation to late capitalism. In so doing he has provided not just a dissenting voice (or bad conscience) to architecture's unavoidable participation within the capitalist milieu, but has articulated a set of problematics, even symptoms, of this condition that in turn serve as potent critical tools. In a welcome departure from prevailing modes of criticism, Foster traces the formal and technological contours as well as the operations and strategies at play in the work under review and articulates these into discursive and frequently dialectical structures which, while not always coincident with prevailing architectural discourse, reveal important political and institutional stakes. Whether addressing the work of Frank Gehry, Bruce Mau or OMA—all key protagonists in *Design and Crime*—he also uses critical scrutiny to pose the question of alternatives without predetermining a path.

Perhaps the most consequential aspect of *Design and Crime* will be Foster's contention that contemporary design might forge different articulations of aesthetic practice and capitalism than those dominant today through a rethinking of "political situatedness." For Foster is well aware that design cannot simply escape capitalist forces, whether they be manifest in an economic, political, social, technological, or territorial fashion. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri recently argued in *Empire* (a text cited by Foster and lending its name to the chapter on OMA): "There is nothing, no 'naked life,' no external standpoint, that can be posed outside this field permeated by money; nothing escapes money. Production and reproduction are dressed in monetary clothing." Hardt and Negri's formulation brings together a set of problematics important to the nexus of architecture and capitalism and points to the need within a commercialized condition to fully distinguish the politics of ambiguity from a position of ambivalence. Foster's related aim is to return to "a sense of the historical dialectic of disciplinarity and contestation" in order to find what Karl Kraus had earlier termed "running-room" [Spielraum]. [16] This is not just a return to autonomy (though autonomy is turned to more directly in the later chapters of *Design and Crime* addressed to art) but its rearticulation with notions of difference and spacing.

ALTERNATIVES TO RESISTANCE

MICHAEL SPEAKS

It is only possible to understand the relevance of Hal Foster's *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)* for contemporary design culture if we choose to consider the book in terms other than those demanded by its subtitle. For whatever else this slim volume has to say, it has none of the bite or sting of diatribe. Nor does it have the gravitas of the Loosian polemic on which Foster draws so heavily for historical precedent and moral compass. Such polemic is literally recalled by Foster into the present from a time when "running room" sufficient to vantage a "critical" view of commercial culture still seemed obtainable. But, as Fredric Jameson and others have argued, that time has now passed and with it the privileged view that authorized Loos's prosecution of a criminal case against the total design of the Art Nouveau *gesamkunstwerk*. Jameson, in fact, argues in a version of an essay which first appeared in Foster's 1983 collection, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, one of the most important documentations of the transition from modernism to postmodernism, that postmodernism is marked very precisely by the disappearance of modernist critical distance. Foster agrees, noting that artistic autonomy is illusory if not an outright fiction. And yet he is intent on prosecuting his own Loosian criminal case against contemporary design because, as he says, it "sacrifices the semi-autonomy of architecture and art for the manipulation of design." Foster seems genuinely surprised to discover that Bruce Mau "tends to treat the design of a book more as a design construct than an intellectual medium." Frank Gehry, who on Foster's reading seems to have given himself over entirely to commercial pursuits, is an even greater disappointment. Gehry's Chiat Day Office Building in Venice, CA, may suit the client, but Foster adds, its 3D billboard "manipulates the rest of us." Foster's assessment of Rem Koolhaas—who has a little Situationist flaneur left in his soul—is somewhat more equivocal, but even so Koolhaas is portrayed more as a dandy than the cultural politician Foster wants him to be.

Foster does acknowledge the need for contemporary design to engage the market and commercial culture at large but he is only able to see the terms of that engagement as either complicity or resistance. In spite of everything he says and knows to be true—that there is no longer if ever there was "running room" for the artist, architect or the critic—Foster insists on returning to modernist strategies of transgression

AFTER CRITIQUE, WHITHER?

K. MICHAEL HAYS

Time was when the autonomy of architecture – the specificity and irreducibility of its materials, techniques, and history, – provided the ground on which strategies of negation, resistance, and transgression found purchase. The provocations and probes of a well defined practice within a particular discipline produced dialectically a knowledge of the discipline's outside, a map of the "extrinsic" forces that enabled the architectural operations even as the architecture railed against them. For those of us who share Hal Foster's formation in and commitment to the form of critical theory that grow out of the Freud-Marxism of Adorno and Benjamin modified by French and American poststructuralism, these must remain the strategies that we most admire in architecture under twentieth-century capitalism.

In our own time, however, there has been what I have previously referred to as a "smoothing" of architecture: It is not just work like Frank Gehry's after Bilbao which is for an audience that is everyone and everywhere (not so much an architectural ready-made in the sense of Duchamp as an architecture already made, a clone that is its own template). There is now a vaster de-differentiation of disciplines and the tendentious erasure of boundaries between specific cultural materials and practices, that have homogenized all distinction, difference, and otherness into a globalized, neutralized sameness. Much of what claims to be progressive thought is happy to aestheticize this situation, promote its effects, and trade in any remaining individuality or singularity of thought or practice for a randomized, spread out delirium. But even for us critical theorists, "critique" – either in its Kantian sense of ascertaining the limits of a discourse, or in its Marxist sense of an ideological unmasking, or both – is an ambivalent concept now. Of course, post-structuralism long ago admonished us never to risk the embarrassment of a critical claim to know right from wrong, good from bad. But lately, even the more self-conscious and sophisticated tactics of resistance, rebellion, and negative critique seem not so much to have been given up by cultural producers as they have become a strategic part of the capitalism's internal workings, integral operations in the engine of consumption. How, then, can there be critique when critical distance is a socially structural impossibility? How can there be resistance when any disciplinary autonomy or expertise is destined to be crushed anyway under the massive movement of the world

ing do not help us to know. If the concept of 'Design' represented in them had itself made it beyond the gift shop/design store/coffee table mindset—Gehry, OMA, Bruce Mau of course represent 'design' to any vulgar weekend shopper but this fact does not in itself disqualify them from nuanced consideration, and it is at the very least a critical responsibility to provide such an analysis. Unless of course one is content to see the world only in terms of signs and their modes of circulation. But nothing foundational or even salient about architecture will ever be grasped from such a perspective and it is a poor excuse for a concept of 'Capitalism' that seeks to do so. (Though I agree with most of the judgments in the samples, I am obliged to take issue with their method and style, and hold the latter to be everything.)

Critiques of 'Capitalism' have become the poorest form of intellectual life in the developed world. Yet those who seek what can only be called a 'knowledge' of capitalism—and only those unafraid to displace themselves in order to grasp the nature of capitalism's actual movements can do so—can truly claim to discover anything. It is ironic to note that while the 'critics' continue simply to repeat themselves and to unflinchingly state at the end exactly what it was that they 'knew' at the beginning, it is the 'trackers', the concept builders, the modelers and the experimentalists that produce new possibility and new understanding precisely by using Capital as the greyhound uses the wooden dummy it chases: as its foil and engine. This is not quite the 'negative dialectics' of Adorno, but it is the one he might well have advocated had he under-

Design and Crime recapitulates the topoi of the totalization of capitalism—the elimination of any residual or resistant spaces, of any prospect of autonomy or escape—but productively recasts the issue by assessing architecture and design's seemingly willing participation in this totalizing logic. Foster investigates these disciplines' nearly entirely mimetic relation to, and even spatialization of post-Fordist economics—its closeness to cybernetic modes of organization and labor, its rapid and flexible differentiation or modulation across cultural, economic, and social spheres, its contingent and indeterminate qualities, its knowing occupation of the media. Tracing a historical progression of radical stances from Modernism's desire for autonomy from commercial culture to post-modernism's very transgression of that autonomy, Foster asks if there is not some lingering use-value to the notion of autonomy (or semi-autonomy) when one considers yet a further mutation of global capitalism. For if, as he argues, the constructed subject of post-modernist discourse has been transformed into its dystopic counterpart—the "designed subject" of the information age—and if the lines of escape forged from disciplinary specificity in aesthetic practice have been all too easily subsumed into the generalized logic of the "administered space of contemporary design," then perhaps a moment of "semi-autonomy" could "provide culture with running-room." This is understood not as a utopian alternative but as the foregrounding of "distinctions" and of an ongoing search for "differences and provisional spaces." [17] Running-room is thus not quite a space of liberation, but a momentary respite from a "perverse" collapse of art and life, one manifest as a pernicious recuperation of an earlier avant-garde ideal and in which the aesthetic and utilitarian are not so much conflated (as they had been a century before) as "subsumed within the commercial." [17]

Foster's capacity to articulate the contradictions of architecture's relation to capitalism finds a counterpart in the work of OMA. Rem Koolhaas, in particular, is situated as uniquely able to negotiate contradictions without being fully subsumed. OMA, he explains, successfully mediates opposed avant-garde projects (initially set out in *Delirious New York*) including not only the rationalist and irrationalist (or functionalist and surrealist) response to modernization but also the poles of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud: "social transformation and subjective liberation." [60] The work reconciles European modernism's utopian convictions with the pragmatism of American modernization, but is updated to account for the passage from a modern or Fordist economic structure to a postmodern, post-Fordist one.

"It is difficult to imagine a politics today that does not negotiate the market somehow," Foster posits. The question thus is not whether architecture should be related to the emergent forces of capitalism—that is a given—but how that relation is formulated. The elision of a political dimension to much contemporary practice, its failure to produce what Foster terms running-room, is not of course solely the product of the processes of postmodernization but of architects' self-positioning within that field. Where, we might ask, once again following Hardt and Negri, is the "disjunction between the political subject and the economic subject," a disjunction which produces not an escape or the positing of an outside, but a productive struggle?

If we return to Foster's association of the work of OMA with Hardt and Negri's formulation of *Empire*, it is fair to say that the architecture and urbanism is effective at modeling the forces of this new geopolitical organization. Koolhaas's capacity to articulate the contours of emergent capitalist forces is not under dispute, and the work has a critical effect or cognitive moment on account of its uncanny closeness to the forces that it models. In work such as the Prada "epicenter" in New York, it is not an "authentic" or reac-

and autonomy and indeed it is this return that motivates and makes *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)* an instructive read. What is most surprising, however, is that despite his best intentions, Foster finds little to argue against in the work of the designers he critiques. He is instead content to do no more than accuse them of not resisting or transgressing. Rather than offering sharp, concluding argument as one might expect of a polemicist, he often cites distracting passages from Walter Benjamin or allows the designer to speak in their own defense, as when he cites a long passage from Koolhaas to conclude the section on OMA. No more or less transgressive than its subject matter, Foster's little book is important because it shows the utter bankruptcy and impossibility of resistance and transgression as strategic alternatives to the market driven reality he abhors.

Like many critics and scholars of a certain hypercritical disposition, the only running room Foster is able to find is in the warmed over rhetoric of a historical moment and a cultural politics that he acknowledges is today irrelevant. All of this is not to say that Foster, like those of such disposition, does not occasionally stumble across truly relevant questions. Toward the end of the section on Koolhaas, for example, Foster wonders whether or not OMA and its design research offshoot AMO are avant-gardes without a project beyond innovative design. He leaves the question hanging as if the mere suggestion of experimentation without prescribed political direction is damning. But had Foster chosen to pursue this line of thinking, he might have been forced to contemplate the possibility that there are more creative alternatives to dealing with the often deadening sameness of commercial culture than resistance or complicity. Is it possible, for example, that AMO is not a vanguard at all? 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? In order even to consider such a possibility Foster would need either to engage in real diatribe as his book promises but does not deliver (resistance); or, finding it impossible to argue against such a possibility, admit that even rehearsed vanguardism cloaked in a Verso cover is a clever form of branding (complacency). Neither, however, is a real possibility for the hypercritical critic who is happy to invoke bygone polemic to do the work of the former so that they can enjoy the fruits and profits of the latter.

Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes) is neither resistant nor compliant. It is rather, like AMO, a vanguard without an agenda, and as such, a failure in its own terms. Unlike AMO, however, and indeed unlike an emergent form of design practice that has moved beyond the narrow definitions of experimentation defined by all-knowing vanguards, Foster's book is not innovative. Instead, it merely sets out to be new and fails. I have attempted to describe, in a series of essays and interviews in *A+U* that runs from December 2002 until December 2003, entitled "Design Intelligence," what is at stake for an emergent post-vanguard form of design practice, of which AMO is but one example. Though I will not rehearse the entire series here, almost all of these practices, including offices like Max.1, Asymptote, 2x4, Neil Denari, ShoP, One Architecture, FOA, Greg Lynn, Roy, Winka Dubbel-

system itself, to be emulsified along with everything else into so many cultural and economic fluids. Negative critique through the autonomy project is just not available to us now in the same way it was right up until the 1980s.

So architects must find new sorts of ways to produce and multiply alternatives, which was the point of critical practices all along. Some examples already emerging extend the older techniques of ideological unmasking, insofar as they capture the salient elements of a given situation or "problem," register them, and slow down the processes that motivate them long enough to make the workings perceptible, just before the whole thing again slips back into the cultural norm, beyond our critical grasp. Diller + Scofidio and Bruce Mau often employ this new kind of inventory of suspicion, which should be understood as a placeholder for a critique that has become impossible. The catch is that to make such an inventory operative now requires a different relationship with the material being catalogued than earlier critiques did – not a resistance, but rather a certain sympathy, a readiness on the part of author and audience alike to yield, to sink into the deceptively smooth, gelatinous pool of *Kultur ohne Spielraum* that Foster (and I, too) still tend to choke on.

I do not have a good example of another, more radical practice that will surely emerge. (I say "surely" because I believe that architecture will never fully accept the cynically complacent preemption of futures. Against the hegemony of the anti-utopian, real-time thinking of our contemporary technocratic positivism and experiential nominalism, architecture by its nature continues to be anticipatory, inexhaustible, and shared.) This new practice will reinvigorate the search for some irreducibly architectural force, some effect produced by the architectural object or event not in culture but alongside it, in the penumbra of culture – a force that thickens and roughens rather than lubricates the situation, a force that obscures the scene and gums up the hegemonic workings of consumption, an impractical force insofar as it does not seek to solve problems but rather to spin off unprogrammed possibilities for action and thought. This new practice will make

stood anything of the early Benjamin.

The last decade has produced transformations in economics ('unfettered' markets; 'globalization'; zero-cost and instantaneous access to infinite markets; the transformation of the business model by the peer-to-peer world; limitless capitalization) knowledge (relativization; digitization; dis-literacy and the rise of image-based communication; the routinization and waning of culture; the ascendancy of the cybernetic model) and society (market societies; destratification plus 'hourglassing'; radical demographic shifting; mass incarceration; virtualization; suburbanization) 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 principle task of the architectural imagination. Another is to discover where historical instability is happening and to capture its raw forces in form, even blindly. Shibboleths like 'Capitalism' can be a

tionary relation to shopping that is demonstrated but somehow an accurate one, even startlingly so. And this encounter with the very processes of subjectification in late capitalism is more forceful for those who enter the work as shoppers (rather than, say, as architectural historians), for they are more likely to register, even at a subconscious level, where the work is most powerful, such an uncanny interpolation into this spatialization of capital.

Foster gives Koolhaas the last word, and in so doing the opportunity to renounce the "assumption of my cynicism, my alleged lack of criticality, our apparently never-ending surrender." [62] It is a smart move, for Koolhaas delights in outfoxing his critics; he is always brilliantly able to mobilize the knowing ambiguity of his position, always able to confront, in the words of a radical spokesperson from another context, "a flux of interchangeable possibilities, keeping open as many as possible, turning to the closest and swerving unpredictably from one to the other." Such adaptability to contingencies is a crucial skill for operating in post-industrial society, and Koolhaas is a remarkably flexible social subject. The question that remains, a question Foster raises, is how in fact we should understand the work's political situatedness. Foster points to his own doubt when he asks "Is OMA/AMO an avant-garde without a project beyond innovative design?" [61] It remains unclear what the nature of the politics of Koolhaas's surfer of the forces of the Groszstadt might be.

As cited above, Koolhaas acknowledges the value both of criticism and of the refusal to surrender, and indeed his work is easily distinguished from the post-critical progeny it has in part spawned. (Foster refers in a footnote to the "'capitalogical' position of young Deleuzian architects and artists," [148] a Deleuzianism, we might add, willfully ignorant of the political dimension of the philosopher's work.) In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri argue that

The critical approach is thus intended to bring to light the contradictions, cycles, and crises of the process because in each of these moments the imagined necessity of the historical development can open toward alternative possibilities. In other words, the deconstruction of the *historia rerum gestarum*, of the spectral reign of globalized capitalism, reveals the possibility of alternative social formations.

This raises the issue of whether running-room has the burden of a critical redirection and to what extent it aims at alternative social formations. If Koolhaas's work is in some sense positioned as exemplary (unlike the spectacular "logo" architecture of Gehry or the "total design" of Mau), should it harbor positive alternatives? Koolhaas rejects such a notion, "I have never through of our activity as 'affecting change,'" he remarks. [62] Rather, his desire as an architect is to "reinvent a plausible relation between the formal and the social." [62] The political cast of the work would thus lie in this moment of reinvention, of decision. But is that reinvention simply a vanguard stance—in which architecture models the most "contemporary" social relations—or does it entail a turn away from such functionality?

Koolhaas has frequently noted his indebtedness to the events of May '68, if not his alignment with the politics of that insurrectionary moment. And the work, while brilliant, does not appear "militant" in the sense in which Hardt and Negri have recast the term. "Here," they argue, "is the strong novelty of militancy today,"

it repeats the virtues of insurrectional action of two hundred years of subversive experience, but at the same time it is linked to a new world, a world that knows no outside. It knows only an inside, a vital and ineluctable participation in the set of social structures, with no possibility of transcending them. This inside is the productive cooperation of mass intellectuality and affective networks, the productivity of postmodern biopolitics. This militancy makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love.

Foster's notion of political situatedness suggests that we might ask how the discipline could move from an architecture of Empire, to one of Empire, the distinction turning upon a shift from modeling capitalist forces to working "inside and against" them. How, in other words, might contemporary practice take the critical lessons of this loss of an outside as a potential for new forms of political relations to

dam, Hernan Diaz Alonso and servo, to name only a few, no longer follow the vanguard prescription of “making it new” but rather choose the path of innovation. The search for the new is always driven by a vanguard that issues, in manifesto, a set of principals or guidelines that become the blueprint of the new. The new needs clergy and followers and over the last 15 years or so, that clergy has been dominated by Frankfurt School Critical Theory, whose resolute negativity hamstring Foster, and by the infinite regressions of deconstruction-inflected archi-theory allergic to anything affirmative or projective. Set up as the intellectual vanguard of contemporary practice, they have argued tirelessly against the new. The paradox is that these “vanguard theories” have been unable to guide contemporary practice, as for example philosophy did with Modernism, but have only required practices to resist and transgress. (This is why it is enough for Foster to say that Mau does not design into his work intellectualisms; that Gehry merely creates innovative designs for clients; and that Koolhaas critiques consumerism but at the same time works with Prada: none resist and transgress.) And yet, critiques made by these vanguards of negativity as well as the warnings they have issued against the new have been instrumental in the overall reassessment of the ambitions of Modernism. Today we find ourselves in a situation that demands the new and yet we are rightly suspicious of anything so sure of itself that it might define an agenda or manifesto from which the new could emerge. We need the affirmation of Modernism absent its sense of certainty. Given the complex and unpredictable world thrown up by the forces of globalization, and given everything the sciences of complexity tell us about our limitations to know with certainty, we are today more not less cautious about assertions of the new. And yet, we yearn for something other, something alternative to the world, to our cities, to our buildings, and to our design practices.

Foster’s little book opens with the following quote from Edward Said that is instructive in this regard: “What is critical consciousness at bottom if not an unstoppable predilection for alternatives?” Said points us away from a single predetermined new and towards limitless alternatives. Alternatives cannot be determined in advance by any single idea, theory or philosophy, nor can they be constrained by negativity. They are rather always produced as a result of the transformation of conditions that appear to constrain into conditions of possibility. Each transformation is critical in that it refuses what exists and seeks to find alternatives. That is to say, these transformations are not merely critical (oppositional) but are critical as a means of affirmation. Moreover, each transformation operates under very specific conditions, influenced by a multiplicity of forces that must be analyzed and treated as unique to that situation. Transforming constraint into possibility opens the door to Said’s and to our own design alternatives. Indeed, this unique and un-programmed transformation, guided only by accumulated intelligence, by the techniques, local and global knowledge, affiliations, etc., individuates and marks off the above mentioned practices from any vanguard movement or style. Such is the importance of vanguards without a project beyond innovation, for innovation is the very name for alternatives without project. We have no name for these practices as of yet, but they are punching through to limitless futures of design that

itself felt as a kind of resistance, producing an alternative perception, a delay or refraction beneath the easy transparency of thematization and branding. But precisely because architecture is unencumbered by manifest cultural content (it can never be “about” culture in an unmediated way), it can at certain moments produce a map of a social situation (capitalism) that is understood to be the “cause” of the project in the first place (OMA’s work has often come very close to this). Architecture becomes a kind of precipitate of the vapor that we used to call the social.

An architecture both of a culture and the culture’s biggest threat, then: pained by the loss, anticipatory for the gain, a representation of the moment and a momentary refusal. By cleaving to such contradictions, we can keep alive the expectation that new architectures will unexpectedly emerge.

capitalist forces? Design and Crime raises these and many other important questions, offering not only a reading of contemporary conditions but a contribution to the formulation of concepts as critical weapons which assumes that there is no outside to be had in architecture's relation to capitalism but which does not regard this as an impasse.

OUR EDITORIAL ASPIRATION IS NOT ONLY TO REGISTER SOME OF THE CURRENT ISSUES REGARDING POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CAPITALISM, CRITIQUE, AND ARCHITECTURE, BUT ALSO TO PROVIDE A WORKING SPACE FOR THE EXPLORATION, TESTING, AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW IDEAS. IT IS THUS OUR HOPE THAT THE EXCERPT FROM "DESIGN AND CRIME," THE PROJECTIVE CHARACTER OF THE FOUR RESPONSES, AND HAL FOSTER'S MORE PERSONAL REPLY TO HIS INTERLOCUTORS, WHICH WE PUBLISH HERE AT HIS REQUEST, WILL INSPIRE FURTHER CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION AROUND THE THEMES TACKLED BY ALL FIVE AUTHORS

REPLY TO MY INTERLOCUTORS HAL FOSTER

First, I want to thank Praxis for this forum, or at least I think I do: it's not really what was proposed to me, and I do get burned, but then some of the respondents seem singed too--and they start the fighting here. Second, the respondents treat only fragments of the first part of the book, and these fragments are quickly crossed with figments of their imaginations. So it is often in critique--which, strangely enough, three of the four critics deem no longer possible (after reading them one almost believes it)--but it does leave me the task of retrieving the book from their imagoes. Here I can only ask readers to check out the book for themselves. Finally, I wrote the originals of the excerpted essays for the generalist audience of London Review of Books. I didn't dumb things down, but I wasn't surfing the latest A + U article by Michael Speaks, or "flying the bullet" of neo-futurist thought with Sanford Kwinter, either. I'm an outsider in the architectural world, not an embedded intellectual.

For me the only productive response is Felicity Scott's, for it alone puts the extracts into critical play, and extends their arguments (such as the connection to Empire in the text on Koolhaas). Her response also effectively rebuts the other responses before the fact. As Scott notes, I don't argue for "a return to autonomy" but rather a rearticulation of "difference and spacing"--that's what Speilraum means, boys, not "autonomy", not "critical distance". The distinction between a "poli-

tics of ambiguity" and a "position of ambivalence" is also crucial; the first is what I, like many others, wish to develop; the second is what Michael Hays, the Hamlet of the GSD, seems to indulge here. Another necessary distinction is underscored by Scott: "the distinction turning upon a shift from modeling capitalist forces to working 'inside and against' them." Speaks and Kwinter not only forego but foreclose this immanent critique. They suffer badly from Koolhaas Envy, and sell out critique in the hope of admission to the Architects' Surf Club. Architecture "does not merely belong to history, but actually is history," Kwinter writes in a characteristic bit of warmed-over Ayn-Randism. No wonder he gets invited to crits.

I'm about as sympathetic to Hays as he is to me--that is, mildly, ambivalently, so (after all he says we have a similar formation). "Time was" when architecture had autonomy, Hays tells us (again, that's not my claim--what could it mean?); "in our own time," however, it's all gone "smooth". This recalls the scene in Michael Herr's Dispatches when a paratrooper riffs on his battle experience in Viet Nam as equal parts trauma and rush: "I been scaled, man, I'm smooth now." Is architecture really so skinned alive? Or is Hays so alarmed by the schlock and awe of global capitalism to surrender it outright? "The world system has homogenized all distinction, difference, and otherness." It has? "Negative critique" is "a strategic part of capitalism's inner workings." It is? Everyone on Wall Street is trading the Journal for Adorno? For a person schooled in the Frankfurt

can only be made one at a time.

School, Michael doesn't seem very intent on witnessing the world skeptically, let alone probing the culture dialectically, anymore. But at least capitalism is more than "a shibboleth" for him, and contradictions still occur—even though he treats them mostly as occasions for "placeholdering". Living with contradictions, otherwise known as political ambivalence, can be a productive prompt to critical consciousness (consider Baudelaire, Benjamin, Barthes...), but it can also be a way of having it both (indeed many) ways.

Here at least Hays seems to be driving under the influence of Speaks-Kwinter.

For some reason he signs on to their party line: dialectical thinking and critical distance are out (that kind of difficulty is so passé!); "affirmation" is in (just ask Deleuze, or what passes for "Deleuze" in architectural circles—but surely Deleuze taught us many other things); the end of history has come. What's the difference, finally, between this line and boiler-plate neo-conservatism? In a previous bash Kwinter accused me of "boiler-plate Marxism" (though here he accuses me of letting Marx go—which is it, Sandy?), but better a little of that than a lot of this end-of-history blather. And I'm the one for whom "nothing significant ever changes"?

Speaks is macho stuff. My book is "slim", "little" (penis enlargement, anyone?), without "gravitas" (who wants that? Dick Cheney has gravitas). After this initial flurry his jabs are incredibly predictable: TheorySpeaks 101. Critical distance is done with, Speaks intones. Why? Fredric Jameson told him so. (Again, as with Deleuze on affirmation, the Jameson remark is very situated, and uttered diagnostically, not triumphally. Certainly Jameson still thinks dialectically, producing critique out of contradictions—but then he can't be blamed for his students.) For some reason Speaks thinks that I'm on his side here, that autonomy for me is a simple illusion; but my argument is that semi-autonomy is periodically a useful fiction, which is not the same thing at all. No matter: Speaks is too busy "punching through" to notice. "Foster insists on returning to modernist strategies of transgression and autonomy." My participation in the postmodern debates of the 1980s would demonstrate the opposite to any middling undergraduate. But Speaks thinks he has things nailed: today I'm stuck on "either complicity or resistance." Previously he quotes positions I don't hold; here it's clear he hasn't understood a thing I've written over the last decade and more. And Speaks sticks with other bathetic oppositions long since deconstructed or overcome in practice: clearly he is battling some "hypercritical" demon of his own, and it has this prophet of affirmation spooked. Speaks can have his fantasy of a "post-vanguard"

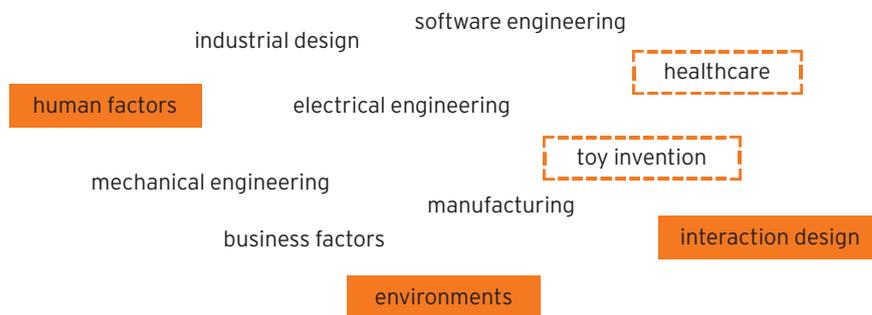
(whatever narcissistic idol that is) "adding value through design" (a telling line—is it from a brochure?). I'll keep my "resolute negativity" (that's an insult, right?).

Were Speaks and Kwinter separated at birth? Certainly they share the same line now, and this is where I feel burned. The editors had asked Kenneth Frampton to respond, but when he wasn't able to do it, Kwinter jumped in instead: that's hardly a fair trade in all kinds of ways, and it skewed what balance this forum might have had. Maybe the editors didn't know Kwinter had already had a go at my book; obviously Kwinter didn't have that excuse: apparently ethics is "a shibboleth" too. Sandy and I are old friends turned enemies. Part of his animosity has to do with the history of Zone (we were among the co-founders, and he harbors a lot of resentment over its split-up); part of it has to do with his close ties with Bruce Mau. Bruce Mau Design was the subject of an assigned review that I wrote for the LRB, the original of one of the excerpted chapters here, in which his studio is treated as one instance of our neo-Art-Nouveau world of total design today, and clearly Sandy felt implicated too. In any case he is less than disinterested, and not even honest about his partisanship. Resentment is the great bugbear of negative critique for a pseudo-Nietzschean like Kwinter, but he's the one stewing in it—all the more so, perhaps, because he admits that he "agrees with most of the judgments" in the extracts!

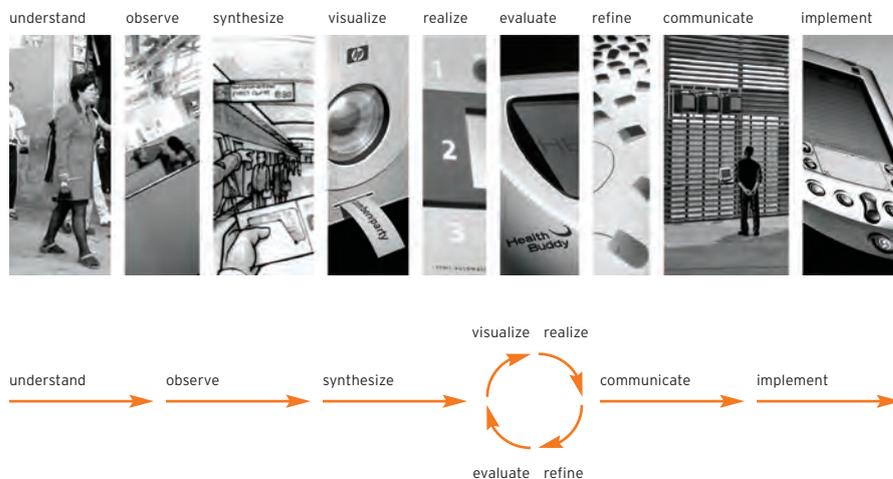
Kwinter puts terms into scare quotes as if they were death sentences: the idea of "signs" is idiotic, "sign-exchange value" is a "fallacy", capitalism is not only a "shibboleth" but a "wooden dummy", and "critiques of 'capitalism' have become the poorest form of intellectual life in the developed world." They're not fashionable to Speaks-Kwinter anymore, ergo they're finished. This ludicrousness would be harmless except for the fact that its neo-futurism links arms with neo-conservatism: again, after reading Speaks-Kwinter one might almost believe that critical distance really is dead; certainly they flatline it here—it's just not fast enough for these Top Guns. (At least Hays still looks for different speeds, "a kind of resistance, producing an alternative perception, a delay or refraction.") If some students want to fly this bullet with them—and why wouldn't the naïve ones? it sounds so sexy on first hearing—they'll only knock themselves out. But can't the rest of us be spared this puerile Marinetti-ism? When it wasn't mischievous blague the first time around, it was technophilic mysticism, and today it's far worse than farce. It's a funny time—a tragically funny time, architecturally, urbanistically, culturally, politically—to give up on critique.

IDEO : HOW TO DESIGN AN ENVIRONMENT?

TEAMS



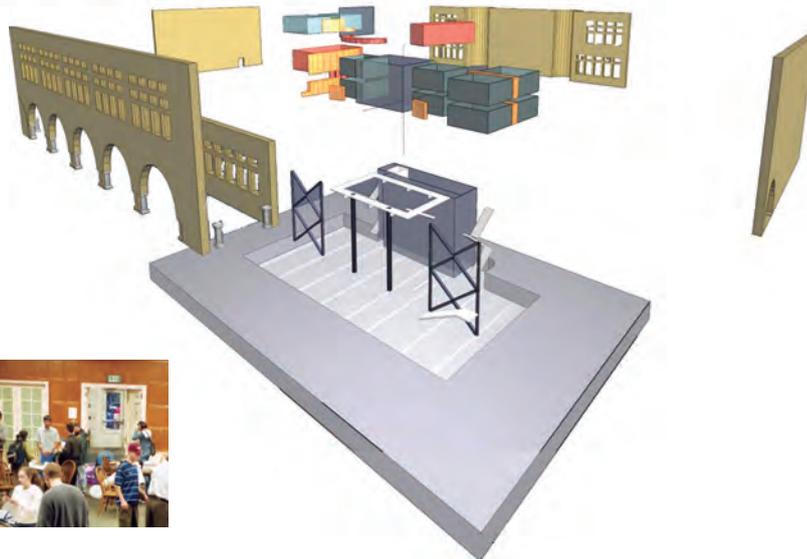
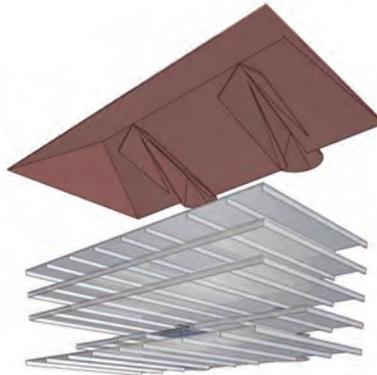
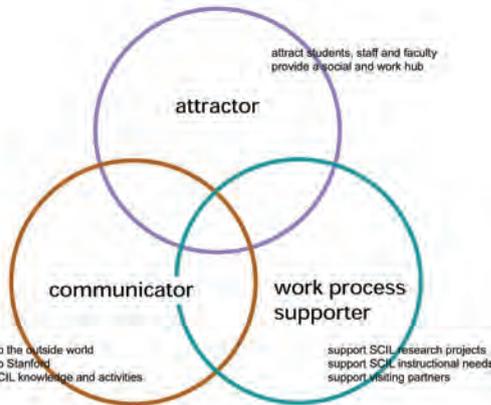
PROCESS



We all know IDEO. IDEO designs our kitchen utensils, our toothbrushes, our PDAs, and our faithful companion: the laptop. They design the products and behaviors that routinely turn our wildest visions of the future into our cozy present. As the architectural discipline has been trying to redefine its boundaries over the last decade, flirting with the idea of branching out into graphic design, branding and consulting services, the large and often praised design firm IDEO simply extended its design strategies to include the architectural scale. It did so without any trace of the existential crisis that characterized architecture's race to colonize fields traditionally outside of its own narrowly prescribed definition. Its brochures and web site are packed with the rhetoric of innovation. IDEO's clients "commission" innovation. To tease it out, IDEO taps into its pool of diverse experts in the social and behavioral sciences, interaction and software design, mechanical engineering and architecture. Every product, protocol and environment designed by IDEO has involved designers and researchers from several teams of experts. Relying currently on a flexible and interdisciplinary structure of teams with particular expertise, the intelligence of a firm which in 1991 began with product design is transferred to architectural space as "simply" another scale of design. This is possible partly because IDEO understands all processes and objects as producing a complex set of relationships with their users, as having the capacity to change the perceptions of space and the behavioral protocols in and around them.

Since IDEO's teams are well equipped to completely integrate technology and architecture, a wall does not have more importance than an LED screen, for example – but instead they work together to define a complex "environment." While the term has had several incarnations in the annals of architectural history, from the intensely technological "well-tempered environment" of Reyner Banham, to its more recent biological and ecological interpretations, IDEO's use of the word perhaps most closely resembles Marshall McLuhan's play on visible and invisible environments. For him, environments were not only containers, although they involved some physical manifestation, but also processes that change the content of the environment. McLuhan developed his definition of environments with regard to media, IDEO on the other hand, employs the term "environment" to mean a considered relationship between space, processes and tools. Their version of total design represents a different impulse to "totalize" design than

OBSERVE + SYNTHESIZE



PROJECT
Wallenberg Hall, Stanford University

CLIENT
Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning

DESIGN CONSULTANT
IDEO

ARCHITECT OF RECORD
Skidmore Owings and Merrill LLP

FACING PAGE, TOP: TEAMS. Members of IDEO's disciplinary teams (highlighted in orange) participated in the design development of the environment needed to support SCIL's activities: human factors, environments and interaction design. Hypothetically, if IDEO were asked to develop a project for a children's hospital, experts in healthcare devices and toy invention would mostly likely join the team comprised of the three already highlighted disciplines.

FACING PAGE, BELOW: PROCESS. IDEO's process diagram starts with a simple understanding of their design problem and ends with implementation. The design path as IDEO charts it is not at all unusual, in fact, it may seem as the most common-sensical understanding of the design process possible. But the fact that IDEO articulates it and uses it to explain the process of innovation to their clients makes this diagram important. The particular visualization of various stages of the design process testifies to the fact that the process applies equally to the design of a hospital environment, a mouse or a PDA. While it concretizes the stages of the design process, it also promotes IDEO's diverse and scalable expertise.

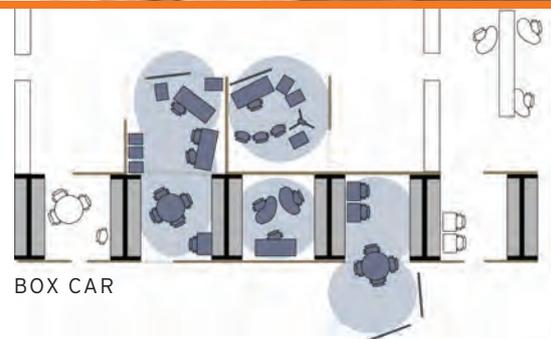
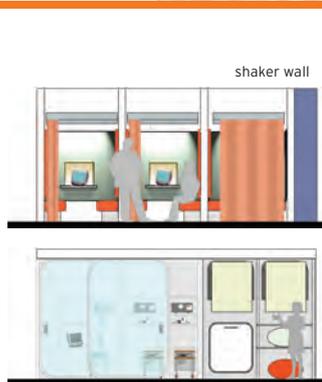
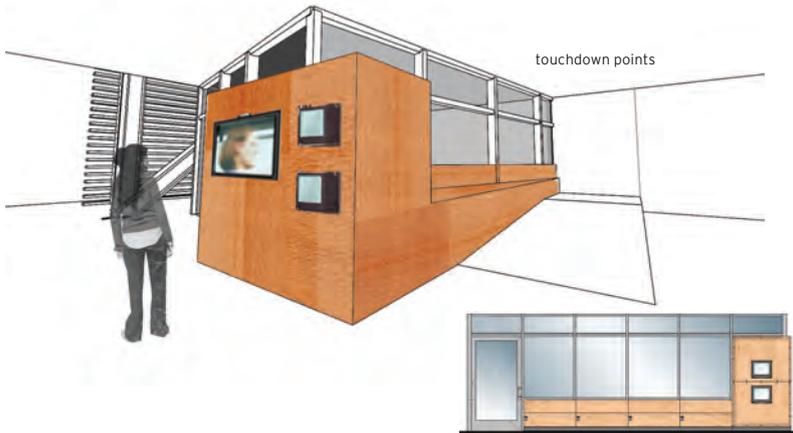
LEFT: OBSERVE + SYNTHESIZE. Every IDEO project begins with an extensive and in-depth observation process. This stage allows the innovation in their designs to be grounded in the real needs they observe. They believe that innovation is a gradual and historical process and that even the wildest visions need to be grounded in the reality they will address, for otherwise, they would be rejected. When it comes to the learning environments designed for SCIL, the process began with observing the daily life of students and by determining the "ingredients" an environment needed to have in order to be turned into a learning environment by groups of students.

Three "Meta-Functions" were developed by IDEO in order to conceptualize both how the building and various technological tools would impact the needs for publicity, flexibility and general operation of SCIL. Spatial propositions were considered as a form of catalytic design, helping SCIL understand and develop their own institutional organization.

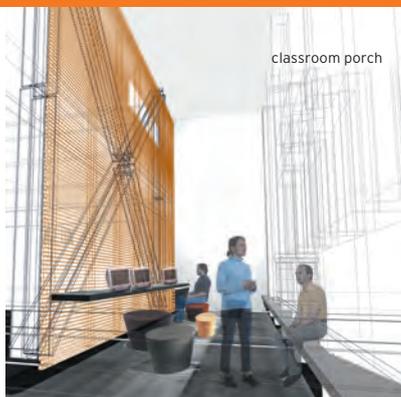
VISUALIZE



SCREEN WALL AND DOUBLE HEIGHT SPACE



BOX CAR



IMPLEMENT



the one we have seen in the work of Art Nouveau, Werkbund or Bauhaus designers. While IDEO may have the capacity (literally) to frame everything as a design opportunity, they are not overly eager to design everything, every time. This is not to say that their position is simply outside of ideology, but to suggest that if there is any credo that underlies IDEO's work it is one of total **designability**, which brings with it constant incremental innovation and ensures an enduring importance for the role of the designer.

During the last decade, IDEO has often been invited to analyze and reconceptualize already existing spaces and processes. It has also been involved in radically new "implementation" projects: radically new because they involved the very definition of the design problem. Opened in 2002, the Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning (SCIL) is IDEO's most recently completed such project. IDEO was invited as a design consultant for Wallenberg Hall, the core building of the research facility established in 1997, previously called the Stanford Learning Lab. In order to fulfill SCIL's desire and need for a home that would display the center's research as well as accommodate unanticipated changes in learning, IDEO's design proposal for Wallenberg hall provides environments and support functions for exploring, prototyping, and researching new learning methods.

Working with SCIL and with the project architect, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill LLP, IDEO's environments, human factors and interaction design teams were involved in seven weeks of observation and research, and consequently in drafting the design proposal. In general, the environments team focuses on designing and developing new kinds of spaces. It designs various aspects of an environment: from its architecture, the information presented and the interactions people engage in, to the integration of technology. Employing a range of observational and emphatic techniques to research the premise of every project, the human factors team helps create scenarios and "experiential prototypes." IDEO's interaction designers are experts in the creation of any complex user experience of products, services, and both physical and virtual environments.

Every IDEO project begins with a similar intensive contextual research process meant to gain knowledge about how people understand and experience a place, a process, a service, and a brand. For IDEO, these "learning from" exercises ultimately present a matrix, or a network, of new design opportunities. Their notion of innovation is not a wild will to novelty, but a careful and opportunistic calibration of newness to the very real needs of a given situation. —ANA MILJACKI ●

FACING PAGE TOP: The screen wall is the second, interior façade of the SCIL. It is a landmark that simultaneously advertises the Center to the world, supports gathering, and provides shelter for the activities within. The Screen Wall enables classroom and group activities to be protected and featured at the same time.

The ease of access to technology combined with the compressed scale of the entry lobby create an intimate space for informal gathering. Spaces of different scales and technologies suitable to a range of activities allow for a variety of interactions along the Screen Wall. The Screen Wall allows for the mounting of various interactive and display technologies.

Throughout Wallenberg Hall, double height spaces allow for a broad range of experimentation and use. They are described by IDEO as adaptable spaces. The ground floor provides multiple access points from both the first and second floors, and can open up to the main atrium, supporting a range of activities from learning to performance.

FACING PAGE BOTTOM: The box car defines the 4th floor project space, as well as developing a physical structure for the way projects can inhabit the space over time. The box car is a series of compact, flexible spaces which can be owned by projects or individuals. Left open they grant access to the information generated by the project, closed they create private meeting spaces and hide project "disorder."

The shaker wall is a simple and secure place for high and low-tech learning tools to be stored when not in use. It is also a form of display in which learning tools become a part of SCIL's identity messaging.

The diner-style av booths are technology enabled and can be readily closed off to make acoustically private spaces for distance collaboration.

Front porches and touchdown points: rough "informal" plywood walls can be reskinned and reconfigured to create new housings for unforeseen technology. Informal gathering spaces throughout the learning lab provide touchdown points combining wired access.