now / I see it

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Peter A. Brew
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Abstract

This thesis examines the agency of ideas in the formation of objects. The study is situated between the formulation of ideas, which properly is a philosophical problem, and the critique of objects, whose aim is the recovery of ideas, which is properly Aesthetics. There is a question as to the method by which architectural ideas are formulated and their subsequent use in everyday practice. This investigation leads to a proposition suggesting there are other formats, methods and, ultimately other Architecture.

Introduction

The central focus of this work has been to investigate ideas as they are used in architecture: what they do and how they do it. I set out to identify ideas, to explore what they are, their appearance and their properties. I look at their relationships and how they affect things. Through a series of studies in aesthetics and philosophy, I recreate conditions and circumstances from which ideas can appear. I search for Goethe’s Urphenomena (an almost mythical event), where idea, object, recognition and significance coincide. I consider the forces that motivate and resist ideas and I then reflect on my own use of ideas as they define my practice as an Architect.

A reflection on method is found in Part II (Architecture & its Paradigms), in which I consider an understanding of architecture by its disciplinary matrix outlined by Thomas Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. The predicate for the existence of a disciplinary matrix is evidence of progress. Any activity that causes progress then is research. With this comes expectation of an ever-narrowing gap between a discipline’s achievement and its theoretical formation. With a narrowing arises the expectation of an end, inquiry ends when a thing is known. In the course of this study I have gathered evidence where various combinations of the features of a matrix appear together and in isolation. I use this evidence to populate the schematic model for a disciplinary matrix and using the partially completed arrays, (Research | Method | Theory | Paradigms) I am able to suggest the form of their completion.

The expectation of an end brings to any discussion a sense of urgency. The end is what motivates Tragedy. Only once all the events have transpired do we recognise what particular trait had been the cause of a character’s now inevitable fate. I acknowledge haste in my thinking because normal architecture, in my mind, must always be on the verge of self-extinction. This, of course, is far from the mind of the architect. I present the profession in a way that will
be unfamiliar to itself. We assume that Architecture acts in the public good because it is a profession. I suggest that the profession, as it understands itself, is the impediment to the progression of architecture, as its method, practices and culture remain largely unchanged since the cinquecento, while its paradigms (mimesis, truth, judgment, beauty, trust, value, competition and innovation) continue to evolve.

This disconnect between the profession's achievements and its method has been of concern to historians, critics and theorists of architecture for last half century, in whose work, we find terms such as crisis, paradigm and practice in proximity.

The rather narrow contemporary vision of architecture as a discipline that can be treated as an instrument, or as a commodity, is the result of a transformation in which the broadly oriented art of building became a separate profession, judged mostly by the criteria of technical disciplines.


Dalibor Vesely consigns architecture to the shadow of production when once it was the light. This is an intriguing image as it assumes a causal relationship of theory and object. We no longer see theory as the source of what appears (as the light) but as the shadow. The challenge is to recognise what is now the source of the light, to become familiar with the faint white fluorescent cause of architecture.

Architecture’s unrecognised anonymous doppelgängers are management, planning and procurement. The persona that Vesely and Perez Gomez recognise but avoid on social occasions can be found in meaningful conversation with Tafuri after all the others have left. The architect, of whom we are unconscious, is already present within the methods of practice. This is unseeable only to architects. Architects can only see it through another method (Tafuri suggests a form of critique).

This is made possible by the other feature of Kuhn’s model; nominating a paradigm we shift our attention to how we might efficiently and accurately replicate an achievement. Research is the effort to bring theory (how something can be made) and its object (achievement) into a closer proximity. This formulation locates theory within the production of objects as the everyday activity of architects, its normal activity. The formulation of a theory for an object is then properly the task of the architect.

To untie the Gordian knot that in contemporary architecture binds design and Utopia must mean to recover techniques of design capable of spotting the crisis from within.

Manfredo Tafuri, Theories & Histories of Architecture (1980)

I start this project with a discussion on the format and nature of theorems.
PART I

Part I considers Goethe’s *On German Architecture* as the subject for a discussion of architecture theory and architectural method. I look at theories of the essay and ultimately I use Kuhn’s criteria of efficacy and fidelity to judge those theories’ capacity to reproduce their object, which had been Goethe’s essay. I construct a veritable “mise en abyme” of theories. In effect this is my own paradigm of a treatise, as an object that contains its own rules. It is this that then can be used as object in Part II.

Goethe: *On German Architecture*

*On German Architecture* (*Von Deutscher Baukunst*) was Goethe’s earliest published work. It appeared as an anonymously printed pamphlet in 1772, and was attributed to Goethe when reprinted the following year in Johann Gottfried von Herder’s 1773 work, *Von deutscher art und kunst* (On German Manners and Art). The earliest English translation I have found is in J E Springarn’s *Goethe’s Literary Essays* (1921), which includes an excerpt from Goethe’s 1812 autobiography, *Art and Poetry* as a postscript. A very different translation by Geoffrey Grigson and Nikolaus Pevsner was published in ‘The Gothic edition’ of *Architecture Review* in 1945. The Grigson/Pevsner translation is precise in the description of architecture, a precision lacking in the modern English used by Springarins. Pevsner’s annotations provide a valuable critique into the context of German thought in the eighteenth century. Pevsner revisits Goethe’s essay as a topic for his BBC radio program in 1950, transcripts of which have recently been published. The argument in this transcript framed the essay as a manifesto for the Gothic revival, and is similar to that put by E H Gombrich in his last published book, *A Preference for the Primitive* (2002). John Gage’s *Goethe on Art* (1980) published *On German Architecture* with a number of postscripts and related subsequent essays by Goethe. A contemporary translation of the text can be found in Dorethea von Mucke, *Beyond the Paradigm of Representation: Goethe on Architecture*, which includes passages from Goethe’s short essay *On Architecture* (1795). Von Mucke reprints the passages translated by E H Gombrich. Daniel Purdy’s *On the Ruins of Babel* sets out to explore architecture as a metaphor in German thought and summarises many commentaries on the text from German literary and architectural studies.

Goethe attended the Lutheran University in Strasbourg in the Alsace. In that century Alsace became French territory and its cathedral Catholic. The following year Goethe returned to Strasbourg and
wrote *On German Architecture*. When Goethe wrote that German architecture was not foreign, but native, it appears as much a claim for sovereignty over Strasbourg Cathedral as a recognition of the culture of German-speaking people. Goethe presents two distinct propositions to support this. The first is disciplinary, and is made in reference to an academic tradition personified by the Renaissance historian of art and architecture, Giorgio Vasari who categorically defines what is *Architecture*. The second follows from the first; it is a methodology for deriving architecture from first principles.

Gothic was a pejorative term used by Vasari to alienate ‘the rough and barbarous buildings of the middle ages’ from architecture. Gothic cathedrals were ‘the constructions of Germanic tribes and their descendants who had sacked and destroyed the buildings of the Roman Empire’. Vasari’s contention was that Gothic architecture could neither be derived nor reconstructed from geometric theorems and compositional rules determined by the study of antiquity.

We come at last to another sort of work called German, which both in ornament and in proportion is very different from the ancient and the modern. Nor is it adopted now by the best architects but is avoided by them as monstrous and barbarous, and lacking everything that can be called order. Nay, it should rather be called confusion and disorder. In their buildings, which are so numerous that they sickened the world…

Architecture, Vasari maintained, should specifically be restricted to instances where rules could be proven in a manner that produced an object. This sequence constitutes order. My enquiry focuses on the second of Goethe’s propositions, as reflection on architecture’s method. I precede this by outlining arguments presented in four significant commentaries on this text. I am interested in the portion of the text each commentary considers. I wish to note the protagonist and how this is opposed by Goethe. In the section that follows I suggest ways of reading the text as distinct essays on German architecture. Rather than the different interpretation we find in these commentaries, my speculation is that Goethe structured the text between protagonists so that the derivations of architecture can be understood as comparable. In the consideration of these we find a discourse on architecture’s method. From this I consider a model for a theoretical understanding of architecture.

### Four Commentaries On German Architecture

#### Commentary One

N. Pevsner 1945 *Act II: Romantic Gothic – Scene 1: Goethe and Strassburg* ([a translation with commentary of Goethe’s *Von Deutscher Baukunst*], Architectural Review (Gothic Number), 98, December 1945.

Geoffrey Grigson’s 1945 translation and the short introductory essay by Nikolaus Pevsner featured in a special Gothic edition of the English journal *Architectural Review*, and is the model for many of the subsequent criticisms. An argument can be found in the extensive annotations, which ostensibly identify the source of Goethe’s text, or at least identify those with whom he had a contemporary affinity. Pevsner cross-references passages by Goethe to those of Descartes, Shaftesbury and Edward Young, in particular Young’s influential essay *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), as well as Goethe’s German contemporary, Winckelmann, and friends, Johann von Herder, Johann Hamman and Georg Sulzer. Pevsner maps the antimonies of German enlightenment scholarship and progressive literary criticism.

A typical Footnote being:

On the contrast between ‘bildend Kunst’ and ‘Schone kunst’ see 6. The stress on the elementary nature of creation in art is again originally English and then Herderian. See the excellent study in Logan Peardall Smith’s Four Romantic Works (1925). He quotes for instance David Mellet’s Excursions of 1728 which begins: ‘Companion of the Muse, Creative power, Imagination!’ The opposite French view is expressed by Laugier in the Preface to his Essai. Architecture, he says, has essential beauties, “independent of customs of the senses and of conventions of men.” As long as that was believed, it was impossible to admit the validity of different standards at different times by different peoples. Here lies Herder’s greatest discovery. Not without some influence from Voltaire (who in turn had learnt in England) Herder preached in his Shakespeare essay: ‘as everything changes in this world, so that nature which created Greek drama had to change. The condition of the world, customs, states, traditions of the heroic age, faith even music… were transformed’ (ib., Vol 5, p.213). His conclusion is that Shakespeare’s are as good as Sophocles’ plays, just because they are so completely different. (Young: ‘the further from them in similitude, the nearer to them …, in excellence.’) Goethe applies this new conception to Gothic architecture.11

These footnotes provide a commentary for the not quite ‘post’ war English readers. It seems that Pevsner is making as many necessary links to English antecedents as could be made, whilst somewhat unconventionally posing
Goethe as a source of the nineteenth century Gothic revival, in lieu of the more conventional ecclesiastical and native (British) Gothic revival. In fairness to Pevsner, what seems an acute 'anxiety' to find English antecedents reflects Goethe's interest, sympathy and enthusiasm for English subjects: in Goethe's writing can be found extensive and positive critiques and reviews of English literature, poetry and philosophy.

Pevsner's footnotes contain an interesting comparison of the similarity between Goethe and Laugier. He suggests that whole passages and concepts are lifted from the Frenchman, in respect of the architecture of necessity, of the recourse to archaic forms and even of the admiration of the same building – Strasbourg cathedral. A closer reading suggests that Goethe struggled to differentiate his position from Laugier's, rather than that there is a contest for the same or similar ground. The script of Pevsner's 1951 BBC radio show, however, offers a concise Gothic revival manifesto.

**Commentary Two**


Gombrich's last book contains a discussion of Goethe's essay. As the title of Gombrich's volume suggests, 'a preference for the primitive' was bound to consider Goethe's Gothic as a proposition for a primitive architecture. Like Pevsner, Gombrich's theory of Goethe's text is linked directly to Herder's project for a living culture.

Gombrich on Herder:

*Imitation alone is not sufficiently serious or urgent a motivation for art. Art lacked a living purpose and the very stimulus that aided the earlier painters, the spirit of adventure, the light of novelty, now deterred or seduced them. One no longer saw beauty in its most striking features, because one had seen it too often. The sated hen neglected the corn and pecked at colours. What corrupted good taste was quite simply the fact that good taste was not needed.’ (Herder)

*Taste, in other words, cannot be created by fiat or imposed by a ruler. It can only spring out of a new conception of life, nurtured by education and a sense of true values.

When Herder published his pamphlet Of German Character and Art – devoted, hardly logically, to Ossian and Shakespeare – he included in it Goethe's first essay,
On German Architecture, that prose hymn to the semi-legendary creator of the Strasbourgh Minster, Erwin of Steinbach, to which we now return. It was to become one of the most influential manifestos of the anti-classical movement, the first wave of primitivist ideas which assailed the classicist fortress. Yet the ideas it contains are not in themselves novel or true. What is novel is the new tone that Goethe elicits from the instrument of German prose, his translation of Herder’s ideas into memorable images and pregnant aphorisms. The intoxicating splendour of this prose-poem, however, need not blind us to the sober truth that its meagre is born of resentment and nourished by ignorance. The author presents himself as the first champion of the Gothic style, the true German style, against its foreign detractors.

Let me be your companion and guide, my dear young friend, whom I see standing there, deeply moved and yet unable to reconcile the contradictions clashing in your mind as you feel at one moment the irresistible power of the grand total impression and then again you rebuke me as a dreamer because I claim to see beauty where you see nothing but strength and roughness. Do not let a misunderstanding divide us, do not allow this soft doctrine of modish beautymongering to spoil your taste for the significantly rough, lest in the end a sickly sentimentalism can only tolerate smooth mediocrity. They want you to believe that the fine arts owe their existence to an alleged urge, said to be inborn in us, to beautify the things around us. That is not true. For in the sense in which it might be true it may correspond to the usage of the common man or the artisan but certainly not to the terminology of philosophers.

Art is creative long before it is beautiful and yet as truly and greatly art, indeed often more true and more great than when beautiful. For there is inborn in man a creative urge which manifests itself as soon as he has safeguarded his life. As soon as the demi-god is free of care and of fear he becomes active in his leisure and gropes for matter into which to breathe his spirit. And thus it is that the savage shapes his coconuts [so modelt der wilde seinen cocos], his feathers and his body with weird designs, horrifying figures, loud colours - and yet, however arbitrary the shapes composing this creation, it will harmonize even without proportions for one emotion fused it into a characteristic whole. It is this characteristic; art that is the only true art.

What is remarkable in this first manifesto of primitivism in art is its almost complete isolation and lack of immediate consequence. What is remarkable in this first manifesto of primitivism in art is its almost complete isolation and lack of immediate consequence. In translating this passage whole sentences are transcribed from Rousseau, A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1755). Like Pevsner, Gombrich portrays this as a dispute between the classical and the sublime, where the named French and Italian architectural theorists represent the humanist Renaissance tradition and against the ‘manifesto of Sturm und Drang’, heralding the modernist interest in primitivist art.

Commentary Three

Doreatha Von Mucke; Beyond the Paradigm of Representation: Goethe on Architecture. Grey Room no 35, Spring 2009. MIT Press (Goethe 1 & 3)

The title of this essay assumes representation as art’s paradigm. This is a consensus position of the Renaissance theory among the critics I cite (imitation of nature, mimesis, representation). What Von Mucke posits as beyond experience is the encounter of the object in space which she describes as being an ‘emphatic presence’. Von Mucke concentrates on the method or techniques the viewer perceives and comes to understand in the Cathedral. The source of this ontology she finds in medieval academic, devotional and theological practices and methods.

Several factors set Goethe’s essay apart from the general eighteenth-century interest in the Gothic revival. Goethe is not interested in the Gothic cathedral as an actual building with specific purposes. Instead, he discusses the cathedral as if it were a work of art, and explores its powerful effects on the subjectivity of the beholder. The innovative thrust of Goethe’s essay must be sought in the way architecture rather than painting or poetry allows him to discuss the effects of a work of art. In this respect the brief pamphlet far exceeds its various contexts and becomes legible as an important contribution to aesthetic theory, asserting a profound paradigm change in the arts. Goethe turns to architecture as the model object of art when art is no longer to be considered primarily a matter of representation. At stake in this essay from 1772, as well as in Goethe’s later essay On Architecture from 1795, is the programmatic exploration of aesthetic experience through architecture as a medium of emphatic presence. Both On German Architecture and On Architecture consider the effects of architecture on the beholder. The earlier piece focuses on the subjectivity of the beholder; the latter on the beholder’s sense of embodiment. Von Mucke charts the collapse of the artist and the beholder (which we will return to in the figure of critic and poet in Buchenau’s study).

By making the beholder accountable for completing the work of art in the spirit of its creator, Goethe recontextualizes the traditionally understood relationship among artist, artwork, and beholder; in effect, he collapses the artist and beholder, leaving only the two primary positions of artist-beholder and artwork. The beholder is given a status almost equal to that of the bold artist hero, which also protects the beholder from the intimidating, overwhelming impact of a work of genius. By becoming an active participant in the completion of the work of art, the beholder’s spirits are uplifted and he feels strengthened and edified by his aesthetic experience.
The later portion of Von Mucke's essay is concerned with a second essay by Goethe – his 1795 essay On Architecture. Goethe maps out a sequence where architecture, cognised as visual and static, is instead animated and sensed. What controls the design is the sequence of the dance, the animated body, the receptive instrument of cognition. Architecture is conceived of as an experience rather than as the proof or projection of a universal concept.

One would think that architecture, as one of the fine arts, would primarily engage our sense of sight; however, something that has hardly been noticed is the fact that architecture engages primarily our sense of motor control. We have a pleasant sensation when we move in a dance according to certain rules. A similar sensation should be provoked in somebody who is led through a well-built house blindfolded. This leads us to the difficult and complicated doctrine of proportions, which determine the character of a building and its diverse parts.

Goethe On Architecture 1795 quoted by Von Mucke

This passage reveals something of the agility of Goethe’s thought. He maintains the architect as the source of the building’s concept, what he conceives is motion, the vantage replicated or assumed by another dancers. Single-point perspective, a privileged view so beloved of the French sovereign, becomes accessible and imitable in dynamic post-revolution movement. We should note also that Goethe conceptualises this twice: first as the dancer and the dance, and then as the blindfolded onlookers guided through space. The first conception is the architect and the dance is the design, the second conception we can take as the critic and the public. In On German Architecture the concept of a guide is paradigmatic, which we will discuss in a way that will help us in understanding the concept in architecture with the assistance of Agamben and Kuhn. For now we need simply to remember the guide follows the dancer and the dance.

Goethe plots a shift from a Renaissance humanist model of representation (an ideal body, geometric Vitruvian man) to the body as a sensing machine (Descartes), that of the unfolding sequence of a dance movement in space and time as the controlling mechanism for the generation of architecture. Goethe maintains the basic shape of Renaissance architecture with each of its elements shifted. The truth of the project is vested with the author; it is not recognised but felt through the senses (the viewer, being blindfolded, has no sight), and in dance we have the suggestion of Force and Will, motivating the building’s form.18

Von Mucke does not seem to notice nor differentiate distinct episodes of the buildings encountered. The pilgrim who makes an offering in the opening passage within the period of a day; the next encounter with the Cathedral is not in space so much as in a library or the lecture theatre of the academy, and is textual or theoretical; then there is an account of intense and repetitive visiting of the Cathedral, which begins with an narrative of aversion to its presence. This is framed as portent of the first time. This is clearly not the same person who had already successfully visited. A peculiarity of Von Mucke’s critique is that she considers each passage in isolation and in reverse order of their sequence in the text. The discussion is restricted to those passages that are accounts of direct experience with the building. Like Pevsner, Purdy and Gombrich she is interested in the sources for her proposition. Perhaps in deference to Roland Barthes, who argued that Form and Content never appear together as they are on alternative sides of a coin, Von Mucke concentrates on the content.19

Commentary Four

Daniel Purdy’s On the Ruins of Babel: Architectural Metaphor in German thought

This movement of a truth that was abstract and universal to subjective and embodied is what Purdy charts in the course of his study. It is however worth recalling the passage in Goethe’s On Architecture cited by von Mucke, as it relates to the outline for Purdy’s study:

The current scholarship states that with the decline of the five classical orders there emerged a new standard of architectural criticism, namely aesthetic judgements that focused upon the emotional reaction of a building produced in the observer. The cosmology that united the body with the larger environment, through a series of correspondences that were aligned with the soul and the universal unity of all things, shifted slowly into an aesthetic that also drew together diverse relations but did so by claiming that the connections originated in the sensations of the subject, rather than the objective order of the universe. Whereas earlier thinkers might have “recognised” the cosmological relations between the human body and the larger world, the eighteenth century critic “felt” them, and then began to reflect on them the status of this feeling.
In a sense the direction of the metaphor changed. If the Renaissance claimed that the ideal building was supposed to be organised like a human body, then in the eighteenth century this relationship turned back towards the subject, so that it became increasingly structured like a building. The great classical assertion that a building should be designed so that it imitated the symmetrical form of the human body slowly reversed its course. However, by the time the metaphor began its movement away from buildings and back into the human, the terms that had once guided antiquity and Renaissance had also shifted considerably. No longer was the naked athletic body the standard for understanding the organisation of the building; instead it was the sensitive and highly literary faculty of judgment that ruled over architectural discourse, and so when the flow of metaphorical comparison doubled back, suggesting that architectural categories could explain humans, the Olympian athlete was not the ideal all Europeans strove to embody; instead philosophy was more concerned with the sensitive moral subject.

The ancient encounter between buildings and bodies had shifted so that no one could detect comparisons between architecture and theories of consciousness, spirit and the like. Architecture became a means to define both the subject and its expression, the work of art. Of course the original analogy still held sway over aesthetics and buildings were still designed for their human proportions – indeed this second tendency to analyze the human in architectural terms was only confirmed by the older metaphorical usage. Thinkers such as Kant and Goethe presumed that the first connotation fostered the second. 20

Three chapters of Purdy are dedicated to considering architecture as metaphor in Goethe’s writings. In Chapter 6, Goethe’s Architectural Epiphanies, Purdy corales a plethora of interpretations towards a consensus and, in the end, this becomes a confusing combination of historical, psychological (oedipal), literary and philosophical and experiential theories. At one stage Purdy notes that the pilgrim visits the Cathedral for the third time, yet there is no account of the first and second visits. Like most critics, Purdy assumes a confusion in the narrative sequence, the tense and the status of the narrator. This he considers a consequence of Goethe’s youth and ambition, or as Goethe himself claims in *Poetry and Truth*, the influence of Herder and Hamann.

What is of interest to me is the structure and outline of Purdy’s overall project. Purdy recognises the proximity of Goethe’s thinking to that of an early generation of German thought in his outline but does not consider this this in the body of his thesis. In the following section I will posit that what Goethe presumed was in all likelihood the German philosophies written by Christian Wolff (i.e. German logic, German metaphysics), most obviously Wolff’s early architectural treatise as well as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s reflections on poetry and aesthetics. Purdy considers Wolff’s treatise of little consequence as it was so obviously in the tradition of Vitruvian commentaries.

Purdy’s dismissal of Wolff is almost stylistic, as if assuming the Vitruvian nature of Wolff’s thesis cast it with what Goethe opposes: Vasari and Laguier. I have already suggested that Goethe found it difficult to differentiate his thought from theirs; we will note that when Goethe assumes the identity of the architect in On German Architecture, on two occasions his descriptions paraphrase Alberti, presumably via Wolff, to describe the architectural principles. In the section when Goethe describes architecture as Gothic he can only do so by paraphrasing Vasari, calling it ‘rough and barbarous’. 21

Purdy suggests Goethe ‘never postulates a history of Gothic architecture. He does not even generalise about the Gothic as a style or manner; rather, he organises his thoughts in relation to a single vision’, an instant that he draws and repeats. 22 The ‘instant’, the moment, is Strasbourg Cathedral, recognised as architectural, then equal to all the history, theories and proofs for architecture written and drawn in the volumes and treatises by architects, philosophers and theorists from the fifteenth century. This is logically implicit in the architectural treatise, which had evolved from the simple translation of Vitruvius’ text in the quattrocento to the bound compilation of commentaries and methodological proofs as legal and philosophical treaties of architecture over the following century, incorporating increasingly accurate archaeological documentation of ruins, monuments and prospective buildings.

The following anecdote that Purdy recounts is worth noting as it is will reveal something of Goethe’s motive in writing the work:

A few months after arriving in Salzburg, he joined a party that happened to be in a house on the sloping bank of the Rhine across from the cathedral... Goethe tells how he mentioned to one guest that the cathedral’s one completed tower had not been finished according to its design. In discussing the missing details the guest asked who had told him this, and Goethe answered, ‘The tower itself.’ Upon this the guest revealed that he was the porter to the cathedral and that he could show him the plans that confirmed his judgement.

The claim that the tower told the poet what was missing from the structure was pragmatically meant as a statement about interpreting the façade of a building taken as its literal and most fantastic meaning; the poet’s answer also means that the building speaks. 22

The anecdote reveals Goethe’s claim to have recognised the tower’s design, its architecture, simply by looking at the tower itself, only later becoming aware of
the architect’s plans. The plans confirmed what he had seen. Goethe expressed this in a way later formulated by Kant in *Critique of Judgement* (1790), where a judgement of an object could be *the rule of itself*. We can recognise how the sequence Goethe recounted in *Poetry and Truth* is the outline of *On German Architecture*, where architecture is apprehended or recognised first as an appearance and later, on reflection, it is understood, and from this principles are derived. Purdy notes:

*This essay (On German Architecture) is organised as a set of contrasts, between the wall and the pillar, between the theory of French classicism and the experience of looking at the Cathedral, between rationality and feeling. These juxtapositions never rise to the level of a historical narrative, unlike Laugier, who seeks to abstract away from experience of buildings in order to elaborate principles of architecture. Goethe’s essay refuses quite deliberately to move beyond the place before the cathedral.*

The tempo of pairing captures the sense one has in reading the text of a contra theory for architecture. A substitute is sought for each and every disciplinary formula or principal, to recast the theoretical premise of the classical treatise while maintaining it as the standard by which it is judged.

Purdy gives a final anecdote of Goethe writing to Christina of his intention to visit a Palladio villa and suggesting that it would be possible for her in Weimar to visit the library and find the volume and visit the pages at the same time, as a way of them coming together in the object. Goethe deploys the Pilgrim/Architect identity merge in the manner that Von Mucke suggests. In this instance I am guessing that the architect may have conveniently vacated the object to allow Goethe and Christina the discrete privacy of a shared moment.

Here, as in the excerpt from *On Architecture* regarding a building conceived of by a dancer dancing, the anecdote suggests a particular way Goethe conceptualised architecture as the architect. As he famously impersonates being an architectural student in his Italian journey, Goethe’s writing is rife with the ghost of or direct discussions with the architect as a persona, who he refers to as guide, co-conspirator and brother. In the opening passages of *On German Architecture*, Goethe presents a case for architecture to be seen without a guide, while in the closing passages Goethe offers to be the guide. There are three senses of the guide in the text: the treatise, the building and the critic. Von Mucke observes this alignment or equivalence of stature, variously referring to von Steinbeck as follower and friend and as equal or peer. We will come to understand the significance of this familiarity in the following section when I outline what Goethe understood as the role of the critic.

Purdy’s emphasis is on architecture as metaphor in thought, while Von Mucke was able to make a clear distinction in how architecture might be conceived by a new model of thought, that is, the architectural possibility as a consequence of reversing the concept of body from sign (what is known) to the instrument of knowing that Purdy outlines. Instead, Purdy is caught in the pattern established by Pevsner, he is content to cross-reference the text to all other aesthetic theories in the eighteenth century.

**On the Method of On German Architecture**

In this section I propose that we read Goethe’s *On German Architecture* as four distinct essays: *Essays On German Architecture*. In each essay a distinct persona representing a distinct class or stratum of society approaches Strasbourg Cathedral and comes to an understanding of its concept. Combined, they constitute a vox populi of German people whose meditations on a common object arrive at a consensus. This, then, I posit is the text’s provocation. If we structure our reading of the text in this way, the ambiguities that are so often noted by critics as repetitions and inconsistency of sense and style, chronological ambiguity dissolve; instead we recognise how the pairing identified by Purdy, Pevsner and von Mucke constitutes a *tertium comparationis* where connections and alliances are formed across the social strata. It is not multiple ways of seeing; it is the forming or formation of a consensus.

In the first essay a young adventurer visits the building already assuming it is significant. The second essay is a quarrel between French and Italian theorists.

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*Table 1: Summary of Thought in On German Architecture*
and a German scholar, nominally Winckelmann. In the third essay a young scholar educated in the academic Renaissance tradition is seduced by the building but is ill-equipped by his education to acquire its idea. The final essay is a figure identified by Buchenau – a Wolffian philosopher-critic-guide who invents an architectural theory of the modern Gothic.

Persona #1: Adventurer

The subject in the first essay is the Adventurer whose purpose in visiting the building is to venerate its esteemed architect before he sets out to the world ‘on my patched-up bark upon the ocean, destined as it is more likely to death than to fame and fortune.’ The adventurer comes to the building assuming that the architect and the building are significant, and his purpose is to offer a tribute to the Architect as a prelude to a journey from Strasbourg. The adventurer recognises the architect’s task to formulate a thought in such a way and format for it to be enacted, as found in the opening passage of Christian Wolff’s treatise Principles of Architecture:

…architecture is a science for constructing a building so that it is in complete correspondence with the intentions of the architect.

This locates the harmony or agreement in which perfection always consists in the relation between the intentions of the architect and the building that results from his plans and supervision.24

The Adventurer defines his task as finding how the idea of the building was expressed and passed on to those charged with the task of its completion.

Few had the gift to engender a Babylonic thought in their soul, whole, great, and necessarily beautiful down to its smallest part, like God’s trees; even fewer had the gift of encountering thousands of hands, willing to dig into the rock, and to magically build on that up to steep heights, and then while dying say to their sons: I remain with you in the works of my spirit; complete what I have begun in the clouds.25

Having recognised the building as containing its own rule, he acknowledges this in the form of a mock construction.

Therefore, honoured man, before I venture again my patched-up bark upon the ocean, destined as it is more likely to death than to fame and fortune, see, here in this grove where bloom the names of my loves, I cut yours on a beech-tree rising slenderly like thy spire and hang up by its four corners this handkerchief with gifts, not unlike that sheet which was let down from the clouds to the holy apostle, full of clean and unclean beasts; for this is full of flowers and buds and leaves, and some dried grass and moss and fungi, which on my walk through these uninteresting regions I coldly gathered as a past-time for my botanical collection, — I dedicate them to death in your honour.26

Von Mucke considers this to be an act of veneration. He then remodels the tree into a primitive altar and, as a sacrifice to von Steinbach’s spirit, offers up some of the natural products he has collected during the day.27 Pevsner’s translation draws on a more specific architectural terminology: ‘I cut into a beech tree-rising slenderly like thy spire and hang up by its four corners this handkerchief with gifts.’28

The early English translation found in J E Springarn’s Goethe’s Literary Essays describes the weight of the offerings bending the sapling to form an arch. In all translations the exact matter used to bend the sapling varies, as does the value of the material Goethe uses to weigh it down.

It is possible to consider this as a mimetic gesture that affirms the Adventurer has intuited the Cathedral design as the expression of forces. This is not an alter suggested by Von Mucke so much as a ‘Marquette’ of the building’s concept, bending the bent birch sapling and weighed down with collected fauna wrapped in a handkerchief. The weight of the collected material puts the spire in tension as it adopts the form of a pointed arch.

There is a question asked in the first person – why is there no memorial? And also, how is the idea recognised. Then there is a heuristic gesture, in this case an intuition and a demonstration of what has become known through the experience of the building: architecture as the expression of force.

Persona #2: Academic

The second encounter is a discussion, or more correctly, a disagreement between theoretist and philosophers. It is a summary of the mid-eighteenth century disciplinary discussion. Goethe maps the theoretical premise and disciplinary problems in a way that aligns with the literary debates of Herder and the archaeological writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann.29

What a trivial style, says the Italian, and passes by. Childishness, lisps the Frenchman, and snaps his finger against his snuff box à la Grecque. What have you done that you dare to despise?

But you, Italian, you have let the genius of the ancients, arising from the grave, fetter and bind your own. You crept to beg for artistic knowledge from the splendid relics of the olden time, you patched together palaces from these sacred ruins, and
consider yourself the guardian of the secrets of art, because you can give account of the measurements by inch and line of enormous buildings. Had you felt more than you measured, had the spirit of the gigantic structures at which you gazed come to you, you would not have imitated merely because they did it thus and it is beautiful. But you would have created your own designs, and there would have flowed out of them living beauty to instruct you.10

Purdy, Von Mucke and Pevsner all offer accounts and interpretations of this quarrel. Pevsner gives emphasis to the influence here of Winckelmann’s Reflection on Imitation as the source of Goethe’s analogous proposition with respect to culture as it is practiced or known by those to whom it is indigenous.31

Goethe’s contention is what constitutes truth, juxtaposing feeling with measuring. Goethe presumes that feeling is a higher standard of truth. This echoes Rousseau’s concept of Will being the desire of a slave to be free and Force being measured by the sovereign’s rule. Thus upon your shortcomings you have plastered a whitewashing, a mere appearance of truth and beauty.32 We see that the individual will is held to constitute a higher truth. If we take beauty as the source of truth then your own design would have been instructed by it. And it would then be enacted by will, recalling the willingness of the artisans who enacted the design as in Persona #1: Adventurer, and the willingness of the sons to complete the task.

Creepers in the mighty fragments to cadge proportions looking upon thyself as guardian of mysteries of art because thou canst account, to inch and to fraction, for gigantic buildings.

Hadst thou felt, more than measured – had the spirit of the masses thou gapest at come upon thee, then hadst thou not imitated only because they did it and it is beautiful, then by necessity and truth hadst thou created thy designs and living beauty might plastically have welled from them.33

The second argument is about Abbe Laugier’s claim to the arcaic origins of Renaissance architecture. The dispute here is however not as clear as the language of the text suggests; what Goethe objects to is not the recourse to first principles, but the form an architecture of necessity would take. Goethe’s reckoning of Laugier’s proto-Greek temple as pure fantasy instead proposes an architecture of first principle as pointed huts – that is, an architecture of walls, which accounts for what we are most likely to know the gothic by: its windows.

Persona #3: The Young Scholar

The figure of the third essay we are inclined to readily identify as Goethe in Salzburg (the Young Scholar). The accounts and circumstance are similar to what we know of Goethe’s from that time. Goethe had a scholarly familiarity with renaissance architecture, its achievements and its theory through his own account and through his father’s library.34 This essay starts with a quote from Vasari about the Gothic being barbarous. The Young Scholar fears the appearance of the Minster but is drawn to it as he enters its presence. Nothing in what he has learnt assists the Young Scholar in recognising the architecture of the cathedral. The challenge for Goethe is to formulate an equivalent method to scholarship to allow the Young Scholar to understand and access that power.

When I went for the first time to the Minster, my head was full of the common cant of ‘good taste.’ From hearsay, I was an admirer of the harmony of mass, the purity of form, and was a sworn enemy to the confused arbitrariness of Gothic adornment. Under the term, ‘Gothic,’ like the article in a dictionary, I piled all the misconceptions which had ever come into my head, of the indefinite, the unregulated, the un-natural, the patched-up, the strung-together, the superfluous, in art. No wiser than a people which calls the whole foreign world, ‘barbarous,’ everything was Gothic to me that did not fit into my system; … consequently I had an aversion to seeing it, such as I would have before a malformed bristling monster.

With what unexpected emotions did the sight surprise me when I actually saw it! An impression of grandeur and unity filled my soul, which, because it consisted of a thousand harmonizing details, I could taste and enjoy, but by no means understand and explain.35

This recalls the introductory passages to the thought of Descartes’ ‘On Method’, particularly with respect to the philosophy of first principles derived from experience and reflection:

I entirely abandoned the study of letters. Resolving to seek no knowledge other than that of which could be found in myself or else in the great book of the world, I spent the rest of my youth traveling, visiting courts and armies, mixing with people of diverse temperaments and ranks, gathering various experiences, testing myself in the situations which fortune offered me, and at all times reflecting upon whatever came my way so as to derive some profit from it.36

Von Mucke and Purdy offer detailed accounts of this first person encounter, and in particular the appearance of the Architect. As already noted, the emphatic presence of the object is acquired through repetitive familiarisation and memory techniques that have sources in medieval scholastic traditions,
which Goethe embellishes with his account of physical suffering, exhaustion and eventual fatigue prior to coming into the idea’s proximity in the form of the apparition of the architect.

Goethe’s emphasis on form, proportion and ornament is akin to that found in Alberti’s *Res Architectura* and the Vitruvian tones of Wolff’s architectural treatise. His description of Gothic architecture is crude in comparison to other contemporary descriptions of Gothic architecture, such as Laugier’s description of Salzburg cathedral and also his discussion of the picturesque in his treatise Essay. In Perrault’s *Ordinance* there is a discussion of difficult beauty as it relates to the Gothic, which is nuanced and accepting of the asymmetrical and the episodic complexity, its capacity to synthesise and integrate scale and detail without an overriding order. Goethe’s architect does not, in fact, describe anything of the building so much as speak as an architect would.

**Persona #4: Guide**

The final of Goethe’s subjects is the Guide. In dialogue with a general German vox, the Guide incites the reader to encounter the building with him without prejudice.

> But you I would accompany, dear youth, who stand there, your soul moved, and yet unable to harmonize the contradictions which conflict in your mind, now feeling the irresistible power of the great whole, now calling me a dreamer for seeing beauty where you see only violence and roughness. 38

Goethe combines the urgency of philosophical writings of Rousseau and the precepts of Descartes to present an Architecture that is a valid alternative to the Renaissance classical architecture – an original architecture of first principle. Goethe articulates the mechanism by which it is recognised, through the common experience of the people, through embodied knowledge.

> Welcome, to you, young man, who have been born with a keen eye for form and proportion, with the facility to practise in all forms. If then there awakes gradually in you the joy of life, and you come to feel the rapture which men know after work, fear and hope, the spirited cries of the labourer in the vineyard when the bounty of the harvest swells his vats, the lively dance of the reaper when he has hung his idle sickle high on the beam, – when all the powerful nerves of desire and suffering live again more manfully in your brush, and you have striven and suffered enough and have enjoyed enough, and are filled with earthly beauty, and worthy to rest in the arms of the goddess, worthy to feel on her bosom what gave new birth to the deified Hercules – then receive him, heavenly beauty, thou mediator between gods and men, and let him, more than Prometheus, carry down the rapture of the gods to the earth. 39

It is interesting to compare this with the following passage on methodology by Spinoza:

> ‘Matters here stand as they do with corporeal tools, where someone might argue in the same way. For to forge iron a hammer is needed; and to have a hammer, it must be made; for this, another hammer, and other tools are needed; and to have these tools, too, other tools will be needed, and so on to infinity; in this way, someone might try, in vain, to prove that men have no power of forging iron.’

> ‘But just as men, in the beginning, were able to make the easiest things with the tools they were born with (however laboriously and imperfectly) and once these had been made, made other, more difficult things with less labor and more perfectly, and so proceeding gradually from the simplest works to tools, and from tools to other works and tools, reached the point where they accomplished so many and so difficult things with little labor, in the same way the intellect, by its inborn power, makes intellectual tools for itself, by which it acquires other powers for other intellectual works, and from these works still other tools, or the power of searching further, and so proceeds by stages, until it reaches the pinnacle of wisdom.’ 40

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<th>Thought</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<td>Spinoza Leibniz Herder Rousseau Descartes</td>
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Table 2: Summary of Thought in On German Architecture as four essays
Another Theory: 
Milton's Paradise Lost Theory of 'On German Architecture'

Few reviews of Goethe's text On German architecture make reference to the thought accessible to Goethe from his childhood or from his study prior to Strasbourg and Leipzig. Nor do they look at it from the perspective of literary and critical debate of that time, preferring instead to assess the work as a prelude to the Gothic revival of the nineteenth century. I have suggested that a number of passages in the text suggest that Wolff's treatise provides many of the assumptions in Goethe's thought on architecture, not the least being the instances when Goethe writes in the persona of architect von Steinbach and in the opening passage in his remarks on the role and significance of the architect.

Purdy sees Wolff as belonging to an earlier generation of thought to Goethe. Wolff's German philosophies were used by Kant in his early teachings, and Wolff's concept of the arts was expanded by Baumgarten as the basis for his Aesthetics (1735). Wolff's architectural thesis, as Purdy attests, is largely a demonstration of the practical application of mathematics in Der Anfangs-Gründe aller Mathematischen Wissenschaften (Halle: 1710) as a facsimile of the Italian Vitruvian treatise.

Stefanie Buchenau offers a contra view, and considers this as pivotal to the development and originality of Wolff's thought, where he moves beyond Leibniz's embrace of the artisan and vernacular language to consider the descriptive and inventive power of the artist, poet and critic. It is Wolff who argues that Architecture should be the subject taught at universities. Wolff's adherents were the protagonists of the literary culture of Goethe's youth, the scope of which Buchenau outlines in The Case of the Milton Controversy, her description of the antimonies of German aesthetics between Wolff's followers in Leipzig and Geneva, which we shall see provides a model for Goethe.

Before I offer the outline of this and my reason for doing so, I offer the following excerpts from Buchenau as a mediation of method in Wolff's philosophy.

The following excerpts are from The Art of Invention and the Invention of Art: Logic, Rhetoric and Aesthetics in the Early German Enlightenment by Stefanie Buchenau, a dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (UMI Number: 3167324).41

Buchenau: On Tschirnhaus (Wolff's Precursor)

For Tschirnhaus, introspection allows us to access four incontestable principles immanent to the human mind, which can be related to four distinct faculties. First, I am conscious of various things: this principle, which Tschirnhaus qualifies as the 'most evident one', manifests the existence of a faculty of thought within me. Second, I am affected pleasantly by certain objects, unpleasantly by others: this experience proves the existence of a faculty of will, defined as the mental operation by which I seek to attain what is pleasing and turn away from what is unpleasant. Third, certain things are conceivable, others inconceivable: this principle indicates the existence of a faculty of conception, which is understanding. Fourth, I perceive various things by means of the external senses and also by means of inner representations and passions: this principle confirms the existence of the faculty of imagination as defined as the faculty by which the objects are known as being exterior to the mind. These four principles are those which present themselves first to the human mind, for they do not require recourse to external things but lie within us. They can be found by means of common experiences that do not require expense and are not subject to error. Their recognition marks the beginning of a methodical inquiry. 42

We recognise in this brief outline a proto method that fits with the broad ontological challenges outlined in my schema: Adventurer, Academic, Scholar, Guide. What is interesting here is the combination Unconsciousness/Consciousness (those who wander around the Cathedral like ants, and the Adventurer for whom it is the focus of his attention), experience and will. Conceivable and inconceivable, as in the plausibility of the theory of the primitive hut opposed to walls, and perceiving things by sensing and also by the inner representation of the passion as imagination.

Tschirnhaus notes that the logician and the artisan share the same popular notions that manifest some natural logic – no artisan is unaware why he carries out a task, and it is no secret to him that certain materials and effort are necessary even if he does not know that philosophers call these kind of things causality43, and also suggests that the philosophical analysis of the products of the arts (machines, buildings, ships) may be part of the art of invention. These objects can train what he calls the active imagination because they 'exhibit all their possibilities', the sense that the objects can be used to train thought and therefore are active in forming a consensus between viewers.

The passage 'no artist is unaware of why he carries out the task' recalls the manner of speech of Goethe's architect in Scholar when he speaks to him: "Why are you astonished?" He whispered to me. "All these masses were necessary, and do you not see them in all the older churches of my city?"
Buchenau: On De gustibus non est disputandum? The case of the Milton controversy

In 1740 one of the fiercest battles in the history of German literature began, engaging in its first stage Bodmer and Breitinger in Zurich on the one side, and Gottsched, in Leipzig, on the other. One major issue appears to have been the literary value of Milton’s Paradise Lost: while Gottsched contests Milton’s literary value, Bodmer believes it is his mission to convince his fellow citizens of Milton’s incomparable genius. In 1740, Bodmer and Gottsched begin to publish a series of highly polemical and personally insulting texts. In the following years, both sides gain a certain number of allies: Triller and Schwabe on Gottsched’s side, and Pyra, Lange and Klepstock on Bodmer’s. Literary historians generally view the outcome of the debate as a triumph for the Swiss: they point to their decisive impact on Germany’s future poets.

Bodmer deploys the nation’s indifference towards Milton and seeks social explanations for this phenomenon, in an effort to justify the intrinsic literary value of Paradise Lost. In his preface, he suggests that Milton’s unpopularity comes from the incomprehension and corrupt and deficient taste of his readers: Bodmer’s categories of reader incompetence must necessarily apply to all except the English nation and in particular, they apply to the French and German nation and their critics. Bodmer directly attacks the French, accusing them of both cultural ‘frigidity’ (‘Kaltsinnigkeit’) and atheism. Since reading Milton requires enthusiasm, or the capacity to raise oneself to the higher thoughts ‘of those who are above the human species’, it is no wonder that the French have not been able to appreciate him. They who exhibit such refined manners and at the same time suffer such great pains in giving up their customs must find it extremely difficult to ‘adapt to the habits of other species, in particular those who deviate so much from the human species as the good and bad angels, sin, death, the spirits of Chaos.’ But the French reaction not only proves their narrow-mindedness and their emotional deficiencies; it also reveals their lack of faith. Bodmer insinuates that those who despise Milton’s popular subject matter are not only ‘hollow spirits’, but in fact atheists: he calls them ‘the dregs of the nation’. 44

Wolffian philosophy absorbs and synthesises many of the philosophies of first principles – Descartes, Bacon, Hume and Leibniz particularly – in respect to the concept of a method. Buchenau notes what is distinct in Wolff’s philosophy followed on from and was a consequence of his incorporation of architecture as part of his mathematics. That Goethe in On German Architecture is oblivious to this in his own architectural preconception is perhaps one of the text’s most interesting and unnoticed features. This is attested to by each of the commentators who are dismissive or mystified by the innocence of Goethe’s comments. They and remark, notably with respect to Laugier, that the Milton controversy outlines the parameters and role of the critic as a public intellectual, particularly with respect to literary criticism and poetry.

It is possible that Goethe imagines Strasbourg Cathedral as analogous to Milton’s poem and restages that famous literary debate. The positions of various protagonists are outlined in the construction, and we realise the approximate or proxy nature of these figures to those who appear in Goethe’s text.

The cathedral is not recognised by the general public. Its author is unknown and does not have the status that his genius deserves. Milton was disparaged by the French critics, not the least criticism being that his work did not take the proper arcadian form.

The debate was technical and disciplinary and accessible to the general public. Further to this, in the general scheme of Bodmer’s critique we notice that the sequence of events coincides between Goethe’s text and Bodmer’s, and that all of the text is animated by this alignment. This is true even of obscure passages, such as Goethe’s quibble over the extension of a neoclassical porch to an ancient gothic church, relating to the mixing and fusing of language, and the mishmash and confusion of thinking across languages.

It also explains the relatively thin reading of the architectural text cited by Goethe. Laugier is simply a proxy for French critics and Vasari for a Latin scholar. The architect speaks simply as an architect would.

Goethe’s intersection with architectural theory in the mid-eighteenth century is, as Purdy illustrates, neither original nor particularly thorough. In the eighteenth century the academic discourse of architecture was far from the monolith portrayed. The discipline at that time was divided as to its purpose and the source of its authority, demonstrated by the writings of Goethe’s interlocutor Abbe Laugier. The diverse trajectories of Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s ambiguous imagery suggest a perpetual deferral of unity, and the research into the definitive geometric sequence implied by a harmonic theory of the orders of Claude Perrault’s ‘A Treatise of the Five Orders of Columns’ is evidence of a concurrent search for disciplinary authority. Perrault found no proof that there were absolute universal standards to classical architecture.

Both Perez-Gomez and Rykwert recognise in Perrault the origins of the modern profession, not in its validation of the principle of harmonic divine proportion, but in stability in the form of reproducible proof for architecture’s proportion.
What distinguishes Goethe is that he maintains the necessity for truth and proposes, in place of a lesser truth, a whitewashing, a standard truth, as defined by Christian Wolff.

**Conclusion to the Milton Conspiracy Theory**

Goethe's *On German Architecture* transfers intellectual debates of the mid-eighteenth century in the philosophy of language, literature and criticism into architecture. Goethe seeks to differentiate the architectures of France, Italy and Germany in the manner that Leibniz, Wolff and Herder had done with French, Latin and German, and the cultural categories bourgeois, academic/philosophical and artisan. The challenge for Goethe was to suggest an artisanal theory for architecture, as Goethe understood architecture by the standards and achievements of the French and Italian academies and practices. The original and speculative aspect of Goethe’s text is that this could be done from first principles – without recourse to the method and techniques contained within the humanist and academic treatise.

Considering architecture in the context of its use as the artisans who use them, we find Goethe asking who uses architecture, what use it serves, how it serves this use, and how is it accessed. In effect, these questions are about purpose and ontology, terms familiar to Goethe through the German philosophies written by Christian Wolff. Wolff’s philosophy privileges the imagination and descriptive capacity of artisanal and artistic practice and proposes a theory of invention and an art of fiction. Goethe attempts to find other formats for architecture and frames the question as to what architecture is in a way that closely aligns to the way both Kuhn and Gombrich structure their arguments in the early 1960s. What I see as common to all these enquiries is that by nominating a paradigm we realise architectural method as a site of speculative activity.

**Four theories, one theory a better theory...**

Each of the first commentaries chose to express a single voice of Goethe. Each commentary explains very little in proportional terms of the text. In the table that follows the commentary I have noted the portion of the text each critic considers and the contemporary thought that the critics associated with the Goethe text. I repeat this at the end of my theory of four essays and the *Milton Paradise Lost Controversy Theory of Goethe’s On German Architecture*.

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<td>Mish-mash</td>
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</table>

My speculation of method followed from recognising the difficulty of the problem Goethe found, having rejected from the treatise those formulations that conventionally describe architecture. I have already noted that the text is a conceit as Goethe was aware the design had been drawn. My interest was the curious and original formats that Goethe proposes that architecture might also take, which presents the possibility of there being other architectures.

From Buchenau we realise that Goethe saw himself as critic, a persona of a public intellectual shaped in the mid eighteenth century by the philosophy of Christian Wolff. The critic was charged with the task of presenting a method of invention so that a work could be known to its audience.

In the final table of this series we recognise a number of features. The entire text and all references make sense relative to the controversy of Paradise Lost. There are no texts other than those actually cited by Goethe that would have been required to reconstitute the thought in *On German Architecture*. Its reconstruction is faithful and efficacious.

When Goethe nominated humanist architecture as imitation he may well have been carrying forward disparaging arguments found in the writings of the literary antinomy discussed by Buchenau, specifically the opening sortie by Bodmer, and in all likelihood those cited by Pevsner and Gombrich as sources for Goethe’s invective – the writings of Winkelmann, Herder and Hamann.
Goethe used arguments of origin and originality in architecture as they had been developed in literature and archaeology. The consequence was that what Goethe meant by architecture was different to what his eighteenth century contemporaries meant. But his meaning would be familiar to contemporary practitioners: Goethe transposed a literary critique of poetics and composition to geometry and proportion.

Paradigms Found in Goethe's Text

In the title to her essay *Beyond the Paradigm of Representation: Goethe on Architecture*, Dorothea von Mucke assumes that architecture's paradigm had been representation. The alternative paradigm for the perception of art, that she proposes 'appears' as experience, empathetic exchange between the subject and the object. When Goethe reflected on his early essay in 1812 he is oblivious to the paradigm later identified by Von Mucke, instead considering the originality of his formulation for an architecture of walls, which he considers as a rival theory of architecture to that of columns and pediments. This masonry architecture is the subject of Gombrich's interest in *A Preference for the Primitive*, though not in the sense Goethe meant in his reflection. Gombrich is interested in the embodied knowledge acquired by working stone: an architecture of first principles.

A further paradigm I suggest is the recognition of the expression of force by the first of Goethe's Strasbourg visitors; the young pilgrim Adventurer who makes an imitative gesture by bending the sapling.

The presumption Goethe made, if we accept the Milton *Paradise Lost* theory of *On German Architecture*, is that Goethe used Classical and Gothic as style analogues for language traditions, as in epic and folk, Latin and German. Style is the mode of cultural expression distinct from architecture, making architecture the method. This allegorical construct posits Italian and French treatises as theorems used by architects to produce classical buildings. This is the sense in which Goethe refers to them, as rule in grammar. Goethe critiques Renaissance architectures not as imitative of nature (mimesis) but of architecture, as found in the literary criticism of the time. Architectural imitation lacked originality and had no capacity to engage or inspire its German-speaking public. Goethe inadvertently highlighted architecture's primary function – not that architecture imitates, but rather that it is a method capable of imitation.

Vasari’s frustration with the Gothic was that its unknowability made it unfit for replication. Goethe’s contempt for Italian architecture was for its lack of both originality and materiality. The rules of the treatise of proportion and measurement alone constituted a lesser truth and buildings were described as whitewashed – drained of material. What is common to Goethe and Vasari is the standard by which they judge architecture in terms of the fidelity or truth to its object, Vasari to the Roman precedent, Goethe to the thing itself. The distinction is that Vasari imposes a limit on architecture in the form of a rule that can be determined, in other words measurement and geometry. Goethe’s provocation is that things could be architecture; he nominates the most elaborate of Gothic churches, then is challenged by the task of inventing or deriving a theory for it. What is distinct and useful about the Goethe text is that he poses architecture as the architect’s idea. The architect devises multiple formats or methods by which the idea might become a renewable event of thought – that is to say, a concept. Each alternative method derives the same architecture.

Endnotes to Part I

4. S.Games Peasoner: *The BBC Years* Ashgate 2015
5. E.H. Gombrich *A Preference for the primitive* 2002 Phadion
7. D. E. Von Muke; *Beyond the Paradigm of Representation: Goethe on Architecture* Grey Room no 35 Spring 2009 MIT
10. Vasari, op. cit.


13. S. Games Pevsner: The BBC Years Ashgate 2015


18. It is interesting to consider Goethes use of the terms will and force as they are defined by Jean Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract or Principles Of Political Right 1762 trans G. D. H. Cole, public domain

19. R. Bathes The Form and the Concept in Mythologies 1972 Noonday press NY. p 117


24. S. Buchenau The founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment: The Art of Invention and the Invention of Art Cambridge 2015 chap 5 p 99

25. Goethe On German Architecture 1772 in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt

26. Goethe On German Architecture 1772 in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt


30. J. Von Goethe Poetry and Truth quoted in Goethe, On German Architecture 1772 rep in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt, Brace and co N.Y


32. J. Von Goethe Poetry and Truth quoted in Goethe, On German Architecture 1772 rep in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt, Brace and co N.Y

33. J. Von Goethe Poetry and Truth quoted in Goethe, On German Architecture 1772 rep in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt, Brace and co N.Y


35. J. Von Goethe Poetry and Truth quoted in Goethe, On German Architecture 1772 rep in J E Springarns ed; Goethe's Literary Essays 1921 Harcourt, Brace and co N.Y


42. S. Buchenau The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment: The Art of Invention 2013 Cambridge University Press New York


44. S. Buchenau The Founding of Aesthetics in the German Enlightenment: The Art of Invention 2013 Cambridge University Press New York


46. E.H. Gombrich A Preference for the primitive 2002 Phadion
While my model is deliberately speculative in structure, it’s underlying premise and assumptions are closely aligned with scholarly formulations that have considered the relationship of the architecture profession to its theoretical premise. Joseph Rykwert’s study *The First Moderns* notably examines the origins of the profession and the diverse tradition of academia and the freemasons. Like Rykwert, Vesaly, Perez Gomez and Tafuri each attempt to reveal the distinct mechanism that combined medieval knowledge with humanist theory; this combination resulted in the co-founding of architecture as a profession and modern aesthetics.¹ I locate a mechanism (the object of a contract) that can be found in the formulation and the description of objects and the use of them in contracts. Of interest is how an idea enters into law.

By looking at this precisely I hope to show that the capacity to make what would otherwise be an unlawful claim of authorship is a power granted to each architect on registration, and that in this strange privilege there is an assumption that architecture would lack originality.

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Goethe/Kuhn – Normal Architecture

In *On German Architecture*, Goethe nominated imitation as the paradigm of Renaissance architecture. He identified the *operative fields of disciplinary research* – mathematics and archaeology; its *locus of professional commitment* – the architects of Renaissance France and Italy; and architecture’s limits (by way of an exclusion) – the *rough and barbaric buildings of the Middle Ages*, against which he proposes an exemplar in ‘Strasbourg Cathedral’, and a branch of enquiry in ‘German Architecture’. Do we take *On German Architecture*, then, as revolutionary theory for architecture?

Before we can answer that question we need to agree upon what we mean by theory. The terms I used in the previous paragraph to pose that question – ‘paradigm’, ‘operative fields of disciplinary research’ and ‘locus of professional commitment’ – can be found in Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure Of Scientific Revolutions*.² It might seem unusual to structure a critique of an eighteenth-century poet with the widely accepted view of twentieth-century science. This, however, is neither brave nor unprecedented. An obvious connection between
Kuhn and Goethe can be established in the common use of example in their thinking. Kuhn notes in the 1969 postscript to his famous treatise:

*The paradigm as shared example is the central element of what I now take to be the most novel and least understood aspect of my book. Exemplars will therefore require more attention than the other sorts of components of the disciplinary matrix.*

Goethe, as we have noted, does not propose rules or a theory of German architecture; he proffers an example: Strasbourg Cathedral.

So there is no doubt that example is what Kuhn meant when he uses the word paradigm. I include the following passage; this is in effect the first time he uses the word in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and is the most fundamental definition offered.

*These textbooks expound the body of accepted theory, illustrate many or all its successful applications and compare these applications with exemplary observations and experiments. Before such books became popular in the early nineteenth century many of the famous classics of science fulfilled a similar function... Aristotel's Physics, Ptolemy's Almagest, Newton's Principia and Opticks, Franklin's Electricity, and Lyell's Geology – these and many others works served for a time implicitly to define the legitimate problems and methods of a research field for succeeding generations of practitioners. They were able to do so because they shared two essential characteristics: their achievements were sufficiently unprecedented to attract an endurng group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity; simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve.*

*Achievements that share these two characteristics I shall call paradigms, a term that relates closely to normal science. By choosing I mean to suggest that some accepted examples which include law, theory, application and instrumentation together provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research. These are the traditions which the historian describes under such rubrics as *Ptolemaic Astrology* (or Copernican), *Aristotelian Dynamics* (or Newtonian) and so on. The study of paradigms, including many that are far more specialised than those named, is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community with which he will later practice...*

To consider architecture in the format outlined by Kuhn as *normal science* requires us to first nominate an achievement. In effect this is the sort of thing architects receive an award for. The giving of the award is itself an affirmation of the existence of a disciplinary matrix (*membership in the particular scientific community*) and acknowledgment of that community’s shared values and ideals, expressed as the assessment criteria for the award. This makes sense when we consider that paradigm is commonly used to refer to an example, though more correctly it should be exemplar, as in rule or law.

To continue this thread, is it not possible to substitute one of the many French and Italian treatises from the sixteenth or seventeenth century as examples of the proto text book that Kuhn identifies as paradigmatic? In which case Architecture could easily be one of Kuhn's *fields more specialised than those named*. Leon Battista Alberti’s *De Re Aedificatoria* is an example of what Kuhn refers to as *particular coherent traditions of scientific research* (these are the traditions which the historian describes under such rubrics). We could nominate Vitruvian Palladian architecture as an example of this. Claude Perrault’s *Ordinance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Method of the Ancients*, clearly demonstrates the behaviour and type of research question outlined by Kuhn as *the route to normal science* where a number of concurrent theories and methods vie for disciplinary prominence. Perrault recognised divergent results and anomalous descriptions as Kuhn's proliferation of compelling articulations in his review of all prior studies derived from the Vitruvian treatise. Each purported to represent the translation of musical chords described by Vitruvius into the orders of classical columns. Perrault proposes instead a technique where harmony (assumed as an index of an abiding unity of all creation) became proportion and then proportionate (or relative to itself). This slight change in grammar breaks the bond to the predicate of the Vitruvian paradigm and forms a bridge to the thought of Descartes.

Perrault’s proposed relative proportion within architecture solved the appearance of recurrent errors or anomalies between architects identified in his research. A rational (reproducible) method provided a standard of accuracy that could be used in all subsequent works. After Perrault’s treatise architecture practice displays many of the behaviours described by Kuhn as normal science. We have already been able to recognise its field of enquiry, its operative fields of research, the existence of standards, of instruments and the formation of professional bodies.

**Architecture & the Crises of Modern Science**

It is not surprising once we start to go in this direction that we begin to pick up Kuhnian terms in the discussion of architectural theory and history. Alberto Perez-Gomez’s 1983 study of Perrault, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* in the introductory essay to the facsimile of Perrault’s *Ordinance* presents a fuller outline of Perrault’s writing, arguing that it breaks the thread of humanist metaphysics, and heralds the birth of the modern profession of architecture and the end of western civilisation.
Perez-Gomez uses the word crisis in a way similar, if not identical, to the way Kuhn uses it in chapters VII and VIII of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In Kuhn crisis occurs when an existing paradigm is no longer held to be functional and/or is challenged by the emergence of an alternative functioning paradigm. In explaining his usage of the term, Perez-Gomez attributes it to Edmund Husserl. It is Husserl’s Mathematics which holds that mathematics, or more precisely numbers, maintain a material reality that connects mathematics to lived experience as the basis for his polemic against the functionalisation of theory. Accordingly Perez Gomez’s concept of science draws from the eight volumes of Georges Gusdorf’s *Les Sciences Humaines et la Pensée Occidentale*. While there is no mention of Kuhn by name, there is a sense that it is specifically the functionalism of Kuhn’s science that Perez-Gomez opposes:

*The prevalent methodologies, typologies, linguistic rules of formalism, any sort of explicit or disguised functionalism. Contemporary architects, who encounter a proliferation of these forms whenever they make design decisions, find it difficult to reconcile mathematics’ demands for invariance (the mathemata) with their conception of architecture as an art rather than a science.*

In the penultimate chapters of *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science, ‘Positivism, Descriptive Geometry and Scientific Building*, Perez-Gomez discusses the absence of a metaphysical dimension to the procedure, method, technique and the specialised compartments of knowledge of architects.

*The intention to reduce architectural theory to a simple set of fixed rules, whose primary objective was a more efficient and economic practice, was finally brought to fruition in the early nineteenth century. With the development of new geometries and their application to military engineering, stereometry, carpentry, and working drawings in general, sufficient precision was achieved to guarantee the success of these theories in practical problems.*

Alberto Perez-Gomez considers the functionalism of nineteenth century architectural practice – descriptive geometry, building science (what we would understand as quantity surveying) and structural analysis, all of which seem to come tantalisingly close to a possible reconciliation of architecture’s theory with its practice and material. It seems possible form could be induced as the ‘expression’ of static forces in material (Nervi, Calatrava, Gio Ponti, et al.). Perez-Gomez contemplates the format for the recovery of the divine character of external reality; in a sense he is speculating on what a thinker should mean by mathematics for it to become a paradigm. In the end Perez-Gomez rejects an architecture of production, suggesting that:

*…the Reconciliatory mission of architecture is poetic. This is necessarily an individual task, encompassing personal expression and reference to the totality; there is no meaningful logic without acknowledging the inter-subjective world, best revealed in dreams and myths. We may be condemned to live in the absence of gods, but the void is evident.*

The *Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* is the subtitle of Dalibor Vesely’s *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*. It is a rare recognition of a relationship between production and architecture's fractured paradigm. Though, as we have noted, it was identified and rejected by Perez-Gomez, Vesely suggests the challenge is to conceive of ways for creativity to affect production. The problem with this formulation is it resumes the project that had eluded Perez-Gomez – that of a universal metaphysics – a uniting of science, material and matter such as found in the architecture and buildings by Santiago Calatrava, or the most fluid of Saarinen’s concrete structures. This assumes that the problem of architecture was material scarcity and not time or scarcity of labour, and that architecture needs to have a metaphysical dimension. This thinking is evident in current explorations of digital design and manufacturing, where there is a direct connection between the concept, its binary description and the material fabrication.

The *Crisis* outlined by Perez-Gomez has been identified for the best part of two centuries in architectural discourse. Perez-Gomez, Gombrich and Tafuri each detect moments of alignment between the everyday activity, its theoretical premise and its achievements. If we consider Perez-Gomez’s attempt to re-fix significance to the method of deductive reasoning that Perrault employed and to determine relative proportions to Husserl’s phenomenology of mathematics, his later countenance of the expression of engineered forces as a ‘material reality’ serve to demonstrate the sort of relationship truth material and method would need to have. Gombrich’s enthusiasm for Geometric Modern architecture and Tafuri’s for the research projects of Soviet mass housing in the 1920s are moments when activities or research projects of the discipline matrix and outcomes coincide. That those moments did not endure is thought to have been a problem with their formulation, or the limits of the theoretical model.

**Gombrich**

An unusual and potentially interesting variation on this is in Gombrich’s *The Story of Art*. Instead of aiming to reconstitute the status of its instrument, Gombrich anticipates its extinction. *The Story of Art* is evenly divided between
Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, providing an interesting general history of architecture. Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* is a study of episodes in history when techniques and methods in representation advanced. In this context ‘advances’ refers specifically to methods and techniques of representation, as problems of representation are solved by what is ostensibly a process of trial and error. Once a problem is solved the field of enquiry ceases to exist. The condition that comes about as the absence of a problem defines the new era. This is distinct from the introduction of new possibilities allowed by technology. The theme of art and illusion makes sense of the opening passage from *The Story or Art*, ‘There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists’. Gombrich anticipates a knowing or understanding of the world without ‘a guide’. The world was becoming known to our senses, or becoming known aesthetically. Gombrich finds evidence for this in the shift from art to process and from painting to graphic design, in the emergence of media such as television and cartoons. In nominating representation as art’s paradigm Gombrich was thought to have been out of step, though in many ways his idea is prescient in light of the way technology has developed towards virtual representation. Gombrich’s nomination of representation as art’s paradigm has been cast in a different light with the pervasiveness of representational images in the twenty first century due to the proliferation of digital technology, and with the abolition of technical competencies required for their production.

In the following passage from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn draws from the just published *Art and Illusion*:

Critics and historians, like Pliny and Vasari, then recorded with veneration the series of inventions from foreshortening through chiaroscuro that had made possible successively more perfect representations of nature. But those are also the years, particularly during the Renaissance, when little cleavage was felt between the sciences and the arts. Leonardo was only one of many men who passed freely back and forth between fields that only later became categorically distinct.

Furthermore, even after that steady exchange had ceased, the term ‘art’ continued to apply as much to technology and the crafts, which were also seen as progressive, as to painting and sculpture. Only when the latter unequivocally renounced representation as their goal and began to learn again from primitive models did the cleavage we now take for granted assume anything like its present depth. And even today, to switch fields once more, part of our difficulty in seeing the profound differences between science and technology must relate to the fact that progress is an obvious attribute of both fields.

The relationship between Kuhn and Gombrich is interesting, not in the least as Gombrich credits fellow Austrian émigré Karl Popper as influential in the development of the schema of his work, and Popper takes a position that is at times critical of Kuhn, as Kuhn is of Popper. Notwithstanding the subtleties of these relationships, many of the features of Kuhn’s thought were ‘anticipated’ in Gombrich’s books on art for Phaidon. This Kuhn acknowledges in his text, and in the 1969 Postscript.

The untimeliness of Gombrich clinging to representation is precisely the feature that Kuhn remarks upon. Kuhn recognises the descriptive and speculative nature of art and its capacity to recognise the nature of things, an observation similar to that discussed by Buchenau in regard to the acceptance by Leibniz of artisans and Wolff of artists. Kuhn’s paradigms are similar to Gombrich’s technological events; they are not characterised by time or epoch but the method, technique and understanding of objects.

Kuhn’s definition of science is more permissive than many of his critics account for. In his 1969 Postscript he notes that science is any field or activity that exhibits progress. Kuhn admits that he is unable to draw a distinction between technology and science and acknowledges that the aesthetic nature of his model, as we shall see, shared many common features with Gombrich’s art histories. Kuhn makes reference to both *The Story of Art* (1950) and *Art and Illusion* (1960), which was published only two years before Kuhn’s book.

The most obvious feature of Gombrich that Kuhn adopts is that of revolutions, moments where the disciplinary paradigm is redefined by the appearance of a new discovery in ways of depicting or observing the subject, such as the invention of perspective, of high speed photography, or of anatomical detail in drawings. Gombrich catalogues these as specific moments in the advancement of art, and this approach becomes the template for Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

The other aspect of Gombrich that Kuhn adopts as a model is the concept of the end. Gombrich’s opening sentence in *The Story of Art* is ‘there is no such thing as art, only artists’, the inference being that it was possible to anticipate the end of problems in art (representation), and in imagining this we take on the persona of the artist. Gombrich assumed that representation is art’s paradigm and chronicled the technical advances in the depiction or replication of the observed world, just as Leibniz embraced vernacular language for a descriptive capacity lacking in Latin, and Christian Wolff described advances in poetry and literature according to capacity for description. Gombrich was accepting of
new forms of perception and new methods of production – advertising, graphic design, photography, cartoons, animation.

The third concept that Kuhn adopts is that of Crisis. In *The Story of Art*, Gombrich is appalled that half of all buildings ever built had been built by architects during the nineteenth century, which in his words was ‘a perpetual crisis of architectural theory’. Gombrich is scathing with regard to the architecture of that time: ‘Vastly expanded cities were erected in a motley of styles which lacked any relationship to the purpose of the buildings, and a bit of “Art” had then been plastered on the façade in the form of ornament taken from one of the pattern books of historical styles’. This is to say that the discipline was without a functioning paradigm. A feature of Kuhn and of his interlocutors Lakatos and Popper is the capacity to function under a paradigm despite its refutation. The reason this is possible, according to Kuhn, is that the old paradigm may be maintained and followed by adherents for as long as it continues to be productive. As Gombrich noted, one half of all the buildings built was a good measure of productivity.

The feature that Kuhn offers to Gombrich’s model however is the systematic organisation of its everyday activities. For Gombrich art is episodic and random, its adherents are disorganised. Kuhn considers the organisation of science into specific fields of enquiry – research as a normal activity.

**Agamben**

Giorgio Agamben’s essay *What is a Paradigm* explores the role and nature of paradigm in thought. This discussion extends on Thomas Kuhn’s use of paradigms to structure scientific research and the proximity this has to the usage of the word paradigm in Greek thought, in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and fittingly in the archaic meaning of the word itself. Agamben translates the word from the Greek as, variously, ‘paradigm (paradigmatis… genesis; paradigma… gignomena) by “placing alongside”, “conjoining together”, and above all by “showing” and “exposing” (paraballonata… paratithemena… endeikynai… deichthei… deichthenta).’

Agamben connects writings and exploration of Goethe throughout his life to the method and systematic thought outlined by Kuhn two centuries later. The work by Goethe discussed by Agamben is later than the work I have been considering, however I suggest that Goethe uses of the Cathedral as a disciplinary exemplar is preemptory and consistent with the use and subsequent explorations by Goethe that Agamben refers to.

Agamben ends a long and interesting passage on Aby Warburg’s *mnemosyne* in reference to Goethe’s concept of *Urphenomena*, suggesting *mnemosyne* can only be understood in a paradigmatic sense:

> And in Maximen und Reflexionen, he sums up its nature with a definition that could be equally valid for the paradigm: ‘the originary phenomenon; ideal insofar it is the last knowable/real, insofar as it is known/symbolic because it embraces all cases/identical with all cases.’ Even though it never crosses into the generality of a hypothesis or law, the *Urphenomena* is nevertheless knowable; it is indeed in the single phenomenon the last knowable element, its capacity to constitute itself as a paradigm. For this reason, a famous Goethean dictum states that ‘one should never look beyond the phenomenon’; insofar as they are paradigms ‘they are theory.’

The signature of Goethe’s thought, which we have already seen, is his reticence to leave the medium. When Goethe formulated a theory of colour it was based on the human perception of colour; in Maxim and Reflection he posits a theory of mathematics as accuracy, and we can refer to Goethe’s thought as with Descartes. When Agamben notes, ‘Even though it never crosses into the generality of a hypothesis or law the *Urphenomena* is nevertheless knowable’, he reiterates a Goethean predilection for ontology that we discussed as the model of Wolffian critique from Stephanie Buchenau. As we have also seen with Kuhn, Goethe defines a field of inquiry by the *last knowable element*, and assesses this as a paradigm by its capacity to reconstitute itself.

To go back to our discussion of Strasbourg Cathedral, already we have noted that as a provocation Goethe simply posits it as architecture. The cathedral is considered as a single unit of architecture – this coincidence of the architecture and the recognition of its form constitutes its *knowability.* Within Goethe’s text we recognise that the multiplicity of theories coincides with the distinct elements of the church, that is its arch, its walls, its fine assembled forms, and finally the stones themselves.

Agamben starts his essay noting the two distinct uses of the word ‘paradigm’ by Kuhn: as science (the disciplinary matrix) and its object. Of the instance of paradigms discussed by Agamben, half are sensible – things or objects. The aim for Kuhn is to replicate objects. Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* assumes that we are considering an object. Warburg’s *mnemosynes* are objects or representation.
as objects. Agamben studies sensible objects in Plato’s thought, while other instances of paradigms have the status of a rule, as in the Latin grammar and the etymology of the word. Others objects are non-sensible, and it is the nature of this distinction between the use of paradigms by Kuhn and Foucault that Agamben frames in his discussion.

Cautionary Note

One example of a paradigm in Foucault’s work that Agamben offers that first appears as an object is Jeremy Bentham’s patented prison design, The Panopticon, as both a figure of thought and, once constructed, the object governing thought. Meanwhile a paradigm in thought is not a paradigm in architecture.

Robin Evan’s The Fabrication of Virtue discusses the extent to which Bentham’s diagram as a plan form affected prison design from the late eighteenth century. When we consider this idea in the building of prisons we find it is a spatial arrangement. However in the sense that Foucault uses the panopticon, the thought or idea can be found in the hundreds of subsequent inventions that allow for the disproportionate expression of power, such as the single lever that locks hundreds of doors in the US supermax cell blocks. Panopticon is a concept that combines with what is already a concept prison (in a manner of a mathematical equation Fx). An architectural paradigm of nineteenth century prison would have been cell, yard, wall, locks; its analogues may be a sealed container, a cage or a monastic cell, while the architecture resulting from the panopticon diagram may resemble the modern shopping mall airport or be the as-yet unknown consequences of metadata storage. That is to say, it is wrong to assume the panopticon as a paradigm for prisons, even for those instances that constructed its diagram, for it had no capacity to reconstitute anything other than a diagram – this we know from Goethe as whitewash.

Agamben’s conclusion to this paper, that had ostensibly set out to explore the proximity of Kuhn and Foucault, includes the following passage pertaining to sensible and non-sensible objects:

If one asks whether the paradigmatic character lies in things themselves or in the mind of the enquirer, my response must be that the question itself makes no sense. The intelligibility in question in the paradigm has an ontological character. It refers not to the cognitive relation between subject and object but to being. There is, then, a paradigmatic ontology. And I know of no better definition of it than one contained in the poem by Wallace Stevens titled ‘Description without a place’

It is possible that to seem-it is to be,  
As the sun is something seeming and it is.  
The sun is an example. What it seems  
It is and in such seeming all things are.  

Research In Architecture

Kuhn asks: Why is the concrete scientific achievement the locus of professional commitment, prior to the various concepts, laws, theories and points of view that may be abstracted from it? The object (concrete achievement) provides the stability that allows the orderly advancement of a discipline. A paradigm functions as a rule, a law, or as a function. Its form provides a degree of certainty, offering confidence to its adherents, to those practitioners committed to its reproduction. Once recognised, a paradigm makes sense of the everyday activities of disciplines. Theory is an understanding of how a paradigm might then be produced, its reproduction. Methodology is the techniques and sequence within production. Kuhn suggests research is …the immense effort and ingenuity that have been required to bring nature and theory into closer and closer agreement, that is, enquiry into the manufacturing process including method and techniques. Innovation would then be the measure of any incremental efficacy and/or fidelity with which an achievement (paradigm) is (re-)produced.

If we assume a paradigm (Stuttgart Cathedral), then a theory might be our guess as to how it might be replicated. Research would then entail proving, refining and formulating better guesses. Goethe’s text proposes numerous ways the building could be conceived; obviously some may prove to be ‘better’ than others. Goethe’s theory was architecture as measurement, as expression of forces, as the arrangement of walls, the repetition of its detail and the construction of a critique. Goethe assumed measurement to be the method of the Renaissance architects, which is only capable of producing a whitewashed version of its object. That is to say, it is a theory incapable of replicating aspects of the original. Mathematics offers no hint as to the quality of its materiality: hence it is rendered white. Goethe’s critique is, then, of the adequacy of the theory for describing reality.

For Kuhn, progress is an advance in the quality of replication (fidelity) or in the improvement of the method of reproduction of its process. The narrowing of
the ‘gap’ between theory and paradigm is measured as innovation. The most radical feature of Kuhn, however, is dispensing with a model of science that assumes or is validated by process, method or procedure. By defining science only by its paradigm, Kuhn is open to observations, activities and formulations that would seem to be unscientific.

The opposite to progress is procedure. Kuhn notes that when method ossifies to become procedural the dimension of the ‘gap’ is determined. A pathway with a finite number of steps, science ceases to be the field of enquiry as it becomes simply manufacturing. One way to consider architecture’s paradigm is to identify its research stream.

Before we consider this I wish to suggest aspects of the disciplinary matrix (specifically paradigms used by architects) and the features of a paradigm discussed by Agamben (the sensible/nonsensible definition of an object) as the basis of law.

The Object in Contracts & The Contract as Metaphysical Truth

Perez Gomez contends that the metaphysical had a paradigmatic function in architecture and that it served as the abiding rule or truth, and that this has been replaced by a rule of relative proportions.

Ordinarily it would be fair to say an architect is interested in how things are caused, the concept of the thing. As a registered architect in Victoria, ‘architect’ is the author of a thing’s concept. The law assumes that the author can legitimately claim copyright of a concept, that there is a law – The Architects Act – permits what does not exist naturally. The law allows architects claim of copyright. It provides the assumption of authorship in order that the design has the protection naturally afforded by copyright; it is copyright that allows design to be a lawful object which is what the architect provides the law in a contract. For this reason an architect’s design is neither bought nor sold – properly, the architect licences its use. The ‘client’ is a licensee who takes on the obligation to realise the design. A building contract is a joint undertaking by the client and builder to build the architect’s design.

The object of the client-builder contract is its law, and not the subject of the law. The architect’s role as author is as the design’s authority. The object is a mechanism within the contract. Once this was referred to as the instrument, which now commonly applies to a document that has been signed; in its proper form an instrument is a device that calibrates a change in the state of things.

In the case of a normal building contract, the instrument – the design – allows building materials, skill and labour to be exchanged for money. This may seem arcane, however in this context we are able to recognise the purpose and usage of a design, and in doing so we can begin to imagine the attributes it needs to have, its mechanism of calibration, of verification and control, its inducements and its incentives.

Ideas, in platonist and neo-platonic formulation, are considered universal, types as in archetype or prototype. A concept in law presumes proof and the capacity of ideas to be constructed and reconstructed is in effect the proof. The problem that The Architect Act solves should now become clear: how can a claim of authorship be made on a design that is presumed to be universal, as a formula divined from nature, available in a published treatise or in the form of an encyclopedia? That is the hard core of the discipline’s shared knowledge and is the reason it takes the form of a corpus.

To understand how this evolved we need to consider how architecture became a profession. Rykwert in The first Moderns, provides an excellent account of this, of which my brief sketch here is a whitewash. The point I wish to get to, however, is the relationship, outlined by Rykwert, between the traditions of a craft guild and that of the university, which has proven to be so effective but is also the source of the discipline’s perpetual ‘crisis’.

‘Architecture’ was procured by skilled artisans, represented by guilds. Its practitioners trained as apprentices. Guilds ensured knowledge in the form of competence, understandings, skills and technique.

Architecture appeared in mathematical treatises from the sixteenth century, following from the publication and subsequent illustration and commentary of Vitruvian treatises from the fifteenth century. The schools of architecture, the Academies des Beaux Arts, date from the mid-seventeenth century; their curriculums invariably adapted the template of the treatise.

Academic tradition is concerned with what constitutes truth; geometry and aesthetics both offered techniques for its determination and it is the arguments of these enquiries that provide the content of the disciplinary treatise. The common denominator of geometry and aesthetics is form. Form is both an idea in the platonist and neoplatonic sense, as in ideal types or universal abstract forms. In aesthetics, form is capable of being subject to aesthetic judgment and therefore capable of being lawful.
The academic ‘idea’ is not the same as guild ‘knowledge’. Partly by evolution and partly by imitation, the format of a guild was adopted by professions as they coalesced from the late eighteenth century. Guilds traditionally were constituted as a body defined by common knowledge. In a guild (of stonemasons, etc.), knowing and skill are synonymous. Knowledge takes the form of achievement demonstrated by skill. It is an effect of a competence.

A guild constitutes itself as corpus of bodies which from the Roman laws of Justinian acquired both the right to sue and be sued. A corpus assumes the status in law of a citizen. As the guild’s members share embodied knowledge, each member’s body is both indistinguishable from the corpus as collective and individual as its repository. As a corpus each member is the subject in law to the actions of each member. It is the responsibility of all members of a guild to be active, to maintain knowledge by practice. Members are first inducted as apprentices and then membership is granted as proof or evidence of the demonstration of the guild’s competencies and the corresponding etiquette. Membership provides access to the incentives and conditions exclusive to members.

The artisan guild is the model for Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, where liberty is surrendered (the apprentice) in order to acquire the customs and habits (skills, standards, competencies) of the society. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau’s preference is for embodied knowledge (will) over sovereign rules. A large portion of the treatise is dedicated to the design of laws. Rousseau gives a definition of the mechanism that allow laws to be either enacted or enforced. These are the distinctions that we encountered in Goethe’s *On German Architecture* between the rule of the Latin treatise and the will of the artisan, and as we noted the last portion of the text contained a direct extended passage from Rousseau corresponding to Goethe’s text that considers what is known by the artisan workers.

The format of the Vitruvian treatise is that of a legal proof. As such it contains all the necessary rules, theorems and proof for its determination, from the time of its emergence in the fifteenth century until the formation of the modern profession by the early nineteenth century.

The embrace of distinct and diverse traditions – artisan and scholar – was not distinct to architecture in the period, though its consequences play out to this day. The stonemasons’ guild became the prototype for the quality and standards for professions, particularly architects and engineers. The architectural treatise provided the artisan guild a geometric description capable of being reproduced.
Notes on the Parts of the Thesis

What I hope to have outlined is a model that explains the direction of my writing, that writing that starts with an object and attempts to formulate of it. The subtext of this has been to suggest that the format of architectural contracts privilege a certain view of architecture. This is a hangover from the renaissance treaty. Architecture may have a broader scope and different format to that of descriptive geometry.

Parts III comprises descriptions of things, mostly objects. Part IV includes documentation of my design. By writing descriptions I had hoped to fathom how I understood them and to reflect on the basis for that understanding. An architect is as interested in what caused them. By cause I mean what formulation, thought or concept was necessary to make things shiny or dull, to determine their extent, their form. The interest is in both how they are made and that they are made.

What became apparent in writing was that in describing the object, its appearance and effect and the idea come into proximity. Not all projects can be reduced to a single idea: they are often a combination or sequence, which is what Deleuze and Guattari define as a concept.

When I used concept as outlined by Wolfflin in his doctoral thesis from 1886 (Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture) as a rule that allows a technique or method to determine a concept for the chapel designed by Edmond and Corrigan, I was able to bring a precision to the description of that building; Wolfflin offered a permissibility to my description.

In my long, and perhaps laboured, description of the Loos wall unit which is on permanent display at the National Gallery of Victoria, I recall Peter Eisenman’s descriptive writings from the 1960s such as Real and English, which considers the work of Alison and Peter Smithson as well as Stirling and Gower, as if by simply describing the work we are able to take possession of its design, its intelligence and the thoughts of its maker.

And then in its current form there is some inhibition, a resistance to an elegant description which leads to wild and unreasoned speculations and ultimately to the belief that this work has been altered, all without any basis other than its resistance to being properly described.

The architects Jenson and Skodvin’s comments on their roadside stop seemed to require no documentation once thought of as an example, where an idea was sufficient to cause its object.

Hannah Arendt in her introduction to an anthology of Walter Benjamin’s essays Illuminations writes:

…from Goethe’s conviction of the factual existence of an Urphänomen, an archetypal phenomenon, a concrete thing to be discovered in the world of appearances in which ‘significance’ (Bedeutung, the most Goethean of words, keeps recurring in Benjamin’s writings) and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience, would coincide

In the piece of the white houses built in Reservoir in 1989 by Ian McDougall’s early practice, MMH, there are descriptions of a car yard, passages from The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction and a fragment of the speech that launched the Liberal Party of Australia in 1942 by Robert Menzies. I combined these to approximate the qualities of the object; in the Menzies quote I initially pulled out the line ‘The home is the foundation of sanity and sobriety; it is the indispensable condition of continuity; its health determines the health of society as a whole.’ It offers some sense to the sterile whiteness. I later focused on the phrase ‘nameless and unadvertised’. In the sense that anonymous identical objects as nameless and the unadvertised tied in with the ephemeral nature of the ‘advertising’ (the painted and acrylic fluorescent porches that differentiate each unit), the consequence of this is that my attempt to aesthetically describe these buildings inadvertantly reanimates a specific discussion about housing.

The descriptions were something like a theory for the objects (like the piece on Corrigan’s St Joseph’s), though at times the project of invention is indistinguishable from critique. This is something that I have struggled with and in some ways hope to have come to at least a workable solution in the discussion of Goethe’s essay On German Architecture that follows. Goethe made chaotic attempts to ‘invent’ from Strasbourg Cathedral a rival theory to that found in French and Italian humanist treatises.

Whilst this preamble is not the place for proofs, we can take a theory of a work to be the truth of work. And it is the constitution and function of truth that is the essential component of a contract.

Critique is concerned with the truth content of a work of art, the commentary with the subject matter. The relationship between the two is determined by that basic law of literature according to which a work’s truth content is the more relevant the
more inconspicuously and intimately it is bound up in the subject matter…

This quote from the introduction passage of Walter Benjamin’s concludes with:

For as they come apart in the work, they decide on its immortality. In this sense the history of works of art prepares their critique, and this is why historical distance increases their power. If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a funeral pyre, its commentator can be likened to the chemist, its critic to an alchemist. While the former is left with wood and ashes as the sole objects of his analysis, the latter is concerned only with the enigma of the flame itself: the enigma of being alive. Thus the critic inquires about the truth who’s living flame goes on burning over the heavy logs of the past and the light ashes of life gone by.

As critique or theory is concerned with truth, granted, some of mine are more successful than others (perhaps Goethe would refer to these as lesser truths). It should have been easier in part IV to describe the buildings truthfully as these are my design. For everything else I had no more association with the object than having passed by.

I was surprised in Part IV to find so many non-substantives at the end of each description: the title boundary at Melbourne airport, the common property in Latrobe Street, the right-hand turn at tidal river, time in Fairfield and the extremes of scale at Clayton and Werribee. The interesting thing about this was these were the source of some annoyance; the intransigence of a non-substantives title at Tullamarine meant there was no algorithm in a computer referenced to a spread sheet that could displace the weight of 10,000m2 of building.

Insubstantives become substantive across disciplinary boundaries. Values of vibration, sound, temperature in one discipline are magnitudes in another. To the engineer sound is a gross measurement; to the scientist it is a multiplicity, a veritable orchestra of different effects of profiles and intensities. The aqueduct across the Werribee River is a piece of engineering but is also a fragment of an urban plan; the construction technique adopted tended towards being a delineation on the metropolitan plan realised at 1:1, just as delineation is a gesture realised by Richard Serra’s sculpture discussed in Part II no.9. At 1:1 this is a large single object; the question is not what form these should take so that they can be known, so much as how we might account for the incarnation of such things when they are encountered. Bringing them into the visible world is perhaps the first step, and that is the subject of Part IV, of this thesis: The Projects.

Endnotes to Part II

6. The concept of a bridge with respect to concepts as in Deleuze, G & Guattari, F. What is Philosophy? 1994 Columbia University Press
15. E. H. Gombrich The Story of Art 1950 Phaidon, New York p. 4
17. p 4, E H Gombrich The Story of Art 1950 Phaidon Press Limited
20. G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
22. p 425, G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
23. p 425, G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
24. p 191, G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
25. p 425, G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
26. p10-11 G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
28. R. Evens The fabrication of Virtue Cambridge University press 1982
29. p 32, G. Agamben What is a Paradigm in The Signature of All Things: On Method 2010 Zone books NY
39. R. G. Menzies The Forgotten People : and Other Studies in Democracy Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1945

PART III
NOW I SEE IT: A Series of Speculative Essays

‘A Series of Speculative Essays’ looks at architecture as it is encountered. What these essays reflect is an enquiry into aesthetics, particularly with respect to its method and techniques. The general schema for these essays varied over time: what had been two distinct projects, objects and buildings, fell apart and merged as I became increasingly interested in the ontological and philosophical predicates that each piece demanded. There was an attempt to organise them chronologically as they paired with seminal aesthetics, however it became more important to realise each essay than to adhere to an overarching thematic structure. In the course of the project the number grew and shrank. A second Richard Serra piece, *Delineator*, was added as I realised I needed to consider the idea of the insubstantial object in the works discussed in Part IV.

1. Each piece attempts to propose a theory of its object within a page.

2. Objects that might co-exist in a room, implied a notion of personal collection or ownership and a finite field of enquiry: my version of the studio in Urbino as a model of my thought.

3. The buildings discussed a part of an avant garde History of Melbourne Architecture as a reflection on my possibility, my context.

4. Many of the text writings and essays from the bibliography are paired with the essays, which at times restaged the form of those proofs.

*When we examine works of art, we talk of artistic problems for which the work of art itself offers solutions.*

*A person to whom the meaning has occurred now knows it, and its occurring to him was the beginning of his knowing it. Then how is this like an experience of imagining something?*

This is to be exhibited: what might turn out to be a shambolic domestic scene, a room within which a turn-of-the-century wall piece is laden with plates, books, postcards, an invitation to an exhibition opening. Elsewhere in the room: clock, radiator in the corner, maybe a day bed and reading lamp, signs of life, of a life. The window overlooks a wayside stop or a small park. The following text sets out to describe the objects of this setting, or at least nine of them, remembering here that we could single out one or expand the list to 1057. It does, however,

*fig 2: Drawing showing imagined items in a room*
occur to me that what I had imagined as being a domestic scene might now be mistaken for a back room in a gallery, crammed with pieces that have been damaged or have lost their place on permanent display, a room that was “a catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at our feet.”

The Adolph Loos unit is part of the National Gallery of Victoria’s collection, as is the Pugin plate, though in the course of writing its description I found siblings for the plate and it became my own virtual collection. I wrote to the Musée De Cluny to ask them about the two grains of wheat inscribed with the opening prayer of the Shema Yisrael that Arendt refers to in her introduction to Illuminations. I imagined that they might rest on the Minton plate to complement its graphic head of wheat. On the sideboard is a postcard sent to myself from All Saints, Margaret Street, London. William Butterfield, architect of All Saints, also designed St Paul’s Anglican Cathedral in Melbourne, across the street from the National Gallery of Victoria, where the Loos Wall Unit and the Pugin plate are stored. The interior of St Paul’s is largely as imagined by Butterfield, who quit the project, frustrated by the textures of the local stone samples sent to him during construction. Perhaps this is why I became interested in what he meant in the way he uses bricks in the building on Margaret Street. Anyone familiar with the layout of Melbourne will by now have guessed that my path is little more than the thoughts that might occur as one walks up one of its main streets.

Thoughts that connect us to the currents of culture and ideas of the 19th and 20th centuries: the wall unit takes us to Vienna at the turn of the century, and the plate and the church to London half a century earlier, and if we continue all the way to the time we have reached, the two gum trees at the roundabout at the end of Swanston Street. We will have walked past buildings by those I studied under as a student, and those who first taught architecture in the city – Corrigan, McDougall, Raggatt, Annear and Haddon – and find ourselves standing below the Griffins’ Newman College. Is this a DNA of sorts of what we have come to know?

I could have put the Delineator immediately after the rumination on the passage concerning the two grains of wheat. But this is, after all, a problem with the notes. The idea of a messy room is that there is no order. The aim is to capture a feeling of closeness where intimacy, ownership, intent and interpretation are confused on the way to erasing any distinction between object and subject.

The challenge that I set myself is to invent a theory of, or more correctly from, each object. Obviously this is an inexact process, one that generates many questions: not the least being to what purpose or use this will be. At the outset I had thought that this might simply be a way of becoming familiar with my own criteria of judgement. I had assumed that I would pick up patterns in my own thought, of what I observe in things. This, however, immediately gave over to the descriptions of things – akin to writing a retrospective specification, to the recognition of a project of description and of an art of description: from what the observer sees to what the creator needed to think for it to be made the way it was, and in making it that way what problem was solved.

In effect I found myself working backwards through modern aesthetics, from the Loos cabinet in the National Gallery of Victoria to the descriptive writing by Peter Eisenman on the Smithsons’ Robin Hood Gardens flats, the red buildings by James Stirling and James Gowan, and later the white buildings by Giuseppe Terragni and the palazzos of Venice. From Eisenman it was a small step to Adrian Stokes’ descriptions of the same Venice buildings and to Ruskin’s writings on the same city. On Newman College by the Griffins I found myself, like Goethe, going back and back to the Munster cathedral until I had memorised the sequence and could reproduce it on demand and then take the same scheme and be able deduce how the unbuilt chapel could have been extrapolated from the details of the lights in the dining room. A close reading of Goethe led to a much larger project; his first published text, written in 1772 when Goethe was 21, is like a road map of concepts. Goethe assumes Christian Wolff’s treatise on architecture, and with that the theory of invention by Descartes, Leibniz and Wolff. Away from Goethe there is a comet that passes through Theodore Vischer, and Heinrich Wölfflin’s Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture (1886) paired with the chapel of St Josephs by Edmond and Corrigan. I tried to use Hildebrand’s amazing text on sculpture as the concept for the Burke and Wills sculpture and the City of Melbourne building and Simmel’s The Ruin, already a rerun of Goethe. German architecture made complete sense as of Serra’s prop. Wittgenstein’s radiator keeps its own company in a way, the MMH white Houses take on and Walter Benjamin’s Work of Art in the Age of Mass Production.

The question reframed was: What is the object’s concept, and the volition that it must induce or have to be realised? This is the question that Rousseau asks in writing laws and Kant asks of plants, as to the mechanism by which they acquire their own concept. Simmel takes this one step further than everyone (until Deleuze and Guattari) when he writes in The Ruin.
Architecture is the only art in which the great struggle between the will of the spirit and the necessity of nature issues into real peace: that in which the soul in its upward striving and nature in its gravity are held in balance. In poetry, painting, music, the laws governing the materials must be made dumbly submissive to the artistic conception which, in the perfect work, wholly and invisibly absorbs them. Even in sculpture the tangible piece of marble is not the work of art; what stone or bronze of themselves contribute to the work has its effect only as a means of expressing spirit. Although architecture, too, uses and distributes the weight and carrying power of matter according to a plan conceivable only in the human soul, within this plan the matter works by means of its own nature – carrying the plan out, as it were, with its own forces. This is the most sublime victory of the spirit over nature – a situation like that which obtains when we know how to guide a person so that he realizes our will through his own. His will has not been overpowered; rather, the very tendency of his own nature is made to execute our plan.5

What is it that the architect whispered to the builder?

What was it that the architect whispered to the builder?

3. Barking Gecko’s onefivezeroseven Perth Festival 2014; No of things in a teenagers bedroom
Adolf loos wall unit

In the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria is a wall unit comprising of a sideboard, wall panelling and a long clock that was once part of the furnishings of a late 19th-century Vienna apartment. Seeing this for the first time I found it difficult to believe that these pieces had been combined as they are now displayed; I struggled to imagine the features of a room where this arrangement made sense. As the clock and sideboard are at either end of the ensemble it is unlikely that it could be placed in the corner of a room. What would it take, then, for this configuration to work? Was there a wall as long as these pieces somehow straddling two corridors? How likely was it that you would have a tall clock next to the dining table and chairs that you are required to imagine to make sense of a sideboard?

The sideboard has a projecting bay with a bank of four drawers, flanked either side by receding cupboards. A strip of mirror separates the top of the cabinet from a thin mantle; the mirror is divided to match the cabinet below. Each of the four brackets for the mantle has a brass candelabrum that extends above the mantle. Behind these the wall is lined with a chequered timber panel, five columns and two rows. In the mirrors the shelf is reflected to appear as if an octagonal cabinet is semi-recessed into the wall. We come to realise that the geometry of each aspect of this sideboard has been arrived at by dividing the overall width, so we are left in no doubt as to its extent.

The tall clock projects from the wall panel a depth equal to one of its rows and, like the adjoining panel, is divided evenly five times above the skirting. The middle panel, matching the position of the three mirrors of the sideboard, has a clear window to the clock’s pendulum; the top panel is the face of the clock.

Between the wall unit and the clock there is the chequered wall panel of five rows and five columns is framed by six vertical straps. If the intent was that wall unit panel and clock were to be arranged as they are now, is it unlikely that each piece would contain its own frame, as placing them alongside each other, as they are, creates an uneven pattern of chequered panels. Where the sideboard and the wall panel meet are three vertical straps where there should be only one: it is almost certain that this is not how these pieces were meant to be arranged.

Returning to the sideboard, the multiple divisions have established the width of the cabinet to coincide with the sides of the cabinet. We can see that a extra jamb has at some time been added to either side; the width of these additional jambs matches the projecting overhang of the shelf, and they are not contained.

1. See NGV Collection Online:
by the top rail as the vertical straps of the wall panel are. The adjoining strap of the wall panel is, however, contained by the top rail, which even if we were to remove the additional frame from the wall unit would leave us with a double vertical member making it unlikely that this is the correct relationship.

The clock width corresponds to two ribs and a coffer of the wall panel and its depth appears to be the same. The jamb on the right-hand side of the clock is perhaps testament to a time when the back of the clock was positioned in front of the wall panel. Looking at this now we can judge it, as it is not part of the original design. It is more likely that the clock was fixed directly to the wall and that the wall panel butted to it. It may even be that the depth of the strap that meets the wall may be longer by the depth of the timber wall panel so that the wall panel and the strap appear to be equal.

The challenge now is to imagine how the sideboard, wall panel and clock might have been arranged – would the wall panel necessarily connect clock and sideboard? Already I have imagined that the wall panel might sit next to a door, and the ensemble between doors. However, this might also be an unsatisfactory arrangement for both the clock and the sideboard, as both would interrupt the door and its surrounds (jambs, mouldings, and so forth). Another possibility might be that the elements would be configured to form a return corner of a room. This is appealing, as it is possible to envisage that the clock then would align with the centre of the table, though leaving the sideboard in a corner, which would not have been possible given how far the overhang of the bench projects. The addition of a frame which we can see would allow this, though the pattern of the timber panels would, like now, have been lost. I like the idea of the elements framing a space, defining a setting: this is something one could imagine Loos doing. Would the sideboard be at the head or to the side of the table? Is the table round or rectangular? Do the four cutlery drawers contain eight or twelve table settings? How long was the table?

It is possible to arrange these pieces back to back – the dimension of the sideboard and wall unit both being five rows across, though that would leave the clock as additional, almost superfluous. Looking at the clock, it could just be in a room by itself, which would allow it to stand against a wall. I like the concept of the back-to-back configuration of the room divider, so perhaps the clock could sit to one side, or it could be like the thickness of the wall. Neither seems plausible. It may be that the clock was not in the dining room at all but rather in the hallway. Imagine that the clock is in the hall and the sideboard in the dining room, but they are perpendicular to each other, meeting at an external corner. The near identical width of the sideboard and the wall panel would make some sense in this configuration, as would the completion of the frame stiles for the wall panel, which would then read as a solid corner. Would the clock have to sit in front of the jamb of the wall panel, or would it meet as a return corner?

It is possible that behind the return corner was a small kitchen, nominally 3 metres wide by 3.6 metres deep, with two doors. The first door would be beside the sideboard leading into the dining area and the second door leading from the hall to the kitchen next to the clock in the corridor. In front of the sideboard was possibly a round table with four chairs. At this end of the room was a window, one of two in the room, and an existing fireplace on the wall opposite the sideboard.
Pugin’s Plate (Waste Not Want Not)

These plates are found in museum collections around the world “to demonstrate the revival of encaustic glazing techniques developed by Minton during the 1840s”.

This particular one has the inscription in gothic script: Waste Not Want Not.

At first examination the inscription sounds like a proverb or an aphorism, such as those that were printed on earlier plate collaborations by Minton and Pugin during the 1840s: ‘Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith’, taken from Proverbs (chapter 17 verse 15); or the aphorism ‘After dinner sit a while, after supper walk a mile’ on a plate from 1844. These meanings come to us spontaneously. However, the double negative in Waste Not Want Not is not recognised spontaneously: we force ourselves to make the sense we assume it does. We struggle to overcome some inhibition. We stumble. Without the ‘nots’ we would have: Waste Want. Waste and Want are neither synonyms nor antonyms but we feel they must align or correspond; we have a ‘sense’ that they mean the same thing. The meaning we conventionally (or conveniently?) give to this saying is: If one wastes not, it is a sign that one does not want. This, however, is not what is on the plate.

Imagine if Waste Not Want Not were not making the case for frugality. For a while I have been searching for the origin of the inscription. The plate (1848) predates the saying appearing in print by some 10 years, making it tempting to speculate that the origin of the phrase could be Pugin himself, either from this plate or from his circle. The accompanying image of wheat makes us think of bread, and Pugin was as famous for his ecclesiastic designs as he was for the English Houses of Parliament, so it is possible that the plate was designed to be used during the church service, an offertory plate, part of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Earlier plates by Pugin had seemed destined for everyday use, but at least two others from this time have a distinctly ecclesiastical feel. The first was part of the general exhibit at the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace, ostensibly for its use of six distinct colours, which at the time was at the forefront of glazing technology. The plate bears the inscription ‘Souveigne Vous de Moy’ which translates as ‘Remember Me’.

The small blue flowers that form part of the ornamental frieze are myosotis, from the Greek term for ‘mouse ear’, which we know as Forget-me-nots, and calqued from the French name of the flower, Ne M’oubliez Mas, which directly translates into English as ‘don’t forget me’. The second plate has a similar design to those I have mentioned earlier but with the inscription ‘Eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart’,
paraphrasing Ecclesiastes 9:7: ‘Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for god now accepteth thy works’.

The Eucharist is both the ceremony and the sacrament in which bread and wine first offered as alms by the congregation are consecrated and then returned to the congregation as the sacrament. That which starts as bread is transfigured to be the host, the body capable of holding the spirit. The bible has Jesus saying ‘Remember me’ during the last supper, a refrain that is essential to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

So, back to Pugin’s Waste Not Want Not as corresponding to the offering and giving back of the same thing transfigured, that the text might more fittingly reflect the intent, depending on the phase of the ceremony, as bread is passed from congregation to church and from church to congregation.

And then, how to enter the circle:
not waste | not want | not waste | not want | not waste | not want | not waste |

If we take ‘Waste Not’ as referring to that which is offered, as in an opportunity, ‘Want not’ then is what is on offer as in Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall Not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his names sake.
Yea though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for though art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; though anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Consider then how closely aligned the sentiments of these plates have become: Waste Not Want Not in relation to ‘eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry’
This passage by Hannah Arendt appears in her Introduction to Illuminations, an anthology of writing by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940):

Benjamin had a passion for small, even minute things; Scholem tells about his ambition to get one hundred lines onto the ordinary page of a notebook and about his admiration for two grains of wheat in the Jewish section of the Musee Cluny “on which a kindred soul had inscribed the complete Shema Israel.” For him the size of an object was in an inverse ratio to its significance. And this passion, far from being a whim, derived directly from the only world view that ever had a decisive influence on him, from Goethe’s conviction of the factual existence of an Urphänomen, an archetypal phenomenon, a concrete thing to be discovered in the world of appearances in which “significance” (Bedeutung, the most Goethean of words, keeps recurring in Benjamin’s writings) and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience, would coincide. The smaller the object, the more likely it seemed that it could contain in the most concentrated form everything else; hence his delight that two grains of wheat should contain the entire Shema Israel, the very essence of Judaism, tiniest essence appearing on tiniest entity, from which in both cases everything else originates that, however, in significance cannot be compared with its origin. In other words, what profoundly fascinated Benjamin from the beginning was never an idea, it was always a phenomenon. “What seems ‘paradoxical about everything that is justly called beautiful is the fact that it appears” (Schriften I, 349), and this paradox—or, more simply, the wonder of appearance—was always at the center of all his concerns.

In the middle of this long passage Arendt effectively obliterates the distinctions between ‘Spirit and its material manifestation’, ‘phenomena’, and ‘the wonder of appearance’, suggesting that they can be ‘compressed’ into the singularity of Goethe’s ‘Urphänomen’, where “‘significance’… and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience, …coincide.”

As a non-German reader this comes in some ways as a relief. What is meant by presentation, representation, appearance, phenomena and idea in the translations of writings by German philosophers and aesthetic theorists from the 19th century and early 20th century is elusive; one wonders if the translators mean different things or the same thing by these terms, and what the reasons for their preference for one and not the other are. Having bundled them together, it is with some dismay that the very next thing we find Arendt doing in this passage is differentiating Idea from Phenomenon: ‘In other words, what profoundly fascinated Benjamin from the beginning was never an idea, it was always a phenomenon’, – or in Arendt’s words, the wonder of appearance.

To understand what the paradox is we must first come to see what ‘What is justly called beautiful’ and the phenomenon of appearance may have meant
to Benjamin. ‘What is justly called beautiful’, or that which we judge to be beautiful, in Kant’s Judgment of Beauty, is that which presents to us in our disinterest. And it is here that we realise the paradox, as the same phenomenon can be identified by Benjamin via ‘the profound interest (fascination)’

The fact that it appears. Appearance is a word used by translators of the German 19th-century aesthetics (ref; Vischer and Hildebrand et el); it is not a description of the object, so much as the understanding of form taken by material. In this way presentation may be a better translation than representation in these texts.

The usage of ‘appear’ in this passage by Husserl is typical:

Every experience can be subject to reflection as can indeed every manner in which we occupy ourselves with any real or ideal objects… Through reflection instead of grasping the matter straight out- the values, goals and instrumentalities- we grasp the corresponding subjective experiences in which we become conscious of them. In which (in the broadest sense) they appear. For this reason they are called phenomena.

Arendt, 2

Arendt’s description of Benjamin’s fascination with the two grains of wheat engraved with the Shema Israel closely aligns with a passage by Benjamin on the stone alexandrite.

Arendt’s definition of fascination can be found in this passage:

One can hardly come any closer to the meaning of this significant story than by some words which Paul Valéry wrote in a very remote context. “Artistic observation”, he says in reflections on a woman artist whose work consisted in the silk embroidery of figures, “can attain an almost mystical depth. The objects on which it falls lose their names. Light and shade form very particular systems, present very individual questions which depend upon no knowledge and are derived from no practice, but get their existence and value exclusively from a certain accord of the soul, the eye, and the hand of someone who was born to perceive them and evoke them in his own inner self.”

It is from this passage that Artistic observation … The objects on which it falls lose their names becomes Seeing is forgetting the name of what one sees.

In all this Arendt is attempting to recast Benjamin into his own story and that of the storyteller as Benjamin redeploy Goethe’s scientific analogy idea in his critique of Goethe. Where ideas of force, compression, combustion and phenomena both combine and coincide. The final passage from the storyteller combines the both tropes of ‘debased material’ and ‘the epic’:

“The Alexandrite.” It deals with a semiprecious stone, the chrysoberyl. The mineral is the lowest stratum of created things. For the storyteller, however, it is directly joined to the highest. To him it is granted to see in this chrysoberyl a natural prophecy of petrified, lifeless nature concerning the historical world in which he himself lives. This world is the world of Alexander II. The storyteller—or rather, the man to whom he attributes his own knowledge—is a gem engraver named Wenzel who has achieved the greatest conceivable skill in his art. One can juxtapose him with the silversmith of Tula and say that—in the spirit of Leskov—the perfect artisan has access to the innermost chamber of the realm of created things. He is an incarnation of the devout. We are told of this gem cutter: “He suddenly squeezed my hand on which was the ring with the alexandrite, which is known to sparkle red in artificial light, and cried: ‘Look, here it is, the prophetic Russian stone! Crafty Siberian. It was always green as hope and only toward evening was it suffused with blood. It was that way from the beginning of the world.”

1. From the introduction by Hanna Arendt to Walter Benjamin Illuminations, translated in 1968 from the German; Shiflen 1955
7. see Purdy, D. 2011, On The Ruins Of Babel
9. Walter Benjamin The Storyteller in Illuminations, translated in 1968 from the German; Shiflen. 1955
10. Walter Benjamin The Storyteller in Illuminations, translated in 1968 from the German; Shiflen. 1955
Wittgenstein’s Radiator

A visitor coming across the corner radiator in the house Ludwig Wittgenstein designed for his sister would have immediately realised what the problem was. This cast iron radiator was familiar in every respect other than that it had been bent to fit into the corner of the breakfast room.

High carbon steel was the ubiquitous material of the industrial age; it is durable, strong and brittle. It was not in its nature to bend to fit a situation as it presented. Seeing this, it would have been sensible for the visitor to rearrange the scene so that they imagined instead a situation where the radiator was not bent; a wall with sufficient length to position a radiator between windows. In their mind’s eye they would have removed both the vertical line of the perpendicular walls and the bend from the radiator.

Is this then how we come to sense what is at issue with the bent radiator? The pattern established throughout the major living spaces of this building is exactly as we have just had to imagine. As a rule radiators in this house are placed between windows, and now we have an instance where the rule has been used as a convention. We have simply been asked to suspend what we know of matter as it applies to things in order to accommodate a rule. We realise the effort to have applied the rule in this circumstance, and recognise the force which has been applied with the rule.

In this recognising we feel our own private shame, for recognising first the rule and later the nature of material.1

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The Church of all Saints is celebrated for being the ‘The first brick church built in London for 300 Years’ (1850). The ambition had been to build a ‘traditional’ parish complex – church, priory, chapter house and school – within a 19th-century urban lot. This, in effect, required a campus to be compressed into a building, resulting in a range of innovations in the plan and form of Anglican church architecture – as different from the baroque shoebox temple churches of the 17th and 18th centuries as it was from the contemporary bucolic reproductions of Pugin and his circle. Oddly, it is the use of a single material – brick – that has tethered the appreciation of All Saints to the early 18th-century architecture of Queen Anne’s reign, though it is unlikely that the client or the architect William Butterfield ever saw this as being a brick building.  

The choice of the stone must of course depend in a great measure on the locality; for almost every county has its own kinds of stones. Brick ought on no account to be used: white certainly is worse than red, and red than black: but to settle the precedency in such miserable materials is worse than useless.  

On Margaret Street an arched portal marks the centre of the space between the Charter House School and Chancellery, two buildings that are neither identical nor symmetrical on the site but combine with the fence and brick portal arch to enclose a garden court, the far side of which is the wall of the church itself. These buildings along Margaret Street have a distinct patterned surface, as remarkable for its sheer surface as its ornamental schema, which absorbs the features of each building so that they appear as though they are a mural or the scene of a street with building, with windows, doors and fireplace. In contrast, the wall of the church beyond is overtly articulated with carved stone, deep reveals, massive attached masonry piers, its centre marked by a sculptural stone spar that bisects the upper clerestory windows, a centre however that is tangibly misaligned to that of the arch on Margaret Street.  

To the left of the spar, the entry to the church is found under an arched alcove that has been attached to side of the church, from which access is into the side aisle of the nave. Conventionally one enters a church along the axis of its central aisle in line with the altar; the side entry is for those who come late or leave early, though it seems that the members of the Ecclesiological Society...
were ever only to be late. This is reasonable if we accept that the central tenet of Christian theology is that the death of Jesus and his ascension into heaven, prefigures that for all who follow, and that the church is an instrument for “the propagation of the faith, and not the discovery of the eternal in the actual (idealism) but at the demonstration of the actual as the unfolding of the eternal (materialist) and the determination of its completion in the prediction of the Parousia”.

In contrast to the buildings on Margaret Street, the interior of the church revels in material gathered from nature (as distinct from manufacture) – from carved and engraved stones gathered from across Britain are made fittings, fixtures and fitments. Almost everything found inside the church is made of substantial material, other than those surfaces that are brick and tile, which give no hint of their material depth. The tiles that line the inside of the church spire above the baptismal font, like the surface of the buildings on Margaret Street, have been laid so that the pattern is unbroken as it lines the interior of the structure. Bricks between the stone window frames inside the church are laid so that only the face, a flat surface, is seen, and it is in the insistence on this that we come to realise that in Margaret Street, this is not so much a brick church building as might have been built 300 years earlier, but something removed from time altogether. This surface, resistant to the stain or blemish of the utilitarian world in which it found itself, appears as an encaustic sheen. What we recognise as phenomena is the idea of a ‘salvific presence’.

2. Cambridge Camben Society. A Few Words To Churchbuilders Cambridge University Press
   Rivingtons London 1841
4. Is the Church to be understood as the vehicle for salvation, or the salvific presence in the world, or as a community of those already “saved”? From Issues addressed by ecclesiology [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiology]
Consider the following statement:

For this stop point we investigated if it would be possible to retain qualities of light and space that can be experienced in a forest, and if the forest floor vegetation could be kept. We recommended an old pine forest along the highway as the site for this project. The rest area consists of a new side “road” about three hundred meters long, varying in width from about three to twelve meters, weaving through the pine forest. A slight declivity in the forest is filled – like a riverbed – with gravel to the required datum. All blasting and digging is eliminated. All interventions are pure additions. Studies showed that, if the addition of gravel was done in a very careful way above the ground line, varying the gravel’s density from the bottom up, it would be technically possible to preserve the existing large pine trees. All trees are thriving nine years after completion. The gravel, a material with no inherent shape or module, was carefully raised to the level of stones and plants with backhoes and shovels. The gravel surface did not need to be horizontal, but could rise and fall according to circumstances. The scheme was based on determining the appropriate level of the gravel, so that from the first day the entire complex becomes a ‘garden’ complete with vegetation in the form of the existing plants and trees. This concept implied that cars had to turn around the trees. Very accurate computerized maps of the trees and topography helped us to identify possible routes for cars, to reassure that it could be done without cutting down trees. The trees in the “road” have been protected with an element capable of being adjusted to fit any tree on the plot. The “shoreline” of the gravel and the trees, create spaces of various sizes. Some are suited for car parking, some for resting. Working drawings for the project were actually done on site using about 400 hundred small wooden sticks placed in position by us. The stick positions were surveyed and added to the digital map so that an accurate plan drawing could be generated as a tool for calculating quantities. The contractor, however, used the sticks as the primary “drawing,” for obvious reasons. The site is an indispensable condition for establishing the geometry of this plan in order for the idea to emerge into a specific configuration or layout. Without a site, this concept has no configuration – it is only a method that needs to be applied.

The architects’ statement is very self-conscious; they are at pains to describe how they have brought both idea and material to the site, as if they were interchangeable. That is, that they are both things. Thought drawing, ideas, method, stones, rope, sticks, pipes, even the cars – the success of the project is that all the things that they do in effect are the same thing, which is to protect the site from damage by those who habitually bring asphalt, moulded concrete kerbs, white paint, metal grates, concrete crossovers, stormwater mitigation, etc.

But it is the final sentence of the statement where the architects recognise a general applicability of their design: *Without a site this concept has no configuration – it is only a method that needs to be applied.* It is easy to imagine...
that this is a solution that applies to many sites, each resulting in something that was formally unique – but what appears is the idea of something distinct from the natural beauty of each setting, which we see.  

What is taken to the site is the idea of protecting it. Every time we go there we recognise what has been done and we have this idea, we identify its features and imagine how they are protected from us. The project is eternally being undertaken by each and every motorist when they stop for a cup of milky thermos coffee and, even if they leave an occasional grease-proof wrapper that they have removed from their wholegrain sandwiches, they have left less than the shopping centre car park they otherwise would have.

*We know no form, only building problems.*

*Form is not the goal but the result of our work.*

*There is no form in itself.*

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1. A+U small, Japan, vol 348-1999
4. Mies van derRohe, Bürohaus, in “G”, (July 1923), n. 1
This script for this is reminiscent of an earlier play by Marcel Breuer and Emil Roth in Zurich which revolved around the construction of three apartment buildings in a suburb of villas. In this modern adaptation we find evidence of what I presume to be identical suburban siting 'constraints' – boundary offsets which enforce the even ground of villa subdivisions and presumably the consistency of house allotments.

In the first act, Olgiati assembles the cast with the acquiescent architect working with the reliable engineer under the watchful eye of the planners who aim to keep everybody within the envelope.

In the second act the architect falls under the spell of the developer, who wishes to inflate his floor area to maximise his profit; together they appeal to the vanity of the planner by proposing that his idea is the most important, and deserves to be followed above all others.

1. Olgiati, Three Condominiums, Chur 1999

Fig 12: Olgiati, Three condominiums, Chur
Olgiati II: Visitor Centre – on choice and will

The idea of a sequence of several large exhibition spaces defines the organisation of the volume of this building. The simple basic constellation of two intersecting cubes results in a formal logic that lends the building a pure and universal appearance.

From the outside the building appears regular and ordered. By contrast the interior organisation is difficult to decipher. The visitor passes through several identical spaces. These are central rooms with views in all directions. They are linked by a concealed system of walkways and stairs that create a circuit through the rooms, ending in the foyer with the same stair at which it began.1

Once we have entered the building we access the upper spaces by a stair, which we assume is mirrored and we look for a reflection of ourselves – which we do see.

We enter the rooms by a stair that is within the thickness of the wall, which causes a distortion of the space. We recall that the building from the outside had no sign of this distortion, so we know that the building has already resisted the distortion caused by the stair within the wall – we realise that the insertion of a stair into the room and the resulting distortion has been the source of some pain. In fact the room is perfectly square but for the stair, and it maintains the appearance of a square room precisely because we know that the stair within the thickness of the wall is unimaginable – which is why we found no images of our reflection at the outset. As if when we leave each room in our minds it reverts to how we imagined it at the outset – in which case it makes sense to remember the building as if it was a simple tower silo with three identical levels.

Richard Serra’s Plate Pole Prop

Richard Serra’s Plate Pole Prop has been on display at the National Gallery of Australia since 1975. It is a sheet of lead pressed to the face of the gallery wall by a rolled sheet of lead. The non-mechanical nature of these connections concentrates our attention on the weight of the elements; we recognise the force of gravity as a thing and imagine the effort that is being exerted by the gallery wall to maintain the form of this assemblage.

The lead sheet pinned to the wall in Canberra is five feet square and came from a show in the Leo Castelli gallery in June 1968. The first ‘prop’ sculpture Serra exhibited in Holland earlier that year was four feet square, the same size as Malevich’s Black Square painting from 1915. Serra’s description of his work at the time closely echoed Malevich’s description of Black Square from the 1920s, where he vested the significance of the work with the reaction of the viewer rather than the theme or content:

‘...the Supremacist the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling.’

Serra From the object to that of the subject, the experience of the viewer is the content of the work

‘In my later work, the person who is navigating the space, his or her experience becomes the content. So, the whole subject-object relationship is reversed. The content is you! If you don’t walk into the work and engage with it, there isn’t any content. That’s really what I’ve been dealing with ever since I saw the Velazquez painting.’

It is possible to imagine that these lead sheet sculptures were initially thought of as paintings. After all, a sheet of pure lead pinned to the wall could be a description of a painting, and there is a distinct phenomenon of the material lead, so that content, material and representation are indistinguishable. Today we only see Prop as sculpture, like the wall-mounted sculptures of Donald Judd – arrays of projecting boxes shifting our attention between the boxes as a suspended sculpture in space and the effect that this has on the gallery wall. In Prop the wall is also integral to the composition: the friction of its surface is what is stopping Prop from becoming ‘Formless sheet and pole lying on the ground next to the wall’. As such we come to see the wall and recognise in it the force holding up the lead sheet.

fig 14: Serra’s Plate Pole Prop 1968

What has led the building upward is human will; what gives it its present appearance is the brute, downward-dragging, corroding, crumbling power of
nature. Still, so long as we can speak of a ruin at all and not a mere heap of stones
this power does not sink the work of man into the formlessness of mere matter.5

In the period that followed, Serra assembled what seem like endless variations
of this idea – ‘propping’ plates, boxes, rolled sections in all their combinations.
Recently the Art Gallery of NSW installed one of these in 1978: Plate Post Prop (1969)
as part of its permanent collection. This is mild steel rather than lead plate and
at eight feet square no longer harks back to Malevich’s Black Square. Plate Pole Prop
is a sculpture, though it cannot be seen in the round so much as at 180 degrees,
as the gallery wall inhibits half our view. I imagine that it is possible that Plate Pole Prop
could stand alone; we can imagine it in space and try to look at it as obliquely as possible,
recognising that the wall exists only to limit knowing the work in the round. Having walked an arc,
I now know as much of the wall as the assemblage of plate and post that was the focus of my
attention; it occurs to me that there is another possibility of Prop where ‘Prop’
is not the transitive but a simple noun, as in prop – a theatrical device, like the
bentwood chair is a prop to a lion tamer, the table is a prop to the magician,
the cane to the showman. So now it is the purpose of the wall that we come to see:
it allows the possibility for material to be given form and at the same time
censures that form from existing outside of its embrace.

Serra II: Delineator

When we mark a spot it is definitive. We draw first a diagonal line followed
by another perpendicular to it, meaning, ‘That spot, there’. Richard Serra’s
Delineator comprises two steel plates of 10 feet by 26 feet by one inch, first
installed into ACE gallery in Los Angeles in 1974–75. It is possible to imagine
that this is the reciprocal form at 1:1 of a mark made at 1:20,000: a mark by
a lead pencil on a map. At 1:1 this becomes a 10-foot wide plate, the second
stroke laid perpendicular over the top.

Our experience of this, however, is not of being oriented as the mark on the
map had promised, or we might have hoped, but the realisation of the direct
experience of the idea 1:1; as opposed to the image at 1:20,000. We find
instead a position in the zone between the two stripes which we cannot occupy.
Serra describes the sensation of this:

1.  see http://nga.gov.au/international/catalogue/Detail.cfm?IRN=14963
2.  Malevich K. The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism (1926),
    trans. Howard Dearstyne, Dover, 2003
3.  Foster H. Richard Serra (October Files) MIT Press 2000
5.  Simmel G. The Ruin in Wolff K.H. Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics,
    Harper & Row, 1959

The overhead plate appears to press upwards against the ceiling; that condition
reverses itself as you walk underneath. There aren’t any direct paths into it. As you
walk towards its centre, the piece functions either centripetally or centrifugally. You
are forced to acknowledge the space above, below right, left north, east south, west
up, down. All your psychophysical coordinates, your sense of orientation is called
into question immediately.6

In this way Serra differentiates what we proclaim as objective, that point there,
and our subjective experience of that.

 fig 16: Serra’s Delineator, 1974–75
The City of Melbourne Building Society building

Victorian architecture until the mid 19th century rarely departed from the repertoire of classical exemplars as catalogued in the architectural treatise from the 15th century; Roman buildings; basilicas, temples, palazzo bridges. The City Of Melbourne Building Society building at a glance adheres to that format; the swagged stucco columns are a grand triumphal arch façade on Elizabeth Street, the front of a red brick building that extends back up Little Collins Street.

On approach to the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins we realise that the image we had of a classical building from the distance is put into play. Above stores selling cheap jewellery and discount sporting goods we are bombarded by architectural features: mansards, gables and pediments. Each figure we recognise as we had the triumphal arch that we had first seen embossed onto the red brick walls from a distance.

This building is discussed by Peter Kohane in an essay in Transition 3/2: Classicism Transformed, in which he proposes that the compositional and stylistic eclecticism of the buildings from this period correspond to the ‘vibrant metropolitan experience’ of the late 19th century. He proposes that the movement of our eye over the surface of this and the other buildings that he identifies in Melbourne from this period induces an effect of excitement and vitality that captures the spirit of the city at this time. Kohane asserts that the disparate architectural references would not have been beyond the erudition of the late 19th-century observer:

In the nineteenth century Architecture was required to satisfy such and interpretive expectation, and its impact had to be experienced at different levels. The purely visual function was important; exciting formal relationships were appreciated because they stimulated the eye to explore surfaces and textures, and to see correlations between shapes and such a reading of a facade could also stimulate the observers tactile consciousness so that the stresses within the building could be perceived with ones own body. The bold and vigorous building was to enliven the observer, re affirming his sense of excitement of urban life, while the architect’s use of different historical sources transmitted a sense of time to the observer.1

There is another possibility, that which we saw from a distance, that of a single figure in the city repeated at a different scale, and that rather than this being a cacophonous riot of features, it is a repetition of a single relationship, that of a single figure on a red background.

Seen this way, instead of as a conflict, there is a legibility.

1. Kohane Op Cit
Charles Summer’s Sculpture of Bourke & Wills

The original siting of Charles Summer’s sculpture of the explorers Burke and Wills at the intersection of Collins and Russell streets was meant to ensure that it was seen from a distance. Originally, the image would have been of a figure dominating the prospect. Collins Street then was much steeper than it is today. As one approaches the statue the figure of Wills emerges from the rock. As we move our gaze from Rock to Wills to Burke we realise a progression, a metamorphosis. The image of a single figure and the kinaesthetic idea of a figure changing in time and space present two distinct experiences of the sculpture. In the coincidence of these two experiences the idea becomes accessible.

Adolf Hildebrand’s 1893 essay, *The Problem of Form in The Fine Arts*, is concerned with ‘The relation of form to appearance (Erscheinung) and its implications for artistic representation (Darstellung)’. Like Peter Kohane, Hildebrand sees movement of the eyes over the surface as being an important process in the apprehension of a work, though the striking aspect of Hildebrand’s method is his insistence that a work is comprehended or understood in an instant, spontaneously. Furthermore, Hildebrand warns that a work can only be known from its overall impression: the combined effect of all factors of the appearance is that it is not the knowledge of the object but the idea that allows us to imagine it, that activates our impression.

For Adolf Hildebrand the way that this is known to us is not by reconstructing what we see from a distance, what we take in at a glance (the Visual image), with what we see up close (requiring the movement of the eye) – a temporal set of images (the kinaesthetic idea) – as these are not like things.

For Hildebrand the visual arts reflect the active operation of consciousness; the activity that seeks to bridge the gap between ideas of form and visual impressions and to fashion both into a unity, the true enjoyment of a work of art and its spontaneous blessing lies in the perception of this unity.
Harold Desbrowe Anear’s Windows

As a student I would on occasion come across the odd book on the shelves of the University of Melbourne Leighton Irwin library with the distinct ex libris of H Desbrowe-Annear – a Napier Waller woodcut of a listing three-masted galleon, powered under full sail, moving away and framed by two classical columns, Corinthian and Doric. The Victorian chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects named the award for residential architecture in Desbrowe-Annear’s honour – for a practitioner from the turn of the 20th century who from all accounts never left the state where he was born.

Desbrowe-Annear worked in a wide range of styles: Swiss-style chalets that fall down the Righi that were inspired by Ruskin’s prescriptions in The Seven Lamps of Architecture; later buildings in Alphington that resemble those by the Scottish Arts and Crafts architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh; later still crenulated castles appear in Brighton and Portsea, and Georgian mansions in Toorak and South Yarra in Melbourne’s tree-lined eastern suburbs, all of which reveal an enduring and abiding interest in the architecture of Edward Lutyens.

Harold Desbrowe-Annear was proud of his window details that vanished into the wall cavity; they gave his houses a unique proportion, a signature that made his buildings recognisable. Desbrowe-Annear had a summer cabin in an old timber stand at Crossover, beyond Yarra Junction, on a remote spur of the narrow-gauge network from Belgrave. A good portion of that network has now been preserved as a tourist route. Steam trains with passenger compartments have push-down windows in the compartments; the partitions are lined with old black-and-white photos of waterfalls in the Otways, lyrebirds and platypuses. Windows have coloured canvas blinds to block the sun. Edith Ingpen later built a cottage further up the school road.

Ingpen’s cottage is a circular plan, half of which is living room reminiscent of the screened patio rooms found in almost all of Desbrowe-Annear’s designs. One enters in the middle, from a small wedge-shaped hall the size of six doors. The room, which is the only significant space, is a filled-in veranda of sorts; the rest of the plan consists of tiny pie-shaped cupboards, variously bedroom, kitchen and bathroom accessed through the remaining doors.
Walter Burley Griffin’s Newman College

Only a portion of the Catholic hall of residence at Newman College designed by the American architect Walter Burley Griffin was built. If we consider the proposed centrepiece was a chapel that joined the men’s and women’s cloisters, less than a quarter of what was planned was built following Griffin’s design. What was built comprises two intersecting wings of student quarters (apartments of two rooms sharing a stair and common bathroom); at the intersection of these wings is the hexagonal dining room whose ancillary spaces accommodate student common rooms, the kitchen and masters’ accommodation.

Externally, the building has two distinct textures. The overwhelming mass of the building is described by massive undressed stone walls, \(^1\) battered at the bottom and buttressed at each corner; the spandrels of these walls are made from dressed stone and rendered concrete.

The distinct architecture of the college comes from how these two material are aligned; the rendered concrete is rotated 45 degree to the grain of the rough stone walls, as if concrete were in fact the crystalline form of the hewn stone, a natural phenomenon produced by unimaginable force. This analogy has a further elaboration in the design of the leadlight windows and the elegant diamond pop that satisfies the requirement for fixed ventilation. \(^2\)

Within the dining room the overriding schema is readily comprehended. At the intersection of the residential wings the blank end walls of each wing describe a square. Within the dining room this is the central timber panels; these are flanked by the buttress walls which combine as a massive diagonal pier, the projecting vertical edges of which extend as one set of the constructed geometric lines scoring the dome. The intersection of these lines delineates the plan of the lantern. The centre of this square and the extension of its diagonals position the iconic twelve-plus-one spires whose supposed ‘Moorish imagery’ offended one of the College’s rectors, who had them banished for most of the College’s history. Only in recent years have these been restored.

As well as the two sets of parallel lines that project from the perpendicular wings, another line of structure connects each of the alternate points of transverse ribs (right to right) from the springing point of the dome’s hemisphere at the floor of the first floor balcony. The intersection of these lines is framed by the parallel ribs that form the cupola, which results in a ‘gothic pointed’ arch. The surface between the pointed arch is filled by a fretwork lattice that matches the design of the timber wall panels below.
The surface of the concrete dome is indistinct. The textured finish, known variously as roughcast stipple or dashing, was a common enough finish during the so-called Queen Anne era at the turn of the 20th century. I don’t know what the original colour was – perhaps gold. As we follow the main column to where the lateral arc springs, a detail occurs in the light, a prismatic net – a detail of what was envisaged for the chapel.

This is nothing other than an early electric light fitting. It’s formed as if the unformed material of the hemisphere were pulled or stretched into existence – “the making of ornament does not occur in a zone between the drawn and executed but between the concrete and the abstract.” Perhaps the light is the energy released from the splitting of the beam into the indistinct material of the hemisphere, a further transformation of the crystallisation of stone that we saw in the building. Looking at the light it is easy imagine how the chapel could have appeared.

1. A schema similar to that used for the G Melson House Rock Crest Mason City by Griffen 1912 and as discussed M Tafuri in Modern Architecture Vol 1 Rizzoli. See Also Tafuri’s discussion of Griffins entry into the Chicago tribune competition in his Essay The disenchanted mountain in The American City. A schema similar to that used for the G Melson House Rock Crest Mason City by Griffen 1912 and as discussed M Tafuri in Modern Architecture Vol 1 Rizzoli. See Also Tafuri’s discussion of Griffins entry into the Chicago tribune competition in his Essay The disenchanted mountain in The American City.

2. For a real discussion on the expression of compression in the work The Griffins see Michael Markham – Expressionism in Architecture of Walter Burley Griffin. Architect Magazine 1984 (?)

3. Ruskin’s abstract lines and his expressionistic concept of Gothic ribs, constitute centrelines of force and action making – and more specifically the making of ornament-does not occur in a zone between the drawn and executed but between the concrete and the abstract. ... P138 I. Spruytbroek The Sympathy Of Things 2012

4. Tafuri M. The Disenchanted Mountain in The American City MIT 1979
   In discussing the Chicago tribune Competition entries Tafuri concludes with a detailed discussion of the coincidence of ornament and structure in griffins design.
Fritz Jeneba’s Koornang School, Warrandyte 1909

For a time, Deakin University had a collection of old timber buildings on a hill at its Waurn Ponds campus. I imagine that one of the lecturers had collected them, inadvertently creating a village from these parked buildings, one of which was a classroom designed for the Department of Education, the ‘Open Air Classroom’ from before World War I. The collection has since been dispersed and this classroom apparently sent back to the school at Natimuk to fall apart in peace.

These classrooms were a common sight in Victoria’s state schools, with openings on three sides, two of which were glazed; the third had sliding canvas screens. Opposite the canvas screens was a solid wall equipped with blackboards, maps, tables, a clock, and a picture of King George V. These succinct buildings were a response to the tuberculosis epidemic, which had plague status in 1909. Many schools had closed to stop the spread of disease, causing a sharp decline in attendance. During the period that followed, the open air classroom building was developed.

It was consistent with the principles of palliative design, which had been already adopted by hospitals and asylums late in the 19th century: deep balconies, day rooms and open-air wards. I would like to think these buildings retain something of a ‘plein air’ spirit, the spirit saw artists leave their city studios and catch trains to the end of the suburban lines to paint for the day. The English critic John Ruskin thought it was preferable to select a mediocre water colour than an excellent print, as one could imagine that the water colour had been produced in happy circumstance, something one presumably did not imagine of the print.

The open air classrooms building is a prototype for latter experimental teaching spaces such as those built at the Koonung and Preshil schools, as well as to mass-produced and transportable school buildings that sit on school campuses around the state. The canvas windows were like the blinds in the middle section of the old trams, a form that returns at Warrandyte with the Nields’ Koonung school (1939), at Bairnsdale infectious disease ward (Irwin, 1947), and at Beulah Hospital (McIntyre, 1954). It had precedents as well in the familiar sleepout, the screened verandas, the tent, and Desbrowe-Annear’s outdoor rooms and patio spaces. One could have written any date on the small plaque that sat beside it to explain its significance.
Roy Ground’s Clendon Corner

On the corner of Clendon and Malvern roads in Armadale is a set of six one-bedroom apartments built in the late 1930s. Next door is another block of flats by the same architect, done some years before. We call them flats, though I am not quite sure why. Maybe modern architecture had flat roofs; on the opposite corner is a larger apartment building from the 1920s. It has a pitched roof like a mansion, and its dwellings were maisonettes.

Each flat has an identical long plan. One enters from the middle of the side of each unit into a small passage, the other side of which is divided between kitchen and bathroom. The living room and bedroom are full-width rooms at either end of the passage. The flats are stacked to form three identical blocks arranged in a loose U shape open to Clendon Road. The upper level has a patio that covers roughly one-third of the space formed by the three blocks; above this is a timber frame, the front half of which is covered by a metal deck roof. The roof overlaps the upper level patio by about one metre to provide some protection to the entry of the two upper-level apartments.

Looking at this building on a rainy day I noted that the arrangement was satisfactory only to a point. As the only stair was from the back of the patio, one had no choice other than to walk under the dripping trellises to get to the upper apartment entrances before the roof offered shelter. The patio had been detailed so that there were discernible gaps between the concrete pavers, and there was no roof other than the trellis, now unpleasantly replicating the effect of unavoidable raindrops under the floor below, where one would be justified in thinking that some degree of protection should have been afforded. That was until the sun appeared through the clouds and reversed this effect. The double-height volume now arranged itself as two distinct spaces. Form the double-height front space one looks to the rear volume divided in half – the upper portion described by the streaming shadows of the grid and the reverse below, sunlight cast into the shade. In the middle of the double-height space a patch in the paving marks where a stair must once have landed in the manner of a grand entry hall to match that of the building across the road.
McIntyre’s Buelah Hospital (objectivity 2)

The post office in Beulah doesn’t look like much. At one time it was a nursing home, and before that it was the local hospital. Even then, when it was new it seemed temporary, like something that had been deployed in an emergency and then left behind; its central features were the folded metal sunshades that covered the glass roof and open air courts around the central drum core. These sunshades extended down the sides of the building, looking like giant venetian blinds, an illusion that is not difficult to substantiate given that the folded metal louvers are suspended on thin vertical cables like spokes from the central hub.

Peter Wille’s 35mm slides, part of the State Library of Victoria’s collection, capture healthy folk sitting in butterfly chairs and around coffee tables made by Clement Meadmore. At first we think these slides must have been misfiled from a happy summer vacation, and as we look at these images it is hard not to imagine the circumstances that led to the building of this hospital. Its appearance is that of a prototype: one cannot but think of how it could be repeated. It is a solution, so we immediately think of where else it could go. As we look more closely we see that the building is not architecture so much as the selection and arrangement of equipment – tent, tank, blinds.

That year the University of Melbourne magazine Cross Section noted that the department store Myer had installed a new air curtain, and speculated that this might mark the beginning of a new phase of architectural development towards what Reyner Banham would come to identify as Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment.¹

When we look at this work we see the issue that has been addressed – Environment and Technology. In other projects, such as the proposal for a swimming pool for Sale which was to be in the lake (a pool was later built beside the lake), we see a first-principles response to habitation and environment – an existentialist response, where requirement and circumstance define the limits of the reality that we respond to. That is how it felt, as in ‘existence precedes essence’. McIntyre at times found himself shying away from these early projects for various reasons: the roofs leaks, clients who tried to sue him, materials that failed, a family to feed. He found it difficult in the company of those who expressed their admiration for this post-war architecture.

While presenting the first stage of the Sea Ranch-inspired Dinner Plains project to the Victorian Institute of Architects, McIntyre noted that in the early days (the 1950s) they were only interested in facts, structure, material colour and perception – it was scientific. He said, ‘we didn’t even think about what we did because it was objective’.²

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2. From a lecture by Peter McIntyre at Melbourne University August 1992
Notes on the Science of Buildings; Department of Housing & Construction

At the end of the 1946 academic year the teaching of architecture was suspended at the University of Melbourne. In its place two new courses were introduced: Building and Planning. This happened because the modern epoch had sufficiently advanced beyond design to now apply itself to the pressing issues of production and distribution. When architecture tentatively resumed in 1948 the curriculum reflected the recent military experience of the instructors and many of the students who had returned to civilian life following years of military service. Many of the instructors had been embedded in the engineering and construction corps during the war, where they had designed and developed buildings suitable for production, transportation, deployment and assembly.

In 1948 Arthur Baldwinson as Commonwealth Architect oversaw the construction of a prototype house in the Treasury Gardens for public display. The Federal Government put in an order for 5000 units (of which only 23 were built). This became the Beaufort House, named after the repurposed bomber factory where it was to be built.

In 1944 the Victorian government published We Must Go On,¹ a survey of future civil infrastructure projects that would be influenced by the New Deal and the Soldier Settlement schemes of the 1920s and 1930s and civil works projects such as the Great Ocean Road, the Mulwala Canal and the Murray River irrigation scheme, whose new townships were designed by the office of Walter Burley Griffin.

The coalescing of planned economic development that Francesco Dal Co noted in his essay² was presented to Roosevelt as being the prototype of his New Deal projects in the second half of the 1930s. Towns were to become the centre of a new decentralised industrial economy. In Australia this vision was abetted by the coordination of major infrastructure works, particularly electric power generation and distribution, in towns like Wangaratta, Swan Hill, Seymour and Ballarat.

In 1948 the Architectural Students Association published Victorian Modern,³ a collection of articles by Nora Cooper (written for The Australian Women’s Weekly in the 1930s) and Raymond McGrath (written for The Architecture Review), and a survey of 1930s progressive architecture.

In 1948 The Experimental Building Station was established to provide objective evidence for the practice of material design and construction. It issued the first notes to the profession in 1948, single- and double-page memorandums on matters such as sunlight penetration, protection against white ant, timber shrinkage, retaining wall construction, and common faults in buildings, and continued to do so well into the 1980s. Load Bearing Single Skin Masonry Construction, featuring the multistory buildings of Kranz and Sheldon, was issued when I was a student. Much of this work evolved to become the basis for Australian Standards, now SAI, a publically listed company on the Australian Stock Exchange with a valuation in excess of one billion Australian dollars.

A history of the architecture profession might chart how building management, planning, the establishment of Australian standards, contract and insurance quality standards, and consumer protection was established through the advocacy of architects.

1. Barnett F. O. & Burt W. O. 1944, We Must Go On: A Study In Planned Reconstruction And Housing Melbourne: Book Depot,
Corrigan’s Chapel of St Josephs, Stribane Avenue, Box Hill

It seems like there is no impediment to accessing the chapel of St Josephs in Box Hill. A broad staircase from the street affords entry to a raised patio outside the chapel’s vestibule. The patio has been stretched to form a ramp that extends further down the street, and is then pulled across the back of the chapel to a set of stairs from the car park. From the rear of the chapel another door provides discreet access for latecomers and early leavers.

It is possible to imagine that ramp, entry, chapel and passage are constrictions and swellings of a single volume, as if a passage had been inflated by a series of deep and shallow breaths. If we hold this visceral image in mind, it would explain the appearance of the brick walls of the church, which seem to be at times pinched, wrapped and stretched. Windows are ‘pulled’ around corners, causing horizontal striations; wrinkles take the form of lines and colours change as matter does when under pressure. The early Greek philosophers imagined earth as thick water, water as thick air, and fire as thin air. The Greek word that is usually translated as spirit is pneuma, which is also breath.

The Swiss art historian Hienrich Wolfflin’s doctoral thesis, *A Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, makes the observation that ‘breathing is the most direct organ of Expression’. Wolfflin makes this observation to demonstrate the mechanism by which we acquire the building’s mood: he suggest that we do this by imagining the bodily gestures that would be required. By imitation we recognise the sensation that is the idea.

And by this process of imagining a series of deep and sharp breaths we are reminded of the most essential teaching of the Christian church, the pervasiveness of spirit:

> "the wind that bloweth where it wills and though hear its sound but canst tell whence it cometh, and wither it goeth… it is the charged wind, the cosmic breath, the driving spectral force, it is also the directing power that drives the stranger into the wilderness. And it manifests itself in unsound forms within deranged individuals. John will refer to pneuma the god". 3

As if the stretching of the skin and the swelling of the plan were not enough to create an atmosphere of tension, a pair of giant steel portals pierces the wall and pulls the veranda, while another pair tethers the ramp to the pavement in the other direction, as one might immobilise a beast undergoing surgery in the field. Oblivious to this torture, a light-weight steel frame marks the positions where the church services are held.

1. Mark 4:35-41King James Bible

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A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

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3. Heinrich Wolfflin in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* Getty Center

4. Mark 4:35-41King James Bible
The local variant of Le Corbusier’s radiant city failed to win over the long-term residents of Carlton. Betrayal can be seen down almost every street in this inner-city neighbourhood. Following The Royal Commission into Certain Housing Commission Land Purchases and Other Matters (Frost 1979-1982) the Housing Commission was rebranded the Ministry of Housing, and one of its first acts under this more humble appellation was a gesture of contrition, the infill housing program, where houses were built on allotments that the Ministry of Housing had only recently cleared long-established working class communities from.

Architects were eager to proclaim the success of this program, hoping that by this sleight of hand they would once again be trusted to delve into the personal affairs of others. They saw it as an opportunity to recover a trust that had been lost. They imagined it possible to untangle the entrenched mistrust of institutional authority by public tenant and private resident with that of their profession – ‘Architect’, to ‘the architect infilling the recently cleared sites’ was all that was needed to be done. As it was, repairs to the damaged fabric only removed evidence of the crime.

Hughes’ 1963 article, Distinguishing the Professions, Early 20th Century Studies, emphasised the service and trust components of professional practice over the knowledge aspects. He proposed that, in the ideal situation, the professional asks to be trusted and is granted this trust. Rather than the business motto of; ‘let the buyer beware’ (caveat emptor), that of the professional is ‘let the buyer trust’ (credat emptor). Related to trust is one of the distinctive features of a profession mentioned by Hughes, the ‘licence to delve into the personal affairs of others, or to make “impositions” on them, which are not normally acceptable.’ Hughes related the community mandate of a profession (the willingness of a community to allow practitioners to do their work unsupervised) to the degree of license allowed. Thus if a group had no independence from community or organisational evaluation and control, it would also not have the sanction to delve into personal areas. In essence, it was a community’s acceptance of the profession’s claim to expertise (the faith which they profess), and the community’s granting the profession a mandate, which was fundamental. Freidson was later to develop this insight in his theory of professional autonomy.

1. Øverveit J. 1992 Therapy Services: Organisation, Management, and Autonomy Psychology Press,
Ian McDougall’s Cheddar Road Elderly Housing Project

The architectural practice MMH designed 18 semi-detached one-bedroom cottages clustered in groups of three in the middle-ring Melbourne suburb of Reservoir. The site was a deactivated easement that the architects ‘imagined’ as ‘subdivided’. Units were arranged ‘as if’ the normal rules of property development applied – setbacks, crossovers and covenants have all been imagined.

Although none of the six clusters is identical, the way they are different is similar. Villa units are arranged in staggered (the jazz era waterfall), C shape (Georgian) and L blocks, each a figure identified by Robin Boyd in his ‘evolutionary trajectory’ as the Victorian Type 1 and later Australia’s Home. 2 In the appearance of difference we recognise the idea of repetition.

The white houses are both ordinary and beautiful, works of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Different coloured acrylic sheet lines the constructivist patios and a wash of colour is cast over the sanitary white surfaces of each entry when illuminated by the fluorescent lights. The ‘individuality’ of each units has a theatrical quality, perhaps because of the range of colour available in acrylic sheet – the colours are reminiscent of those found around the car yard of a Ford dealership in a country town. In the day one imagines that the lights might be switched off to save electricity and each entry would be white; individuality then is an option like AM radio, a sun visor or bucket seats.

Perhaps because of the electric glow we could switch of what differentiates each villa and we would find the homes of people who are nameless and unadvertised – ideas of mutuality, co-operation and shared ideals, hopes and dreams that came more to fruition in the years of John Cain senior’s Labor government from 1945-47 than those actually enacted by Robert Menzies when he returned to federal power in 1949 with a more strident proclamation of state-sponsored individualism.

I do not believe that the real life of this nation is to be found either in great luxury hotels and the petty gossip of so-called fashionable suburbs, or in the officialdom of the organised masses. It is to be found in the homes of people who are nameless and unadvertised, and who, whatever their individual religious conviction or dogma, see in their children their greatest contribution to the immortality of their race. The home is the foundation of sanity and sobriety; it is the indispensable condition of continuity; its health determines the health of society as a whole. 3

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3. The Forgotten People - Robert Menzies speech, 22 May, 1942 Retrieved 4 November 2011
Jeffrey Howlett Exhibition, 1991

As Jeff Howlett approached his 65th Birthday he was forced to relinquish his position as Professor of Architecture at the University of Western Australia, although bestowing the title ‘honorary’ was a chance to recognise a significant architect from the modern epoch. Despite the good intention, there was a sufficient disconnect between ‘The History of Modern Architecture in Australia’ and ‘The Life and Work of Jeffrey Howlett’. This became a chance to recast the paradigm Modern Architecture in Australia, which had been thought of as a local variant of the international style, championed or pilloried in a meaningless partisan way by both practitioners and academics. The works of Howlett and his collaborators can only partially be reconstructed under the umbrella ‘Modern Architecture’ – there was more substance to the work than the narrative it was enlisted to promote or denounce.

The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with three pieces of writing: Charlie Mann’s interview with Jeff, an essay by Michael Markham and one by me. Each piece focused on either a personal trajectory or single moments. The idea quickly formed to make it a series, and each an event. Our aim was to interrupt the concepts of movement, epoch, shared ideal, of groupthink. The principal was to establish a circumstance where the work was seen in an immediate context, that is to say, not prejudged by the international rule administered by Seidler, Gropius or le Corbusier.

Local practitioners turned out to be international in another way. Howlett was born in Hyderabad and came to Australia after studying in London. Summerhays was Australian but had studied architecture in America, Ivanoff was from Bulgaria, Krantz from Czechoslovakia. International diaspora was the local condition. Jeff Howlett noted this when he said of Krantz’s office “that it was representative of more countries than the United Nations.”

Our Howlett catalogue was inspired by Neal Durbach’s documentation of Hugh Buhrich’s house the year before. That catalogue was put together with the help of John Gollings’ yellow-tinted duotone photographs (I could hardly believe the bathroom was completely red in the flesh). The point of the duotone seemed to be one of recovery, as if the work had been considered as significant at the time. In almost all the books and magazines I later published I continued to use duotone to remember Neal’s catalogue. Buhrich was an architect in Australia in the 1930s and his work was extraordinary nearly two decades before Seidler arrived to visit his mum.

The Howlett exhibition was followed by Michael Markham’s Summerhays show and Simon Anderson’s subsequent exhibitions on Gordon Finn, Krantz and Sheldon, Julies Elisher and Brian Kopper. The architectural practice NMBW curated a show on architect James Birrell that in turn recognised these shows in the format of their catalogue. It seems that the format of Durbach’s Buhrich show was such that it attracted willing collaborators.
Flowerdale Primary School, A+R 1989

The A+R (subsequently ARM) Flowerdale Primary School building was a watershed project for that practice and for Melbourne architecture students of my generation, built as it was in 1989, my final year of study. Its significance lay in the efficacy of its architectural gesture – the iconic ‘wave’ of its west facade, but also in the arrangement of bespoke and standard clip-on pieces, a diagram resembling a toy gun. The small schoolyard is built like a sheep-dosing pen whose circular form combines with the landscape plan to make the peace symbol – hippies in army disposal fatigues, GI Joe and Barbie having a cup of tea and mud pies, toys lying around. Kids at play seemed to be able to breach the polarised debates of the day.

The extent of the constructed landscape that surrounds the new building reveals some of the difficulty that ARM had contended with – the site slope and orientation. The flat circular play space was achieved by arranging the portable classrooms in the most economical fashion across the fall of the land, forcing the new building to fall down the site. This gave the ARM building its big gesture, though it was condemned by having an unfortunate solar orientation, which meant that it has not over time been as loved as it should have been. The re-alignment of the main road also diluted the impact of the big formal gesture, denying it an audience.
PART IV

The Projects

Projects were selected based on one project per year for the preceding nine years. In that time I worked with a number of practices, and these projects were very much collaborative. What I describe is an honest account of the idea or circumstances of my input into the project, which hopefully sets up a way of testing the ideas, that is to say, the extent to which what I thought (written as project descriptions) affected the building (evidenced by drawing and photographs). There were obvious connections between Parts I, II, III and IV, that go towards understanding my context and defining my practice.
fig 47: Stephenson & Turner, Mercy Hospital, 1971

Lorne
Architects Branch
Design Architect: Peter Brew
2003
Lorne

The part of Lorne where this house is dates back to when one sought the crisp mountain air in preference to sunshine and surf. The house is on a portion of an allotment that was once the site of the local sawmill. This is where hardwood trees grew on the steep slopes of the Otway Ranges – Eucalyptus regnans, branded as ‘Mountain Ash’ and used to frame and clad the old timber buildings around about here – these are what come to mind when I think of architecture. Timber frame construction has an inbuilt facility for tolerance and improvisation – the timber doesn’t have rigid dimensions or stock lengths, and there is no abiding rule or system that limits or constrains form. When we see order in a timber building it is not the requirement for order so much as the idea of order that we see; accordingly, when we see form in a timber building it is not the requirement for it that we see.

The big 1960s Mercy Maternity Hospital, when it was in East Melbourne, had an unusual floor plan arrangement: a continuous balcony surrounded the plan. One could walk laps of each floor, which was a great for new fathers with a crying baby to offer respite to the mother, though I suspect something of a nightmare for mothers trying to get peace and privacy.

One enters the plan at Lorne in the middle of the building, up into a room like the entry at Edith Ingpin’s house at Crossover. If you choose the north stair, you seem to go straight outside onto a wide open balcony, which is in effect a day room. The pull-down windows here are like those on the W class trams and old rail carriages that had photos of Victorian waterfalls under the luggage racks but also owe a big debt to Annear and Max May, who developed these into counter-hung sashless windows with Keith Shugg in the 1970s. The idea was that the open and shut position of things is reversed, so the house is open when it is empty and closed when it is occupied. The other stair takes you ‘round the back’ as it were, to the kitchen. From here you walk around the perimeter of the building through the day room, as a balcony.
fig 48: Page from Pugin’s Contrasts: or a parallel between the noble edifices of the middle ages, and corresponding buildings of the present day; showing the present decay of taste. Published in 1898
Fairfield

This project seemed ideal over the phone, though when we found the site ‘river frontage’ more closely translated as ‘land fill’ – nothing like the ‘pristine wilderness’ I had imagined. That part of the site that was not a designated flood plain had been constrained by buildings that spoke in unison of their indifference to the overall aspect of the site, and that were oblivious to each other. It proved difficult to ascertain the geology or the topography of the site – what appeared to be the bank of the Yarra was later found to be variously cut or filled with uncontrolled spoil. It was only after extensive testing and analysis that we were able to determine something that might have been an earlier profile of the riverbank.

Despite the reality it was hard not to keep thinking of the project in the idyllic way I had imagined from the description over the phone, and as it would have been in paintings such as those of Melbourne’s early settlement in the collections of the State Library and National Gallery. These are paintings in the style ‘after’ Poussin (Landscape with Diogenes, 1648) and by itinerant English artists such as Gritten, Archer, Glover and von Guerard; Arcadian views of the city that teeter at a moment of the progress civilisation and ruin and oblivion. The ‘traditional people’ and agricultural stock stand alongside the artist, with whom we also stand by association, looking towards the city as if realising for the first time what its destiny might be. In these views we recognise significant buildings, the churches, Parliament and the law courts under construction.

Perhaps when it is hard to think of the reality of a situation we cling to the imagined, ‘unencumbered’. The other side of the river has steep banks that are part of a formation known as Wurundjeri Spur, the last land that the Wurundjeri people occupied in the Melbourne area in a traditional way. The Fairfield side to the north is generally flatter here, though it becomes quite steep just downstream of the site as the river bends around the spur.

Pugin’s ‘Catholic town 1440’/The same town 1840’ adopts the same general schema of the French-style picturesque painters, however in Pugin’s didactic presentation there is no ambivalence. The before and after view is a device borrowed from earlier English landscape gardeners Capability Brown and Humphry Repton, who used it to demonstrate a vision for a transformation.
of the landscape. The same town 1840, the village, church school, and charter house are replaced by the utilitarian workhouse, panopticon, and factory, clear sky with foul air – the linear progression of time has not brought about a better situation for the people of Catholic town.

This, then, became the project, what it felt to be 'not the same town' but 'Catholic town 1440' in this situation. The early designs for this house resembled the caretaker's/director's house that is part of the bluestone wall at the back of the National Gallery of Victoria on Sturt Street, a fragment from the city wall of 'Catholic City 1440' in its own wilderness setting. The Same Town 1840 encroaches on three sides, looking into the site, pressing up against it, appropriating its space. It was odd building a house in a nest of apartments, as if we could invert the usual sense one has whereby a new house was 'encroached on' by the long-established neighbours – accepting that we are compromised by our choices.

As with the back walls of the National Gallery of Victoria, the form is a rendition of a city street corner – the Australian Bank building as it was in 1870 to be specific, on the north-east corner of Bourke and Stephen streets (now Exhibition), and while something of this remains after three appearances in court, what has been built did depart from this. The cladding changed from bluestone blocks to a dark purplish-black brick to match those of the nearby pumping station at Dight's Falls – a building that was not so much connected to the city as tethered to it. It was from here that the early hydraulic lifts were powered and whose cast iron access plates (Melbourne Hydraulic Company) can be still found on occasion in the city's remaining bluestone lanes.

From the rear of the adjoining buildings one approaches the east wall; its only form of articulation is a prominent expansion joint. I was interested in how the joint might not just occur out of necessity on the façade, nor be something that was adeptly absorbed into it by a compositional scheme. Its requirement, by the building regulations and the brickwork code, invariably assumes that we see it, as we habitually see conduit and meter boxes-things we recognise for what they are, and for this reason do not see. The joint's function is expansion over time; if we were to see the expansion joint as something other than a code compliant item, what we would see is time measured.

The expansion joint sits above the side-opening garage doors, which never open or shut fast enough; all the time the bricks are growing at a rate that will see the loose foam packer compress to the width of paper in 40 years. The opening and shutting of the garage door, then, is the fine scale of a unit of time measured by the compressed foam packer.

The internal organisation of the house is such that rooms come into existence and go again as doors open and close. This is obvious as doors are opening, but what happens is that the doors open to the shut position, or the designed position was with the doors open rather than shut.

When all the doors are open there are a series of white 3-metre × 3-metre squares – when shut they are a series of interconnecting volumes. Movement through and around the house triggers various configurations and alignments like traffic, depending on which wall and doors have been opened. There is the sense of being a geometry, which here is fleeting and randomised by the fact that everybody in the house (the family who occupy it) carelessly leave the doors open or shut.

The first room, the foyer, is a cubic volume through which the main stair moves. If we came from the lower level (basement) to the foyer we might notice that the ceiling of the basement and the foyer floor are co-planar; and if we continued up the stair, the wall to the sunroom and that of the stair are Cartesian planes, caused by the misalignment of floors (steps) and wall, which are hard to notice as we have to look up, then down, forward then back. This was a thought about the presence of geometry in Melbourne which is everywhere on the map but something we are mostly oblivious too.

I was interested in how something as fundamental and conceptual as the delineation of a drawing's origin at a point in space and setting XYZ axis as the start of every drawing might have a corresponding material form, and that this is not an object but an appearance.
Fairfield

view from south east

landscape detail →

column concealed
column revealed
fig. 49: Rabbit-Duck illusion, 1892

Fawkner
Architects Branch
Design Architect: Peter Brew
2004
The requirement was to add facilities for umpires and improvements to the visitors’ change room at the Oak Park Football Club. By coincidence, this followed our own recommendations as part of an already ‘forgotten’ master plan we had developed for the same council the year before with the landscape architects Paterson and Pettus.

As well as address the new council brief, we undertook by stealth to realise as much of the already forgotten master plan as possible. This included works to the car park to the north of the clubrooms and the realignment of the mutated oval, to remove an awkward squared-off pocket that some at the club had seen as ‘home side advantage’. We argued that this was only an advantage if the other team was blind or stupid, in which case they would already be at a disadvantage, and that providing a proper graded surface in front of the club rooms for the spectators would provide a spot where the notoriously partisan home fans could cheer – and possibly just tip the equation in favour of a properly aligned arc and drainage to this area.

The new building was located between some old change rooms and the existing club room and incorporated public toilets for the larger reserve accessed from the car park. The alignment of the toilets is such that they veer away from the oval. This is not reflected in the shape of the roof, so that a significant eave behind the toilets offers protection for spectators in the newly aligned pocket, an incidental grandstand of sorts.

The skylights in the change room are arranged so that the coach could address a huddle as under a big dome, surrounded by acolytes. Individual skylights illuminate each shower position like spotlights at the curtain call. Everything inside the change room is green, which we argued would not clash with the grass but was also an obvious reference to the theatricality of suburban sport.

In effect the building has three distinct elements or figures: the grandstand, the change rooms and the toilets. These elements are resolved under a simple rectangular skillion so that each must form the background or profile of the others; different ideas occupy the same form – just like Sumner’s statue of Burke and Wills, where one side shows men laden with technology and equipment, while from behind it is the classical drapery of Plato recording the words of Socrates.
Melbourne
Architects Branch
Design Architect: Peter Brew
2003
Melbourne

This was a proposal to upgrade the public space on the ground floor of a city building with 12 strata levels. Our concept divided the existing foyer into two spaces: Foyer and Corridor. The Foyer was to be emphatically real, made from identifiable materials that had discernible dimensions, thicknesses, depths. The Corridor, on the other hand, was to be ephemeral, it was to be made in a way that there could be no evidence of the material of its construction or the means of its fabrication.

We imagined that the Foyer could have been lined in either brushed aluminium or timber veneer – it was to have curved corners and a continuous ring of fluorescent lighting, so as to have a luxurious atmosphere that would recall Yuncken Freeman’s Eagle House foyer in Bourke Street, which at the time was being demolished. A niche for a vase, tenant directory embossed or gold lettered like a Great War honour board, gold with black shadow, maybe an Aztec pattern in the floor mat, and a slightly too small revolving door, or the door could have been annoyingly quick, or maybe a bit heavy to push, so that you would notice it.

The Corridor we imagined was as much an object as it was a space, identical in size, shape and location to the corridors that occur on each floor in all respects except that this one was empty, and in this it was unique. It had not been decorated, personalised or claimed. Nor could it be, as it was the thing that the strata deed refers to as common corridor which is the basis for the bond of the corporation that owned the building.

The empty Corridor was to have a skim of venetian plaster to the walls and ceiling while the floor was a white Marmoleum with a marble pattern. The idea was to build something that had the appearance of having been cast of hard plaster. Venetian plaster uses a mix of marble dust and chip as well as lime, which raises the possibility of it being appreciated for the material. This was a bet each way, as Semper and Faraday argued that marble had been used by the Greeks solely for the fact that it provided an excellent substrate for paint, but unpainted it recalled the marble quattrocento statues in which Alois Riegl first identified the will to form: that which we see as something that is not the object, so much as the idea.¹

The slight incline of the street allows the Corridor, when we first see it, to be raised 450mm so it appears to resemble a bay window through which one sees what is a white space, a corridor, though from the street it might be mistaken for an empty shop. The entry to the building is first through the foyer that is ‘next door’.

We paid particular attention to thinking about the lights in the corridor, as we wanted them to be objects but not necessarily the source of illumination, which then made the problem of illuminating the corridor particularly difficult. I remember thinking about this problem for a long time, as it felt similar to the problem of explaining to the body corporate that the empty corridor was not the foyer that they had asked for, but a thing that they had collectively written into existence through the covenant of the strata title. What was at play here was not only Object as it occurs as a concept in Philosophy but its coincidence with Object as a physical tangible thing. We customarily see rooms as form and as a figure, though not corridors.

This was the first of many projects where what was proposed was difficult to recognise as being ‘designed’ – Super T Bridge, tram stops, an aqueduct, more bridges, Fountain Pier, etc....

This project was a building to accommodate the research institute MCEM, office laboratories and plant for nine imaging arrays; ‘microscopes’ within the Clayton campus of Monash University. The site is the north west of the campus between the outer ring road and the existing Material Engineering buildings, which like most of this precinct was largely unchanged from the early years of the campus in the 1960s.

The controlling idea of the early campus can be seen in the landscape plan, where there is an ‘evolution’ from a wilderness/naturalistic landscapes at the east side of the campus through ‘groomed’ wilderness, parks and playing fields in the centre and then captured as court and gardens to the west, a schema that has an complementary architectural taxonomy. At the time we worked on this project there were at least two if not three campus plans, each of which seemed oblivious to the elegance of these ideas. There was no recognition or intent to preserve or value the remnant Eliss Stones landscapes or the BSM buildings that complemented them. To this end we aimed to render the campus sensible in a way that the part and the whole were one.

There was always a lot of mystery surrounding this project and its equipment, not the least being how buildings measure performance and tolerance and how scientist measure the same thing. For the equipment to perform to its theoretical capacity the environment needed to be somewhere else – on the moon would have been good in terms of the required absence of ground vibration, temperature, ambient electromagnetic field etc. This is before considering variation within the room caused by operating the equipment. At no stage were we ever certain if the required operating conditions were in fact achievable. Engineers talk the same qualities of experience as scientist but they are degrees of magnitude apart, which posed some really interesting questions about the limits and nature of disciplinary knowledge. Only the equipment itself, that is the microscopes, could detect the performance of the space. We needed nine rooms for live cats.

The square plan is laid out almost like city blocks, like the streets and plazas of a city plan – maybe even one attributed to Alberti as an extension to the Rome depicted as ideal city. If it was that, then the experience of the building is apt, as it has an almost archaeological sequence, of descending into an excavation. The many corridors and the ramp in combination mean that apart from the variety and sequence of rooms there are a different number of steps at the end of each corridor - so perhaps more like the stage set in Palladio’s Teatro Olimpico than an ideal city.
western corridor

east & north corridors

east west corridor

Clayton
Tullamarine

This building at Melbourne Airport is the landside infrastructure of an airfreight facility. A ‘generic’ building ‘in which freight is sorted and packed into the metal cargo vaults that are shaped like segments of an aircraft, that are then sent “airside’. The question was not one of architectural form, as ‘generic building’ assumed this as having been resolved, but of matching ‘generic building’ to the circumstances of the site.

Eliot Noyes’ Mobil petrol stations were ‘generic’ in this way, that is the material and operational requirements had been through a process of design and refinement and were capable of being deployed as required to allow the necessary adjustment for the shape and alignment of the site, the topography, orientation drainage and access. (The Mobil petrol stations required larger sites areas to cope with the sort of issues we identify here; we found that the Bairnsdale ambulance station was the most efficient building imaginable but required a site area nearly double that of other stations built to that brief). For there to be the level of ‘efficiency’ of land use it requires the pattern of land division, orientation, proportion and access to ‘allow’ a generic solution, which is rarely the case, as land can only be sold once the initial civil works or ‘land development’ has occurred, in effect imposing a impost on the future development of the land in the form of capital cost to adapt to the site constraints. In principal there is little or no cost to changing the position of a line on a map compared to the cost of designing a bespoke building each time to cope with the circumstances of an arbitrary placement of a line. It is here that architects often bear the brunt of mistaking the economy of their solution with that of the economy of a project.

Here the building is developed as if it were the generic building assumed by the project brief, that is, there was an attempt to make it as unencumbered by the specifics of an actual site and to be encumbered by objective and empirical criteria, matters such as the quantity of sheet, the direction of the gutter, the number of downpipes, the combined weight of the steel frame, the sequence of construction, standards and efficiency. Perhaps because of the proximity to the airport we began to see the building as being a 747, in which case the civil works took on something of the architecture of the always-intriguing docking infrastructure that converges on planes at airports: conveyor belts, scissor platforms, mobile stairs, carts and gantries, objects that are part machine, part building tethering the generic industrial object (plane/shed) to the abstract coordinates of the lot.

Nothing is fixed on the site other than the line of the subdivision that delineates the title.

fig 52: Eliot Noyes, Mobil Filling Station, 1964
Tullamarine
Architectus
Design Architect: Peter Brew
2007
Tidal River Depot

The project was to relocate the works depot from a low-lying area to higher ground within an area of the park set aside for plant, services and staging activities associated with the management of the Tidal River Village. This area already was a scatter of objects and things half buried in tea trees and dunes at the base of Mount Oberon. The organisation of the new depot evolved after a process of carefully mapping and locating the existing site features, cultural and archaeological heritage and a tangle of in-ground services routes, the position of old rubbish pits and ammunition dumps that dated to when the Australian Army occupied the site as a base during World War II.

It was decided to locate the building over the old garbage pits, as this was already a disturbed portion of the site and had been avoided by those laying in-ground services since. The pits had been formed by bulldozers pushing the sand in long straight lines; between these we delineated an intersection which we extended until it picked up the existing roads that passed near the site. One arm of delineation framed an area for the helicopter landing and overflow car park to the north towards the main road. As the layout was developed through an apparently logical sequence of objective and quantifiable decisions, its visual appearance could be argued to have some resemblance to the abstract modernist paintings of Malevich (e.g. Self Portrait in Two Dimensions, 1915).

All the new buildings adopt the alignment of the intersection, in a sequence that accords with the daily workflow of the depot. The orientation of entry of each shed or yard is based on the direction of vehicles, all movement as far as possible being forward and clockwise. The sequence results in a rule where one moves past a building on the right and is oriented by a distant clearing. Having recognised this we replicated it wherever possible, in number and at different scales. This applies to the depot, the buildings and within the buildings themselves.

The insistence of this relationship tends towards a singularity where there is an experience of always moving toward an opening, with purpose, the idea of starting and the anticipation of confronting that which lies beyond.

FLOWERDALE

This project was developed following bushfires that had burnt to the north of the town. The plan was to consolidate new community facilities onto the site of the local primary school, as well as incorporate school functions into a new building. In the confusion following the fire this building was assigned a performance requirement for BAL 40 (Bushfire Attack Level) and required extensive research into the design and material performance testing., much of which was ultimately removed from the project once the criteria and application of the code to the site had been assessed.

The new building was to be higher up the site ‘on’ the road; cars now park next to it, as though on a street, a step towards the casual formality one finds at a district community hall or mechanics’ institute. This extends to having a proper foyer, nominally a 4 metre x 4-metre cube, a neutral space for the hitherto independent groups to come together with some equanimity. The skillion is perpendicular to that of the ARM building and parallel to the slope, with, with the fall paradoxically being the means by which each of the functions are differentiated with the building (paradoxically, as the ARM building this gesture renders the interior is largely undifferentiated). The larger kindergarten rooms taper to a low 2100mm high Kevin Borland-like bay window to the north-east, while on the far diagonal of the skillion the maternal health rooms are nearly 6 metres high – the proportions of an Edwardian hospital. The school room, accessed from the foyer, is the community hall, and from the schoolyard is activities space and art room.
junior kindergarten

foyer

kitchen

view to playground

Flowerdale
The Werribee Bridge

This project was part of the larger upgrade of the Melbourne sewer network. This particular parcel of work was to replace the main sewer pipe as it crosses the Werribee River, a pipe bridge or aqueduct, the third such structure to do this since the original red brick open-channel aqueduct was built in 1892; it remains as a relic immediately to the south. The 1970s pipe bridge that replaced it and had served as the main connection since then was removed as part of our works.

Heritage status was afforded the 1890s structure for engineering significance, but was not extended to the utilitarian pipe bridge from the 1970s, which, by definition, was also a significant piece of engineering. This was an interesting issue for the engineers on our team, as it focused attention on what is thought to be of significance once utility has been extinguished; Kant’s analytic is that Utility is equated to being good and distinguished from what is beautiful.3

In the process of developing the project there were a number of early designs – design in this context refers to a possible constructed solution that allowed the comprehension of the project, which despite its immense size was mostly underneath the eyeline of almost all who will be in close proximity to it. Only a few intrepid cyclists on the Federation Trail would realise the extent of the project as they first cross over the bridge, turn and pass under it to connect to the new trail that follows the river to the bay, or in the contra direction, to Geelong.

The decision was made to cast and launch the pipe as a monolith to the opposite bank, the advantage being that the extent of the span would be without mechanical joints, as these represented a risk to the environmental waters of the river and would ultimately require access to replacement over time. The design includes the formation of the banks to allow support piers and for the seals to be replaced.

When we considered this and acknowledged that it would be simply a result of the exigencies of the project, it became clear to us that it would create an interesting experience. We imagined that the river gorge would be rehabilitated as a natural setting and that our piece would be encountered as an aberration, something that was unknowable. Its size, form and appearance needed to be such that one could not conceive of how it had been built. Initially we imagined all aspects of the design being integral to the box section as a single thing. In addition to the sewer pipe we were required to cater for a navigable portion for service vehicles and later public access. This turned out to be too complex as a launched structure and in time we made the bridge with a sacrificial precast element above the main pipe structure.

The plazas on each bank cap what is in effect a giant junction box connecting into the existing pipe, which is parallel to the alignment of the 1890s sewer. The surface of these extended across to the ends of the old 1890s structure as if to frame it in a formal gesture that bracketed the existing bridge as a thing of wonder, as if we were building viewing platforms, rather than merely capping a junction box. To this end we designed components, that looked like rostra, signs that may have at one time been heraldic or banners, as if the Queen had been invited to a civic opening of this project, or at least the local mayor or council representative, and a huge crowd had once gathered there and a speech had been given.

3. Kant I. 1790 Critique of Judgment esp. the concept of the purposiveness P 203
viaduct over Werribee River from West bank

Werribee
Werribee
Part V

Part V: The Exhibition

The exhibition took place on June 2014. Exhibited were three video loops of still photos from various projects. The second wall had the still photos and accompanying this was a partially completed catalogue.

The intention was to present the exhibition as restaging of an abandoned project as a ruin. A pretext for this can be found in Alois Riegel’s text on Monumentality or indeed in the assumption that Goethe makes of Strasbourg Cathedral as a ruin which allows the visitor to enter into the buildings idea, to acquire its concept.

The display of images from works described in Part IV including catalogue and surveillance video of the exhibition. The aim of the exhibition was to test and verify the ground and precondition of judgment necessary to identify ideas in things as discussed in part I. In particular, the Exhibition aimed to configure a condition whereby the viewer adopted the vantage proposed by Kant, that of being disinterested. From this position it is envisaged that what is seen in the work would be the epic as discussed by Foucault in his article, What is an Author.
There are 10 photos each an architectural detail, on the accompanying page is a title – properly laid out as if a 1934 edition of Art in Australia edited by Syney Ure Smith – where Max Dupain first published his Black and white Still life/ The distinct blue pencil of the editor or proof reader has been at work suggesting alternative names for each of the plates

..... STILL LIFE / LIFE STILL

This exhibition is approached as one would an abandoned suitcase, that is with a mix of suspicion and sympathy, The sympathy one feels for an others loss (of baggage), suspicion, Bomb, Hoax or Lingerie? The aim of this paper is to review the exhibition STILL LIFE / LIFE STILL, This we shall see is not simply a task of determining what is meant by the title of the exhibition as much as the figure ( strike through / proper name ) which one assumed designates the work as in progress, annotated, corrected, draft, in discussion , or waiting approval, Ordinarily this would have been part of the way to building our understanding as to the status of the catalogue, but we shall see that this is not a draft of a catalogue for of an exhibition so much as it is the exhibit of the exhibition.

A fact that would have been easy to have missed, as what is displayed does not appear to be in a state, or to have taken the proper form, of something that we would recognise as being of significance, What seems like hastily assembled pages from an architectural folio; it is only when we realise how this catalogue / exhibit sits in the sequence Catalogue, Exhibition, Treatise. Work that its appearance take on some significance.

Entering the gallery one is confronted by a bank of 3 LCD screens, Flickering a familiar bluish hue, Security camera footage of a gallery, on a table before the screens is an well thumbed catalogue which we assumesis from the exhibition monitored by the screens, two standard office chairs are tucked under the table facing the screens

It occurs to us that as we attend the exhibition it is being staged, watched and surveyed ( as outlined in the scene description ) the catalogue on the table appears as a draft, heavily annotated;

Though some misgivings may arise as we glance to the occasional close up surveillance of the exhibition screened in front of the desk which reveal that the annotations of the catalogue have been reproduced as part of the work exhibited. Presumably making the “works” exhibited not what is not reproduced in the catalogue but faithful reproductions of it.
There is no evidence in the catalogue of time or place of the exhibit, that we can only guess.1 By its condition as having been, We imagine that once it had been sanctioned, requested and even encouraged; Had there been moments of its anticipation? Public display, perhaps the works would one day have the status of being recognised. Acknowledgements of thoughts of acceptance, though it is clear that things did not turn out that way, the project had been abandoned, What is presented is not the proposed exhibition but its re-creation for forensic purpose.2

Those who attend this, not the gallery going public eager for new developments in the field who like prospective shoppers wish to see the latest trends before settling on last years model have given way to detective, archaeologist and psychoanalyst all on duty as it were. Whose interest is strictly professional the exhibit is in such a state that it cannot but be thought of as a stage, though remember that the same could be said of a teenagers bedroom or an artist studio, the gesture strike through/ proper name undoubtedly mars the work, It value is now as Critique.3 And without additional information of the subject names date and address. We are left by circumstance if not by design with only one option; to find the truth of the work.

In that scene in the photographic print the exhibition are on the whole Architectural details though perhaps not in the sense that an architect would understand a details To the architect a detail map out the conceit he wishes to perpetrate, like the stage notes of a playwright setting up scene that is to be performed. The architects detail is private, read only by those whose tolerance he requires to realise what is set up, What is depicted in the photos is not the set up but a still from live action ( still life also points to the video screen where the images of the works displayed are screened appear as frozen)

Screens flick between images of the works; photographs of architectural details. The title of the photographs and the rooms of the gallery, between the screens a single person appears, walking between rooms, standing in front of the works looking at the catalogue. Because of the multiple screens the person appears on occasion simultaneously, by impersonating security guards ( and even at times by different scales).

As the guards are away it is not unreasonable that we sit in their chairs, to rest, until they return, watching the screens, and flicking through the catalogue. Looking at the catalogue it is possible to imagine three possible scenarios as to the situation we have found ourselves in,

1 That the captions belong to an exhibition of works referred to by the titles and the photos are proxy, that the images on the security camera and the table and chairs are incidental

2 That the Edited captions belong to an exhibition of works where the photos of the catalogue are the works and that that is currently being exhibited

3 That the title and the photos and the annotation be considered as a single work, and that is being exhibited but our only access to it is by impersonating security guards

As the title to the photos are familiar to us as works of art, (Kiss) Brancusi (David) Michelangelo and the (View to Mount Wellington with Orphan Asylum) Colonial artist John Glover. Is it possible to imagine a curatorial premise, or an occasion where such disparate works would be assembled, Could we imagine this as the eclectic vision of a private collector on display in a regional gallery, in such a gallery we could almost imagine the recreation of Hoffman’s apartment with a Dining table by WBG a sideboard by Adolph Loos upon which sits a Pugin Plate.

1 That the captions belong to an exhibition of works referred to by the titles and the photos are proxy, that the images on the security camera and the table and chairs are incidental

2 That the Edited captions belong to an exhibition of works where the photos of the catalogue are the works and that that is currently being exhibited

3 That the title and the photos and the annotation be considered as a single work

Starting with the annotated catalogue, to animate this it seems that we must project into it- accepting that there is a difference of opinion we imagine who it is between and based on the force of the pencil, who has the authority to make such marks, someone petty no doubt, as if having changed one title from necessity has then committed to changing them all. Looking at what has struck through, Still Life, Kiss, etc, and the advanced state of the proof, as if it was all but finished; We feel for who it must be that now wrongly had hoped that the images may have come to be known

1 (the beholder who contemplates them long after their own time) Op cit Benjamin
2 Subject matter and truth content, united in the work’s early period, come apart during its afterlife
3 Critique is concerned with the truth content of a work of art, the commentary with its subject matter

4 Henri Bergson dedicated to Jules Lachelier his essay Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience.
5 In the sense that 19th German Realist, Wollin Wettinger, set dispise the accurate depicting of nature esp in its realistic depiction – imitation being the lowest form of understanding etc
as KISS rather than EXPANSION JOINT or View to Mount Wellington with Orphan Asylum (1) not Galvanised Box Gutter just as the artist had intended. Arrangement of Greys and Black is known as. A work whose lengthened title: Arrangement of grey and black, A portrait of the painters mother. Now shortened to Whistlers Mother.

Of these scenarios 3 has been adopted by the exhibition, as the works on display maintain the form Caption / CAPTION of the draft catalogue we have assumed here that the catalogue is to the exhibit - Still Life / LIFE still

The a coupling A/B of the title occurs in title of each of the images displayed at XXXXXX gallery The striking out the editors mark and renaming suggest a change of heart or a shift of position I was doing this and now i am doing this, The works (2) are silent witness to this dispute happening to the side

The temporal shift is twofold, from afterlife, recognition and respect, to the present but also a re appraisal. We are at the moment of recognition editing, the strike through the editors pencil a redaction and a change of heart, a new way of seeing things, the title shifts at some time the label Still Life was thought to be a description or title for the body of Works (1) and as we have seen its difference to Life STILL is the isolation of a particular mode of representation of Fruit, that which we know from memory-mimesis recollection it is by this gesture we come to know that which flits past.6

Expansion joint at first offers no clues other than the redaction of KISS. It is as if their is a preference for fact to be an image from trade literature or a illustration from a construction handbook, Expansion Joint something that interrupts the ornamental patterns of brick walls, that transforms them from skin or mass to the representation of skin and mass though in this instance, expansion joint is intended to be evidence of the expansion of the bricks over time. Movement and time, as if in saying expansion joint that is what we meant EXPANSION JOINT is the final form of the redacted Kiss, Is the building / photograph / book to app / caption writer suggesting some process of, transference perhaps transmogrification. Where the force we sense in Brancusi Kiss is actualised by closing of expansion joint caused by the incremental expansion of clay bricks over time close the gaps.

Kiss is redacted not removed, like still life indicates what has been transcended, perhaps not Brancusi’s greatness but Kiss and for expansion joint

When we say it in isolation it corresponds to what we could see it every time we forgot 30 years we realise the force of coming together (the endless force of their fusion ) of Kiss but we know it in a way that in is described by the force of two figures forced into the single object, expansion joint is actual force and real time

6 Benjiman in Elective Affinities as quoted by Arendt in introduction to Illuminations
7 Worringer W. Abstraction and Empathy 1908, Routlage and Kegan Paul ltd 1953 (English ed) P 28
The entasis here stylised is considered as optical correction, the curvature of our optic device the eye, while the shroud for the microscopist ensures the stability of the equipment.

The setting for the column is like a stage set or diorama of what we would conventionally imagine a microspore lab to be, - the receptionist (observer/ technician), the Fire indicator panel (standing in for the necessary remote plant) and the glass walls like a shroud or backdrop with the column in the room as object.

Shrouded column is a anomaly as other than this there are no other structural columns, the building being supported by timber walls. That the column is

Though given the consistency of these figures it is possible that column is a synonym of Column that the prosaic vertical support, is what now wants us to see and the discipline architecture

Is what microscopist refer to the assortment of boxes beams and parti which they view small things - Representational a symbol

Post of steel shrouded in timber fact of the building, its architectural problem gravitational forces.

WHAT WE NOW KNOW

1 The exhibition /catalogue sets out to prevent any possibility of commentary.

2 The aim is to discover truth content – Sense spirit or thought of the work

3 The method is to separate the Shining truth from the now redundant utility

The Figure Strike through/ proper name establish a field that is intended to hold our attention Long enough for us to see something else. Each term Strike through and Proper name are not dialectic as gradations of difference of the same, difference in time. If the same not difference of kind, the local intensity is intended to heighten the sense that we have of what is presented.

INDUCTIVE We

DEDUCTIVE We

ANALOGICAL

We now know the Enigma of being alive is what is meant by LIFE STILL.
fig 1: Frontal Door Shaped Column
fig 2: commemoration plaque

fig 3: balcony
fig 4: plaster wall in timber room
fig 5: timber door in white room
fig 6: white room with timber wall unit
fig 7: light and skylight

fig 8: wall clock and corner cupboard
fig 8: corporate foyer
fig 9: pollock former municipal building
fig 10: study in red and grey #1
fig 11: study in red and grey #2
**Fig 12:** Diamond expansion joint
fig 13: view to Mt. Oberon Concrete courtyard (the delineator)

fig 14: view to Mt. Bishop Galvanised box gutter
fig 15: Albury airport land side stair
Goethe’s literary essays

by Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 1749-1832; Spingarn, Joel Elias, 1875-1939

Published 1921 New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

266 267
On German Architecture

Yet it means to me, dear child, that the German architecture of this interregnum of building columns in it, as well, that the twenties have overruled the interregnum of sudden springs in them, might have soared in your mind since reflections. If your ears even now to the next generation, they have possessed a song to you.

Gothic's Literary Essay

Goethe's Literary Essay

the confound utilitarian of Gothic architecture. Under the term, "Gothic," the term for a dictionary, I pick all the misconceptions which have ever marred the term, the cutting, the stretching, the stretching of the term, it is as wide as any people can explain the foreign term. After all, it was the 1950s be so that did not yet live in my system, the term for it would be saying that the farm, instead of being the farm, the term for it was a real architectural and not the philosophically.

And how long periods of growth before it is useless, utterly, certain xuân and great art has, it is in over time and greater than that when it showed its beautiful. Too in less there is a creative disposition, which comes into existence as soon as its existence is seen. As soon as he has everything to do to us, this necessity is in, working effectively in his spiritual peace and assurance, groups materials into which he becomes his own spirit. That the design or design with strange chart and form, ghostly figures, grâce et prix, his weapons and his body. And even if these people consist of the most arbitrary and incongruous forms and thus, they shall, without any intended proportions or features, yet have a sort of harmony; for a feeling of feeling created out of them a characteristic whole.

Now this architectural art is the only genuine art. If only it comes from the inner world, expressing the original, unique sentiments, untrammelled, unclothed.

On German Architecture

The contrariety which conflict in your mind, now feeling the boundless power of the god whole, now calling for a direction for beauty when you see only_resume and toughness. Do not let it underwrite, however, say that the two are not in one. "Art" means that the godly self-control is able to embody only meaningless visualizations. They want to be speculations, but not the visualizations, but not the visualizations.

And how long period of growth before it is useless, utterly, certain xuân and great art has, it is in over time and greater than that when it showed its beautiful. Too in less there is a creative disposition, which comes into existence as soon as its existence is seen. As soon as he has everything to do to us, this necessity is in, working effectively in his spiritual peace and assurance, groups materials into which he becomes his own spirit. That the design or design with strange chart and form, ghostly figures, grâce et prix, his weapons and his body. And even if these people consist of the most arbitrary and incongruous forms and thus, they shall, without any intended proportions or features, yet have a sort of harmony; for a feeling of feeling created out of them a characteristic whole.

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Source of Figures:


Part One  Theoretical Premise

Fig 1 (pp 12): Salzburg Cathedral

Part 2  Now I See It

Fig 2 (pp 24): Drawing showing imagined items in a room by P. Brew, 2014


Fig 4.b (pp 30): Pugin Plate (‘Souvigne Vous de Moy’ (Remember Me).) viewed 4 January 2012, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O134790/plate-pugin-augustus-welby/>.


Fig 8 (pp 40): All Saints, Margaret Street, London, 1850-59 William Butterfield (photographer unknown) viewed 4 January 2012, <http://www.shafe.uk/Butterfield_All_Saints_Margaret_Street_1849/>.


Fig 12.a.b.c. (pp 48): Valerio Olgiati, Three family house, Chur, Switzerland scanned from Lucan, J. 2006, 2G: Valerio Olgiati: Revista Internacional de Arquitectura = International Architecture Review, n.37, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona

Fig 13.a (pp 50): Olgiati, Visiting Center, Swiss National Parc, Zernez; Windows (photographer unattributed) viewed 4 January 2012, <http://acdn.architizer.com/thumbnails-PRODUCTION/05/89/058959f0d6018ee9c6604dc70864f98.jpg>.

Source of Figures (continued):


Fig 16 (pp 58): Desbrowe–Annear; Clover Hill House (photographer unattributed) scanned from Edquist, H. 2004, Harold Desbrowe-Annear 1865–1933: a life in architecture The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne Victoria


A person to whom the meaning has occurred now knows it, and its occurring to him was the beginning of his knowing it. Then how is this like an experience of imagining something?

p. 185, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations
now I see it