Welcome to our Debate issue. This issue explores the role of debates, ones that have taken place as well as ones that should take place. How are these debates constructive exchanges of opposing positions? What are the topics of those impassioned discussions? What are the issues at stake? What are the venues, physical or virtual, historic or current, in which these debates take place? What conditions favor the generation of these debates? Who participates in these debates, who is the audience, and who should be the audience? And ultimately, what are the outcomes of these debates? We hope you take part of the debate.
After having been founded in 1885 as an architectural sketch club, the Chicago Architectural Club was reconstituted in 1979 and, with it came the legendary debates spearheaded by the then-president Stanley Tigerman. During the monthly meetings, two members would present and debate their work, with the audience casting their votes and deciding on the winner. Debates were fierce and personal, and both the winner and the loser received a diploma, which we assume the earlier displayed more proudly than the later.

The Chicago Architectural Club was composed of a limited number of members who paid high dues, bringing together (and reinforcing) the elite group of architects already practicing in the city. After Tigerman left, those debates started to disappear. Over three decades later, neither the architecture nor the city itself remains the same. The format of the debate is still relevant, but we wonder if we can expand these debates (in size and/or number) to be more inclusive in terms of participants, audience, and topics.

Chicago has missed (i.e. intentionally avoided) several opportunities to debate the fate of existing and proposed buildings, but the first Chicago Architecture Biennial is a step in the right direction. The public setting, the diversity of points of view and mediums of the projects exhibited, and the number and range of free public events offered express an interest in engaging in this city-wide conversation about the role of architecture in our cities.

We hope that initiatives like the Chicago Architecture Biennial, as well as many others that do not receive the same resources and media attention but are equally important in shaping a constructive conversation, can help to convince citizens, public officials, and private interests that having these debates can only produce better work and, in turn, generate a better city.

With this issue, we hope to include all of you in this conversation, bringing the attention to ongoing debates and creating new (sometimes fictitious) ones. We also want to learn from those who have led them in the past, and to provide a platform for those willing to take their role in the future. You will not agree with all of the positions presented, but we hope you continue to add your voice and be part of the debates.
IDENTIFYING THE DESIGNER AS WORKER

THE ARCHITECTURE LOBBY AS ORGANIZING PLATFORM TO DISCUSS THE VALUE OF ARCHITECTURAL WORK

Essay by Peggy Deamer, Quilian Riano, and Manuel Shvartzberg on behalf of The Architecture Lobby
1. Enforce labor laws that prohibit unpaid internships, unpaid overtime; refuse unpaid competitions.

2. Reject fees based on percentage of construction or hourly fees and instead calculate value based on the money we save our clients or gain them.

3. Stop peddling a product—buildings—and focus on the unique value architects help realize through spatial services.

4. Enforce wage transparency across the discipline.

5. Establish a union for architects, designers, academics, and interns in architecture and design.

6. Demystify the architect as solo creative genius; no honors for architects who don’t acknowledge their staff.

7. Licensure upon completion of degree.

8. Change professional architecture organizations to advocate for the living conditions of architects.

9. Support research about labor rights in architecture.

10. Implement democratic alternatives to the free market system of development.

WE ARE PRECARIOUS WORKERS; THESE ARE OUR DEMANDS!
As professionalized Architecture eradicates discourse of design as labor, it does so in capitalism’s favor, not to the advantage of the profession. The discourse of the lone genius with individual authorship, creativity, and talent leads to the rationalization of our long, unpaid hours as the intangible sacrifice we make for society. The resulting system prevents us from identifying as workers and, as a consequence, we remain ignorant of our exploitation by others who aren’t so uninformed and can profit from the value of our work.

The Architecture Lobby is an organization that argues for the value of architecture to society at large, beginning by identifying ourselves as workers and our contributions as “work”—work that is aesthetic, technical, social, organizational, environmental, administrative, fiduciary, but in all cases, work. The goal is to build on this fundamental awareness and understanding of value to become perceptive operators in our contemporary political economy, and ultimately, to change it from the vantage point of our profession.

It was not always the case that architecture ignored labor. Nineteenth-century architects developed their designs with particular regard to the skills, knowledge, and creativity that the various trades—skilled and unskilled—would bring to their projects; they saw their immaterial work as part and parcel to the subsequent material labor. In the US, members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in the 1930s called for the organization to become a union. When this did not come to pass, the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists, and Technicians (FAECT)—formed in 1933, merged with the Union of Office and Profes-
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sional Workers in 1946, and terminated in 1948 when the latter was purged from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) with which it had joined—took up the need for architectural labor advocacy. In other words, it is neither God-given nor “natural” to think that architecture isn’t part of a labor discourse. Our task today is to rediscover the lost legacy of labor activism for our profession.

Still, it has taken a number of convergent events to make it clear to the members of The Architecture Lobby how illogical this work aphasia is, particularly in the twenty-first century. One is the advances in technology that make the design ingenuity of developers, fabricators, environmentalists, engineers, and contractors able to be shared up front, early on, and in an integrated fashion. It is not just that CAD-CAM and BIM allow the transfer of knowledge to be seamless and coordinated, but it has made us architects aware that these players don’t just execute design; they initiate and direct it as well. Perhaps most importantly, this realization also helps to problematize the traditional division of labor in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry, including its stark inequalities as governed by capitalist imperatives. The vertical structure with the architect or, increasingly, the real estate visionary at the top and contractors and subs below is rapidly disappearing, as is the idea that they do “work” and we do “design.”

Another is the realization that other professions approach their work habits, fees, and their hiring practices in a more enlightened manner. In the hall of the Yale Law School one can find a sign that lists “The Top 10 Family-Friendly Law Firms.” The signal that such a list sends is clear: this matters;
graduating students have a choice of where they work and this information can help them make it. The second is that it was collected by Yale Law School students—that is, that the school endorsed this data collection as a matter of institutional concern. The third is that law firms are scrambling, lobbying, and striving to be on this list because they are anxious to attract the best and brightest graduates, itself interesting but indicative as well that the students must think of themselves as the best and the brightest; they are being wooed, not the other way around. These actions bring up the question if the way a profession cares and values about its workers turns into value and respect of the profession by the larger culture. Regardless, creating such a list, and the values it embodies, seems oddly anathema to our current schools of architecture, graduates, and firms.

Third, is the outcry over construction labor conditions in the Emirates, particularly the protest by Gulf Labor over the construction of the new Guggenheim and New York University (NYU) campus in Abu Dhabi. The protests struck a cord on two levels. First, architects were asked directly by Gulf Labor, the Human Rights Watch, and the architecture activist group Who Builds Your Architecture to take a stand on the illegal practices of indentured servitude for construction workers. The initial inability to get any architect building in the Emirates to show up, make a comment, or change their project choices was (and still is) shocking. Yes, it is the case that architects don’t have official, legal contracts with responsibilities for contractors—the owners do. But where are our politics? What about our ethics? And isn’t one
advantage of *starchitects* that they have significant power to persuade, either via cultural or, as with the “Bilbao effect,” economic caché? Do we have so little faith in our ability to set visions larger than objects themselves that we can’t take a stand on a clear problem with the industry? The dismay at our architectural response was made more palpable for its contrast with the art community’s, which agreed to a boycott by not displaying their work at the Guggenheim and held protests in their New York museum. If architects failed to identify with the construction workers, presumably because we are “artists” and they laborers, how come the artists themselves didn’t see it that way and saw the construction workers as brothers?

These observations made many of us think about our lack of a broad worker identity and our lack of an adequate practical, historical, and theoretical vocabulary with which to address these issues beyond the usual and tired positions of cynical acquiescence or self-righteous moralization. It became clear that our inability to meaningfully identify as and with workers came, in the first instance, from ignorance of or shame about our own labor conditions. Our graduates suffer many unacceptable conditions—cramped group living; enormous debts that bind us to jobs we would otherwise not take; itinerant work ungoverned by any laws of hiring, firing, or health standards; virtually no say about the amount or distribution of hours one is expected to work. When we don’t recognize this as shameful in our own house, why would we be able to diagnose and empathize with it elsewhere?
The Lobby recognizes that the organization of work has moved on from the time when the economy was driven by manufacturing and labor unions that were the preferred vehicle to assure job security and proper compensation. We have vigorous internal debates about whether the decline of unions is a result of the economy’s move from manufacturing to service to knowledge production or whether it is merely ideology’s good work to make unions seem, well, unseemly and old-fashioned. Likewise, we have lively discussions about whether the move towards a gig economy fueled by technological platforms is good or bad for society, good or bad for architecture. On the one hand, “production” is back in the picture and with it, the emphasis on those who produce it—knowledge workers, which architects surely are. Innovation and innovators, designers in studios and labs—these are the models of contemporary knowledge production and we architects surely are—or should be—included.

Non-hierarchical work, collaboration, open-sourcing, ad hoc alliances, just-in-time delivery—these are things that architects are edging toward and that society deeply embraces—if not in all their consequences, then at least in principle as signs of a more liberated and fluid working life. A convergence of a changing economy and a changing profession has the potential to be almost utopian. On the other hand, entrepreneurialism and freelance work, equally central to this new economy, might be another word for precarity, hyper-individualism, competition, and the inability to identify as a class in need of common security. In short, the current push towards an entrepreneurial economy might just be neoliberalism’s dream child.

What we do know is that architects need new platforms to regroup and reorganize in order to have open conversations about these issues and realize their true worth in society. If we could persuade the AIA to be our proper advocates instead of selling contracts that prevent new practices and giving out self-congratulating prizes, that would be great. But that isn’t likely to happen. What a contemporary union for design workers looks like—one that understands that the work force is no longer made up of the manager/labor dichotomy; that doesn’t see a singular big “other” to be attacked but rather adjustments in the network of power; that doesn’t distinguish between blue and white collar but between the 1% and the rest of us—we are not sure. But we do know it needs to be supportive of the struggling firm owners who have not figured out how to argue their value to their clients; of their employees who have spent as many years getting a professional degree as lawyers but make two-thirds the money and are laden with debt; of the public that deserves more than our ample but insufficient aesthetic intelligence.

We want architects to be better paid—yes. But we want the better pay to come with a realization of our status and value as workers so that we respect ourselves and the value of our work better and in turn are better respected by society. And this because we want to be at the seat of power when a developer considers the pros and cons of building a fifty- or eighty-story building in a transitional neighborhood; when a
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mayor makes judgments about public housing; when a governor makes a decision about public access to waterfronts; when a president allocates money for sea-level rise. We deserve to be at these tables.


2 Frank Gehry has, since the first push of these organizations, indicated his stance against these practices. See Anna Fixsen, “What Is Frank Gehry Doing About Labor Conditions in Abu Dhabi?” Architectural Record 25 (September 2014).

Statistics taken from a recent Architecture Lobby survey taken by 236 architectural professionals.
Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture

ESSAY BY DENISE SCOTT BROWN

[Left] © George Pohl, courtesy of VSBA
Most professional women can recount horror stories about discrimination they have suffered during their careers. Mine include social trivia as well as grand trauma. But some less common forms of discrimination came my way when, in mid-career, I married a colleague and we joined our professional lives just as fame (though not fortune) hit him. I watched as he was manufactured into an architectural guru before my eyes and, to some extent, on the basis of our joint work and the work of our firm.

When Bob and I married, in 1967, I was an associate professor. I had taught at the universities of Pennsylvania and Berkeley, and had initiated the first program in the new school of architecture at UCLA. I had tenure. My publication record was respectable; my students, enthusiastic. My colleagues, mostly older than me, accorded me the same respect they showed each other, and I had walked the same corridors of power they had (or thought I had).

The first indication of my new status came when an architect whose work I had reviewed said, “We at the office think it was Bob writing, using your name.” By the time reviewed said, “We at the office think it was Bob writing, using your name.” By the time reviewed said, “We at the office think it was Bob writing, using your name.” By the time reviewed said, “We at the office think it was Bob writing, using your name.”

As nine were listed in the cover design. On the inside flap, however, “eight architects” and the “man behind” modern architecture were mentioned. As nine were listed in the front, I gather I am still left out.

There have been exceptions. Ada Louise Huxtable has never put a foot wrong with me. She also works hard at reporting our ideas correctly. A few critics have changed their methods of attribution in response to our requests, but at least one, in 1971, was on the warpath in the opposite direction, out to prove that Great Art can only be made by one man, and that Robert Venturi (read Howard Roark) is led astray when “he joins his wife Denise Scott Brown in praising certain suburban practices.”

And the consort and collaborator of a famous architect wrote to me that, although she sees herself in his work, the work owes its quality to his individual talents and not to her collaboration. When real architects collaborate, she claimed, their separate identities remain; she gave as an example the lieder of Schubert and Goethe. We countered with the Beatles.

The social trivia (what Africans call petty apartheid) continue too: “wives’ dinners” (“we’ll just let the architects meet together, my dear”); job interviews where the presence of “the architect’s wife” distressed the board; dinners I must not attend because an influential member of the client group wants “the architect” as her date; Italian journalists who ignore Bob’s request that they address me because “she’s not an architect too?” to Bob, and the well-meant “so you’re the architect!” to Bob, and the well-meant “so you’re an architect too?” to me. The head of a New York architecture school once reached me on the telephone.

To avoid misattributions, our office provides an information sheet describing our preferred forms of attribution—the work to our firm, the writing to the person who signed the article or the nook. The result is that some critics now make a pro forma attribution in an inconspicuous place; then, in the body of the text, the design of the work and the ideas in the writing are attributed to Robert Venturi.

In the Japanese journal Architecture and Urbanism, for example, Hideki Shimizu wrote:

A review of his plan for the Crosstown Community suggests that Venturi is not so much affording his theory new development as giving the source of his architectural approach clear form in a fundamental attitude toward city planning …

Venturi’s position in relation to city planning is the thing that enables him to develop his basic posture in relation to architecture. The Crosstown Community reveals a profound mood of affectionate emotion.

This would be fine except that the Crosstown Community was my work and was attributed as such in our book; I doubt whether, over a period of two years, Bob spent two afternoons on it.

When Praeger published a series of interviews with architects, my name was omitted from the dust jacket. We complained and Praeger added my name, although objecting that this would spoil the effect.

3 The architects originally listed were Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Bertrand Goldberg, Morris Lapidus, Louis Kahn, Charles Moore, and Robert Venturi. Also omitted from the dust jacket was the architect Alan Lapidus, interviewed with his father, Morris. Alan did not complain; at least he’s up there with those men behind the architecture.
because Bob was unavailable: “Denise, I’m embarrassed to be speaking to you because we’re giving a party for QP and we’re asking Bob but not you. You see, you are a friend of QP and you are an architect, but you’re also a wife, and we’re not asking wives.”

These experiences have caused me to fight, suffer doubt and confusion, and expend too much energy. “I would be pleased if my work were attributed to my husband,” says the designer wife of an architect. And a colleague asks, “Why do you worry about these things? We know you’re good. You know your real role in the office and in teaching. Isn’t that enough?” I doubt whether it would be enough for my male colleagues. What would Peter Eisenman do if his latest article were attributed to his co-editor, Kenneth Frampton? Or Vincent Scully, if the book on Newport houses were attributed to his co-author, Antoinette Downing—with perhaps a parenthesis to the effect that this was not intended to slight the contribution of others?

So I complain to the editor who refers to “Venturi’s ducks,” informing him that I invented the “duck.” (He prints my letter under the title “Less is a Bore,” a quotation from my husband). But my complaints make critics angry, and some have formed lasting hostilities against both of us on this score. Architects cannot afford hostile critics. And anyway I begin to dislike my own hostile persona.

That is when self-doubt and confusion arise. “My husband is a better designer than I am. And I’m a pretty dull thinker.” The first is true, the second probably not. I try to counter with further questions: “How come, then, we work so well together capping each other’s ideas in both design and theory? If my ideas are no good, why are they praised by the critics (even though attributed to Bob)?

We ourselves cannot tease our contributions apart. Since 1960 we have collaborated in the development of ideas and since 1967 we have collaborated in architectural practice. As chief designer, Bob takes final design responsibility. On some projects, I am closely involved and see many of my ideas in the final design; on others, hardly at all. In a few, the basic idea (what Louis Kahn called the “what”) was mine. All of our firm’s urban planning work, and the urban design related to it, is my responsibility; Bob is virtually not involved with it, although other architects in the firm are.’

As in all firms, our ideas are translated and added by our co-workers, particularly our long-standing associates. Principals and assistants may alternate in the roles of creator and critic. The star system, which sees the firm as a pyramid with a designer on top, has little to do with today’s complex relations in architecture and construction. But, as sexism defines me as a scribe, typist, and photographer to my husband, so the star system defines our associates as “second bananas” and our staff as pencils.

Short of sitting under our drawing board, there is no way for the critics to separate us out. Those who do hurt me in particular but also others in the firm, and by ignoring as unimportant those aspects

4 Bob’s intellectual focus comes mainly from the arts and from the history of architecture. He is more of a specialist than I am. My artistic and intellectual concerns were formed before I met Bob (and indeed before I came to America), but they were the base of our friendship as academic colleagues. As a planner, my professional span includes the social sciences and other planning-related disciplines that I have tried to meld into our critique and theory of architecture. As an architect, my interests range widely but I am probably most useful at the initial stages of a design as we work to develop the parti.
of our work where Bob has interfaced with others, they narrow his span to meet the limits of their perception.

Although I had been convinced with my role as a woman years before the rebirth of the movement, it was my experience as an architect’s wife that finally compelled me to act. In 1973 I gave a talk on sexism and the star system to the Alliance of Women in Architecture in New York City. I requested that the meeting be open to women only, from each other. Later, it struck me that shared woe and on the support we felt for everywhere. We were soon high on our “Me too!” “My God, you too?” echoed identified strongly with my experience; of the audience. The hundred or so women men came. They hid in the back and sides of our work where Bob has interfaced with stress separatism. Nevertheless, about six men came. They hid in the back and sides of the audience. The hundred or so women that make national movements initially stress separatism. Nevertheless, about six men came. They hid in the back and sides of our work where Bob has interfaced with others, they narrow his span to meet the limits of their perception.

Although I had been convinced with my role as a woman years before the rebirth of the movement, it was my experience as an architect’s wife that finally compelled me to act. In 1973 I gave a talk on sexism and the star system to the Alliance of Women in Architecture. I now receive inquiries of interest for deanships and department chairs several times a year. I find myself on committees where I am the only woman and there is one black man. We two tokens greet each other wryly. I am frequently invited to lecture at architecture schools, “to be a role model for our girls.” I am happy to do this for their young women but I would rather he asked purely because my work is interesting.

Finally, I essayed my own interpretation of sexism and the star system in architecture. A more conserving and nurturing architecture club still excludes women. The architectural prima donnas are men in Groups, he writes that men run in male packs and ambitious men in the name of social justice and to save the planet. Women may yet ride in on this trend.

The critic in architecture is often the scribe, historian, and kingmaker for a particular group. These activities entitle him to join the “few,” even though he pokes them a little. His other satisfaction comes from making history in his and their image. The kingmaker-critic is, of course, male; though he may write of others, they narrow his span to meet the limits of their perception.
In these deductions, my thinking parallels that of Cynthia F. Epstein, who writes that elevation within the professions is denied to women for reasons that include “the colleague system,” which she describes as a men’s club, and “the sponsor-protégé relationship, which determines access to the highest levels of most professions.” Epstein suggests that the high-level sponsor would, like the king-maker-critic, look foolish if he sponsored a female and, in any case, his wife would object.7

You would think that the last element of Schulberg’s definition of a star, “sexual promise,” would have nothing to do with architecture. But I wondered why there was a familiar ring to the tone—hostile, lugubriously self-righteous, yet somehow envious—of letters to the editor that follow anything our firm publishes, until I recognized it as the tone middle America employs in letters to the editor on pornography. Architects who write angry letters about our work apparently feel we are architectural panderers, or at least we permit ourselves liberties they would not take, but possibly envy. Here is one, by an English architecture instructor: “Venturi has a niche, all right, but it’s down there with the flagellant, the rubber-fetishist, and the Blagdon Nude Amateur Rapist.” These are written by men, and they are written to or of Bob alone.

I have suggested that the star system, which is unfair to many architects, is doubly hard on women in a sexist environment, and that, at the upper levels of the profession, the female architect who works with her husband will be submerged in his reputation. My interpretations are speculative. We have no sociology of architecture. Architects are unaccustomed to social analysis and mistrust it; sociologists have fatter fish to fry. But I do get support for my thesis from women architects, from some members of my firm and from my husband.

Should there be a star system? It is unavoidable, I think, owing to the prestige we give design in architecture. But the schools can and should reduce the importance of the star system by broadening the student’s view of the profession to show value in its other aspects. Heaven knows, skills other than design are important to the survival of architecture firms. The schools should also combat the student’s sense of inadequacy about design, rather than, as now, augmenting it through wrongly authoritarian and judgmental educational techniques. With these changes, architects would feel less need for gurus, and those they would need would be different—more responsible and humane than gurus are asked to be today.

To the extent that gurus are unavoidable and sexism is rampant in the architecture profession, my personal problem of submersion through the star system is insoluble. I could improve my chances for recognition as an individual if I returned to teaching or abandoned collaboration with my husband. The latter has happened to some extent as our office has grown and our individual responsibilities within it take more of our time. We certainly spend less time at the drawing board together and, in general, less time writing. But this is a pity, as our joint work feeds us both.

On the larger scene, all is not lost. Not all architects belong to the men’s club; more architects than before are women; some critics are learning; the American Institute of Architects (AIA) actively wants to help; and most architects, in theory at least, would rather not practice discrimination if someone will prove to them that they have been and will show them how to stop.

The foregoing is an abridgement of an article I wrote in 1975. I decided not to publish it at the time, because I judged that

Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture

MAS CONTEXT / 27 / DEBATE
During the 1980s there has been a gradual increase of women architects in academe (I suspect that the growth has been slower than in other professions). I now receive fewer offers of deanships, probably because there are more female candidates than before and because word is out that I am too busy to accept. I have little time to lecture. As our office has grown, Bob and I have found more, rather than less, opportunity to work together, since some of our responsibilities have been delegated to the senior associates and project directors who form the core of our firm.

Instead, the cult of personality increased. Architects lost their social concern and the architect as macho revolutionary was succeeded by the architect as dernier cri of the art world. This made things worse for women because, in architecture, the dernier cri is as male as the prima donna.

The rise in female admissions and the move to the right in architecture appear to be trends in opposite directions, but they are, in fact, unrelated because they occur at either end of the seniority spectrum. The women entrants are young; the cult of personality occurs at the top. The two trends have yet to meet. When they do, it will be fascinating to see what happens. Meanwhile, affirmative action programs have helped small female-owned firms get started but may have hindered the absorption of women into the mainstream of the profession, because women who integrate large existing practices gain no affirmative action standing unless they own 51 percent of the firm.

During this period we have ceased to be regarded as young turks and have seen a greater acceptance of our ideas than we would have dreamed possible. Ironically, a citation honoring Bob for his “discovery of the everyday American environment” was written in 1979 by the same critic who, in 1971, judged Bob lacking for sharing my interest in everyday landscape.

For a few years, writers on architecture were interested in sexism and the feminist movement and they wanted to discuss the movement with me. In a joint interview, they would ask Bob about work and question me about my “woman’s problem.” “Write about my work!” I would plead, but they seldom did.

Some young women in architecture question the need for the feminist movement, strong sentiments on feminism in the world of architecture would ensure my ideas a hostile reception, which could hurt my career and the prospects of my firm. However, I did share the manuscript with friends and, in samizdat, it achieved a following of sorts. Over the years I have received letters asking for copies.

In 1975, I recounted my first experience of the new surge of women in architecture. The ratio of men to women is now 1:1 in many schools. The talent and enthusiasm of these young women has burst creatively into the profession. At conferences today I find many women participants; some have ten years or more in the field.

Architecture, too, has changed since I first wrote this essay. However, my hope that architects would heed the social planners’ dicta did not pan out, and women did not ride in on that trend. Postmodernism did change the views of architects but not in the way I had hoped. For me, things are much the same at the top as they were. The discrimination continues at the rate of about one incident a day. Journalists who approach our firm seem to feel that they will not be worth their salt if they do not “deliver Venturi.” The battle for turf and the race for status among critics still require the beating-off of women. In the last twenty years, I can not recall one major article by a high-priest critic about a woman architect. Young women critics, as they enter the fray, become as macho as the men and for the same reasons—to survive and win in the competitive world of critics.

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claiming to have experienced no discrimination. My concern is that, although school is not free of discrimination, it is probably the least discriminatory environment they will encounter in their careers. By the same token, the early years in practice bring little differentiation between men and women. It is as they advance that difficulties arise, when firms and clients shy away from entrusting high-level responsibility to women. On seeing their male colleagues draw out in front of them, women who lack a feminist awareness are likely to feel that their failure to achieve is their own fault.

Over the years, it has slowly dawned on me that the people who cause my painful experiences are ignorant and crude. They are the critics who have not read enough and the clients who do not know why they have come to us. I have been helped to realize this by noticing that the scholars whose work we most respect, the clients whose projects intrigue us, and the patrons whose friendship inspires us, have no problem understanding my role. They are the sophisticated. Partly through them I gain heart and realize that, over the last twenty years, I have managed to do my work and, despite some sliding, to achieve my own self-respect.
I first read Denise Scott Brown’s “Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture” as an undergraduate at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, not long after the essay was published. Although far removed from the scene of the discussion, we had been well educated in the conjunctions of feminism and architecture and in dismantling the canon. We were excited and invigorated. Feminist theory was “cool.” It informed our student work and opened up new ways of seeing the world and imaging the parts we might play in it.

So, my colleagues and I were a receptive audience for the essay. And yet, with the bravura of youth, the world described also seemed far away—and not just in terms of geography and status. Surely this wouldn’t happen to us? Surely people like Scott Brown, and less famous women closer to home, had fought these battles well? Surely we would be the beneficiaries? Surely our road would be less difficult? (And this despite the fact that Scott Brown draws the essay to a close with a clear description of how difficulties increase as women’s careers advance.)

A quarter of a century on, I speak frequently to students about our recent research into women in architecture. I show them statistics that chart the disappearance of women from the profession. I quote women and men on the frustrations and challenges that greet them in the workplace, and as they progress through it. I urge them to understand the structural issues and to be strategic about navigating them. I quote Scott Brown herself from a 2012 interview, “I say to young women today, don’t cast out your feminist awareness: when the glass ceiling hits you, you will think it is your fault, unless you know a bit about feminism, and it will destroy you.”

These students are also interested and engaged, and yet many feel the way I did all those years ago—that “women in architecture” is a cause mostly pursued by slightly batty older women. “I am smart and talented and I work hard,” they think, “it won’t happen to me.” This is one of the ongoing challenges. How do we equip clever, enthusiastic young women and men with the skills and insight they need both to navigate the profession, and to change it? As Scott Brown so eloquently articulates, the system is deeply entrenched. We are playing a long game here—one that stretches back far into the past, and one which will be active well after we have handed the baton on.
Of course a lot has also changed since 1975, when Scott Brown penned the first part of the essay, and 1989 when she published it accompanied by further reflections. There are many more women in the profession and we have all benefitted greatly from the campaigning of Scott Brown and her colleagues all over the world. And yet, here we are in the midst of another international wave of interest in women in architecture. A wave driven, in part, by my generation’s realization that, regardless of our youthful enthusiasm, all did not workout so easily. Despite women graduating in almost equal proportions for over two decades, there are still very few women at the top.

And, as Karen Burns so astutely observes, the feminist theory, design work, and experimentation that inspired us in the late 80s and early 90s is now being sidelined as the theory anthologies are compiled and histories rewritten. (A process that echoes Scott Brown’s own experiences in the hands of the kingmaker-critics.)

Sexism is still with us. The international star system, is still with us, still bizarrely beholden to the idea of the singular genius (despite the dismantling of the idea of the “author” half a century ago, despite Christine Battersby’s Gender and Genius, also published in 1989, despite Scott Brown). The architectural prima donnas are (mostly) still all male. The star system is still, as Scott Brown points out, based in class as well as gender and other distinctions. This is fed by an endless stream of underpaid or unpaid labour; young architects who are spat out the other end, exhausted but carrying the prize of having worked for a “star”—and some will manage to use this to underwrite their own career rise. This is exclusionary in multiple ways—only those who can afford to work for nothing can access this rather slippery route to the top. The profession is narrowing at a time when it needs to be opening to change and possibility.

One of the most striking things about rereading Scott’s Browns account is the familiarity of the themes—the desire to be known for the quality of one’s work, rather than the fact of one’s gender; the misattribution of work and the inability of some to recognize collaboration as a core part of architecture; the “social trivia”; the self doubt that creeps up in the wake of sexism; the discomfort of being the person always calling out the problems; the hostility of those challenged; the camaraderie and optimism for the future that comes from talking about these matters in “safe” environments. These correspond to issues raised in survey of women (and men) we conducted in Australia in 2012, and the events we have run as part of the project.

Another intensely familiar aspect is the sheer relentlessness of it all. Scott Brown writes:

“For me, things are much the same at the top as they were. The discrimination continues at the rate of about one instance per day.” This ongoing accumulation of indignities, large and small, is a widely shared experience. It is a significant part of the story of many women’s careers and impacts on their progression—as psychologist Virginia Valian points out, “success is largely the accumulation of advantage, the parlaying of small gains into larger ones.”

This is also one of the reasons many women leave, or consider leaving, the profession. Regardless of their commitment and the pleasures of architecture, for many there comes a time when it simply isn’t worth it any more. This reminds us that the star system doesn’t only affect those at the top. It reflects embedded attitudes and structures that impact on everyone in the profession to some extent.

So, what of the women of the middle? Recent research has shifted emphasis to investigating architectural workplaces and work cultures (as well as representation and public culture)—this means we now know more about these women. In 1989 Scott Brown observed, “We have no sociology of architecture.” This is slowly changing. A couple of years later, in 1991, Dana Cuff published Architecture: The Story of Practice. Our own research project includes a similar “ethnographic” approach—Gill Matthewson has spent time “embedded” in three large Sydney practices, observing and interviewing the women and men who worked there. Her PhD, recently awarded, contains a wealth of material.
Women in Australian Architecture

2012
Compilation and analysis of statistics led by Gill Matthewson.

Teachers
- 36% All Salaried Teaching Staff
- 50% Lecturer
- 38% Senior Lecturer
- 25% Associate Professor
- 12% Professor

Students
- 44% All Students
- 45% First Year Student
- 44% Graduate

Registered Architects
- 34% Admissions to Registers
- 21% AACA Register

Australian Institute of Architects Members
- 28% All Members
- 47% Student Members
- 39% Graduate Members
- 42% Affiliate Members
- 20% Registered Members
- 9% Fellow Members
- 4% National President Members
- 37% Not In Practice
- 34% Employee
- 21% Sole Practitioner
- 14% Partner
- 11% Director

Census Data
- 28% Architects
- 34% Employee
- 24% Owner Small Business
- 13% Owner Large Business

% Women
Relative % Men

Sexism Is Still With Us

MAS CONTEXT / 27 / DEBATE

Sexism Is Still With Us

MAS CONTEXT / 27 / DEBATE
This focus is important because it allows us to explore the gap between training and opportunity (to use Karen Burns’ phrase), and the mechanisms through which both advantage and disadvantage accrue. It also allows us to deploy insights from broader studies of the workplace. One of the most important is the idea of “unconscious bias.” This is based in the work of Valian who shows that we all (men and women) tend to underestimate the abilities of women and overestimate those of men. Gill explains the impact of this in the architectural workplace: “Because of gender bias, it is more difficult for women to demonstrate competence in a workplace, particularly when they are few in number. Women tend to be judged on their accomplishments, men on their potential.” The effects of this are often hidden—Gill points out that gender “most often interacts with the complicated economic, political, and social imperatives that control much of the work of the architecture profession. As such, bias due to gender is able to be obscured, and then dismissed as not existing.”

There is also a now well-established “business case” for gender equity, which goes something like this—a more diverse workforce, especially at senior levels, delivers better outcomes for multiple reasons. Diverse voices lead to more creative approaches to problem solving, more robust overall decisions, and better economic performance. A diverse, inclusive culture helps avoid “groupthink,” and brings significant gains in retaining staff and reducing “churn.” These findings are relevant to architecture—creative problem solving and better overall decisions are obvious assets in architectural practice—but they are also relevant to the wider profession. The attrition of highly educated and skilled architects who happen to be women diminishes architecture’s potential for change and renewal. If the profession is to adapt effectively to new environments we need more people who think in diverse ways, not fewer. As British architect Sarah Wigglesworth comments, “Architecture is too important to be left to men alone.”

So where does this leave us? One of the many outcomes of our research project are the Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice, which provide practical, productive strategies to help the profession move towards more equitable work practices, and thereby a more robust and inclusive profession. There are eleven guides. Each outlines a particular issue, why it matters and what “we” might do about it. This last section is addressed to multiple audiences—individual employee architects, employer practices, and institutional and professional bodies. The guides recognize that different parts of the profession have different types of agency—and propose that we all have a part to play in facilitating change. Many of the recommendations are about putting transparent procedures in place to ensure that systems and processes are equitable and recognize ability and effort rather being based in perception and bias, unconscious or otherwise.

The guides are part of a broader advocacy project, run through the online platform Parlour: women, equity, architecture. In setting up Parlour we became activists and advocates as well as researchers and scholars. We realized that to seed change in the profession we needed to mobilize the community and create a demand for action. The site has generated remarkable interest and now has many participants from all over the world. It has benefitted particularly from the online environment, which brings heightened opportunities to build “communities of interest” that cross generations and geographic boundaries.

This brings me to Scott Brown’s own essay ending. She conveys enormous dignity in the face of relentless sexism—a dignity maintained over many years. But, importantly, she also reminds us that there is more than one system—we all also have colleagues, clients, and friends who are respectful and respected. These are alternative networks and they are flourishing in the world of online and social media. We must cultivate these old and new allegiances and alliances so that together we can build the profession we want and need.

As this issue went to press, the Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) voted to award the 2016 AIA Gold Medal to Denise Scott Brown, Hon. FAIA, and Robert Venturi, FAIA. Congratulations to both of them on a much-deserved recognition of the lasting impact of their work in the field of Architecture.
Pay Equity

Equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in Australian law since 1969. Despite this—and despite the best intentions of many—gender-based pay gaps still occur in architecture, as in most industries. Pay inequity is complex and needs to be tackled by everyone practices, employees and the profession as a whole.

Long Hours

Long working hours are a huge issue in architecture. A culture of long hours is damaging to individual architects, to businesses, to the architect’s professional standing and to the viability of the profession. It has major negative effects on those with commitments outside the workplace, and impacts particularly severely on women’s careers.

Although there are surprisingly few resources available and the issue can seem inevitable and intractable, there are also good examples of practices that don’t fall into this pattern.
Part-Time Work

Meaningful part-time work in architecture is essential to workplace equity. It allows employees to balance life and work demands—to be challenged and fulfilled at work, while also devoting adequate time and energy to family life or external activities.

It also ensures practices retain key talent, experience and professional knowledge. If the industry is to achieve true gender equity, serious part-time work needs to be a more available and acceptable career option for everyone.

Flexibility

Flexible work practices are becoming increasingly common in architecture. Some architects already enjoy the benefits of flexible schedules or working from home.

In architecture the challenge is less to encourage the adoption of flexible work patterns, and more to overcome their often-unspoken career costs. For example, returning to part-time work after parental leave is often considered a career killer, and this inevitably impacts disproportionately on women.
Recruitment

Equitable recruitment is an important place to start building an equitable practice and profession. Recruitment processes in architectural practices range from very casual to tightly managed.

Whatever the process used, recruitment needs to be done well to ensure that the practice attracts and keeps the best people, and that all applicants have equal opportunity. Satisfied employees, high levels of performance and competitive strength are just some of the rewards for practices that handle recruitment well.

Career Progression

There is more than one career model and different models suit different people and life stages. Research indicates that women are more likely to have complex “non-standard” careers and to experience delayed career progression.

A richer understanding of career paths and models can enhance engagement in the profession for many architects. This has specific potential for improving the career prospects of women in architecture, but it has benefit for all.
Negotiation

A richer understanding of career paths and models can enhance engagement in the profession for many architects. This has specific potential for improving the career prospects of women in architecture, but it has benefit for all.

Negotiation is overlaid with many myths about gender—“women don’t ask,” “women don’t like talking about money,” “women aren’t good at negotiation” and so on. These myths can be traps for all involved but tools are available to navigate them effectively, and to change them.

Career Break

Career breaks are common in architecture and many people take one or more breaks over the course of their career.

The unfortunate fact is that while taking time of to travel is usually seen as career advancing, taking a break to care for children is often seen and experienced as a career killer. This disproportionately affects women, who still carry the majority of child-rearing responsibilities. As a profession, architecture could be more conscious to curb unreflective judgments on what constitutes a useful career break.
Leadership

We need the best people to lead the profession (women and men) at both practice and industry levels. Women are significantly underrepresented at the senior levels of architectural practices and in leadership roles in the profession.

Yet substantial research shows that companies and organisations with diverse leadership groups consistently outperform those without. The ethical and business cases for gender-diverse leadership are abundantly clear – architecture needs to catch up.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a critical tool for retaining women in architecture, developing their careers and assisting women returning to work after career breaks. Mentoring relationships can be useful and inspirational.

They deliver valuable learning experiences and diverse support and advice to the mentee. They also provide value for the mentor who shares experience and skills and gains insight into the concerns and experiences of younger architects.
Only 21% of registered architects are women. This is despite women having comprised approximately 40% of architecture graduates in Australia for three decades.

Although there are mixed opinions about whether registration matters or not, it is an important indicator of professional participation and representation. Encouraging, supporting and mentoring those women who choose to register is a symbolic and practical contribution to gender equity in the profession.
One of the first hurdles encountered by the design historian, or for that matter anyone who writes about design, is the question of authorship. Not the elevated kind that has been so heatedly debated over recent decades—the auteurist notion of the graphic designer as author—but the more prosaic question of who did what, and its emotive corollary, who gets the credit for what.

It’s a question not confined to graphic design—it extends to all aspects of creative endeavor. Famous artists have assistants: Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst have armies of helpers. Do we know who they are? Do their employers publicly acknowledge their contributions? Does it even matter?

Over the past few years I’ve written three graphic design monographs. In each the question of personal attribution was a recurring theme. Work that was widely and formally credited to one of my subjects was found, on closer inspection, to have been done by others, invariably studio personnel. Or if not done entirely by others, it was work that was at least contributed to by others, often to a substantial degree. Yet these same works appear in books and magazines credited to a single designer.

The problem of correct—and equitable— attribution is a perennial consideration when assessing any designer’s work. In truth, it is really a question of what is authorship in the context of graphic design itself. And since graphic design, at least at its more advanced levels, is a collaborative process, the notion of individual authorship is increasingly slippery. However, this doesn’t stop designers craving credit for work they have made, or feeling denigrated when they are either not credited for their efforts, or worse still, see the credit go to someone else.

Yet it’s unrealistic to think of today’s complex graphic design outcomes emerging from a single pair of hands attached to a single brain. Even a designer working on his or her own is likely to use...
typefaces designed by others. And just as progressive social historians encourage a view of history that is not exclusively focused on the activities of monarchs or the machinations of the powerful, but rather one that acknowledges that history is also made by ordinary people, so we should be wary of viewing design as the work of single figures.

The problem of attribution is somewhat alleviated by the use of a studio name. The logo that bears the name of a studio, or studio-owning designer, might in truth be the work of an employee—a junior even. Yet how realistic is it to expect a junior designer to be credited as the author? The commercial argument in favor of only citing the studio—or studio head—as the “author” is persuasive. How else do clients know whom to contact with offers of work?

But this argument ignores the ethical requirement of acknowledging the contributions of others, and more importantly, it flies in the face of one of the fundamental reasons why people choose to become graphic designers in the first place: the allure of authorship. No author in any field—high or low—likes to go unacknowledged for his or her work; anonymity is the enemy of creative endeavor.

When I owned a studio, I allowed designers (wherever possible) to have personal design credits. This worked well for the individuals concerned, and as their names were always combined with the studio name, there was no barrier to anyone who wanted to get in touch with us.

The weakness of the system was that it failed to include the contributions of others such as production people and junior assistants. The designers who got their names into print were undoubtedly the principal authors, but they were rarely if ever the sole authors. It’s a practice I wouldn’t implement today.

Paradoxically, the subjects of my three monographs stand out as exemplars of fairness and generosity in the matter of equitable attribution. All three men (Herb Lubalin, FHK Henrion, and Ken Garland) were generous in acknowledging the effort of others. Only in Lubalin’s case did I find a residual bitterness among some of his collaborators—grossly unjustified in my opinion. Ken Garland, the only living member of the trio, is vigorous in his desire to acknowledge the contribution of his associates. And in the Henrion archives I found numerous examples of public recognition of his collaborators.

Authorship will always be a contentious issue wherever creative work is produced. The new era of co-design, user-generated design, human centric design, and sharing economies, means that we must all learn to deal with anonymity. I was going to post this text anonymously. But I decided against it.

This essay was first published on Design Observer, www.designobserver.com
Although designers aim to work toward the betterment of society, it is and has been easy for them to overstep, indulge in temptation, succumb to the dark side of a moral dilemma, or simply err. Excerpt from Design and Violence at MoMA
Design and Violence is an online curatorial project and book co-organized by Paola Antonelli, senior curator at the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA, and Jamer Hunt, director of the graduate program in Transdisciplinary Design at Parsons. Launched in the fall of 2013, the project is a platform that aims to raise our awareness of the violence of design in the world through a series of design objects, projects, and concepts that, as the curators describe them, “have an ambiguous relationship with violence, either masking it while at the same time enabling it.” These objects become the prompt to spark debates between invited critical thinkers from different disciplines and readers across the world. Controversial and sometimes heated, these debates become important forums to discuss and challenge our understanding of the complex relationship between design, violence, and life after 2011.

Paola Antonelli talks to Zoë Ryan, John H. Bryan Chair and Curator of Architecture and Design at the Department of Architecture and Design at the Art Institute of Chicago, about the ambitions of the project, the debates it has generated, the possibilities of each curatorial medium, and defining the role of museums within society.

Zoe Ryan: I think that Design and Violence was quite ground-breaking in a museum context. How did the project come about?

Paola Antonelli: I’m not going to be falsely modest but I believe that many groundbreaking things happen without any intention to make them groundbreaking. In this particular case, there was really no dream of grandeur of any kind. Things simply happened. I remember reading the announcement about the 3D-printed gun, and my reaction was one of surprise. I was stunned at first, and shortly thereafter stunned about the naiveté of my first reaction. I started thinking I really had to revise completely the way I approached design. Because, you know very well, I have been preaching for years that designers take a Hippocratic Oath, that designers always work for the betterment of society and the world. Then and there, I thought, “Wait a second. It’s not true.” Number one, whether they are complicit or not, the things they design can also be used for malicious purposes. Number two, the shades between good and evil are so many, there’s no way that I could be so drastic and ideological and Pollyanna-ish about design. I started thinking about it that way. Then I heard about a new book by Steven Pinker called The Better Angels of Our Nature. In that book Pinker argues that our
society is becoming less violent. When you think about it, however, it doesn’t really feel like our society is becoming less violent. Of course, fewer people, at least in the Western world, are likely to take a lupara or a machete and open your head. Nonetheless, it doesn’t feel like it’s all so much better. I thought that maybe it’s the idea of violence that has changed. So I started thinking of an exhibition that looked at the manifestations of violence in contemporary society using design objects that have an ambiguous relationship with violence as a lens.

I always like to work with other colleagues and I especially love working with Jamer Hunt, because we complement each other really well. As usual, I gathered many objects apparently completely at random, bookmarked fifteen hundred ones on Evernote, in Safari, on Pinterest... they were all there, in a gigantic cloud. In ten minutes, Jamer had made a diagram. He formed four quadrants, separated by two axis ranging from “individual” to “mass,” and from “fictional” to “real,” and he organized the objects in them. All of a sudden, it was just amazingly clear. So that’s why it’s so great to work with somebody like Jamer.

We presented the show to the exhibitions committee of MoMA and it was rejected as a show. That happens often, you get rejections and sometimes you just shelve the idea. In a few years, maybe somebody else in another museum has the same idea and you don’t pick it up anymore. Other times, it’s not so easy. That was the case of Design and Violence, it really felt that it was an urgent idea. Jamer and I just said, “Okay, no MoMA exhibition—so let’s see what we can do.” We decided to make it happen without asking anybody’s permission and without any money. We just started a Wordpress site. We asked Kate [Carmody, curatorial assistant at the museum], “would you mind working on this together with us after hours, even if it’s not officially part of your MoMA duties?” She accepted. Then we hired a research assistant from Parsons that Jamer could pay. We organized a schedule, and we started out calling in favors.

The idea—the website for Design and Violence—was to publish every week a different object. Write a little curatorial introduction, with museum-style label information and a factual description of the object. That would be followed by a short essay by a person that had an expertise...
or knowledge or involvement in this object and/or in the idea and type of violence it represented. At the end of the essay, we would ask a question and let the readers answer and comment. I was against the commenting part. That was really Jamer’s push, but then it was very successful and it really became one of the ways to distinguish this project from any exhibition. In an exhibition, we would have never been able to have that feedback from the audience.

The questions were provocative in some cases, and they really started full-fledged big debates. This was particularly the case with two objects. One is a speculative, critical design project by Michiko Nitta and Michael Burton, *The Republic of Salivation.* The second project was the redesign of the slaughterhouse, the Serpentine Ramp by Temple Grandin. The project by Temple Grandin generated a hundred plus comments, and in the case of *The Republic of Salivation* it informed actual symposia about critical design.

At some point Kate left the museum and Michelle Fisher became part of the program. MoMA saw that it was good so they embraced it within the MoMA website, and then published the book.

**ZR:** When you started the project, what did you hope to achieve?

**PA:** I did not have a precise goal. It used to be that exhibitions had a hypothesis and a thesis, and you tried to prove the thesis. In this particular case, the goal was to increase my own and the public’s awareness of the violence of design in the world. Also, too, it was to stimulate the public’s understanding of design as a way to better understand our own predicament as citizens and as parts of society. It was open-ended. As usual, my big problem with these shows that we call groundbreaking is that there are no pre-established metrics for success. It’s not how many readers but rather what kind of readers, what kind of comments, what it stirs, and what it makes happen.

What we knew is that we wanted this website to be a platform. A platform for discussion and also maybe a platform for exhibitions. It’s interesting because I told you that there were a few symposia that happened because of that post about *The Republic of Salivation.* We were not involved in them. We also organized live, Oxford-style debates. We had four exceptionally good debates. They are on the website if you want to see them. The last one was with Larry Lessig and Gabriella Coleman and it was about the tools to keep the Internet truly open and free.

Moreover, the Science Gallery in Dublin is going to do an exhibition next year based on the project. We’re going to collaborate by supervising it, but I trust them completely because they’re very good. It’s the ideal collaboration. I’m just hoping that it will be something that will percolate discussions and new projects.

**ZR:** Can you explain how those debates framed the conversation, how you went from debates offline to online?

**PA:** The format of the Oxford-style debate is great, and I didn’t know it before I met Yana Peel. She’s the CEO of Intelligence Squared. Of course, I knew that debates existed and I knew that there’s a whole tradition of teaching debate in schools, but I’ve never really considered the format for public programs about design. We tried it, and the first one was so good because we realized that it’s important to have really good and engaged speakers. We always had an object as a prompt and, in that case, it was the 3D-printed gun.

The motion—it’s important to have a well-designed motion—was not about gun control but rather about open source. The motion was, “We cannot limit open source design, even when we do not support the consequences.” Arguing for the motion was Cody Wilson, the designer of the 3D-printed gun, and arguing against the motion was Rob Walker. It was wonderful because the two speakers were really amazing. Cody can create a wall of words, of philosophical and ideological statements and, unless you’re skeptical and strong, you’re going to be fogged out. Rob was incredible because he was so subtle that Cody was not confronted with a real rival but rather with somebody that was about to insert himself like a virus into his system. It was fantastic.

The audience votes at the beginning and at the end of the debate. And the winner is not the one that has more hand votes but rather the one that’s been able to sway the opinion the most. In that case, it was Rob who changed people’s minds. The last debate was similarly excellent. It was Gabriella Coleman vs. Larry Lessig. Gabriella Coleman and Larry Lessig are both for a free Internet. The difference is that Gabriella—the foremost expert on Anonymous—thinks that the only way to get to a really free Internet is...
civil disobedience and hacking. Larry Lessig, on the other hand, thinks that we have a government, however weak and defective, and the first thing that we have to do is to legislate in the right direction.

It was fantastic because the debate focused on the tools not on the goals. The motion was “Internet freedom and digital privacy will come about only through the design of better tools for civil disobedience and direct action.” That’s the secret. What I have discovered with Design and Violence is that ambivalence and ambiguity are more instructive than excessively clear-cut positions. Granted, there are some objects that are benign, and can never be turned malignant, but very few. There’s many ways to frame and contextualize design.

ZR: What surprised you? Was there anything that became controversial or spurred dialogue or discussion in a way that you could never have expected?

PA: We talked about really, really serious matters. We talked about euthanasia. We talked about torture. The last post was about the death penalty. What surprised us was that there were many more comments when we tackled the killing of animals than when we discussed killing human beings. It was interesting to see what sparked the conversation and what didn’t. It was not necessarily what you would expect. I was surprised by the level of the conversation, and how good it was, and how well the project was received, and by how generous the writers were. Because we had big, busy people. A few well-respected and well-known people said yes at the beginning—for instance William Gibson, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Steven Pinker, Arianna Huffington—and they created this safe ground for other people to accept and write.

I was also surprised by the diversity of people that we were able to attract. For the female genital mutilation post—prompted by a series of posters for Amnesty International—we had Angélique Kidjo, a famous singer and activist from Benin. For the post on the AK-47 we had China Keitetsi, a former child soldier from Uganda and the founder of The African Child Soldiers and War Victims Charity. They were just amazing testimonials. For the Flexicuffs—the plastic handcuffs—we had Judge Shira Scheindlin, who is the judge that declared Stop and Frisk unconstitutional in New York two years ago.
The project really made us proud. Sometimes people would say, “Are we talking about design? This is not design.” Of course it is. The prompt was always a design object.

ZR: The topics are very challenging and often not the sort of conversations discussed head-on in museums. How did MoMA react? Was the project monitored by the institution or were you able to keep the conversations as open as possible?

PA: The institution would have never intervened. In my twenty-one years at the MoMA I’ve never had an episode of censorship or control during the process. There was only one instance—in 2004, when I was installing the exhibition SAFE: Design Takes On Risk—that the director of MoMA asked me to think twice about showing a poster that featured the images of dozens of different recreational drug use. He said, “I wouldn’t want people to think that we’re endorsing drugs.” I said, “No. Actually, this is for kids to be able to recognize what people are giving them and know what the effects will be, so they don’t drop down dehydrated because of ecstasy, for instance.” He said, “Oh okay. I understand,” and I showed the poster. That was the only time I got a question. Of course then there are exhibitions that get rejected all together, but that happens for very different reasons.

I think we moderated out maybe one comment during the whole process. I think that, when you present people with a serious project that shows deep thought and good intentions, people respect it. Unless it is something that is polarizing, that gets into a political arena, and that is already heated. The most heated debate was around the Serpentine Ramp because the writer was Ingrid Newkirk, who’s the president of PETA. She argued that it was a good thing, so the vegans went berserk. The question at the end was, “Can we redesign a violent act to be more humane?” In my opinion, it was the most heated topic. Because it was almost like talking about abortion, having all sides of the barricade present. It really became an ideology, an idealism, and a religious issue.

ZR: You’ve created websites for other exhibitions such as Design and the Elastic Mind, and SAFE and thought about the type of information people can access online versus offline in the physical space of the gallery. You don’t really refer to Design and Violence as an online exhibition. How do you describe the project in terms of fostering the same dialog and debate?

PA: I always call it an online curatorial project or curatorial experiment. At the beginning, we were saying experiment. Now it seems a little cute to keep on saying “experiment,” so we say project.

I’ve been trying to have online presence for exhibitions since the beginning, but I also realize how much that presence has changed. For instance, in the first website for Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design, in 1995, my ambition was to put the checklist online because I always saw the Internet as more permanent and more open that any catalog. I wanted the exhibition to have a life and afterlife.

Then came the site exhibition about Dutch design in 1996, Castiglioni in 1997, Ingo Maurer and the Campana brothers in 1998, and so on. With every show, there was a checklist and a documentation for the future. The first changes probably happened with Workspheres in 2001, and SAFE in 2003. I started thinking about the website as one more means of expression of the exhibition, a universe where there were different laws of space.

I always thought of three different locations for each exhibition. The physical space of the gallery is subjected...
to circulation and the force of gravity—people can only move this way or the other. You can change walls around, but you’re constricted by the space. The book, the second location, is even more constricting because it’s sequential. I always felt that the website was the opportunity to add another dimension. I always saw it as one more means of expression. Often I featured more objects on the websites than I had in the physical exhibition, and that culminated with Design and Elastic Mind, which was a full-fledged work of design by a great designer, Yugo Nakamura. It was a completely different experience that took as much advantage as possible of the medium.

I changed my approach again after that. Once upon a time you would go to a homepage, and you would enter a website as if it were a palace, through the main gate. Lately instead we tend to be linked to individual pages and individual pictures, through social media. It’s not a palace anymore. Now it’s almost as if you are entering many rooms directly from the street. It’s changed again. For the Talk to Me show in 2011, we published a blog leading up to the exhibition. We started a year and half before, and we documented everything that we were looking at. We would let people know what we chose for the exhibition and what we were thinking about for the installation design. We also started publishing little bios of all the people involved in the exhibition. We wanted people to know what a conservator does and so on and so forth. It was more of a chronicle.

In the case of Design and Violence, it was none of the above. If previous websites were places, this was a platform. We talk more and more about platforms online. That was really the idea, but I don’t like it when people say online exhibition. Because it presumes being tethered to the old physical world, and there are possibilities in the digital space that are sometimes better, sometimes worse, but no matter what, different. I think we should really inhabit a different space instead of trying to mimic the old one.

ZR: Why did you decide to produce a catalog in the end? It almost seems an antithesis to this open-ended, ongoing platform, to then become sealed in a volume.

PA: I can’t remember anymore why. Maybe we wanted a real commitment from MoMA. It was almost like saying, “All right, put a ring on it.” I just know that we started thinking that it would be great, maybe because it was one more means of communication. There are ways a book still drives the point better for some people. I would say that it was more of a commitment and statement.

ZR: Many museums are currently trying to broaden their audiences and are trying to encourage a more diversified range of visitors to their projects in the galleries and online. Do you think that this project has engaged a different audience or broader audience? How do you think it has helped you in terms of your mission with encouraging a further understanding of the important role that design plays in the world?

PA: Just in quantitative terms, there were more visitors to this website than there would be to an exhibition, and that is great. I’m sure that many of them were from far away. Websites help people from all over the world to get to know the museum, a very particular part of the museum. I’m sure that most politicians and citizens don’t necessarily think of museums and art in this way, and with this project they got acquainted with a different aspect of a museum. I don’t even know if this audience was diversified enough, though. I’m still afraid that it’s going to be the usual museum visitors. For sure more people from the non-Western world, but I’m still not sure that it’s diversified enough.

For museums to really change the way they’re perceived within society and for them to really reach outside of their normal audience, this is just one small brick. It takes a whole construction crew. It’s a brick in the right direction for sure, but I don’t think it has resolved the situation.

ZR: Do you think you would do it again? Do you have plans for any other online projects?

PA: Why not? It all depends on the project itself. There are projects that lend themselves to different types of narratives. There are some projects that are meant to be for a gallery. Others could be books. Others, documentaries. This was great to have on a website because it’s almost like a novel, by episodes, by chapters, and I like that. I’m not really good at doing a big thing all at once and instead I like this evolution. The next exhibition will definitely have an online component leading up to it, but I don’t know yet what it will be.
For the past four years, participants in the School of Visual Arts Summer Design Writing and Research Intensive in New York have used Twitter to document, research, and critique the city. The social media platform acts as a productive constraint, distilling individual observations and narratives into a public, digital text.

The central concerns of #platform project are collectivity and criticism. Or, what is the future of criticism in an era when critique can be reduced to 140 characters a tweet? Participants answer the question over two weeks each summer. Every tweet is an act of collective criticism, a critical mode that uses leverages the social web for discussion of architecture, urbanism, and design. Collective criticism operates on, across, and between social platforms. It is made up of individuals, but takes its power from responsive dialogue, not autonomous authorship. Collective criticism opens up the possibility of many criticisms, rather than a singular dominant discourse.

Participants produced hundreds and hundreds of tweets, which were collectively edited into a single publication designed by Neil Donnelly—a handbill, a web-based billboard-sized projection, a broadsheet, and wall labels—to be redistributed back onto the urban realm. By physicalizing the tweets #platform reinforces criticism's immediacy and impact.

#platform is both a means of production and a place to take a stand.

#platform project is a collaborative publication and act of collective criticism.

#platform's physical documents navigate back into the city, lingering as messages.

#platform project is both a means of production and a place to take a stand.

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Project by
Mimi Zeiger and Neil Donnelly
Participants spent two weeks tweeting design criticism and observations on the urban environment. After choosing selections of this writing, each tweet took the form of a small flyer, ready to be dispersed back into the city. The design of these flyers was determined by factors such as structure (paper color), theme (typeface), and time of day (black type or background), allowing a limited set of variables to recombine. The flyers could also be bound in any order with a stapler at the Intensive’s closing party, letting participants build another narrative of the Intensive.
It's the kind of neighborhood that reinforces the things people want to believe about themselves, whether or not they are true.

The 2013 edition of #platform was conceived as an alternative digital platform to power a display seen from the street. A website pulls participants' tweets randomly from an edited set, changing colors depending on the content. Projecting the site onto the windows of the D-Crit studio at night allows passers-by to read comments on design and the city, subtitling a journey across 21st Street.
the voice of these streets is changing. a rich, captivating melody has become a mournful, heavy-hearted tune

domino platform

Participants spent two weeks writing criticism (and publishing via Twitter) about four contested sites in New York: MoMA/ Folk Art Museum, Penn Station/Madison Square Garden, the Domino Sugar Factory, and the New York State Pavilion. The assignment culminated in an edited collection of tweets, returned to the physical world in the form of newsprint posters and a call-and-response performance.
When the story told by the exterior doesn’t match, is a wrong place or a wrong content? #platform @smithsonian

In response to the theme of how museums and galleries engage with the public, this year’s #platform took the form of wall labels. In contrast to the label’s typical function of being subservient to the art it describes, the label itself was the only content of this mini-exhibition, along with stickers designating the themes used to organize the edited set of tweets. Sets of labels were also distributed at the closing party, implicitly suggesting that they be released into the wilds of NYC, and perhaps the art spaces that prompted the commentary in the first place.
PARTICIPANTS

@DCrit - Design Criticism / @loudpaper - Mimi Zeiger / Neil Donnelly

2012
@adrianmadiener - Adrian Madiener / @AliBrownHejazi - Alexandrea Brown-Hejazi / @gibbsriley - Brandy Gibbs-Riley / @carollinetiger - Caroline Tiger / @chasetimes - Chase Stone / @danielraycole - Daniel Cole
@EmmadeCrespigny - Emma de Crespigny / @IRENECHIN - Irene Chin / @JenJoyRoybal - Jen Joy Roybal
@Kathievonankum - Kathie Von Ankum / @kelissima - Kelly Murdoch-Kitt / @laureneleoboyhm - Laurene Leon Boyhm / @lineUlrika - Line Ulrika Christiansen / @meegan_marin - Megan Marin / @merritt_susan - Susan / @murruyebernard - Murrye Bernard / @nicoleokeay - Nicole Lavelle / @petite_crevette - Lauren Palmer / @WideOpenAir - Garreth Blackwell

2013
@amerycal - Amery Calvelli / @AnneMiltenburg - Anne Miltenburg / @blahs - Shantel Blakely / @bklyndad - John Payne / @Bonnie_Cristine - Bonnie Abbott / @CarlAlviani - Carl Alviani / @delhep - Del Hepler / @Ejoi - Erica Lester / @guthrie_liz - Liz Guthrie / @iny - Yin Loh / @skatecarmody - Kate Carmody / @kathyBwheeler - Kathy Wheeler / @katyniner - Katy Niner / @LeannePrain - Leanne Prain
@meraus - Mercedes Kraus / @mawirtz - Michael Wirtz / @powpunch - Dana El Ahdab / @samanthafodot - Samantha Fodot / @sarahlpeck - Sarah Pack / @templetonpa - Patrick Templeton / @timbelonax - Tim Belonax / @tornaben - Zack Tornaben / @vmatranga - Vicki Matranga

2014
@bsnaith1 - Brenda Snaith / @gcbbsays - Charlotte Bik Bandlien / @clarameliande - Clara Meliande
@cocabags - Gunes Kocabag / @darylmarch - Daryl McCurdy / @gilad - Gabrielle Oropallo
@janjveoggd - Jan Voogd / @joshua_bradwell - Joshua Bradwell / @karabermejo - Kara Bermejo
@kingery_kingery - Josephine Kingery / @lawolke - Leslie Wolke / @leretico - Tj O’Donnell
@lisamalone - Lisa Malone / @magnellis - Megan Ellis / @michaconway - Michael Conway / @nnarasimhan - Naresh Narasimhan
@uglybird - Andrew Seeth / @pat_amorim - Patricia Amorim / @reginapuma - Regina Pozo / @SMassarsk - Sara Massarsky / @squintdotcom - Renee Olson

2015
@amishachowbey - Amisha Chowbey / @corinneigel - Corinne Gisel / @eemmaxx - Elizabeth Essner
@fimakeswork - Scott / @laubeleva - Iva Laube / @thetackamo - Jack Curry / @jenlaaa - Jennifer - Wong
@joangreco - JoAnn Greco / @uncommonmono - Karen Brunel-Lafargue / @lizbethEigel - Lizbeth Eigel / @ManasiPophale - Manasi Pophale / @melindasekela - Melinda Sekela / @VieraNatalia - Natalia Viera / @NatePyper - Nate Pyper / @nicolhaveszve - Nicholas Venezia / @lundberg_scott - Scott Lundberg / @shrutigupta - Shruti Gupta / @sparkrey - Sigridur Sigurjonsdottir / @muscolino - Simone Muscolino / @tbettinardi - Tereza Bettinardi

With special thanks to Alice Twemlow

IT’S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT’S WHAT YOU DO

IKER GIL
AND
ANN LUI

INTERVIEW
STANLEY TIGERMAN
At one point in this interview, Stanley Tigerman asked us: “You know the character you need to be an architect? You need to be brave. You need to be strong. You have to have a very strong backbone. You have to have very thick skin because you’re going to get beat to shit by others, without question. You have to have that quality in you to take the criticism that will come your way no matter what.”

At the core of this advice is the central belief that vigorous debate—including harsh criticism, strong positions, and the prioritization of powerful new ideas even at the cost of one’s own comfort—is essential to the forward movement of architecture.

This position resonates across Stanley’s many roles in architectural discourse as practitioner, curator, and teacher. No encounters seem to escape his dedication, often ferocious, to the construction of an articulate battle over the future of design. (He even noted, at the beginning of our interview, his frustration with how others had censored his salty language in publication. His firm stance against the watering down of his positions, against the backdrop of increasingly edited and PR-worthy statements by designers, was refreshing fearless.) In the 1970s, Stanley curated seminal exhibitions that brought to the fore Chicago architects against rising stars in New York and Los Angeles. In parallel, he also staged discursive events, such as The State of the Art of Architecture (1977), from which this year’s Biennial draws its name, and a series of rough-and-tumble, informal debates at the newly revived Chicago Architectural Club. As an educator, Stanley hosted The Chicago Tapes (1986) conference, a symposium that took after The Charlottesville Tapes conference three years before; at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), he was also responsible for initiating a series of publications. These practices set the stage for decades of service as a moderator, ringmaster, and electric goad to architects in the city: calling upon us to both be self-critical and also engage others in conversation over our practices and beliefs.

To this day, Stanley Tigerman serves as the backbone of Chicago’s rich conversation on architecture and the city, including his warm nurturing of a new generation of architects. Stanley’s dedication to fostering debate—which always includes the demand that architects bring their work to the table and stand firm behind their ideas—has not diminished through the years. His gift to Chicago is his continued fight for the value of potent, put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is, discourse.
Ann Lui: During your interview for the Chicago Architects Oral History Project you discussed the tough critiques at Yale in the late 50s and early 60s. You mentioned one critic that was especially tough on Louis Skidmore Jr. Stanley Tigerman: Yeah. Who, by the way, is an asshole.

AL: I was wondering how this harsh criticism shaped you as a teacher and as a pedagogue. It seems that Archeworks, the school you co-founded in 1994 with Eva Maddox, goes in another direction and focuses on fostering communication between disciplines. Did these tough critiques inform your thinking when you started Archeworks?

ST: Well, that’s a very complex question. When I was at Yale, Paul Rudolph was the Chair, and Paul was a very tough guy. In the 1959-60 academic year, I was in the Bachelor’s thesis class. The class started in September with thirty students. By the time we graduated, do you know how many graduated on time? Fifteen. Some flunked, some were asked to come back for the summer, some for a semester, some for a year, some for more than a year, some never. When I was there several of the kids ended up on shrink’s couches. One kid committed suicide. Is this a justification for that level of harshness? No, but it was what it was. This is a different time in architectural education. You don’t flunk people because this is a litigious society. The kid’s mommy comes after you and sues your ass.

But that was a very rough time. In my second year in my masters program, I worked for Paul at night. In those years, the architecture school at Yale closed at two in the morning. At two in the morning, the Yale radio station, which was on in the drafting room, played the alma mater “Bright College Years.” We all got up and sang it, and they all went to get drunk, except me. At two in the morning, I went to Paul Rudolph’s office and worked until five in the morning, five nights a week. But I had to be back in the studio by nine, because he showed up at nine. So I had basically four hours of sleep at night. It was a killer. There was a point when I got my masters and Paul offered me a full time job. I said, “Paul, do you see that old, beat-up station wagon belching gasoline at the curb? If I don’t go back to Chicago this minute I’m going to get physically ill. I’m going to vomit, probably all over you.” And I left. It was the hardest two years of my life. It made being in the United States Navy a piece of cake. Those of us who survived it, bonded: Bob Stern, Charlie Gwathmey, Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, Jack Robertson, Tom Beeby, blah, blah, blah. Irrespective of our differences stylistically, formally, whatever, we survived this trial by fire. Paul Rudolph did invent me, what you see is the product of my having been there. If he hadn’t come across me and molded me to his satisfaction I wouldn’t be sitting here. Period.

Paul was very demanding, and he was that demanding of himself. His problem was that, holistically speaking, he never was a whole human being. I remember coming back from Bangladesh one time and on the way back we stopped in Paris. I said, “Paul, do you want to go to L’Opéra, or l’Opéra Comique?” No, he just wanted to sit on the Champs-Élysées sipping drinks. I thought, “Where is your cultural IQ, Paul?” He walked, spoke, ate, shat, and practiced architecture. It’s what he did. He was a supreme, supremo architect, and he was totally single-minded. But that doesn’t cut it, even then. So Paul was flawed, but I loved him. I loved, and I understood the treatment because I had been in the Navy.

So did that infect the way that I then treated others? Yes and no. Archeworks
was late in my life. Earlier, when I was at UIC, I burned a kid’s drawings. Burned it right in his presence. It was a shit drawing. As a result, they hung me in effigy, outside the building. I have a checkered career and persona. I didn’t do things the way traditional architects do them. I don’t mean stylistically, but the tradition of architects’ behavior. It’s one of the reasons that my office stayed small, which was done consciously. I didn’t want a big office so I could say no to people, I could actually fire a client, which I have done on three occasions.

I am a perfectionist. I used to believe in absolute values, not relative values. I’ve changed my mind. Times change. I’m thinking more of relative things now. So I’ve changed. But, did my experience at Yale impact my behavior later as a teacher? Yes. At Arche-works, not so much. I don’t think we ever got rid of a student because it was so god-damed small we needed every student. So I had to curb my innate behavior to some degree.

Iker Gil: During the 1970s and 80s, you organized a series of symposia such as the 1977 The State of the Art of Architecture at the Graham Foundation. The event is once again in the news as this year’s Chicago Architecture Biennial has borrowed the name for its inaugural edition. What was the format and what were the goals of the 1977 symposium?

ST: It began with the New York Five, which was Eisenman, Meier, Gwathmey, Hejduk, and Graves. Only Eisenman and Meier are alive. And they’re cousins [they are second cousins by marriage]. Did you know that?

IG: No.

ST: It’s a great story about them. They’re first cousins. Eisenman’s mother is the poor one. Jewish family. Meier’s mother is the rich one. So Meier’s mother used to call Peter’s mother all the time and say, “What has Peter done? Richard just won the Gold Medal.” Typical Jewish mother bullshit, right? She would say, “Richard just won the Pritzker Prize. What did Peter ever win?” So Peter is filled with anxieties because then his mother would call and say, “Well you say you are so famous, but you didn’t do this, you didn’t do that. Because Richard’s mother just told me about blah, blah, blah.”

The New York Five was an elitist operation. It was architecture for architecture’s sake. Like art for art’s sake, which is as it should have been. It was not inclusivist. The first reaction to that was Bob Stern, Aldo Giurgola [plus Allan Greenberg, Charles Moore, and Jaquelin Robertson] forming The Greys. Then, the Los Angeles guys did The Silvers. If you can imagine: speed, extrusions, that kind of architecture. And then the Chicago Seven. Why the Chicago Seven? The Chicago Seven was a total bullshit operation. We didn’t then, and we still do not, even like each other. We had nothing in common. Do I ever see any of these people? Absolutely not ever.

I wanted to get them together. I have a history, which began at Yale. When I was at Yale, I brought students from Harvard and Penn to Yale and New Haven, to talk about the state of the art. I have done that a bazillion times. I see architecture as a performing art. I do well working alone, but I do well in groups. I like bringing people together.

You could ask the question, “What did you gain? What happened at that thing in ’77? I could ask the same thing. You could ask the question, “What happened between Harvard and Princeton; Harvard, Penn, and Yale?” Or what happened at the Passing The Baton event at Archeworks in 2008 when I had Sarah Herda, Bob Somol, Zoë Ryan,
Sketch by Stanley Tigerman about The State of the Art of Architecture symposium, 1994 © Courtesy of Volume Gallery
It was a place for dialogue to engage, and now it’s been fulfilled. Look at all the people that are now in Chicago. That includes you [Iker], it includes Sean Lally, [Thomas] Kelley, Andy Moddrell, and the young people teaching at UIC. It’s sort of becoming a hot-shit place.

IG: It’s surprising that those two publications no longer exist and that neither UIC nor the Chicago Architecture Club published that much after those initial efforts.

ST: It needs continuous prodding. I got five issues out of each. But ultimately, in the biblical terms, in Ecclesiastes, there’s a time for everything and I just can’t be there continuously doing that. I loved when Jimenez Lai did Treatise, the fourteen books and the exhibition at the Graham Foundation. It was obviously self-serving for Jimenez, but it also put together a bunch of really good people. And he did it from Chicago, so I really miss him now that he’s in L.A.

IG: Now people like Ann, who has been doing very interesting work in Boston, are coming to Chicago to continue her practice and to teach. So some people are leaving for different reasons but others are coming too, and they see Chicago as a viable place for them.

ST: It’s a work in progress. Chicago, that is.

IG: It’s always going to be.

ST: Yes, it always is going to be, but I got to tell you, it wasn’t always the case. When I came back from Yale in ‘61, the big firm that was worth something outside of Mies was Skidmore [Skidmore, Owings & Merrill]. There were only two small firms that were really good architects. One was Harry Weese, and the other was Ed Dart, Edward Dùpaquier Dart. He was a very good architect. That’s...
what I came to. So it wasn’t always like it is now. Now you can say with confidence that it’s a work in progress. It will always change.

AL: When the Chicago Architecture Club was reestablished in 1979, it was fairly exclusive: it had limited members [40] and you had to pay high dues to be part of it. However, it seems to me that the most grueling barrier to entry was to be able to hold your own at the debates and the critiques that took place at the Club.

ST: At every meeting, which used to be at the Graham Foundation, there would be two guys, more or less comparable, who would debate each other and show their work, because work is a vehicle for ideas. At the end there was a vote, and there was a winner and a loser. The winner got a certificate with a “W,” and the loser got one with a “L.” I loved that. In other words, I loved documenting what transpired. And that people lose. You don’t just win. If you play major league baseball, if you want to get your contract renewed, you have to hit at least .300. .300 means that seven out of ten times you’re out. You have to understand losing.

IG: I am assuming that some of these debates were fierce and very personal.

ST: Entirely personal. When [John] Syvertsen became president of the club, he put [Tom] Beeby up against me, and Beeby won. I have my certificate with the “L” on it proudly displayed at home. Everything you do counts. Don’t bullshit yourself, and say you can get away with it, because you can’t. Some asshole down the line will engage you in revisionist history and catch you up for lying. You see it all the time in the papers about politics, and movie stars. They think they can get away with something and they engage in something called hubris, which is the problem. You have to be truthful. You have to say what really happened, that you won this and that you lost that.

IG: Do you think those debates made people tougher and helped them create better work?

ST: Yes. Absolutely. They didn’t create better friends, but it did create better work. I realize that not all the work in Chicago was great, but Chicago has a lot of very good architects.

IG: Clearly you’d rather have better work than better friends.

ST: Absol-goddamn-lutely. In Chicago, I’d much rather have better work than better friends. No question about it. And who are my friends not in Chicago? Very good architects. Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, Charlie Gwathmey before he died, Peter Eisenman, etc. Jeanne Gang was the greatest supporter of me because I’m very supportive of her. I told her, “Jeanne, it’s simple, when you start doing shitty work, you’ll see that I’m not such a good friend. Because I will call you out for it publicly.” I’m interested in good work, period.

Good architecture, good dialogue, good ideas require critical mass. If you live in Santa Fe, New Mexico, you don’t expect good architecture, because there aren’t enough guys out there practicing good architecture to have an impact on each other. That’s why Chicago is great. Because it’s tough. I’ve been trying to do that my whole life.

AL: At the end of your text from Emmanuel Petit’s recent book Schlepping Through Ambivalence, you wrote, “It seems as if precious little changes, including the fact that I still miss you.” It seems to me that a long debate can be very productive or collaborative when it is built on mutual admiration between you and Mies. Who
would be a worthy candidate today to do battle with, as Ada Louise Huxtable described your conversation with Mies?”

ST: Mies had a huge impact on me. After a year at MIT, I flunked out. I got a job working for George Fred Keck, who was a wonderful architect. Keck was trying to do what turned out to be sort of a shitty building for the Chicago Housing Authority. He wanted to engage Mies to persuade the head of the Chicago Housing Authority to hire him. I was nineteen and an absolute apprentice, bottom, zero in this office. Mies came to the office, and I was blown away. To meet Mies, for me, was like meeting God. It was like meeting Moses. Mies was incredible. I can tell you endless stories about him. He was a wonderful person.

On the other hand, he was shit toward women, as was Corbu, as was Frank Lloyd Wright. We are all people. We have good sides, but we’re flawed. Mies wasn’t perfect. But Mies, architecturally, philosophically, and theologically, was perfect. Humanistically? Not perfect. But I admired him, and I liked him. He had a big impact on me and he obviously had a giant impact on Chicago.

When Saarinen designed the TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport, I used to fly there every fucking day at nine o’clock.”

IG: That’s one of the things I like about Chicago. You don’t find that attitude very often. If people say something, they do it.

ST: My conversations with Peter Eisenman always begin the following way: Peter says, “I’m totally out of it. I’m not in the mainstream. I’m more out of it than you are.” I say, “No, Peter, I’m more out of it than you are.” Outsider. I wrote about it in my own book. Emmanuel Petit wrote about it in his book.

When I was a little kid, I grew up in my grandparents’ boarding house because they were very poor. My grandfather was a Hasidic, Jewish, Talmudic scholar. If he had lived I would have become a rabbi. I know that. Without question. However hard it was, that’s what I would have become. But he didn’t. I’ve always been the poor, Jewish, outsider kid. Period. Being an outsider is great.

AL: And Mies too.

ST: Mies too was an outsider, Chicago worked for him because he wasn’t an intellect in the conventional sense. He was as well-read, more well-read than anyone I ever knew. Do you know the story about how Mies came to America? When he came in ’37 after the closing of the Bauhaus in ’33, he tried for years to become Hitler’s official architect. Mies was trying actively to displace Albert Speer. When he came to the realization through his thick German skull that Hitler wasn’t having any, he stole his brother Ewald’s passport, and that’s how he came.

So he was an outsider, even in Berlin, and he knew it. He came here where he was for sure an outsider because he was too old to learn English. He thought, wrote, and spoke in German. Believe me, English was a distant second language. He couldn’t make jokes in English but he was a very funny guy, actually. So for him being an outsider was real.

When he finally emigrated, to become head of the architecture school at the Armour Institute of Technology [now Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)], the SS allowed him to take thirty books. He had a library of three thousand books but he was allowed to take thirty. Those thirty books, after Mies was fired from IIT in ’58, are at the rare books library at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

IG: So you both had something in common. You were both fired from a university.

ST: Yeah, absolutely. My being fired was great. If I had been the Dean at that time I’d have fired me too, because I was absolutely a troublemaker. When I was the director at UIC, there was a long axis and faculty had to come down all the way to see me sitting in my office. On my round table there was nothing, except a piece of paper facing them with all the retirement dates of everybody on the faculty. There’s a guy named Louis Rocah, one of the major assholes of our time. When I became the Director, I said, “Louis, I consider you a really shitty teacher.” And I said, “Louis, do you know what the penalty box is in ice hockey? If you stick a guy too high, you get two minutes and you go to the penalty box. Louis, do you see this desk here? This is the penalty box for you. While I’m the director, I’m going to sacrifice your salary. We will pay you, because we can’t fire you. You have tenure. But you will sit here and never teach during my time. Ever. And you will be here every fucking day at nine o’clock.”

Yes, I was a tough character. For sure. I still am. I’m the same guy. I’ll never change. Where the phrase “mellowing out” comes from, I have no idea because it never pertained to me. I did things like that, and both Mies and I, among other things, had in common that we were both fired. When Mies was fired, there was a dinner that was called for by Myron Goldsmith and conducted by the Miesians. All the partners at Skidmore had gone to IIT. Among the people at the dinner, there was Alfred Caldwell. When Mies was fired, he was fired as campus architect, not just as a director of the architecture school, and Skidmore replaced him as the campus architect. Some of the IIT faculty were saying, “Where is this loyalty to Mies when you accept replacing him?” Only one faculty member, putting your action where your mouth is, quit: Alfred Caldwell. The rest of them stayed, the weak guys. And Myron Goldsmith became the darling of them. But he had stabbed Mies in the back. That’s why revisionist history comes about. Because it takes digging to find that stuff.
IG: You’ve always been very interested in morality and ethics.
ST: It’s how you behave. It’s not what you say, it’s what you do. A very good friend of mine, a Hasidic Rabbi now in Jerusalem, used to give a course at the Spertus Institute here once a year on the Zohar, the Kabbalah. I always used to go hear his lectures and they were great. We became friends and one night we had a drink after a talk and he said, “the reason I like architects is because they actually make something. They don’t just speak it.” He said, “I know the Jews are renowned as being people of the book, but in actual fact it’s what you do that will have an impact on God. Not what you say.” Of course that’s true, all the way through.

So I loved Caldwell ever since doing what he did, get out and resign. When it counted, he stood up for what he believed, and he left. So being fired, no problem. I’ve been fired. I’ve fired clients.

IG: It’s just a game.
ST: No, it’s not a game. It’s what you believe in. When you’re a zealot, which I confess I am, and people go against that, you have to act out. You have to act to show your displeasure with them. When I was director at UIC, I curated an exhibition, which changed everything. It was called, 10 Untenured Faculty. It included ten young people who would become the next generation of stars: Catherine Ingraham, Bob Somol… Bob Bruegmann resented the exhibition and said bad things about me behind my back. So I wrote a 250-word piece and, among other things, I said of course there are those that haven’t been invited to be in the tent. And then I noted them. I said one is Driehaus who’s spending his money again to bring forth this reactionary crowd, to the point that Sarah, among other talks, invited the Chicago Seven to give a talk. Beeby said no. I will note that at the talk. If you were doing a symposium on the Whites, the New York Five, would you do it even though three of them were dead? Sure. So Beeby is dead. Then I said there are also “former” star architects like Rem, Peter Eisenman, that are having an event here as well. Don’t you love it that I refer to Eisenman and Rem as “former” stars? That’s great. It’s a great game.

IG: The Biennial will have a series of public programs but besides them, there are other people and institutions organizing parallel events. Richard Driehaus has organized a kind of counter program during the opening days of the Biennial focusing on tradition, more akin to his architectural taste. I find it interesting that he is building from and reacting to the official event.

ST: The September/October issue of Chicago Architect is dedicated entirely to the Biennial. Zurich Esposito has asked me to write a piece at the beginning of the magazine. So I wrote a good 250-word piece and, among other things, I said of course there are other events. Richard Driehaus is putting together a symposium at the Merchandise Mart during the time of the Biennial. She has invited traditional architects, and she invited Margaret McCurry. I said, “Margaret, this is your chance. Do this, but show these projects in this way.” The big house in Lincoln Park,
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It's Not What You Say, It's What You Do
It’s Not What You Say, It’s What You Do

MAS CONTEXT / 27 / DEBATE

It’s Not What You Say, It’s What You Do

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which after all is based on a Palladian parti, but is an incredibly modern, glass, and zinc-coated steel house. So I said, “From the inside, you can cut their balls off.” So she’s doing it. I like the fact that things will happen outside the tent as it were.

IG: Let’s talk about the Obama Presidential Library for a moment. It ended up landing at the University of Chicago despite not having released publicly any information about their proposal. UIC had to share those plans because it’s a public school and they have to make the proposal public. In my opinion, there was a lack of debate about the actual ideas and proposals submitted. There’s something completely wrong about the process.

ST: Absolutely. It’s an unfortunate tradition in Chicago. They hold things too tightly to themselves.

IG: Despite using public land, you award a project that hasn’t been discussed at all, having been decided behind-the-scenes.

ST: Well, there’s an unfortunate tradition of behind-the-scenes. When Bruce Graham from Skidmore was alive, a number of us were helping him with the 100th anniversary of the Columbian Exposition in 1993. It never happened. You know why? I know why. In 1893, how many public meetings did Daniel Burnham conduct to persuade the population to do it? Would you guess?

IG: 20?

ST: Try 2,000. You know how many Bruce Graham conducted? Zero. So I said, “Bruce, how do you expect to get the support of the city? The politics, the city, the establishment, rich people etc. didn’t want to make waves. That’s one. Now let’s go to 2000-something when we attempted to get the Olympics for Chicago. When Mayor Daley went to Barcelona, how many public meetings were held before that? Zero. How do you expect to get the public behind you if you do zero? So I said to Sarah and Joe Grima, “Listen guys, you have to come out with this. If you hold it to yourself you’re going to get nothing but antagonism.” And they had done it to some degree, more lately than early. You understand the problem? It goes for schools, it goes for your practice, etc. I’m not worried that anyone’s going to rip me off. I show everything what I’m working on, what my thoughts are, to anybody that’s interested that’ll listen to it.

AL: In a 2003 interview you said, “Architects tend to be responders. Painters and artists tend to be initiators.” Maybe that conflicts some with some of what you just said about the people you most admire in this Biennial. I want to know, do you still think that’s the case?

ST: It’s not the case now. There was only one architect of my generation who actively was an initiator, not a responder. What was his name? It’s a quiz.

AL: I don’t know.

ST: John Hejduk. He didn’t need a client. He kept putting things out there. In actual fact, the first drawings for his Wall House are actually better than the one built in Groningen. The one built in Groningen is great. But his original concept is earth shattering. It’s a brilliant concept. It’s surrealism about the future and the past, and the present is the wall. I think that your generation has more of that, of initiating.
through foam-core with a hot wire. I love her misusing a tool to achieve something. That’s a first, as far as I’m concerned. She’s not the only one. Andy Moddrell is another example. Turning Grant Park into Central Park, for the purpose of high-rent districts all the way around.

IG: It’s an interesting project that understands the history of the city and its rules. If you can’t build east of Lakeshore Drive, then move Lakeshore Drive. The city has expanded its lakefront and added acres of land for a century.

ST: Exactly. All the best things come out that way. That’s how Utzon won the goddamned competition for the Sydney Opera House. He broke all the rules of the competition. That’s how Maya Lin won the Vietnam memorial competition. She broke all the rules of the actual competition. They had dismissed her project, and actually Harry Weese brought it back. “You guys are wrong. This is brilliant.”

IG: Going back to architects as initiators, people have to be willing to put themselves and their ideas out there in the public, to be open to debate and be challenged.

ST: So you know the character you need to be an architect? You need to be brave. You need to be strong. You have to have a very strong backbone. You have to have very thick skin because you’re going to get beat to shit by others, without question. You have to have that quality in you to take the criticism that will come your way no matter what. Guaranteed. Put it in the bank. I think there’s a moral to the story that you, the youngest person sitting here, should understand entirely. You know what the name of the game is? Health. You have to stay healthy. Because if you live a very long time, good shit will happen to you. But you have to be here. So all those people like Doug Garofalo, who died prematurely, that’s tragic. Or Eero Saarinen who died when he was 51. Great tragedy. Or Fazlur Khan, who was a great friend of mine. He was 51 years old. Come on. That’s the tragedy. But old guys who are 85 years old, no tragedy. I love seeing all the shit that’s going down right now. I love it, because it’s a wishful form of prophecy. I’m thrilled to be around for so long that I can see that things are going well. The latest generation, your generation, is doing it.

Endnotes
Debate by Jason Pickleman
In 2015, graphic designers Benjamin Koditschek and Alexander Hayashi founded Dgenerator, a provisional Chicago-based studio, based on their shared belief that the conversations currently occurring within design communities insufficiently address broader social, cultural, political, and economic contexts and instead uncritically celebrate individual entrepreneurship and technological advancement. Their projects seek out a new set of aspirations and reject tried-and-true “design advice” in order to provoke the classic debate of creative labor: what should (or could) we surrender—as designers, as writers, as artists—in exchange for pursuing our work?

The studio’s public-facing side is its Confrontations reading group, which began in July 2015 and meets monthly at the Chicago Design Museum. Each session addresses a different topic in contemporary graphic design practice, such as manifestos, freelance politics, personal branding, and TED Talk-ification in order to encourage productive debates regarding the limitations, responsibilities, and possibilities of designers who practice within the precarious space at the intersections of laborer, messenger, and content creator.

Journalist Jessica Barrett Sattell spoke with Koditschek and Hayashi about how they provoke the boundaries that design inherently places upon itself as a commercial art, why designers are inherently hypocritical, and how criticism can be a productive force.
Jessica Barrett Sattell: You two met through the conversations you shared at the Chicago Design Book Club, which went on hiatus only to re-emerge as Confrontations. When did you decide to start to collaborate together?

Alexander Hayashi: We met about a year and a half ago, and we weren’t aware of each other’s work at all before then. I think Dgenerator was mainly Ben’s idea to begin with.

Benjamin Koditschek: The studio is an outgrowth of a smaller project that we did this past spring, which was a series of “design advice” posters. I was invited to give a talk to design students at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), but I really didn’t want mine to be the standard model. I’ve gone to a number of conferences, and especially at student conferences, people end up saying the same types of things, and the same advice is reproduced over and over again.

AH: That advice that doesn’t go anywhere. The kind that’s nice to hear and vaguely encouraging, but has no real application and doesn’t particularly engage any realities of actually working as a designer in anything other than a school vacuum. You’re told, “you can do anything! But…” But everyone always avoids talking about the “but.”

JBS: But what’s the “but”?

BK: Well, that kind of advice does engage the reality of working as a designer, but it’s a popular fiction.

AH: It’s the Neoliberal fantasy of “everything’s going to be OK and we can solve it by doing what we love and working hard.”

JBS: Which is the basis of things like Creative Mornings talks, where speakers get audiences pumped up about the gloss of inspirational or aspirational work, but they rarely address the systems that designers are working within and the politics of production.

AH: Very few people give, especially to students, advice that applies to living one’s life as a designer. I think the talk at UIC would have gotten a totally different reaction if it were presented at somewhere like Creative Mornings.
I’d be interested to see how it would go over in the context of a design conference, where people are very committed to defending their perspectives, especially when they view something as attacking their own value systems around design.

JBS: But you’re not trying to attack anyone head-on. It’s subtler, more like calling out the system rather than the participants within it—although you seem to hold them accountable, too. Where does your advice fit into this?

BK: Around the same time that I was doing that talk at UIC, I read an article about Johnny Ive that mentioned that he had one of the Good Fucking Design Advice posters hanging in the Apple Design Studio. I thought that poster would be a great object to center my argument around.

Alex and I had this vague idea of making a response to Good Fucking Design Advice with a design advice talk. So, we started working on a poster series called “Degenerate Design Advice.”

JBS: What is it about the medium of the poster? And, why do you make them all available for free online as PDF downloads?

AH: The poster is the typical graphic design fallback, and I think it’s also a direct response to what Good Fucking Design Advice was doing. They want you to see and admire their posters online, but then you have to buy them.

Posters, too, are objects that are often imbued with transferring knowledge. We make all of ours freely available, because, first, we don’t have the money to be producing these posters and handing them out everywhere, and second, we don’t want to sell them. Had we done that whole project and then say, “buy the poster!” then it would be totally self-defeating! You have to take the approach and critique full circle.

“Degenerate Design Advice” was a key project for us because is allowed us to start thinking about how we wanted to help people to start questioning norms within the design community. We wanted them to look at their practices and realize that they have choices beyond being told that they could subscribe to any number of labels: product designers, socially engaged designers,
or other roles that are already allotted as tools for young designers to help them develop identities in the design world.

BK: Or even just as people—as citizens, as informed participants in the public sphere.

JBS: Why work from the platform of a provisional studio to encourage people to question their own practices?

BK: It’s our way of trying to take our ideas beyond the first project’s poster form and start to engage the broader design community.

AH: The idea for doing a provisional graphic design studio sprung out of a conversation we had with one of my professors at UIC, Jack Henrie Fisher, about where we could go next with “Degenerate Design Advice.” He suggested that we make a studio because it would allow us to be producing with our own goals in mind. We could take on client work but still have control over the greater intent of our own work.

We’re using the word “studio” here as more of a form of working, rather than a small corporation. It’s a kind of working relationship, rather than a structure with the end goal of making money.

BK: A framework for creating design projects.

AH: The influence that we want Dgenerator to have isn’t particularly in terms of aesthetics. It’s more about in terms of a criticality of the design industry at large, and in terms of peoples’ individual practices. It’s not our intent to find and discover some new, radical aesthetic.

BK: Our goal with the studio, even though we have to formally express ourselves through design, is to look at the meta-level of design, what it means to be a designer, and what it means to be “designer as worker.”

JBS: From poster series to studio, and now to a reading group. How did the idea for Confrontations come about?

AH: There are a lot of leftist reading groups, but there aren’t a lot of design reading groups, let alone those that combine leftist ideas with design. At least to our knowledge, there aren’t a lot of opportunities to discuss how the boundaries of design interact with political, economic, and social theory.

I used to help Emily Haasch run the Chicago Design Book club, but she moved to San Francisco and then that structure started to dissolve. We didn’t want that to happen, and at first we had planned to keep running it the same way. But Ben and I began to think about how we could make the discussions more pointed and directed. Before, a sort of both positive and negative aspect of the Book Club was that it was very open-ended. That was good because it provided for a variety of discussions to happen and to engage a lot of different kinds of designers, but there was also very little imperative for people to come. It was hard to retain participation, and even if there would be a really deep conversation over the course of a two-hour meeting, there was no link to the next one. Oftentimes, those seemingly open-ended discussions ended up turning into ones on politics and economics.

JBS: From poster series to studio, and now to a reading group. How did the idea for Confrontations come about?

AH: [laughs] I don’t know if people dreaded being around us because we would turn the discussions into this dysphoric dismemberment of contemporary design practice, saying that it was unable to do anything to change anything in any meaningful way.

JBS: That hits on the argument, though, that so much discussion about contemporary graphic design, either in writing or thinking, tends to be so self-affirming and uncritical beyond a formal surface examination. Maybe the fact that people were getting uncomfortable with what you were bringing up in terms of how design interacts with political issues hits on something that needs to be said.

BK: I do think that people got uncomfortable. Even though the Design Book Club was more heady than a lot of other conversations happening about design going on in Chicago at that time, there seemed to be an urge to keep things positive. I think that tendency, this aversion to criticism of any sorts, especially self-criticism or self-questioning, is very common in design communities.
Alex and I wanted to push that further; still have it be open and not have a specific agenda to shove down people’s throats, but try to push more towards the critical, potentially darker sides of design.

AH: There’s a multitude of reasons that conversations with people in groups of designers tend to be pretty positive. Part of it is that we work in an industry that puts us in a position that’s at the blunt end of a lot of critique from a lot of different people. You’re dealing with a lot of criticisms, and while it’s ideal to be able to separate yourself from your work, it’s not always possible to fully do so. You’re going to be upset, sooner or later. So you need a support system to work through that, and to foster positivity around your work.

The trend toward that positivity has a lot to do with the general societal trend towards not being critical, because being critical isn’t fun. You don’t want to be the only one being negative.

BK: You don’t want to be the hater.

AH: That makes people overly cautious. There’s this assumption that if you’re not totally for something, you’re totally against it. You can be very polite and respectful but still be against something.

BK: And you can acknowledge nuance, that there can be “love” and “hate” at the same time.

JBS: To be a designer is to adhere to an unstable kind of label that never quite fits the nature of the work. Why do designers so often feel that they need to look outside of design to justify their practices?

AH: Something that came out of “Degenerate Design Advice” was this idea that has been prolific for the past five or ten years: “Designer as fill-in-the-blank.” “Designer as entrepreneur.” “Designer as writer.” “Designer as activist.” “Designer as academic.” “Designer as printmaker.” Which is great, because it’s important to think about how one’s discipline relates to others, or to one’s other passions.

It was funny to me to look at these kinds of “Designer as...” lists because I began to think of my own practice as “Designer as hypocrite.” That is, working as a graphic
I always feel like a hypocrite. I think part of that is owning it, and being up-front about it, and acknowledging that it’s normal to make decisions that don’t totally sit comfortably.

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BK: One of the ideas we talked about in the first session of Confrontations is the “First Things First” manifestos. There’s a reason why designers end up looking hypocritical, and it’s not a moral failing—that they’re unethical and unable to “do good.” It’s that the social and economic context that we’re working within is contradictory. Everyone is a hypocrite; that’s just the world we live in. We’re trying to acknowledge and understand this underlying issue more in-depth, which means looking outside of design.

AH: Every conversation about design and designers, if it’s productive, applies to society as a whole. We’re not operating in a vacuum. That’s the case with the examination of any so-called “creative” group: the outsider-looking-in perspective is that we’re starving artists who get to do whatever we want. There’s this valorization of not making a lot of money doing something you love. But isn’t that a problem? The system is very much set up to make everyone seem like a bad person.

JBS: As artists or writers or designers, or anyone who is doing any kind of “creative” work, we make that choice to do so as a means to support ourselves, and when we do so, we’re ultimately giving something up, be it agency or accountability or security. That seems to be where that oft-quoted but problematic advice to “do what you love” comes in.

AH: The “do what you love” mind-set is incredibly seductive. But it’s not that simple. The trap is that you see people supposedly living lives where they’re being paid copious amounts of money to do what they love. But in reality, the majority of them can do so because they came from wealthy families and were able to get the best educations in aesthetics and conceptual art. They’ve been provided for. When people are unable to actualize a “do what
Designer As Degenerate

Disrupt Bankrupt Clean Up

A poster is a product of privilege and perspective.
you love” life right out of school or training, they feel like failures because they’re unaware of the level of privilege that comes from. Another issue is that “do what you love” never asks you to be critical of the things you love, or want to do. It perpetuates this commonplace lack and fear of criticality, and criticality in terms of the greater good of society. It placates people and makes them feel comfortable. It’s a carrot-on-the-string mentality: it’s out there, but it’s always just out of reach.

JBS: It’s back to that false binary of love versus criticism, and as criticism as something negative when it’s really just the act of thinking critically.

BK: Love and criticism aren’t separate things. I think everyone should be able to do what they love. It’s a tragedy that they’re not able to, and the rhetoric of “do what you love” prevents it from becoming a reality for everyone.

JBS: Who do you want to be a part of the discussions you’re holding, and how are they getting involved? And, how will the conversations taking place carry on beyond the structure of the meetings?

AH: We want as diverse an array of people as possible to attend, since there will be no truly constructive discussion without a mixture of opinions, perspectives, and privilege. Right now, we’re relying on our social networks to spread the word, in addition to individually inviting particular people who we think would act as great catalysts for discussion. While we’d prefer if people were to come to each meeting, the conversations also each stand alone, allowing for an accessible, drop-in model.

Right now, there is no intended outcome of this other than the discussions themselves. But, we’re looking to start recording them in order to create a set of source materials, which could be utilized as audio files, or as content for use in a design project like a publication or poster series.

BK: Each discussion is focused on a small selection of opposing or complementary texts that target a related set of issues. Broadly, it’s based on the idea of trying to get at the bound-

aries of design discourse, the kinds of things that are unacceptable, for various reasons, to talk about in the workplace, at parties, or even in most classroom settings. We’re interested in issues that are common to the creative industry as a whole, not just specific workplaces.

The first discussion questioned whether designers and advertisers are able to act ethically through their work: what is the relationship between the design for business and the design for good? Might aspirations for design to act as a social force be self-undermining? The next discussion will build off of that conversation and take a look back to early modernism to consider how history repeats similar patterns, and takes stock of how the grand aspirations of modernist design have played out. The third discussion shifts gears a bit to interrogate the relationship between corporate identity, corporate personhood, and the obligation to brand oneself as an enterprise of one. Future discussions will address the way TED talks have transformed the ways ideas are expected to be presented, further explore the charged politics of the “do what you love” rhetoric, and dive into the pros and cons of contract freelance labor.

JBS: What are you hoping will arise from Confrontations, as it continues? How are you defining the success of the debates you’re trying to engender?

AH: A successful series would be one that allows people to openly discuss their ideas and ideals in a space that invites productive creativity, and that these discussions help people better understand their individual practices more deeply on both personal and structural levels. There are topics that each session will approach, but really, all I want to happen out of it is that there’s spirited discussion in general. That is incredibly important. I would really like a lot of the people who disagree with the things that Ben and I have to say to show up. Because of all of the nuances of these issues, and because everyone has a different experience, it’s going to be exciting just to be in a place where criticality is understood as a productive asset and not as a hateful force.
BK: Part of the name “Dgenerator” is that we’re trying to slow down the typical, to throw a wrench in “business-as-usual” and stop to take a look at the larger picture. Potentially, that means trying to have a better sense of the entirety of the interconnected worlds of design, life, and political economy that we all operate in. The reading group is supposed to begin to open up these questions a bit, for a few people, in Chicago, and have this slightly different perspective be explored and developed beyond just Alex and myself.

AH: It’s not about having these discussions as a means to a solution, and then acting upon that solution. If that were to happen, that’s incredible, and I’m sure a lot of people would hear about it because we would have totally changed the landscape of design. [laughs]

Ben and I have spent a lot of time talking together over the past year or so about these kinds of problems, and would like to, at least as a first step, expand those discussions and invite people with other identities and experiences to come and engage in this discussion. Hopefully it will grow organically from there.

BK: It’s a framework, or a platform, for these discussions to happen. We’re trying to spark critical conversations and different perspectives and debates. There’s some stakes involved in that, and actual disagreements. We want to press up against boundaries and be a little irritating and stimulating.

AH: The end goal isn’t to offend people. But, if we do this well, we wouldn’t be doing anything particularly radical if people don’t get offended.
A Heroic Debate

Featuring Alison and Peter Smithson, Le Corbusier, Araldo Cossutta, Reyner Banham, Tad Stahl, Mary Otis Stevens, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, N. Michael McKinnell, Henry N. Cobb, Ada Louise Huxtable, Peter Chermayeff, Jane Jacobs, Edward J. Logue, William J. Foley, Katherine Craven, Louise Day Hicks, Bill Foley, Tician Papachristou, and various Internet commenters

Alison and Peter Smithson architects, London:
Brutalism tries to face up to a mass-production society, and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work. Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical.

Le Corbusier architect, Paris:
Béton brut was born at the Unité d’Habitation at Marseilles where there were 80 contractors and such a massacre of concrete that one simply could not dream of making useful transitions by means of grouting. I decided: let us leave all that brute. I called it “béton brut.” The English immediately jumped on the piece and treated me (Ronchamp and the Monastery of La Tourette) as “Brutal”—béton brutal—all things considered, the brute is Corbu. They called that “the new brutality.” My friends and admirers take me for the brute of the brutal concrete!

Reyner Banham critic, United Kingdom:
Adopted as something between a slogan and a brick-bat flung in the public’s face, The New Brutalism ceased to be a label descriptive of a tendency common to most modern architecture, and became instead a program, a banner, while retaining some—rather restricted—sense as a descriptive label. It is because it is both kinds of -ism at once that The New Brutalism eludes precise description.

What does “Brutalism” mean?

Araldo Cossutta architect, New York and Paris:
The term “brut” means something completely different in the French language, whereas the word “brutal” gives the impression of buildings created by wild people. I resent the word Brutalism being attached to my work in any way.
Why concrete?

Smithsons:
The heroic struggle of the first period of Modern Architecture... gave a sense of moral responsibility to invent for ourselves forms appropriate to the postwar period; forms equal in power—but of a different order of strength... responding to the more complicated, even confused, needs of our time.

Stevens:
I would apply the word Heroic to today’s McMansions and other megashowoffs, whereas our work was anti-monumental... Heroic to me means being grandiose.

McKinnell:
Concrete was in the air. People were interested in the material. I think there were many reasons for its use. As Peter Collins—the biographer of Auguste Perret who taught me at Manchester University—said, “Concrete is the stone of our time.”

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Stahl:
Reinforced concrete attracted me in part because it is an innately architectural medium, one that is a complete building system unto itself. I had become convinced that architecture should necessitate and compellingly demonstrate an internal consistency based on universal principles.

Cobb:
Architectural concrete was an art form that more or less went out with the modern movement and its insistence on exposing the rawness of the real. After the slaughters of successive World Wars, you tell it as it is—with none of this phony cover-up. We believed in the link between architectural and moral integrity.

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Anon (not verified):
Replace “Heroic” with “arrogant” and they are right. At the time architects and their BRA [Boston Redevelopment Authority] enablers thought nothing of being uncaring and disdainful of the public with mass land takings and demolition for anti-human superblocks.
What happened in Boston?

Cobb: What happened in Boston was a kind of conjunction of the historic city with modernism.

Ada Louise Huxtable: New York City. While other cities made the same mistakes, and are still making them, Boston paused for shocked reappraisal of what “renewal” had wrought. Brought in Edward J. Logue from New Haven to head the Boston Redevelopment Authority and set up an expert planning and architectural staff. Just as significantly, it began to plan directly with the communities involved.

Peter Chermayeff: Architect, Boston. A lot of credit should be given to Ed Logue; he was a sophisticated guy with a civic vision, who also believed in the importance of good design. He became the means to recover from the huge mistake made in destroying Boston’s West End in the name of urban renewal. It was on everybody’s mind—what a disaster. Logue came in to make sure that it could never happen again.

Stevens: I thought he was like a missionary, one who had a singular vision in mind, making cities commercially viable. New Haven, Boston, New York—this is what he did. Mayor John F. Collins was easily influenced by Ed Logue, especially if it got him good reviews. I was all for urban renewal and the BRA at the time, although tearing down the West End set a terrible precedent. That strategy destroyed rather than revived residential life in Boston and other American cities.

Jane Jacobs: Urbanist and author, New York City: The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so.

Edward J. Logue: Director, Boston Redevelopment Authority: Ms. Jacobs is the first one to propose that we use street life as the model for city life everywhere. It is in the image of the Village that she would recast our slum-stricken cities. No more federal renewal aids; let the cities fend for themselves. Not surprisingly, this approach has won her many new friends, particularly among comfortable suburbanites. They like to be told that neither their tax dollars nor their own time need be spent on the cities they leave behind them at the close of each work day.

Jacobs: We expect too much of new buildings, and too little of ourselves.

Logue: Our cities are in deep trouble, and large-scale federal financial aid is crumbling. There is no other effective, constitutional way to get rid of harmful urban land use on the scale required. Urban renewal is the most useful tool yet devised to help cities help themselves.

Jacobs: Dull, inert cities, it is true, do contain the seeds of their own destruction and little else. But lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves.

Logue: Rehabilitation is the wave of the future. The days of the bulldozer redevelopment program will soon be over. Rehabilitation may be harder to start but it is easier to wholesale, and it makes much more sense to city dwellers.

William J. Foley: Member, Boston City Council: I’d rather have visitors to Boston look at things they see in Miami and New York—bright, shiny, tax-producing buildings—rather than some ugly building where William Lloyd Garrison once published the Liberator or some old pizza stand (the Old Brattle Tavern) which he [Logue] plans to tear down brick by brick and rebuild elsewhere.

HubMan: Right on! They shouldn’t have stopped with Scollay Square and the West End. The South End was a total shithole back then and they should have wiped it all out and replaced it with terrific, inviting buildings like Center Plaza and Longfellow Place! Then we wouldn’t have the ugly, unliveable South End and all the disgusting old rehabbed brownstone buildings and walkable blocks that blight that whole stretch of the city!! Charlestown, Back Bay, Jamaica Plain—how those God-awful neighborhoods didn’t “bring down the economy of the entire city,” Twill never understand.

Foley: Money is shipped in by the bunches and carloads from Washington and there is no shortage of wise guys to control it.... One of the leading wolves in that pack of wise guys is Ed Logue.

anon: Rehabilitation has been the most useful tool yet devised to help cities help themselves. Logue: All of Government Center looks like something an egomaniacal dictator would design. It perhaps might make sense to someone with a social deficit like autism, but not to neuro-typical people.

Katherine Craven: Member, Boston City Council: ...the resemblances between Logue and Hitler are striking.

Louise Day Hicks: Chair, Boston School Committee: You know where I stand.

George Foley: Chair, Boston City Council Urban Renewal Committee: If you don’t want urban renewal, you won’t have to have it... show some respect for the people who came here honestly to learn something.

Craven: You bald-headed son-of-a-bitch, I’ll poke you in the nose!

Logue: To my Boston friends here… I want to say I am happy with my new job. It is calm and peaceful, and I can’t really say that I miss Louise Day Hicks. Mrs. Craven... and was happy to learn that Bill Foley has been retired to private life.

Sokinpa: Just think, if there had been a Twitter in the late ’60s we might not have had to spend the subsequent half a century looking at the waste of concrete and brick that is Boston’s City Hall.
Stahl:
Two principal developments created the strong trend away from concrete to steel throughout the 1970s. First, the oil embargo of the mid-seventies and the ensuing recession in the building industry were far more serious than many have imagined... Concrete construction was dealt a fatal blow, with construction companies, precasters, and concrete specialists suffering or closing entirely.
Second, the major emphasis in the building industry was on the reduction of risk. The advent of construction management in the process of building made the more risky, complex, and demanding execution of concrete construction far less attractive than the singular responsibilities of steel subcontractors. Most general contractors learned to outsource their risk through more extensive subcontracting. In doing so, they often abandoned the concrete work they once had mastered.

McKinnell:
There was a political aspect to it as well. While in the early sixties we witnessed a euphoria—President Kennedy was a heroic figure—later in that decade people turned against heroism in the political world. The young people in '68 were staunchly opposed to anything that smacked of authority. And it was also true in architecture. Bob Venturi and Denise Scott Brown became immensely influential by pursuing what they believed to be an authentic version of populist architecture.

Jacobs:
There are fashions in building. Behind the fashions lie economic and technological reasons, and these fashions exclude all but a few genuinely different possibilities in city dwelling construction at any one time.

McKinnell:
Postmodern ideas were beginning to take hold earlier than most people imagine, especially with the liberty to draw on historical and contextual sources. The ideological straitjacket of modernism had been put back in the closet.

Tiçian Papachristou
architect, New York City:
Yes, postmodern, although it would have more aptly been called “pre-modern.” That movement caught fire for some time and other architects began to come into the picture, while we kept moving along with the concrete burden on our backs. Until the early 1970s when things changed, the late 1960s was a heady time filled with idealism. You felt it—and it was an inseparable part of the buildings conceived in that era.

Stevens:
Prior to that era, I was disillusioned, I felt the country was moving in a direction I did not want it to. Then the 1960s gave me hope. In architectural terms, I don’t think one can just start there, you need to understand the origins of the ideas earlier.

Chermayeff:
It was wonderful. We had a hell of a time.

UHub fan (not verified):
The problem was these ideas were so intellectual and abstract that it’s nearly impossible for an average human being to sense any of them when physically in or around the actual building itself. This was a time of cold people with big ideas, and they were incapable of understanding how disconnected they were to the very people they were attempting to acknowledge.

Stevens:
It was a moment when you had all these creative fires going together. Of course some burned each other out or they burned out on their own. The collegiality eventually shifted because architecture became less of a communal effort, and instead gravitated to today’s pervasive star culture that puts people at poles against one another. But for a while during the postwar era, there was openness, collegiality —and so much became possible.

What changed?
What does “Brutalism” mean?


What about “Heroic?”


Why concrete?


What happened in Boston?


What changed?


The Personal Debate of Juan O’Gorman

Essay by Fabrizio Gallanti
Certain adjectives accompanying the word “debate” imply the existence of an intense dialogue between multiple subjects within a specific discipline. In that phrasal construction the word “debate” equates the concept of “discourse,” although it suggests a wider polyphony of voices. The words associated with “debate” are characteristic of the cultural world: the literary debate, the artistic debate, the architectural debate, etc.

In Latin languages the pairing tends to indicate the majority of the positions, proposals, points of views, and juxtaposed opinions around a practice: it defines a field and an atmosphere, what we could call an intellectual context that surrounds and informs a particular aesthetic activity. *Dibattito architettonico* or *debate arquitectónico* are not related to specific issues but rather indicate the dominant themes and tendencies around architecture, identified in time and space (and in fact an infinite quantity of thesis or academic research are dedicated to the status of such debates in defined historical periods and locations).

Historians and critics tend therefore to employ dialectic methodologies of analysis, identifying the differences between multiple authors, who often act inside currents and groups. Sometimes the debate actually occurred, with opposed and occasionally virulent opinions, struggling for affirmation and hegemony, using a vast array of media (publications, exhibitions, public presentations). One example could be the struggle in Soviet Russia between Constructivist artists gathered around Naum Gabo and Productivist artists, designers, and architects, for the determination of the role of the arts in the post-revolutionary society.

In other circumstances the differences are reconstructed ex-post with the intention to generate a more accurate portrayal of an era, recognizing nuances and differentiations that were not always perceived in the historical moment. In any case, a sensation of a certain width accompanies this notion as numerous subjects appear on a very populated scene, whether it is the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* in seventeenth-century France around the sources of inspiration for literature or the current discussion around net neutrality.

Considering architecture and because it is completely different than the aforementioned generalization, where many voices are involved, it is fascinating to observe the trajectory of one intellectual, the Mexican architect and artist Juan O’Gorman (1905–1982).

It can be said that a conspicuous part of the “architectural debate” in Mexico, between the ’20s and ’50s just happened within one person: him. Through his designed and built work, numerous public presentations, academic teaching, and writings, O’Gorman first strongly advocated for the affirmation of functionalist architecture in Mexico and then violently repudiated it. Both his positions were based not just on questions within the boundaries of architectural thinking, but on a wider moral and political conscience about the role of the architect in a country that emerged from the violence and turmoil of the revolution that lasted between 1910 and 1917.

In his autobiography, published in 1973, O’Gorman dedicates numerous pages about the period of the civil war and the strategies of adaptation and survival vis-à-vis the different warring factions put in place by his father, Cecil Crawford O’Gorman, a mining engineer of Irish origin. Unable to attend school, and blocked at home, O’Gorman observed the cunning actions—a mix of bravery and piety—of his father to protect his family and friends.

The direct experience of the political violence of the ‘10s exerted a durable impression on him: on one hand stimulating questions about the same notion of Mexico and its identity but also revealing a society segmented along extremely profound lines of class division and inequality. Throughout his career the ethical question of the role of the architect with respect to inequality recurrent, determining major consequences in O’Gorman’s life.

In 1921 he started to attend the school of architecture of the Universidad Nacional de México, while working as a draftsman for the cement company Eureka between 7 and 10 in the morning in order to pay for his studies. The school was still under the influence of the Beaux-Arts movement, lazily promoted by aging architects, who almost never appeared to teach. Together with other students, O’Gorman approached the subsecretary of education of the period, who then forced the professors to return to class. Due to his talents in drawing, O’Gorman often collaborated with the offices of architects who incarnated the new emerging tendencies of modern architecture: Carlos Tarditi, José Villagrán García, and Carlos Obregón. He attributed his inclination for the functionalist language of his early projects to the teaching of the architect Guillermo Zárraga and the engineer José Antonio Cuevas. In 1924, O’Gorman received a copy of *Vers une architecture* of Le Corbusier, a turning point in his trajectory. In 1929, investing the
money from his design for a small bank at the Obregón office, he purchased two tennis courts in the San Angel district, where he built a small house that incarnated his ideological position as architect. The project was extreme in its stripped austerity, a small wonder of industrial materials and solutions left visible, surpassing for its radicalism the examples of Le Corbusier that O’Gorman studied carefully. In his autobiography he stated that he wanted to create à Corbusierian machine à habiter and so he did. Shortly after, on the adjacent site, artists Diego de Rivera and Frida Kahlo commissioned him to design their studios, finished in 1931, and that became recognizable icons of the new Mexican functionalist architecture.

Throughout the ’30s O’Gorman multiplied his public appearances, through conferences and articles, vehemently supporting the cause of functionalist architecture, considered as the unique way to deliver the necessary quantities of housing and services for the working class. In the same period he was working for the Secretary of Education, designing over twenty-five functionalist schools. He contributed to the foundation of a new architecture school, the Escuela Superior de Ingeniería y Arquitectura Instituto Politecnico Nacional, while still formally a student of the Universidad Nacional (in fact, he was threatened with expulsion but then managed to graduate in 1936).

His positions were confronted with those of traditionalist architects, seeking to defend an idea of “humanist” architecture. The promotion of functionalism in architecture was clearly articulated in the lecture that he gave at the Sociedad de Arquitectos Mexicanos in 1933. The debate was organized around the nature of Mexican architecture: eleven traditionalist architects, many of them prominent members of the cultural elite of the country, attacked the only three modernists invited to the seminar, O’Gorman himself, Álvaro Aburto, and Juan Legarreta. The juxtaposition was rooted in a political reading of the post war condition: the goal of efficiency, economy, and the urgency to satisfy basic needs. In fact, the divergence around the issue of spiritual values was primarily political, between reactionary and progressive forces: O’Gorman wanted to act on the structural level of society, while issues of form, taste, and style were perceived as bourgeois super structural additions. In his lecture, O’Gorman proposes to adopt the concept of “technical architecture,” rather than modern, international, or functionalist to strengthen the idea of architecture as a useful practice at the service of the majority of citizens. Through the presentation the figure of the engineer as a model emerged often, analogously to the position of Le Corbusier in Vers une architecture. To mock his pompous opponents he evoked the wisdom of Mies van der Rohe, when accused of just designing boxes: “What’s wrong with boxes?”

In the light of his extreme and consistent ideological position in the ’30s, the later rejection of functionalist architecture by O’Gorman represents a fascinating historiographical enigma. Disillusioned by the appropriation of the technical language in architecture by what he considered to be profit seeking developers and investors, after 1935 O’Gorman gradually retrieved from the architectural profession, to dedicate himself to painting, especially public commissioned large murals. In his own residence, a cavernous folly built in 1955 in the Pedregal suburb, it is possible to read a novel interest in organic architecture, combined with decorative motifs from pre-Colombian Mexican sources, similar to the mosaics that he was realizing for the new library building of the UNAM campus (1956). In two lectures of the same period, O’Gorman advocated for the approach of Frank Lloyd Wright, while criticizing the lack of humanity of modernist architecture. It is particularly striking how while he attacked numerous architects, whom he earlier admired, O’Gorman included a very harsh self critical analysis of his own trajectory, recognizing to have failed to understand the relevance of Wright: he wrote that because of his “lack of talent” he used Le Corbusier as a reference instead. The negative appraisal of functionalism was rooted in a political reading of the post war condition: the International Style became the language of the new world power, the United States, and thus was being imported in Mexico by the ruling capitalist elites, without acknowledging the legacy of the work developed there in the ’30s. In a surprising volte-face,
traditional Mexican architecture and art appear to be the sole possible incarnation and expression of the oppressed, for whom O’Gorman still wanted to operate: in order to save his ideological position, he had to sacrifice aesthetics.¹

O’Gorman said: “the knowledge of traditional forms of art, gives to the artist, and especially to the architect, a material from which to proceed ... to create an expressive modern work alive in its own time,” a surprising position that incorporated many of the opinions of his opponents of twenty years earlier.⁷

Located in the archives of American architecture historian Esther McCoy and studied by Keith Eggener, the unpublished manuscript “The Degeneration of Architecture in Mexico Today” is perhaps the epitome of the controversial inner debate that agitated O’Gorman through his life, combining numerous themes explored in his Mexican conferences.⁸

As stated by Eggener, the forty-eight pages of typed text submitted to the journal are a paper battlefield, charged with hand written annotations and corrections, a legible proof of the O’Gorman’s tortuous inner struggles (harsh style, perhaps, being one of the reasons for the journal not to publish it). The text includes scathing comments on many modernist “masters”: Gropius is criticized for not understanding organic architecture, Le Corbusier is described as a Swiss Puritan with fascist inclinations, and the work of Mies van der Rohe is dismissed for its abstraction.

“In synthesis, functionalism in architecture is mechanically reasonable and humanly illogical because man is not a machine” is the summary of the distance that O’Gorman feels with his own past. The architectural production in Mexico during the ‘50s is considered as a decorative iteration of functionalist motifs, without being functional. The feeling of loss of an ethic and political position is central in O’Gorman thinking, which is influenced by the popular rejection of the modernist language (“people calls them square boxes with square windows”). This dichotomy between morality and design is similar to the increasing critique of a normative modernism expressed within the CIAM in the ’50s accompanied by and quest for a return to the progressive origins of modern architecture.²

What is fascinating in the essay is the historical overview of modern architecture, produced from a peripheral platform, Mexico, in that case. The final diagnosis is correct, not only about the discipline (modernism is on the wane), but more in general about the relations between developed and underdeveloped countries, about the class composition of the Mexican society, and the allegiances of the dominant elite to a cosmopolitan jet-set, and about the political struggles ahead.

There is another coherence and continuity to be found in O’Gorman’s thinking, which is about the role of design as a motor of collective progress, where the personal debate between international functionalism and national tradition is just the superficial crust. Not many could engage in such a deep critique. O’Gorman had to do it alone, until his end.

⁴ Mies van der Rohe (Lecture at the Society of Mexican Architects), Mexico D.F., October 18, 1955) in Arroyo, Juan O’Gorman.
⁵ In his autobiography the decision to close his studio in 1938 is described as a pragmatic choice, related to costs, very much in line with his materialist attitude. O’Gorman continued though to teach architectural design at the school that he founded.
⁶ The same idea of Mexicanidad is also a permanent cultural construction, initially promoted by the ruling party, the PRI, artificially blending multiple historical sources. The adoption of stronger nationalist positions from O’Gorman is similar to the ideological changes of the Soviet Union under Stalin, which were very important within the political and cultural debate in Mexico.
⁷ “Más allá del funcionalismo (I). La arquitectura moderna y sus relaciones (¿Su aceptación popular?),” (Lecture at the Society of Mexican Architects), Mexico D.F., October 18, 1955), in Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, Juan O’Gorman, arquitecto y pintor (Mexico: UNAM, 1982).
The Gila does not always run in the same bed; whenever it changes the boundary must change, and no survey nor anything else can keep it from changing...

It forms of itself a more apparent and enduring monument of the boundary than any that can be made by art.
A 1964 El Paso Times press photograph depicts Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos and US President Lyndon B. Johnson, each standing on the domestic soil of their respective countries, stepping towards one another with open palms (fig. 1). It is the moment directly before a handshake atop the survey line dividing Mexico and the United States, an act choreographed as the symbolic end to the Chamizal land dispute in debate for over a century. Behind them stands a chrome obelisk monument on the international seam, highly polished and proudly new. It reflects the political gesture in high definition. Surrounding crowds from El Paso and Juárez, documented in the tens of thousands, saw the event doubled: four hands reaching out in mutual, amplified greeting. A map serving as backdrop to the scene calls out the course of the Rio Grande River with dotted lines and labels land as “To Mexico” and “To United States,” signifying, with the abstract clarity of diagram, the latest division of international limits. On September 25, 1964 the United States federal government publicized a grand gesture of return, an act reported by Mexico City’s Excélsior as “the greatest diplomatic triumph in Mexico’s history.”

The land in question, and the borderline that divided El Paso from Juárez, was disputed soon after the Treaty of 1848 specified the Rio Grande as an international boundary. The natural element that preexisted the region’s inhabitation and motivated its settlement, chosen as a stable marker of sovereign limits, proved indifferent to politics. Between consecutive surveys in 1852 and 1873 a series of natural shifts pushed the river south, redistributing approximately 600 acres of land from Mexico to the United States. Both countries claimed ownership of the territory. Mexico believed the original survey line should be honored, while the United States claimed the boundary shift was gradual and, in accordance with international law, the territory was theirs. To complicate matters further, a small parcel of land nicknamed Cordova Island was recognized as a Mexican enclave north of the Rio Grande, created after a man-made channel streamlined the river in an effort to control flooding and additional erosion.

The Chamizal ceremony celebrated the signing of the Chamizal Treaty, an international agreement that honored the 1852 survey line and launched a major landscape-engineering project to redirect the Rio Grande back to its historic course. The location of this ceremony, specifically the handshake of Presidents Johnson and Mateos, is of central importance. It is a sense of location, rather than the location itself, that supports the occurrence of the event on many fronts. The public audience is lead to believe, through the inclusion of a new border monument, that the handshake was situated directly atop the international seam, the successful negotiation of which serving as ceremonial impetus. However, this reading is complicated by the fact that first, the international border between El Paso and Juárez would ultimately be defined not by a material monument on dry land but by a concrete channel for the Rio Grande. Second, the ceremony took place at a high school in El Paso that was near the border but not actually on the border. Perhaps this anxiety of location produced the necessity for a diagrammatic backdrop to underline context. Map, monument, and handshake
act in unison to institutionally project a geographically specific location, an image that would be quickly disseminated across both countries by national media.\(^7\)

The following analysis frames compositional fragments of the *El Paso Times* photograph as political props, defined as material elements that support the border as a project performed and in turn allow for the reconstitution of national limits to occur. By tracing the role and history of territory, monument, and federal agents central to the Chamizal ceremony one is able to understand the relevance of things represented and, more importantly, assert the absence of both landscape-engineering and urbanism—elements that played a vital role in the definition of the United States-Mexico border during the mid-twentieth century yet were denied visual representation.

* * *

The *El Paso Times* photograph can be read on two levels. The first reading is one of fact, or truthful representation of an event. It acts as evidence and alibi for time, place, and circumstance, elements that are not in dispute or open to interpretation.\(^8\) The fixed nature of the image and its distribution by national media promotes the action as a binding legal contract.\(^9\) Yet far from mutually exclusive, facts are open to interpretation. Each singular fact or description is complicated by a series of alternate realities framed by varying contexts, compositions, and vantage points, all, as sociologist Kim Lane Scheppele explains, “equally true but differently organized.”\(^10\) Further, such projected narratives are constructed with motive and intention; they are anything but neutral. It is only through a close reading that one is able to extract and navigate elements unseen.

Through consideration of alternative realities, a second reading of the photograph as social fiction emerges. The institutionally framed image operates on the gap between truthful description and public mass communication.\(^11\)

Photographs, especially those that emanate from news media, are public artifacts to be interpreted. Often serving as secondary visual support alongside descriptive text, these images contain their own agency that expands far beyond the individual caption. Even when the image is directed by a single figure and carefully composed, ownership or authority of meaning does not exist.\(^12\) While it is possible, even necessary, to consider photographs as an assemblage of components, each with their own history and relevance, an overall reading of the artifact cannot be reduced to a single element. The *El Paso Times* photograph can thus be framed as an assemblage of actors—including territory, monument, politicians, press, and audience. Once traced, individual threads can be reconstructed to offer new meaning.

The relationship of territorial limits to riverbed is the first thread to examine, depicted as unified—and static—vectors at the Chamizal ceremony. Such representation ignores a history of disjunction between natural barrier and theoretical boundary line that was well documented on the United States-Mexico border. Confronted with the unruly course of the Gila River, a regional waterway that designated an early portion of the international boundary, nineteenth-century commissioners William H. Emory and José Salazar reconciled the futility of their efforts with poetic reflection. The river was better suited as a monument to the evolving forces acting on the border, they would write, than as a fixed limit of sovereign territory. Any attempt at survey was inconsequential. Shifting natural boundaries were given explicit representation four decades later when a fifteen-mile stretch of the Colorado
River was surveyed in 1893 by the United States and then again by Mexico one year later. “Official map No. 19” shows their efforts superimposed, revealing a tangled network of tributaries and islands formed through time, or perhaps simply by subjective viewpoints (fig. 2). All 1,255 miles of the Rio Grande could thus be conceived as a dynamic path with an internal logic of its own, redistributing national territory at will. Yet, as unsettling as the concept was to governing bodies, such acts of natural deviance were only of consequence in settled locations where built structures and populations could be quantified along with acreage lost or gained.

The boundary shifts that accumulated between El Paso and Juárez by the beginning of the twentieth century produced a thick liminal zone of contestation. An early 1909 meeting between Presidents Taft and Porfirio Díaz to negotiate the land was disrupted by a violent riot that led in headlines. “Diaz-Taft Meeting marred by Tragedy; Boys Duel Over Flags,” ran the banner of the Atlanta Constitution. The event overshadowed Taft’s visit to Juárez, reported as the first time in history a United States president traveled outside of national limits. A year later, an arbitration proposal (mediated by an “impartial Canadian jurist”) that split disputed land equally between nations was deemed a failure. Both the United States and Mexico rejected the compromise, concluding in a final report: “The present decision terminates nothing; settles nothing. It is simply an invitation for international litigation. It breathes the spirit of unconscious but nevertheless unauthorized compromise rather than of judicial determination.” Not only was territory in question, which included a residential population and small industrial center of factories and warehouses, but also the fundamental relationship of sovereign limits to historic boundary markers. Cordova Island, a Mexican enclave north of the river in otherwise United States territory, exacerbated this tension. Occupying a geographic position outside the normative national bounds, the land mass became a troubled grey zone for federal jurisdiction. Nicknamed el barrio del Diablo (or “neighborhood of the devil”) it was a site noted for drug smuggling and illegal immigration.

Due to sparse historical records, largely based on personal accounts, the sole geographic reference for the Rio Grande agreed upon by both nations was the original survey conducted in 1852. This survey line held authority for over one hundred and twelve years, cited in ongoing international negotiations and ultimately serving as the primary reference for the reconstruction of the river in the 1960s. Amidst encroaching Soviet influence on Mexico and Latin America, John F. Kennedy reopened the Chamizal case in 1962. The threat of communist infiltration through the nation’s southern edge motivated resolution with then Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos citing the dispute as the “number one problem in US-Mexican relations.” The land was negotiated within a larger international program, the Alliance for Progress, which provided United States government aid to Latin America—publicized as support to “complete the revolution of the Americas” and ward off Soviet control. Along with funding in support of democratic governments, education, and social housing the United States officially recognized the original survey
line between El Paso and Juárez, effectively “giving back” 600 acres of land to Mexico.

A map from the city of El Paso titled “Land Affected by the Chamizal Settlement” shows the land in question as well as the location of the Chamizal ceremony (fig. 3). Grey poché fills the disputed territory, bound by the Rio Grande in the south and its future (or nineteenth-century past) course in the north. A thick dotted line labeled “relocated river channel” snakes through the center, representing the 1852 survey superimposed on an urbanism that had since grown to a half million in population. A new “border highway” is offset north of the channel, signifying dual lateral infrastructures of water and transportation that would give uninterrupted material presence to the borderline. While boundaries, acreage, and infrastructure are presented with diagrammatic clarity, the displaced residents of the Chamizal, estimated at 5,600 at the time the land was rezoned, are denied visual presence. A speckled hatch over the contested land obscures any reading of residential side streets or human occupation.

The location of the ceremony is labeled with a number one, taking place in United States territory on a sports field at Bowie Senior High School. While ample space was a requirement for the large public gathering, it should be noted the distance the event took place from the downtown districts of El Paso and Juárez. These adjacent urban zones, connected by three international bridges linking the urban communities and labeled as “new ports of entry,” are in close proximity and linked with a continuous commercial strip. In comparison to Bowie Senior High School and the simulation of context that was constructed there, a distinctive site existed less than two miles away, operating in reality as an international joint between the two nations. When given the choice between real site and abstracted reproduction, federal administrators chose the latter.

Perhaps a generic symbol of binational cooperation was the point intended, a site that could stand in for a range of geographies on the US federal agenda. The Chamizal was just one of many locations mentioned by Lyndon B. Johnson in his dedication speech that afternoon. Johnson linked to broader territory with the phrase, “We have found peaceful roads to the solution of differences from Chamizal to Panama,” and then spiraled to address a host of global others: Africa, the Middle East, Israel, China, Japan, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Moscow, Cyprus, Vietnam, Congo, Cuba, Greece, Turkey, and Lebanon.

The local history of Mexico and the United States at the Chamizal was subsumed by the larger concern of Cold War politics. For Johnson, the event was a symbol “to all the world that the most troublesome of problems can yield to the tools of peace,” but more importantly to the Soviet Union that Mexico (and the larger frontier of Latin America) was in cooperation with the United States in the midst of the Cold War. This promotion of the Chamizal, as a singular location symbolically expanded ad infinitum, leads to a reading of multiplicity by means of the various territories, borders, events, and monuments it was institutionally framed to represent.

For Adolfo López Mateos the ceremony symbolized far more than the correction of a historic injustice;
it was tied to the ongoing urban development of Mexico’s northern border, spearheaded through the federal program Programa Nacional Fronterizo or PRONA F. In the year of 1965 alone, head architect Mario Pani designed “regulatory” master plan developments and architectural projects for eight of twelve Mexican border cities including Juárez. The full urban ambition for Juárez was published in the journal Arquitectura/México and featured an economic free zone, the “Zona PRONAF,” to promote United States tourism through new shopping centers and a museum in close proximity to the border (fig. 4,5).

Despite a contemporary conception of the border as a geopolitical, urban zone, the Chamizal ceremony employed an anachronistic object—the border monument—to symbolize binational agreement. Historically, border monuments were positioned to correspond with a precise coordinate on the international survey line. Commissioned, inscribed and placed by both the United States and Mexico, they were unique bilateral objects operating across and reflecting on separate territories and philosophies of nationhood. The original monuments were designed in heavy cast-iron as material markers, sequentially numbered and intervisible from one lateral view to next along the entire length of the US-Mexico border west of the Rio Grande. These artifacts of visual reference operated as a set of standardized, engineered points, placed with geographic precision and objective finality. Their placement was inextricably linked to the constitution of sovereign limits, with the international seam bound to their exact location.

The form and operative position of the Chamizal Monument can be traced to the late nineteenth century. Measuring six-feet nine-inches tall and one-foot wide at the base, it was the same scale and proportion as border monuments deployed in a joint 1891 international survey but was of a different material and construction type. In comparison to the original material of rough cast-iron, the Chamizal Monument was one-of-a-kind and produced in gleaming chromium-plated steel. It reflected actions immediately adjacent in sharp clarity and the surrounding atmosphere with rippled distortion. One could imagine that without the context of political fanfare the monument would simply reflect its natural surroundings and effectually disappear, an anti-monument of sorts. It simultaneously represented and denied a geographically specific location. Though the artifact had binational inscriptions, it was not numbered in relation to existing monuments. It sat in obscured isolation, a single self-referential point that had no visual connection to a larger context. Further, rather than constructed or placed the monument was revealed to an awaiting audience, exposed from under a white sheet by the combined effort of Johnson and Mateos (fig. 6). At a moment when a conception of the bilateral had expanded far beyond the production of theoretical maps and monuments, the international boundary line as pure construct of the nation-state was asserted through simulacra and choreographed performance.
A series of unmarked images from the Chamizal ceremony, stored in the *El Paso Times* media archive, depict alternative views from that of the main press photograph. Offering a range of focal depths and taken at oblique angles and moments throughout the day, they provide valuable information as to the federal scenic design and broader context of the event. The archival *El Paso Times* images, unedited and without organization, sit between the constructs of government and press to offer a distinct perspective. “Unmarked image No. 179” reveals the backdrop map to be a thin plane, reminiscent of a grounded billboard positioned within an expansive crowd (fig. 7). It is just large enough to fill the frame of a frontal photograph and block the background of buses, trees, and onlookers. An expanded view of the crowd in relation to both presidents and First Ladies Claudia Johnson and Eva Mateos is provided in another unmarked series image. Taken from above the heads of an applauding public, the composition is centered on Lyndon Johnson holding the hand of Adolfo López Mateos in the air (fig. 8). The obelisk monument that served the proud focus of the main press photograph barely registers, mirroring adjacent figures at the base only to stand out above the crowd. The alternate images make clear a construction of place that could only be represented as total environment through an equally constructed photographic image, framed by a privileged and unobstructed frontal viewpoint.

After the ceremony the Chamizal Monument was removed to make way for the reconstruction of the Rio Grande. The international boundary between El Paso and Juárez was constituted in reality not by a symbolic object but through an urban-scale landscape-engineering project. The concrete channel that redirected the river back to its historic course was 4.5-miles long, 116-feet wide, and required 78 million dollars to construct. An aerial image from 1966 midway through construction shows the full scale of the project (fig. 9). The view looks east, laterally down the borderline with El Paso labeled on the left and Ciudad Juárez on the right. The freeform course of the Rio Grande zigzags vertically down the image, in close proximity to Mexican urban development. The nascent path of the new channel reaches to the sports fields of Bowie Senior High School, captured in this one moment as if terminating directly on the past site of the Chamizal ceremony. A comparable view from 1968 pictures the project complete (fig. 10). The straight-edged lines and tight curves of the concrete channel, rendered as an engineered super-highway, boldly upstage the last remnants of the natural riverbed.
the new channel is a streamlined sign of the old. The formerly disputed Chamizal territory sits between, vacant and restricted from development after being designated a national park and historic site in 1966.

If the *El Paso Times* photographs represent a social fiction of place and placing, then the aerial images of the Rio Grande channel provide evidence of the realized alternative. It was precisely the acts of engineering that governed the reconstitution of international limits—in relation to geographic survey and channel construction—that were denied visual presence at the Chamizal ceremony. Whereas the Chamizal Monument functioned as a symbol of binational agreement, a political prop that organized the main press image, the channel was an instrument of binational division that gave uninterrupted material presence to the boundary. Thus, as an alternative to the projected act of “giving back,” the negotiation of the Chamizal can be read as a means to assert territorial limits and spatial distance at the height of the Cold War. Abstract survey lines and the soft, shifting edge of the Rio Grande riverbed were replaced by formalized concrete infrastructure.

Postscript

On December 13, 1968, four years after the Chamizal ceremony, Lyndon Johnson and Gustavo Diaz Ordaz traveled to the border of El Paso and Juárez to celebrate the completion of the Rio Grande channel. They met at the center of the newly built Santa Fe International Bridge, where the Chamizal Monument had been stripped from its base and relocated. In a repeat performance of the 1964 ceremony with modified actors, location, and marker, the two presidents clasped hands in front of the chrome obelisk and symbolically atop the survey line. Again, the ritual was documented as binding social contract and disseminated by international press.

After shaking hands, Johnson and Ordaz approached a platform with a raised red button. Their final act was orchestrated as a display of federal control over nature and the riverbed: a simultaneous compression by both presidents was rigged to detonate an earth dam a half-mile away, allowing the river behind to surge through its new course. However, the performance of wilderness tamed ended in anticlimax. An insufficient blast of dynamite resulted in a “trickle” of water to emerge instead of a mighty current. In a final moment of failed rupture, the federal act of engineering that reshaped sovereign limits was not even allowed presence through the choreographed act of simulation. Instead, fittingly, it was represented solely by the malfunction of a single button.
Territorial Performance and the Chamizal Dispute


3. See; Excélsior, September 21, 1964, 8.


9. ibid.


11. This paragraph is adapted from Kim Lane Squepele’s analysis of the term “legal fiction” in her text “Facing Facts in Legal Interpretation.” It should be noted that the relationship of scientific operations performed under difficult circumstances.”


17. The speech of Adolfo López Mateos also privileged Cold War rhetoric over the local territorial implications of the Chamizal, focusing on the international relationship with the United States following WWII. See “Discurso del presidente López Mateos en la ceremonia de la entrega de Chamizal,” 195.


20. Detailed urban redelineation plans for Ciudad Juárez can be found in “Pino regidor de Ciudad Juárez,” Architecura/ México, 1963.

It is a beautiful sequence of images. Breaking trough raising arms and placards, a young woman reaches the police barrier. Opens her jacket, lean backwards, and reveals a message on a self made white T-shirt: “We don’t need New York to teach us how to talk.”

In 2011, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation inaugurated—together with car-maker BMW—The BMW Guggenheim Lab. Rather than taking the form of a museum, the Lab was, instead, a “combination of think tank, public forum, and community center,” intended to bring programming out of the institutional space and to a wider audience.2 To this end, it was designed not only as a temporary and mobile structure, but also as a “Major New Global Initiative” stretching out over New York, Berlin, and Mumbai from 2011 to 2013.3 Whereas museums in previous decades brought a new sense of relevance to architecture concerning its role in intervening in urban space to produce financial and cultural growth—what has been called the “Bilbao Effect”—in the Lab the aim was no longer to transform the space, but rather the subject. “We felt the need for a project that was more about people, about experiences, and about new ideas on how to make city life better in a variety of contexts,” co-curator David van der Leer explained. Thus, following a series of experiments on social engagement developed by museums in recent years, the Lab encouraged citizens “to acquire the skills to live in cities comfortably and responsibly.”4 Some of them, however, asked: “Why do we need a Lab to conduct such discussions?”5

The architecture of the Lab did not have doors, windows or walls, protection against natural forces, or climate control systems. It voluntarily renounced those features that generally define a traditional architectural interior space. The ambition of the Lab was to become a piece of stage machinery capable of magically transforming an urban void into a gathering space. Its architects, Atelier Bow-Wow, following the concept of behaviorology, designed the Lab as an infrastructure that can be used and transformed, “giving back a sense of autonomy of spatial practice to citizens.”6 It aimed to foster accessibility, and to construct an institution in constant flux that would be able to span across three continents and democratic systems—something that its “naked, unassuming aesthetic” was meant to facilitate. Paradoxically, inside its interior-without-walls, the practices of architecture were confined within political boundaries; enclosures of an unstable and yet material condition that erect an institutional space.

In that moment, it was the police barrier what seemed to be the last threshold leading to a complex of galleries, bars, and artist studios in the Pfefferberg complex at the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg, where the Lab had just landed. Inside, workshops, conferences, and even meditation classes, were free and open for all those wishing to participate. Images of people performing in outdoor events,
Circulating Borders: The BMW Guggenheim Lab
doing fitness, cycling, making prototypes, robots, or solar coffee-bean roasters were suddenly confronted by scenes of political disagreement. “Protests are a symptom of a healthy and equitable society,” argued Atelier Bow-Wow Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, after being asked about the demonstrations. Intended to create a platform for active participation and to produce a spectator with a more create a platform for active participation and to produce a spectator with a more create a platform for active participation and to produce a spectator with a more

demonstrators protesting it; “Berlin had a reputation as a city of diversity and freedom that must be protected,” she continued. Two months before her intervention in the Parliament, and this time at the Brandenburg Gate, Koppers would accept a symbolic key from a BMW Plant Manager Hermann Bohre in front of twenty BMW R900RT “Authority” motorcycles—a model especially designed for authority use—given as a present to the Berlin Police by the company. The friction between the scene in the Parliament and that in the street enacts the circulating borders of contemporary institutions as they extend beyond the limits of the architectural objects to the sponsored structures and mechanisms of social order governing the space. From cultural complexes, urban laboratories, and Parliament houses, to social media or media campaigns, the architectures designed for debate normalize the space of agreement and disagreement, consensus and dispute. As the high walls of cultural institutions seem to further loosen up with yet another initiative for public participation and citizen empowerment, other spatial arrangements emerge for the appropriation of the political and the public character of the urban space; other forms of control and consumption appear on the public sphere, which, in turn, define the spaces and possibilities of debate. Meanwhile, the bodies of the uninvited carry a message: “We don’t need you to teach us how to talk.”

1 This text is based on Marina Otero Verzier’s Master thesis developed within the framework of the CCCP program at GSAPP (Columbia University) and advised by Professor Felicity D. Scott. Fragments of this thesis have been previously published in CIRCO M.R.T. Cooperativa de ideas: Madrid, 2012.


8 Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, in an interview conducted by the author in New York on April 18, 2012.


The Fargo House is a contemporary art and architectural oasis located in a formerly derelict 1890s-era Victorian house on Fargo Avenue in Buffalo, NY. Artist and architect Dennis Maher acquired the property in 2009, when it was slated for demolition. Maher has been living in the house and simultaneously transforming it since that time. Excavations have been made into the walls, floors, and ceilings in order to intensify the house’s layers. This has been complemented by the continuous accumulation of salvaged materials and artifacts. The house has become a hybrid of post-industrial construction and archaeological dig; its surfaces and spaces are the patterns of daily living and the instabilities of objects. Within the house, operations of making and unmaking expose a world that is always on the brink of becoming. In 2013, Maher inaugurated the house’s first floor gallery space, which hosts public exhibitions, and initiated a program of workshops, tours, and special events that have established the house as a forum for the urban imagination. What follows is a dialogue between the house, its inhabitant, and a visitor.

Dialogue Concerning A House’s World System (After Galileo)

Text by Dennis Maher
INTERLOCUTORS:

INHABITANT, HOUSE, VISITOR

INHABITANT: We resolved to meet today and discuss as clearly and in as much detail as possible the character and the efficacy of those laws to which your walls, floors, and ceilings, as well as your objects and furnishings do abide. I have heard it stated that it is you—not I—who is the prime mover of your substances. We may begin our discussion by examining the plausibility of that hypothesis: what is the source of your movements, and how great is your force and effect? For this it is necessary to establish the solubility of your constitution, which is exemplified by the invariant as well as temporary “continuities” of your domain.

HOUSE: Do I not demonstrate that walls, floors, and ceilings are inadequately suited to define the dimensions of space? Is it not first proved that walls, floors, and ceilings, being malleable in every way, are no more solid than the flow of matter through my orifices? To wit: a transformation is made only according to some active pulse; when there is a transformation of wall into ceiling, it is not because the wall lacks surface, or because space requires definition, but because the wall is a body, and is coursed by movements that originate beyond its own bounds. Do you not think that in all the corners of my reach, the dust that falls is anything but the thickness of evolving form? Do you imagine that my propensity for change is due to what some have called a restless temperament, or can you see that my mirror is aimed toward a city and its ever-advancing storm? The thing called “wall” is a cloud of many filaments and, like other constellations within my arc, has an inertia charged by relations among constituent parts.
Dialogue Concerning a House's World System (After Galileo)
I: To tell you the truth, I do not feel impelled by all these reasons to grant the animate nature of your contents. Any house that has a beginning, middle, and end ought not to be called continuous. And I feel no compulsion to grant that the malleability of walls, floors, and ceilings is due to anything more or less than the actions of a dweller who incessantly cuts and collects, finding in the openings and closings the forms you endeavor to evolve. I do not even understand, let alone believe, that the agency of one body can be mistaken for that of another; neither do I conceive that without the dweller’s tools and hands any of this might come to pass.

H: It seems that you ridicule these reasons, and yet all of them were inscribed long ago within the matter at my core. You, who are an artist and an architect, and for whom philosophies of space might transcend those of physics, seem now to scorn their mysteries.

I: I have long held the magic of architecture in high esteem, and that fantasies are nurtured within your midst, I know very well. But these mysteries which caused such follies so as to mistake the “inner” for the “outer” chair, these I do not believe at all. Rather, I know that, in order to prevent the furniture from taking command, there must be a pattern of use and wear which is exposed in the ritualized activities of the dreamer’s waking life. Therefore, I believe that the spaces within which I reside are generated as much through the friction of daily patterns against your edges, as through the projection of a material psyche unleashed.

H: I do not want to join the number of those who are too curious about matter’s mysteries. But as to the point in hand, I reply that the dimensions of space are commensurate to the dimensions of mind; and if a more cogent demonstration of the fissure between mind and matter had existed, it would not have been necessary to enlist the aid of your unending repairs.

I: You might at least add, “if the fissure was known or if the depth of its chasm had been measured.” Visitor, you would be doing me a great favor by giving me some effective arguments, if there are any clear enough to be comprehended by me.

VISITOR: Not only by you, but by the House too; and not merely comprehended, but already known—though perhaps without your realizing it. And to make them easier to understand, let us take this paper and pen and draw a plan. First we shall mark the boundaries of the House as I remember them, and draw the lines separating room from room. I ask which of these is to your mind the one that determines the difference between container and contained and why?

I: I should say the front door, and none other, because the threshold that it delineates is unique, distinct, and determinate. The infinite other lines are constantly shifting, moving in, out, over, and under one another. It seems to me that the choice ought to depend upon that which is unique and definite.

V: We have the front door, then, as determining the difference between container and contained. We now add a rear door at the opposite end of the house, so that between the two doors is a space of which I want to show you the breadth. Therefore, starting from the first door, and proceeding towards the second, tell me how and which way I will go, so as to avoid being absorbed by the space between. Would you determine it according to a succession of events, such as the initial knock, the turn of the knob and the swing of the hinge, or according to the marks that I have drawn here, or…?

H: According to the events, and not according to the marks, such being already excluded for such purpose.
Dialogue Concerning a House’s World System (After Galileo)
Visitor, you should take neither of them, seeing that the events are erratic and unpredictable, and that the lines, as previously established, are indeterminate. Instead, I encourage you to traverse an alternate path. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine:

A table inside of the House.

When I tell you that this table is also a lamp, and that the lamp is also a wall, and that the wall has many windows, which may be either open or closed, and that, at times, the windows frame furniture, into which the stairs descend, into a cabinet with many drawers, within which other houses are contained, do you not see that the front door of which we speak is the most legible difference within a world of and as borderless as night, at the same time that they indicate to us the persistence of known, recognizable things? Your absorption, Visitor, within this world is a certainty, so much so that other visitors will confirm for you the impossibility of absolute focus. The central dilemma around which we have been circling is to identify who or what is the instigator of this matrix. According to others who have brought their tools to bear upon the House, the inspiration for their actions has had nothing to do with my will as the Inhabitant, but rather with directions imparted to them straight from the walls. “The House made me do it,” they tell me, at which point, as you might surmise, my incredulity rears its head, and, like an astonished and frustrated imp in a fairy tale, I begin to stomp up and down on the floors, pound my fists on the plaster, slam the doors shut, and forcefully shut off and on the lights. When at last I have calmed down and, lifting my head from my hands, have come to survey the brute that surrounds me, I see that there is now a new place to sit, to rest, to dine, to sip my tea, alone or with many others, around a table that the House endeavored to conjure; a table that is also a temple, that is cradled by a dream, that is fueled by the labor of kitchens and dining rooms that are everywhere under construction. My consolation arrives as I take my place at this table among the real and imagined builders who are now smiling, laughing and critiquing the joints. At that moment, I am struck with the certainty that its plane of consumption will never be hungry for feast or company.

Well then, I suggest that we eat.
In the essays *Neo-“Classicism” and Modern Architecture I and II*, Colin Rowe brings attention to the resurgence of neo-Palladian symmetry and centrality as a minor revolt against Modernism’s preference for peripheral composition. With this stunningly simple yet striking juxtaposition of compositional difference, Rowe debates the Modernist claims for an architecture whose forms are mechanized, universal, and beyond taste. This mid-century debate, with the help of other notable figures such as Venturi and Rossi, would usher in a new post-functionalist discourse in architecture. Such a seismic upheaval seems impossible today. In that time, a collective project was discernible and in plain sight, establishing a discursive center that one could faithfully support or, if in dissension, could define a critical counter-position against. However, at least since the new millennium, there has been a post-critical malaise and a disinterest in the architectural manifesto. Postmodern horizontality enables a panoply of friendly conversations in lieu of debates across entrenched positions.

If we are to begin a debate today, against whom would we argue? We must begin by searching out those protagonists hiding in plain sight within the friendly and agreeable multitude, camouflaged by the very many styles, *partis*, and ornamentations of today’s endless difference. Presented here are a hit list of eight topics, the double entendre of chart-topping popularity and murderous vendetta fully intended. Identifying these topics establishes *mise en place*, a preparation for future debate over architectural principles whose popularity and innocuousness might be the very symptoms of an entrenched set of unexamined ideologies that require antagonizing if not ultimate termination. This list proposes terms conjoined with their negative prefix such as (de)contextualism, (non)indexicality, (dis)integration; a sampler and taste test to seek out the more scintillating and productive architectural antagonisms that may emerge from the clutter of architecture’s present-day bazaar. An illustration accompanies each proposed antagonism in the form of a destabilized image. After the easy optimism of the past two decades, we are once again venturing into the wilderness of uncertainty. It is exciting to be on the hunt once again.
For some reason, context remains one of the primary demands made upon architecture. Even the most exuberant and iconoclastic buildings of recent years rely on contextualism, however dubious: twisting for sight lines, surface undulation for sailboats, and structural weaving for indigenous basketry. No matter how determined these arguments get, they can never stabilize the relations between architecture and its site. The most cherished architecture never cops to context, transfiguring its site while also remaining removed from it; think temples. Inversely, the more architecture bends towards context, the stranger it gets; think Zaha. If in both diametrically opposed strategies architecture always produces exceptions, then the alibi of context is superfluous. As Aldo Rossi well understood, though architecture is generated by the collective sedimentation of cities, the persistence of architectural form ultimately estranges itself from its origin.

Diagrams in architecture attempt to clarify and streamline architecture for various reasons: sometimes to organize, sometimes to justify, sometimes to charm. However tempting it might be to substitute the diagrammatic punch line for the design itself, the diagram is never the architecture, it is only a part of the design act: a preliminary show of forces, a wiggle, and a lift. But as the strange paradox of Kahn’s designs for Philadelphia Center City demonstrate, the translation of traffic flows into stolid archiforms unveils the diagrams ultimate obsolescence. The generative logos no longer animate the building, which has become an inert consolidation of mass, generating its own subsequent relations and forces as it encounters the Other. Thank god for the whimsy of cities. In its engagement with architecture, it will never contain itself within an architect’s diagram.
(non)Indexicality

In progressive architecture, indexicality is a technique that avoids the showy signifiers of traditional architectural styles and revivalisms. Stripped of symbolic garments, Peter Eisenman has suggested architecture possesses weak signifiers unable to explain its own relevance. Therefore, in lieu of stable signs, indexicality has been a tool for architecture to reveal the various influences on and the traces of its formation. Since the failings of modernist millenarianism, architecture plays an increasingly unstable role within civic society such that architects increasingly rely on process, diagrams, and mark making as a storytelling device. Alternatively, the most dogmatic and persistent attachments societies have to architecture arise from signifiers and forms that have no indexical value. Folkism, classicism, and other revivalisms deploy the allure of symbols and motifs that endure by mutating across time and space. Without reverting to such retrograde sentimentalism, can we design a non-indexical and mutant symbolic architecture without need for the tracings of process and biographical justification?

(dis)Integration

Architecture has always privileged aesthetic pleasure achieved through the integration of parts. Classical proportion, gothic structure, baroque plasticity, modern modularity, and digital smoothing are all techniques with an underlying principle of integration, the foundation of architecture’s part-to-whole experiments. Most recently, integration is beset with new strategies, ambiguous gestalts, allusive figures, and object-coherence, all of which seek to destabilize the appearance of the whole. Whatever the disciplinary exercises, a (dis)integrative architecture would shed the anxieties of the “difficult whole” and needs no teleology of completeness. In its shifting qualities, the architecture’s various parts are left to their own coincidence; the left part need not know what the right part is doing. By sustaining thresholds and figures of difference, architecture can maximize multiple pleasures, narratives, and citizenship, perhaps stumbling upon an intimate whole full of holes.
The problem with innovation is that it is reactionary, always wanting to not be what already exists. And in assessing the future, it has become a model of planned benchmarks always collapsing future into the verifiable present. Running at a breakneck pace, innovation is not self-aware, using its own failures as an excuse to move onto the next big thing. Unfortunately, the adoption of innovation in architecture is incompatible with its temporal scale and incapable of amortizing its effects. Today’s innovation may lead to tomorrow’s nightmare. Stone bridges outlast steel ones, Glass skyscrapers blast death rays in all directions, Air conditioning once led to the Reagan revolution. As robots, 3D printing, and smart systems take over research priorities in architecture, are we still able to advocate for an architectural vanguard without technological contribution? Unlike electronic devices, a hallmark of architecture’s success is its ability to survive through old age, outlasting its own contemporary fetish. Lingering in its own withdrawn mystique, ancient architecture continues to generate new effects and meanings, a reliquary of unplanned innovations.

Complex building assemblies, with its network of vendors and consultants, are hollowing out the thickness of architecture, replacing it with many layers of unlike parts. Everything is inside everything. Impregnated and post-processed sandwiches of alloys, plastics, and composites now constitute ever more complicated buildings. Finding meaning and satisfaction through honest material expression is increasingly a fool’s errand. Similarly, digital technology and its representations have ushered us into the non-referential world of simulacra. The loss of medium specificity is not to be lamented; Greenburg has long been dead. Instead, the intricate combinatorial effects of new synthetics are something to be celebrated. Shedding our nostalgia over the natural world, material experimentation will redesign the sensory associations we have with the world, both reinforcing and upending medium specificity.
Architecture is one of the few disciplines where its representational media are both embedded within and autonomous from its means of production. Looking back, architects have operated in many strategic modes, renderings that simulate reality, collages that eschew realism, and drawings that obliterate buildings. However many polemical varieties have been deployed in the past, the recent progress in computation offers a new paradigm of representational provocation. Computing speeds allow desktop users to simulate precise material and lighting effects, thus collapsing space and time into a series of GUI sliders. These high-fidelity images squeeze out ambiguity and readership in favor of rapturous consumption and salesmanship. Clarity and saturation of the image becomes pornographic. With such robust platforms, we must now ask what new forms of foreplay and strip tease are afforded by the computer so that pleasure and interpretation are expanded in space and time.

In order to organize its many parts, architects have long constructed systems of proportions derived from the human figure. This humanist project begins with Vitruvius and is later revived in Renaissance treatises, further parsing the relations of human proportion as divine providence. And though the dogma of classicism has continued to underwrite the human-scale projects of architects, Leon Krier being prominent among them, proportions are not scales. The drawings of Francesco di Giorgio of a man on a church plan reveal the delirious and absurd proposition of confounding scale with proportion. By superimposing proportional systems of two unlike subjects, in this case that of a human onto that of an architecture, something non-scalar occurs. Considering the many conundrums that we find in the metropolis today, it would behoove us to continue di Giorgio’s project of proportional precision and scalar abstraction. Let us pile on the scales of infrastructure, hyper-objects, vermin, art festivals, food trucks, and global warming, striving towards an architecture of unincorporated scales.
The word debate possesses many connotations and forms. Inherent within the logic of all forms of the debate, however, is a binary structure or duality. In order for a debate to occur, two voices must exist. A provocation cannot occur without a response. What happens when one voice is silenced, or never even acknowledged? Within the architectural community, words like “post-anthropocentrism” and “object-oriented ontology” have recently been tossed around between the various pedagogical and theoretical debates within the discipline. But, what do these phrases and ideas mean in a world increasingly dominated by capitalist consumerism and globalized development?

This project is about debate, but not between established voices within the architectural discipline, but rather it is a project in defense of the voiceless, in defense of territories, sites, and spaces that do not have a voice or representative. These spaces can be understood as counter-spaces.

The modern American city is organized into a multitude of spaces based upon function and use. These organized spaces dictate a prescribed behavior and social awareness resulting in a landscape of ill-fitting and awkward territories existing in opposition to one another. An unintended byproduct of these collisions is the counter-space. Akin to slag, sludge, and waste resulting from modern industrial processes, the counter-space is the leftover and neglected space of the city resulting from the ever-increasing hegemony of society. Each of these sites has been abused, molded, smashed, and punished at the whims of society’s expansions and contractions in the name of development. Hidden within plain site, abandoned and unused, these spaces exist everywhere.

In contrast to the booming bellows of capitalism and production, these spaces have no voice or representative. Due to neglect and abandonment, these spaces also appeal to populations neglected by society. Through various acts of appropriation, the counter-spaces of many cities play host to a number of uses and unprescribed behaviors. Furthermore, within the context of the surrounding city, these spaces present opposing temporalities.

Iain Borden analyzes the use of public spaces by skateboarding counterculture in his article titled “Skateboarding and the Performative Critique of Architecture.” Borden notes multiple instances of appropriation of space by skateboarders throughout London. An inherent aspect of this appropriation and subsequent breaking of specified patterns of usage involves temporality. Borden documents the manner in which
skaters use privatized public spaces, programmed and designed for a very specific use and user, in the hours and times in which office workers are absent. Furthermore, Borden describes the skateboarders as “interweave[ing] their own composition of time into that of regular temporal patterns, such as waging a fast assault on a handrail outside a bank, adding a speeding skateboard to the slower pattern of those walking on the sidewalk...or staying longer in an urban plaza as others hurry through.” This aspect of temporality, oppositions, and variations on lived experience in the city is described by Borden as “micro experience ... the relation of the self to the city’s physical minutiae that are not always obvious to, or considered by, the dominant visualization of the city on which we most commonly depend.” The production of counter-spaces within the city allows not only spatial appropriation but temporal appropriation and collision. Stark contrasts can be drawn between temporalities within counter-spaces.

Borden further analyzes the temporalities of the city through the use of a term coined by Henri Lefebvre: *rhythmanalysis*. This term refers to the daily routines, patterns, and habits of city dwellers. Within modern design practice and zoning, spaces of the city are designated precisely for these patterns. For instance the interstate is not only a space for the car, but it is the space of the daily commute, a space for the ushering in an end of the work day, a space of production and efficiency. As noted above, the temporalities of space can come into sharp contrast against one another through the appropriation of architectural elements using a skateboard. These juxtapositions, contrasts and varying “micro experiences” occur in many differing and often hidden ways throughout the city daily.

The existence of the counter-space within the homogenized grid of the American city begins to present the potential for disturbance within this field. More important than simply understanding the counter-spaces’ existence however, is developing an understanding of their associated character and voice. Within a counter-space, an unknown life occurs and acts of appropriation, resulting from neglect begin to occur within the absence of an overseeing eye or gaze. These acts begin to present the opportunity for further disturbance of the field of the city, producing temporal effects capable of producing new and previously unseen structures within the homogenization of society.

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3 Ibid., 12.
4 Ibid., 11.
5 Ibid., 10.
6 Ibid.
John Latartara refers to John Cage’s use of “temporal layers” existing simultaneously within two compositions dating from 1943 and 1983. Latartara defines these temporal layers as “musical material that has a distinct temporal identity, created through rhythm, meter, repetition, or accent ... regularity of pattern is often deemphasized and irregularity emphasized through both the superimposition of multiple temporal layers and anomalies within each layer.” In a sense, a temporal layer may be compared to the multiple temporal realities within a counter-space. Interestingly, Cage assigned temporal layers to individual experience. Cage’s use of assignment begins to not only address different experiences, but to give them agency and meaning in the production of new musical structures. As in the city, many experiences, groups of people, and places are ostracized or forgotten in the homogenization of society. Like Cage’s use of temporal layers, the designer possesses the responsibility to give the people and places ostracized by modern society a voice.

In order to reveal and channel these voices, a new form and process of notation must be developed. Within the framework of modern architectural and urban design practice, the counter-space and its associated break from societally prescribed behavior is ill understood or ignored. A major reason for this can be attributed to issues of representation and notation. Architectural notation often ignores time, event, and movement in favor of formalist visions of the near future. While ignoring an understanding of the present and existing, architects and urbanists also ignore present conditions in favor of a clean slate of destruction.

This project involves the design and production of three Vocalization Machines, designed in response to three sites chosen within the city of Atlanta. Each of the Vocalization Machines was designed in response to one of these respective sites. Responding to various temporal and spatial stimuli endemic and specific to each site, these machines give rise to notations and drawings that directly translate the voice of each site, creating cartographies and records of events. Previously lying silent, the voice of the individual site has now been exposed, giving birth to the possibility for new debates between the voices of existing spaces and histories and the booming voice developmental capitalism.

10 Latartara, “Cage and Temporality,” 101
**Machine 1: Temporograph**

Site Location: Median of I-75/85, I-20, I-285, and various on and off-ramps in Downtown Atlanta

The *Temporograph* gives voice to a site that has been divided, molded, and carved by the intersection of multiple interstates. The site itself provides shelter to multiple individuals of Atlanta’s homeless and transient community. Seeking the only shelter available in a city that has closed many of its homeless shelters in the last several years, many people utilize the isolation the median provides, acting as an island in a sea of traffic. The *Temporograph* reacts to the temporal juxtaposition existing at the site; five pendulums correspond to one of five stimuli: the movement of car traffic on all four sides of the site and the movement of human traffic on a human footpath within the center of the site. Five sensors are placed within range of each path of movement and register the average flow of traffic existing at the site throughout the day. Weights on the pendulums correspond to the rate and are moved up or down throughout the day in order to register the change in average flow of traffic. The notation that occurs resembles the pulse of an electrocardiogram. The machine registers the cyclic activity of the four paths of interstate traffic and juxtaposes this with the slow, irregular movement that occurs on the human footpath.
Machine 2: Stratograph

Site Location: The location of the former GM Lakewood Assembling Plant in Southeast Atlanta

The Stratograph is a machine that allows the past to be vocalized. The site utilized for this machine exists at the edge of several major thoroughfares of the previously busy industrial activity of Atlanta. It also sits in the shadow of the US Federal Penitentiary. Existing next to one penal colony, the site previously housed another form of penal colony: an automotive assembling plant. As white flight and the move to suburbia drained the city, the factory was eventually closed in the late 1980s and eventually torn down in the mid-1990s, leaving a massive concrete plinth within its wake. The site has since developed a patina of plant life and pollution on top of its concrete shell. The Stratograph utilized microscope slides depicting images from the pre-civilized era of the city, the period of growth in which the railroad tracks were built, the beginnings of industrialization and the GM Plant, the plant’s destruction and the subsequent decay of the site. These slides are mounted upon the machine using three adjustable arms; these arms possess several axes of movement. An image of the slides is then projected upon photographic paper, allowing combinatoric plans from various stages in the site’s life to form. The movement of the arms of the machine allows anamorphic projection as well, thus manipulating the angle of the slides and creating new and unique images.
Vocalization Machines
Vocalization Machines
Machine 3: Displacement-graph

Site Location: The abandoned Alonzo Herndon Stadium at Morris Brown College

The Displacement-graph acts as a timekeeper for its respective site. The site is the abandoned stadium at Morris Brown College, a historically African American college located in west Atlanta. Beginning in the early 2000s, Morris Brown developed a large debt it still owes, eventually losing its accreditation. The college today has around thirty full-time students. As a result of its decline, the college lost its football team and thus closed its stadium in the mid-2000s. Sitting in stillness within a half-mile of the Georgia Dome and the future Atlanta Falcons Stadium, the site slowly decays as the years pass. Running beneath and through parts of the stadium, the MARTA east/west commute line disrupts the stillness of decay several times an hour throughout the day. Responding to this juxtaposition of temporalities, the Displacement-graph drips a combination of water and ink onto a canvas regularly throughout a 24-hour period. Every time a train passes through the site on the MARTA line, a small motor vibrates the plate upon which the canvas sits, thus giving voice to the stillness and movement that occurs throughout the day as this once popular and busy stadium slowly decays to dust.
Whether they are metallic or wood, round or square, or even with a 24-karat gold finish, buttons are a great medium to communicate ideas. Since pinback buttons were patented in 1896, they have carried political messages, supported or opposed laws, and made serious or humorous statements. Ultimately, these objects, despite their small size, are capable of tracing meaningful events of our life and our history. For twenty years, Chicago-based Busy Beaver Button Co. has been producing millions upon millions of them, and since 2010 they have also collected them. The Busy Beaver Button Museum is the only button museum in the world and displays over nine thousand historical buttons.

Busy Beaver Button Co. owners and museum founders Christen and Joel Carter share with us ten sets of buttons from their collection and discuss their role in memorable debates.

Expressing Opposing Opinions Through Buttons

Button selection by Busy Beaver Buttons Co.
In the 1976 Presidential election, Jimmy Carter’s characteristic mouth and the unusual fact that he was a peanut farmer was used by his supporters and detractors.
Life in the public eye also meant that wives of the candidates were under fire.
In the 1970s, President Nixon put cannabis in the most restrictive classification of illegal drugs. People have been fighting this since, in between puffs.
Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected for a third term to help carry the country out of WWII in 1940. He actually won a fourth term and to this day, he is the only US President to have served more than two terms.

A button featuring running opponents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, called the “Salesman’s safety pin,” was a playful take on backing the winning presidential candidate.
George Haumann designed these mechanical buttons in the 1930s for both sides of the aisle to play with and symbolically kick each other.
This ubiquitous slogan—“Have a nice day”—became popular in the 1970s. Not everyone had the same opinion about its friendliness.
Nixon official campaign buttons tended to be very straightforward in message and design, and in this case, the retort was equally so. These are from the 1968 election, when McGovern ran against him in 1972. A lot of buttons for and against mentioned Dick licking.
Avis started using this slogan in the early 1960’s and was perfect fodder for the counter-cultural movement at the time.
Prohibition lasted from 1920–1933. Alcohol became illegal mostly for moral reasons pushed by temperance fighters. The umbrella is the symbol worn by “dry” teetotalers while a “wet” supporter would don a beer on their lapel.
#TheDress
Like No Other

Text by
Craig Shparago
From this day on, the world will be divided into two people. Blue & black, or white & gold.
On February 26, 2015, something happened that changed everything. And nothing.

This was not a political revolution or social upheaval or religious movement. It was a silly thing, really. A crappy photo of a £50 dress that ended up blowing the world’s collective mind—and spurring a debate like no other.

Was it gold and white? Or blue and black?

I thought to myself, what’s there to argue? With the hard, tangible image vividly displayed on the 5-million-plus-pixel screen in front of me, the dress was clearly, obviously gold and white. Right? Then how on Earth could so many people—some that I love and trust, by the way—see blue and black? It was, and still is, as interesting as it is mind-boggling—and polarizing enough to send it hurtling into viral hyper-space in the blink of a billion eyes. It exploded across the globe, generating millions upon millions of views and spews and opinions and parodies. Celebrities debated, politicians jumped on it, brands weighed in and it was a free-for-all for any comedian with a Twitter account.

But months after the fact, I remain intrigued not just by the event itself, but how relatively unique and isolated this phenomenon seemed to be. If, as scientific researchers on this matter have concluded, our brains perceive shapes and colors differently, why had it taken our species 200,000 years to hit such a roadblock? If this is so common, why haven’t I heard any other examples? Where are all the other stories? Shouldn’t this be happening all the time? And before you go there, this isn’t about whether or not you recognize the image of Jesus on a tortilla or see the naked lady in a cartoon face of Sigmund Freud. Those illusions are eventually deciphered by the viewer. This is a simple either-or color question, one that’s not really open for debate (I’ll go to my grave seeing this as gold and white btw), and seemingly without precedent.

Did half of 16th century Italy think the Mona Lisa was wearing pink, but never bothered to mention it? Did Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus glow silver to scores of ancient Egyptians? To half the viewers of “The Wizard of Oz,” was the Yellow Brick Road yellow in name only? Could it be we don’t know because we never asked? Hey, I’m open to hear anyone’s related anecdotes, but I believe this dress debate was an anomaly, one that ripped a temporary hole in the lacy, delicate fabric of human perception and objectivity no doubt—and one we’re likely never to see again. But I’ll keep my eyes open just in case.
I don't understand this odd dress debate and I feel like it's a trick somehow. I'm confused and scared. PS it's OBVIOUSLY BLUE AND BLACK.

I think I'm getting so mad about the dress because it's an assault on what I believe is objective truth.

My daughter thinks it's blue and green and we are headed to the ER.

Not to be irrational but gonna unfriend everyone who sees blue and black. Feel like we're better off building our own societies. #TheDress

This is the most engaged America has been in a debate about color in a long time.

We started the What Colors Are This Dress trending topic to confuse the masses. You can thank us later.

You're all idiots. #TheDress

It's somewhat refreshing that we're debating colors other than red vs. blue. FWIW, I see white & gold. #TheDress #TheDressIsWhiteAndGold

Who is going to write the dystopian YA novel where adolescents are sorted into factions based on what color they think the dress is?

Raise your hand if you have ever felt personally victimized by #TheDress

Punched a kid in the face the other day and gave him a #WhiteAndGold eye

Trust us, #TheDress is white.

The color of a dress? Really? That's what you're asking Me? THE OCEAN LEVELS ROSE FOUR INCHES IN TWO YEARS. You know that, right?

White and gold in the streets; blue and black in the sheets.

We started the What Colors Are This Dress trending topic to confuse the masses. You can thank us later.
Cecelia Bleasdale, a mother-of-the-bride-to-be, sent a photograph of the dress she had purchased to her daughter to give the thumbs up or thumbs down.

Grace Johnston posted the image on Facebook.

McNeill reposted the image on her blog (swiked.tumblr.com) which kicked started debate.

The dress was picked up by almost every social media outlet from Reddit to Buzzfeed, The Guardian to Facebook.

By Friday morning, dress-related hashtags on Twitter totaled as follows: #Thedress, 659,483 mentions; #whiteandgold, 329,484 mentions; #blackandblue, 103,264 mentions.

Roman Originals auctions limited edition gold & white dress on Ebay for Comic Relief.
Paola Antonelli joined The Museum of Modern Art in 1994 and is a Senior Curator in the Department of Architecture and Design, as well as MoMA’s Director of Research and Development. She has curated many memorable exhibitions at MoMA, including WorkshpereS (2001), Humble Masterpieces (2004), SAFE: Design Takes On Risk (2005-2006), Design and the Elastic Mind (2008), and Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects (2011).

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Jessica Barrett Sattell is a design and technology writer, editor, and critic. She received her MA in Journalism with an emphasis in Art and Technology from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and was a research and development fellow at the Chicago Design Museum.

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Since its beginnings in 1995, Busy Beaver Buttons Co. has gone from a one-woman operation in Christen Carter’s college apartment to a company with fifteen employees. Over the last 20 years, the Busy Beaver crew has overseen over 60,000 designs and produced millions upon millions of custom buttons for clients like Brooklyn Brewery, NBC Entertainment, The Art Institute of Chicago, Threadless, WordPress as well as thousands of bands, non-profits, small businesses, and other great folks.

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Justine Clark is an architectural editor, writer, and researcher based in Melbourne, Australia. She is cofounder and editor of Parlour: women, equity, architecture and is an honorary senior fellow at the University of Melbourne. Justine was editor of Architecture Australia, the journal of record of Australian Architecture for ten years and co-author (with Paul Walker) of Looking for the Local: Architecture and the New Zealand Modern (Wellington: VUW Press, 2000).

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Fabrizio Gallanti holds a PhD in architectural design from the Politecnico di Torino (Tun, Italy 2001) and an MArch from the University of Genova (1995). In 1998 he was among the founding members of grupo A12. In 2003 he founded with Francisca Insulza Fig-Projects. Between 2007 and 2011 he was the architecture editor at Abitare magazine and chief editor of the Abitare website. Between 2011 and 2014 he was the Associate Director Programs at the Canadian Centre of Architecture in Montréal, Canada. He has taught at universities in Chile, Italy, and United Kingdom. He is currently the first Mellon Senior Fellow within the Princeton-Mellon Initiative in Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities.

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Iker Gil is an architect, urban designer, and director of MAS Studio. In addition, he is the editor in chief of MAS Context. He is the editor of the book Shanghai Transforming (ACTAR, 2008) and has curated several exhibitions, most recently “BOLD: Alternative Scenarios for Chicago” as part of the Chicago Architecture Biennial. He is the recipient of the 2010 Emerging Visions Award from the Chicago Architectural Club and has been recognized as one of “Fifty Under Fifty: Innovators of the 21st Century” by a jury composed by Stanley Tigerman, Jeanne Gang, Qingyun Ma, and Marion Weiss.

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Chris Grimley is a principal of over,under in Boston, Massachusetts. With expertise in architecture, urban design, graphic identity, and publications, the firm’s portfolio ranges in scale from books to cities. Chris is co-director of the pinkcomma gallery and has designed books for Rockport Publications and Rizzoli Press. He is the co-author of Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston (Monacelli Press, 2015).

Max Kuo is currently a Design Critic at Harvard GSD and a founding partner of the design collaborative, ALLTHATISSOLID, with offices in Los Angeles and Kuala Lumpur. Kuo has an interdisciplinary background in art, architecture, and media. His diverse body of work continues to address multiple interests and to be received by multiple audiences. As a studio artist, he has produced work through artist-in-residency programs at the Whitney Museum, Independent Studies Program and in Beijing through Red Gate Gallery’s International Artist’s program. His art practice consists of projects, which interrogate the social politics of architectural representation, urban constituencies, and temporal urban identities. This work has taken the form of collaborations with punk bands, urban hypnosis, and absurdist architectural proposals. allthatissolid.net

Michael Kubo is an architect, author, and PhD Candidate in the History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture at MIT. In 2014 Kubo was Associate Curator for OfficeUS, the US Pavilion at the International Architecture Biennale in Venice. He is co-editor of OfficeUS Atlas (Lars Müller, 2015), the second volume of the OfficeUS book series. Kubo is a founding partner of the design practice Collective—LOK, co-director of pinkcomma gallery in Boston, and a collaborator in over,under, an interdisciplinary practice with expertise in architecture, urban design, graphic identity, and publications. He is the co-author of Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston (Monacelli Press, 2015).

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Dennis Maher is an artist, architect, and educator. For the past twelve years his projects have engaged processes of disassembly and reconstitution through drawing, photography, collage, and constructions. In his ongoing Undone-Redone City project, Maher has continually reformulated the structural and substructural remains of houses, conjuring a new urban core from assembled city fragments. In 2009, Maher established the FARGO HOUSE, a center for the urban imaginary in Buffalo, NY. He is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at SUNY, University at Buffalo, where he has taught since 2004.

Zoe Ryan is the John H. Bryan Chair and Curator of Architecture and Design at the Art Institute of Chicago. Since joining the museum in 2006, she has taken an interdisciplinary approach to her work, curating exhibitions of graphic design, furniture, fashion, and architecture. Her most recent exhibition is Making Place: The Architecture of David Adjaye (2015). She is a Lecturer in the Art History Department at the School of the Art Institute and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2014, she was the curator of the second Istanbul Design Biennial.
Denise Scott Brown is an architect, planner, urban designer, theorist, writer, and educator whose projects and ideas have influenced designers and thinkers worldwide. Working in collaboration with Robert Venturi over the last half century, she has guided the course of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates by serving on the broad range of the firm’s projects in architecture and as Principal-in-Charge of urban planning, urban design, and campus planning. Her experience in interdisciplinary work, teaching, and research has contributed to VSBA’s breadth and depth in architectural design.

Adrian Shaughnessy is a graphic designer, writer, publisher, art and culture zealot based in London. He is also a senior tutor in Visual Communication at the Royal College of Art and a founding partner in Unit Editions, a publishing company producing books on design and visual culture. Scratching the Surface, a collection of his journalism, has recently been published.

Craig Shparago is a Creative Director at Leo Burnett Chicago. His work has been recognized by industry shows and publications including Cannes, The One Show, D&AD, The CLIOs, The ANDYs, The London International Awards, The MPA Kelly Awards, Creativity, The Addys, The OBIEs, Adweek and Communication Arts. A graduate of Bradley University, Craig lives with his wife, daughter, and extraordinary cat in Wilmette, Illinois.

The Architecture Lobby is an organization of architectural workers advocating for the value of architecture in the general public and for architectural work within the discipline.

Growing up in a military family, Christina Shivers moved to a new location every two years. Because of this, she considers many places and no place home. She is a recent graduate of architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia and previously studied music at the Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

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Hidden

Our winter issue will explore the aspects of our built environment that are hidden, overlooked, not readily apparent, forgotten, and conceptually or physically removed from our sight, whether intentionally or not.

Time for all of us to shine a light on all those things worth rediscovering or seeing for the first time.