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EISENMAN/ KRIER: TWO IDEOLOGIES

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NO

Sarah Whiting

Those who seem to negate history produce historically motivated work, those who try not to cut their links with it, run into the shoals of ambiguity.¹

It would be better, then, to accept reality as it really is and give the historian a dialectical role in respect to the architect, almost to the point of constant opposition.²

It is useless to propose purely architectural alternatives. The search for an alternative within the structures that condition the very character of architectural design is indeed an obvious contradiction of terms.³

If Manfredo Tafuri been an adman, forced to reduce his turgid prose to catchy phrases, his success would have been more ideological than commercial; Nike would have been disappointed in him, but Nancy Reagan would have swooned, for Tafuri all but coined the negative impulse of architectural theory in the 1970s: "Just say no." *No*'s monosyllabic agency only negates (*no* is the *only* option), thereby offering an unambiguously simple formula for a seemingly difficult response, a reassuringly dialectical opposition. This twenty-fifth anniversary of the Eisenman-Krier debate—in itself, a dialectical opposition of two practitioners who each initially forged a practice out of the negative—offers an opportune moment for inquiring after the health, even the life span, of our inherited propensity for the negative. Simply put, when does *no* negate itself?

The mistaken perception of *no*'s simplicity and singularity obscures the complexity underlying Tafuri's stance, a complexity that reveals itself only through a

slow reading of his difficult textual tapestry, which weaves together history, theory, and criticism. The Cliffs Notes conclusion hastily drawn around Tafuri is that architecture has only two options, each a shade of no: succumb to capitalism's instrumentality or retreat into silence. Either choice amounts to what, as K. Michael Hays has noted, has been called Tafuri's "assisted suicide" vis-à-vis architecture, the smoking gun being Tafuri's 1969 essay "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology."⁴

The title of the subsequent book version of this killer article—*Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*—only begins to reveal the host of multiple dialectical oppositions that underlie Tafuri's intellectual strategy, here and in his other writings. For Tafuri, *and* is not a Venturi-esque conjunction of addition or juxtaposition but a self-destructive, hermetic pairing, a coupling mechanism whose impossibility (as Tafuri demonstrates) ultimately nullifies its very existence. Joined together, architecture and utopia suffocate. "It is useless to struggle," Tafuri concludes, "when one is trapped inside a capsule with no exit."⁵

This sci-fi image of a Sartrean *huis clos* formalism seals the fate of the practicing architect who may aspire to a social-political good but who can never reconcile those aspirations with the tools that modernism has left him: the *objets trouvés* of the avant-garde's forms, slogans, and technologies. According to Tafuri, the practicing architect's no is not a critical or operational no but rather a compulsory no, as in "no choice," "no matter," "no exit." Even modernism's most successful efforts to effect ideological change through form (the expressionists) or through program (the Bauhaus, the constructivists) were ultimately doomed, for they were "critique[s] made from a rearguard position that is therefore incapable, by its very nature, of proposing universal alternatives."⁶ Tafuri saw architecture's "return to language [as] a proof of failure," a failure imposed by consumer capitalism's ruthless, steady elimination of all other possibilities. Only a "restructuring of production and consumption in general; in other words, the planned coordination of production"⁷ might bring architecture forward from the rear guard, but architects,

especially those of the avant-garde, were unlikely ever to accept that they might gain effectiveness only by backseating themselves to the planner.

Although Tafuri silences the practice of architecture, he offers a ready voice to architecture's history and criticism, turning no, or the negative, into a form of critical textual project, all the while limiting the projective possibilities of architectural practice. Criticism and history are practices that repackage the past and, despite Tafuri's famous exhortations against operative criticism, simultaneously whisper the hint of a future for practice.⁸ Though privileged, criticism and history remain strategically fuzzy in Tafuri's oeuvre: by skipping across decades, movements, writers, and practitioners with dizzying speed—if it's page 124, it must be Paul Rudolph . . . and Peter Behrens and William Morris and the Five and, and, and . . .⁹—Tafuri leaves the reader flushed from the race but not quite certain which track has been run. Toward the conclusion of *Theories and History*, he offers seemingly precise roles for the historian and the critic, which in turn offer some guidance to architecture:

*The historian accentuates the contradictions of history and offers them crudely, in their reality, to those whose responsibility it is to create new formal worlds. But at the same time, history and criticism set a limit to ambiguity in architecture. By leading the works back into more general contexts, and in the very moment that it hypothesises an historical role for them, criticism delimits a field of values within which it is possible to attribute unequivocal meanings to architecture.*¹⁰

But the limiting of ambiguity and the attribution of the unequivocal are like the elusive merry-go-round's golden ring: how, how, does one hone in on these limits, these definitions? Eight pages later, in the book's final paragraph, Tafuri throws cold water on the eager reader, who by this time is pathetically desperate to claim the prize after going round and round through so many pages: "Solutions are not to be found in history." Tafuri then softens his brutal blow, though only slightly, by

acknowledging that "the only possible way [the *only!*] is the exasperation of the antitheses, the frontal clash of the positions, and the accentuation of contradictions. And this not for a particular form of sado-masochism," he adds (unconvincingly), "but in the hypothesis of a radical change that will leave behind both the anguished present situation and the temporary tasks we have tried to make clear to ourselves . . ." The going is tough, but you're left with a sliver of hope: *hypothesis* and *radical change* are both singular, suggesting a potentially positive conclusion way out on the far, far horizon.

This seemingly requisite pairing of pessimism and optimism is the one and that does not self-destruct in Tafuri but rather holds out a glimmer of hope. It's also an and that recurs again and again in some form or another throughout Tafuri's writing: the bitter aftertaste of pessimism souring a glutinous trail of theoretical or historical bonbons; the saccharine suggestion of optimism sweetening an acrid historical excursus. It's a pairing that keeps the easy answer in check, that keeps total despair from suffocating the reader, that offers some agency within the world of architecture, although the complexities underlying his textual practice obscure whether that agency extends much beyond Tafuri himself.

For that agency is cast in the arresting but ambiguous role of an "angel with dirty hands."¹¹ Surely referencing the hapless angel of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," who is powerless to do anything but describe the ever expanding debris of history at his feet, Tafuri's angel is implicated in his own despair; he cannot avoid engaging capitalism's processes of production. Unlike the architect, who cannot overcome those processes, who can only be silenced by them, Tafuri's sullied angels of history (which, one would assume, include Tafuri himself) possess some ability to act: "Historical criticism," he claims, "must know how to balance on the razor's edge that separates detachment from participation."¹² The image of the razor's edge is only one of a series of images of death, destruction, and violence that in various forms punctuate Tafuri's texts. This razor implies a precarious—even impossible—balancing act, an unstable fulcrum across which historical precision and

contemporary repercussion can find only a tentative relationship. That relationship is, strangely enough, described in terms of design. The historian's first task is to historicize—that is, to identify and contextualize—history's fragments, and then to compose them, effectively redesigning history: the critical act will consist of a recomposition of the fragments once they are historicized, that is, in their "remontage."¹³

Tafuri's nihilism vis-à-vis architectural practice most closely resembles the negative thinking of his younger colleague at the Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura in Venice, philosopher Massimo Cacciari, who believes that the monetary economy of capitalism evacuates the inner bounds of the self, precluding the possibility of any form of subjectivity.¹⁴ Building upon his analysis of Georg Simmel's writings on the modern metropolis, Cacciari developed his theory of negative thought as an alternative to dialectics. Nihilism avoids the false positivism of the synthesis by bringing to an end "the very idea of solution." Like Tafuri, Cacciari sees nihilism as revealing capitalism's ideological stronghold, its ratio, "the eminently productive ratio of technique and its power of control, manipulation, and foresight."¹⁵

While this form of nihilism is possible within architecture (Cacciari offers Adolf Loos as an example), it works best as a practice in the realm of criticism. As Patrizia Lombardo notes in her extended introduction to Cacciari's *Architecture and Nihilism*, "The trajectory of the theory of the Metropolis brings negative thought to the mode of commentary, mystically—not philosophically—conceived as a plunge into the limits of language."¹⁶ Understood in this light, nihilism is like Tafuri's "remontage" of history. Nihilism multiplies outward, illustrating the impossibility of a single conclusion or synthesis: "Fulfillment [of nihilism] implies neither the task of effecting solution nor that of effecting the end of all solution [*sic!*], but the idea of composition as a listening to the differences, as an acknowledgement of their characteristic and as the comprehensible communication of this characteristic."¹⁷ Difference, multiplicity, plurality: these terms form the foundation of the critical theory that spanned the twenty years from the late 1960s

through the 1980s. Messier than negative dialectics, Cacciari's nihilism and Tafuri's no are critical tools reflecting their own time.¹⁸ At the same time, they are attempts to come to terms with how to draw something out of modernism's avant-garde moment without either idealizing its utopian premise or capitulating to its capitalist counterpart.

But where do they leave you, other than in the midst of a tentative construct, born of fragments and destined to coalesce those fragments only in the most passive of ways, as a historical response? At this point, it is almost impossible to avoid hearing Nietzsche's warning: "Now picture yourself the historical virtuoso of the present day . . . He has become a passive sounding-board whose reflected tones act upon other similar sounding-boards: until at last the whole air of an age is filled with the confused humming of these tender and kindred echoes."¹⁹ To return to a question posed at the beginning of this paper, when does no negate itself? When does it become a mere echo chamber of historical noise? For Nietzsche, the historian's recomposition of fragments is rendered instrumental in that it has an effect, a result rather than a mere illustration of ineffectuality; it doesn't just reveal, it acts. For Nietzsche, critical history (as opposed to monumental history or antiquarian history) is a judging of the past:

If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it . . . It is always a dangerous process, especially so for life itself: and men and ages which serve life by judging and destroying a past are always dangerous and endangered men and ages . . . If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them.²⁰

The effect of critical history, then, is this public act of exposure whereby exposure is combined with condemnation. So the agency of the critical lies in its negative: its vociferous condemnation of a historical moment. Has the nihilism ushered in by Tafuri become an endless trial—

the ineffectual but ever expanding dustbin of architecture culture?

By 1987, when *Modern Architecture* and *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* were translated into English and published in the United States, Tafuri's historical condemnation of architecture had rained down like a kind of radioactive critical fallout for almost twenty years. The contaminated results lay everywhere, filled every crevice, and proved their tenacity with their extraordinarily long half-life.

The architectural practices of both Peter Eisenman and Leon Krier emerged during this period of critical (radio)activity. Writing with Francesco Dal Co, Tafuri returns to the angel of history when addressing these two architects' work as well as that of other practices constituting "The Experience of the Seventies," the final chapter of Tafuri and Dal Co's architectural survey: "Architecture seeks to recast in contemporary phrases the meanings destroyed by the fury of the Angelus Novus, as reinterpreted by Walter Benjamin. The gap dividing such attempts from the reality of the relations of production appears unbridgeable. The return to poetry inexorably cuts the umbilical cord that tied the avant-garde to the real."²¹ While Tafuri and Dal Co conclude with the dubious compliment that the work of this final chapter represents "a condition of intellectual labor that suggests certain final reflections," their descriptions of the practices in question reveal their belief that such reflections hardly glitter in a future, outward orientation but instead mark the end of previous, historical projects:

The archaeologizing of Stirling, the nostalgia of Kahn, the irony of Venturi have much to do with the approaches being tried now by the most promising among the architects too young to have been involved in what is still called the modern movement. Without Stirling, the refined designs of the brothers Leon and Robert Krier would be inexplicable. Like Sir Arthur John Evans, the English archaeologist who re-created the lost world of ancient Crete in his own manner, the Kriers make pleasant play with the bits of the past dug up by Stirling. But, as was also the case in the reconstructed Crete, in their architectural jigsaw puzzles the really original pieces are rare . . .

Likewise, without Venturi one could not make sense of the multiple formal games that so-called radical American groups, spoiled by the very generous "social salary" that the American system grants to the potentially unemployed, propose for the enjoyment of a restricted public of adepts... The game nevertheless has its risks... Look too at the ascetic abstractionism of Peter Eisenman; his exaggerated formalism seeks to pin down the perennial logic of the architectural signs and ends up by discovering that all that can be done in such an operation is to train a spotlight on the alienated state of those signs.²²

After reading such eloquent but backhanded compliments, the reader is left convinced that Krier's and Eisenman's strategies are squarely situated within the airless vacuum of Tafuri's no-fly zone. Indeed, both Eisenman and Krier have long operated under a Tafuri-like mantle of negativity, although their particular negativities differ greatly and each has subsequently evolved in very different directions. Krier's endless pursuit has been to condemn modernism's culture of invention, innovation, and discovery; Eisenman's aim, on the other hand, has been to condemn the stranglehold that norms and conventions have imposed upon the possibilities of invention, innovation, and discovery.

Despite their differences, both Krier and Eisenman have relied upon some form of negative strategy to construct their condemnations, especially in their early careers. Perhaps the most famous negative of all is Krier's oft-quoted proclamation "I am an architect because I do not build." With this statement Krier directly echoes Tafuri, concluding that nothing can be done within the existing processes of capitalist production. Rather than retreat to the realm of a mute architecture that ultimately cannot but confirm capitalism's crass cultural compromise, Krier opts for absolute silence. When the Prince of Wales's patronage eventually offered him an opportunity to build as he wanted, outside capitalism's constraints, Krier chose a different kind of negativity, that of the negative dialectic.²³ Krier's cartoon-sketches of contemporary architectural problems are almost always presented in dialectical terms: the binaries consist of extreme oppo-

sites frequently resolved in a Krierian vision of a possible, desirable third. A "Derelict Modernist Masterpiece" is contrasted with "Conservative Restoration (Nostalgic)," which restores the masterpiece to its early modern state; whereas the synthesis between these two extremes that Krier advocates is "Creative (Forward Looking) Restoration," which is, essentially, a complete makeover of the derelict modernist box into a classical villa. Unlike Cacciari's nihilism, Krier's no is always dialectical, at the service of a synthesis, which, for Krier, is always a classical vernacular one. Not only does this synthesis fall into the category of "solution" that Cacciari warns against—decrying the stasis that such false "fulfillment" would engender—but it also obstructs the very criticality that Tafuri wishes upon the act of "remontage."²⁴ If remontage is restorative rather than critical, it will (as demonstrated in Krier's village design for Poundbury) render history's fragments whole again, erasing their fissures, fractures, and fragmentations. The negativity of Krier's practice, then, is neither critical nor productive in the sense of producing either a new vision for the future or a new reading of the past. Tafuri would point to Krier's classical-vernacular idyll as constituting one of the "impotent and ineffectual myths" that he decries in *Architecture and Utopia*. For Krier, it is that very myth that constitutes architecture: looking backward offers the only possible resistance to capitalism's technocracy.

Eisenman's negative critique, on the other hand, more closely resembles Tafuri's own textual practice of critical remontage, without succumbing to the literalist Tafurianism of Krier's silent nonpractice or the false synthesis of a restorative practice. Eisenman nests historical binaries (classical versus modern), formal binaries (walls versus columns), ideological binaries (presentness versus absence), and disciplinary binaries (landscape versus architecture) in an expansive, kaleidoscopic strategy that is simultaneously architectural and textual and where synthesis is never possible, and certainly not desirable. While Tafuri and Dal Co's reading of Eisenman's houses rings true—the accomplishment of these houses is indeed to "train a spotlight on the alienated state of [architectural] signs"—it is unclear why the two histori-

ans find that accomplishment wanting. Finding the limit of architectural language is not that different from Tafuri's own project of revealing the limits of architecture's critique.

For Eisenman, no is an oppositional strategy rather than a mute one. Eisenman's goal was (and continues to be) to distill the structure of architecture's form in an effort to find meaning established by, as opposed to associated with, architecture. In the house projects, architecture's semantic readings do not disappear at the limit; instead, they are thrown into complex relationships—layered, oscillating, and composite—with one another. The oppositional red and green stairs in House VI, for example, offer culturally established, immediate semantic readings of stop and go: the red, upside-down stair, which cannot be ascended, says "stop," while the functional green stair, leading up to the second floor, indicates "go." But a conceptual reading of the two colors interferes with an iconic one: red and green combine to make gray. Eisenman's choice of these two colors was a deliberate effort to tangle color's symbolic value with its purely indexical use by literally graying it out.²⁵

Where his ambition differs from modernism is that Eisenman's subject and object emerge from formal manipulations; neither one is conclusive or singular. In other words, while the modernist project was meant to form a particular subject, Eisenman is more intent on transforming subjectivity, inciting possibilities without predicting them. Eisenman started with the modernist project of estrangement but quickly expanded his scope to a project of engagement. His "cities of artificial excavation" projects—Cannaregio, Berlin, Long Beach, La Villette, and the Wexner Center—evenly arrayed historical and fictional information about a project's site, history, and context, permitting subjects to rearrange that information as they wanted. The subject was engaged in writing the project's narrative, its remontage, assembling it from the material provided. This strategy was modern in its desire to use architecture to affect a subject, and postmodern in its flattening out of source material, rendering all "origins" equal and hence simultaneously valuable and suspect.

Just as the excavation projects springboarded from estrangement to engagement, Eisenman's more recent work has further accelerated his desire to continually embed potential in architecture. As he has begun to build larger, more complex projects, the strategies of estrangement and engagement have been joined by attention to a visceral and even programmatic entanglement of subject and object. The Aronoff Center for Design and Art at the University of Cincinnati offers a series of echoing architectural figures that multiply, amplify, and reorder views, frustrating and even reversing the simultaneously controlling and open-ended viewpoints of the project's axes. These vertical and horizontal cross-views consistently interrupt the school's symbolic shared space, rendering that space ambiguous; they suggest unforeseen programmatic relationships among the building's varied constituencies of students, faculty, and administration. The result is unnerving: what ought to be the apex of spatial synthesis becomes a sequence of visual antigravities that untethers expected behaviors.

What Eisenman started with the Aronoff Center, he has almost infinitely multiplied in the more-than-750,000-square-foot project under construction for the City of Culture of Galicia in Spain. The City of Culture will become a new pilgrimage destination in Santiago de Compostela, transforming subjects not through religion but through a remontage that plays architecture, landscape, and urbanism off one another: the hilltop site has been both carved and extracted, making it nearly impossible to tell where landscape ends and building starts. Spaces between and within buildings are rendered similarly ambiguous, making it possible to redefine programs typically associated with either interiors or exteriors. The possibilities of transformation are the point of any pilgrimage site, but change does not come easily: at Santiago, just like at the Aronoff and in all of Eisenman's projects, those subjected to this architecture will never experience the luxury of being passive. Instead, they will be snared in an atmosphere of calculated estrangement whose vertiginous, agitating, and even frustrating qualities are laced with the ever hopeful opiate of transformation. No mere project of detached abstraction, the

remontage that comes with the collapse of the subject and the object into one another belies an almost euphoric optimism about architecture's possibilities.

It is Tafuri's strategy of negative critique as a historical enterprise that has exhausted itself, that is dead, but its use as a form of practice by Krier and Eisenman forms the springboard for a new stage of critical approach. Tafuri correctly points to architectural, and even intellectual, ineffectuality in the face of capitalism's hegemony. In making this the criteria for judgment, Tafuri necessarily kills architecture. Once it has become a corpse, frozen in place, all that is left for us to do, either as practitioners or as historians, is to examine it, perform an autopsy, and try to reveal the impasse that led to its critical demise. Given the pervasive nature of global capitalism today, the possibility of resurrecting architecture when it is defined in this manner is ever more remote.

Because they are architects, both Krier and Eisenman necessarily treat architecture's body not as something to expose and examine, like the corpse under Dr. Tulp's knife in Rembrandt's famous painting, but as something *live* on which they need to work, like Benjamin's surgeon. That is how Krier and Eisenman move beyond Tafuri's impasse. In other words, while an autopsy demands examination, exposure, and judgment, surgery demands analysis, dissection, and a hopeful ambition to construct life. Both Krier and Eisenman achieve this turn by reclaiming the possibility, even the necessity, of utopia for architecture.

In projecting specifically architectural rather than complete social utopias, Krier and Eisenman reclaim a potential territory of expertise for the architect and for architectural history. The shift from a social to an architectural utopia is not a sellout to capitalism, as some critics might claim, but a means of positing where architecture's political effect might find some traction. Krier's utopia is a world where premodern architectural ideals succeed in maintaining the moral underpinnings of the present and future. Eisenman's utopia is a world where architecture is able to maintain its autonomous definition and progression in the face of interdisciplinary threats. Both utopias have political reverberations, and both, like all utopias, necessarily require the negative as a

means of part of their definition. (Even if Krier offers a vision of aesthetic order, he does so as a means of laying the groundwork for a socialist vision of individual autonomy within that order; Eisenman's aesthetic vision avoids social control in a more revolutionary manner, that is, through challenge to any form of order.)

For Tafuri, utopia as a project was precisely that which was impossible. No as a no-no (as a *don't do*) loomed larger than the utopian no. Utopia, even with the no that lies within its very definition, is arguably the world's biggest yes. Replacing "just say no" with "just do it" would be just another neutralizing strategy of dialectical opposition; in order to capitalize on utopia's possibilities rather than capitulate to capitalism's potential closing down of possibilities, no needs to be replaced with *ambition*, even if that ambition requires donning a potentially illusory utopian mantle.

1. Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (1976; English trans., London: Granada, 1980), 39.
2. Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 64.
3. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1973; English trans., Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 181.
4. K. Michael Hays, "Tafuri's Ghost," in *ANY 25–26*: 36. Tafuri's "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" was originally published in *Contropiano* 1 (January–April 1969).
5. Manfredo Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" (1969), in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Rizzoli/Columbia Books on Architecture, 1998), 32.
6. Tafuri, "Toward a Critique," 23.
7. Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 100.
8. For an excellent discussion of Tafuri's own operative criticism, see Mark Wigley, "Post-Operative History," *ANY 25–26*: 47–53.
9. Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 124.
10. Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 229.
11. Manfredo Tafuri, "L'architecture dans le boudoir," in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 289.
12. Tafuri, "Introduction," *Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 11.
13. Tafuri, "The Historical Project," *Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 15.
14. Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Outside of architecture circles, Cacciari might be best known as the mayor of Venice who married Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn in 1997 (an extreme form of nihilist practice?).
Regarding Cacciari's nihilism, see also Tomas Llorens, "Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History," in Demetri Porphyros, *Architectural Design: On the Methodology of Architectural History*, special issue (1981): 83–95; and Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), especially "The Venice School, or the Diagnosis of Negative Thought," 128–47.
15. Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 201.
16. Patrizia Lombardo, "Introduction: The Philosophy of the City," in Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 1ii.
17. Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, 209.
18. Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* and *On Grammatology* were both originally published in 1967; in 1977, Cacciari published an essay on multiplicity, difference, and transformation in the work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze: "Il problema del politico in Deleuze e Foucault," in *Il Dispositivo Foucault*, ed. Franco Rella and Georges Teyssot (Venice: Cluva, 1977).
19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90.
20. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 75–76.
21. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, vol. 2 (1976; English trans., New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 390–92.
22. Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, vol. 2, 384–87.
23. Prince Charles hired Krier as his architectural consultant in 1988, a collaboration that resulted in the design of Poundbury, a traditional town in Dorset, England.
24. See especially Cacciari's epilogue.
25. Peter Eisenman, conversation with the author, May 30, 2003.

The Art of Listening to Architecture

Mark Wigley

I would like to start by saying that I agree with Demetri Porphyrios on two points, but only two. First, **the claim that deconstruction is a claim to order, not a claim to disorder, that it is a new way of paying attention to how things are put together rather than a description of the way things fall apart.** I agree. This is extremely important. If there is anything radical to deconstruction as a way of thinking, it is precisely that through the seemingly paradoxical complications, through the apparent disruption, through the gaps, that order surprisingly but persistently arises rather than collapses, and that order is therefore to be respected even more than its defenders insist. This is the whole point, perhaps the only point, and a big thing to agree on. The second point of agreement is that so-called deconstructivist architecture is, or should we say was, historicist. Indeed, I am unconvinced that there could be a non-historicist architecture that was in some way wholly of its time, that is to say, new, or at least much more new than it was old, so that one felt the newness much more than one felt the reference to the old. Far from abandoning history, deconstructive thinking is all about unearthing old ghosts, tracing the way that systems are inhabited by the very things they appear to have left behind. It seems to me that it is a long time since architects tried to appeal to radical newness with a straight face. Maybe there are some younger architects who have done so in recent years, but their work clearly echoes and extends the experiments of previous generations, and now they are starting to proudly place themselves within this longer historical tradition. How could architects speak a language that they do not already share with the people they are talking to? On every other point, there is not so much agreement between us, I'm afraid. But at least it is a start of a conversation.

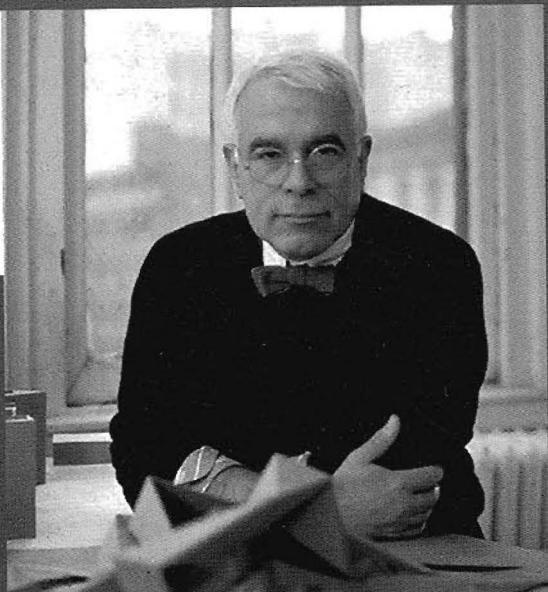
About what? Language, of course. The official theme of our panel. But what is the theme of the conference as a whole? What is the context for our discussion about language? Bob Stern invited us to talk about Peter and Leon. By the way, that is how we talk in architecture, with first names, as if we are all close friends or family. Such intimacy is normal for people spending a couple of days

together like this. Architects also have this wonderful way of feeling close to people who are not in the room or have never met. Even dead architects are welcomed and discussed as if they are in the room. We are constantly talking with all the architects who have preceded us. Names keep flowing into the room as the conversation proceeds. But what is this conversation about, this event that seemed to be founded as a kind of disaster, the construction of an ugly head-on traffic accident between two ancient opposing points of view? As a student said yesterday, "Why would I go to a conference about dinosaurs?" It was then that I realized that the event would be a success. After all, dinosaur movies have been such a hit in recent years.

Looking around the room, this might really be a conference about bow ties. Bow ties, like Leon and Peter, have long been thought to be an endangered species, almost extinct in an age in which the absence of any kind of tie is the official uniform of the artistically or intellectually



Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, Sven Markelius, 1958.



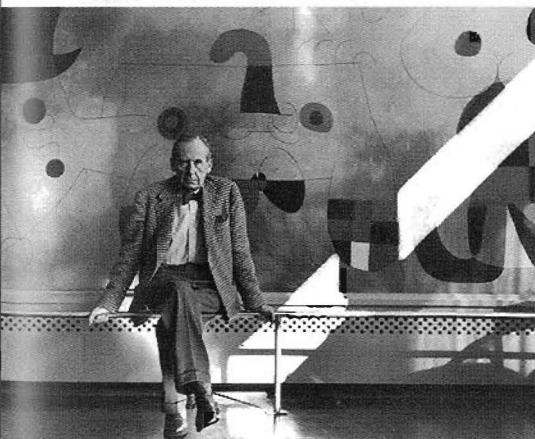
minded architect. But there are a surprisingly large number of them here. **The bow tie is alive and well at Yale.** This little accessory was for a long time an important thing for architects and lawyers, and I have always wondered what the connection is. Architects pretend it is because a regular tie will fall down on their drawings; I am unsure what the lawyer's defense is. **But surely what the lawyer and the architect have in common is that they both talk a lot;** they have to talk. There may be something about the bow tie and talk. We have watched the bow tie bouncing from under the moving lips of Gropius to Eames to Rudolph to Eisenman. We could do a whole history of the bow tie fluttering like a butterfly from architect to architect until it ends up in this room. Maybe some kind of secret knowledge is released from the inside of the knot, guiding the words of the speakers. We could even have a Ph.D. dissertation on bow ties, starting with the one of Gropius carefully preserved in the Harvard archives and moving on to the **key historical moment when Marshall McLuhan proudly declared that his was fake and pulled it away from his neck to reveal the plastic structure.** We could ask Peter, whose work started to appear in the very same years, serious questions about his bow tie. Is it real? Simulated? A commentary on postclassical anguish? A knot somehow

capturing the whole drama of the Hellenic versus Hebraic traditions? Does it displace or rebuild the person who wears it? In so doing, we find ourselves echoing precisely the argument of Adolf Loos, who challenged Joseph Hoffmann by discrediting his bow tie as a fake. Perhaps our history could start with those wonderful images of Mackintosh and his enormous flouncy bow, his flowery artistic tie capturing the ambitions of Art Nouveau that would eventually give way to the clean, reduced, black managerial bow of Gropius at the Bauhaus, though that too would widen and soften and become colorful—as he migrated to Harvard—before mutating itself a few times while making its way to Yale and to this conference here.

But I am sure you do not take me seriously. I am sure you want to dismiss the bow tie as just a decorative element. You don't see it as playing a structural role in the architect's discourse. Yet such seemingly secondary details are always a serious matter for the architect, like the seriousness of a decorative molding in a building: its original purpose, like that of the tie, is to hide a gap. The bow tie has precisely to do with the architecture of the body, in this case the architect's body. The architecture of the architect then. **Who would suggest that architects are not obsessed with the way they look and the look of their colleagues?** Aren't we here to say how Peter and Leon look to us today? Isn't Leon's trademark off-white suit just as much a part of his polemic as any published concept? Isn't it the case that students of architecture all over the world could draw what Peter and Leon are wearing today without being here? **Isn't the way architects systematically construct themselves as architects, the performance of the architect, inseparable from what they are saying, just as any medium is inseparable from the message or sometimes becomes the most important message?** It is precisely when taking an architect seriously that we should take seriously all the seemingly nonserious, or even pathetic, details that may play an unforeseen structural role.

But perhaps you are right. Perhaps this is not a conference about bow ties after all. Perhaps the real purpose of the conference is, as advertised, to celebrate two polemical architects—also an endangered species, yet a species that is alive and well in the room. There are many polemi-

cal figures present, people who can tease you into seeing the world differently, speakers who are a pleasure to listen to. It is always important to listen, even to last night's bow tie lecture—a kind of Martha Stewart view of architecture. The speaker was careful not to provide a glimpse of insight into his subject. This was to be expected. After all, the routine anti-intellectual tone of the lecture, speaking of tradition, is part of a long anti-intellectual tradition that has culminated in the current regressions in Washington. Not to be taken lightly. Surely, Mr. Kimball—not an architect so we should not use his first name—said exactly what he was expected to say. I share his deep interest in what is going on in the university, but I was struck by his evident lack of affection for architecture and therefore could not get interested in his particular opinion of architecture in the university. No one would expect him to share the love of architecture that we architects have, an endlessly foolish love no doubt. Indeed, it is perhaps necessary for social critics to point out that architects are too hopelessly in love with objects, and are therefore too irresponsible, as presumably are people who are in love. But to be entirely without affection for architecture itself is a bit of a problem in a conference about architecture. There was no talk of love last night, the word we use when we cannot be precise, when we cannot control the situation, our word for opening up to something outside ourselves, something we cannot predict or fully understand. To love architecture is to love what you do not know about it and embrace the thought that it could, at



Hans Namuth, portrait of Walter Gropius, 1952.

any moment, turn on you, surprise you, frustrate you, or entrance you, like any other lover. To love architecture is to endlessly try to understand something that escapes understanding. **That is what an architect is, somebody in love with the fact that they do not know what a building is.** The architect is the person for whom a building is a question mark. We know more about buildings than anyone else, but we also know that we know so little. We have been talking about buildings now for more than 2,000 years, and we still have not figured them out. I think we take pleasure in not having a definitive answer to our questions. It's why we are willing to spend long, beautiful fall afternoons foolishly talking on and on about it in rooms like this one.

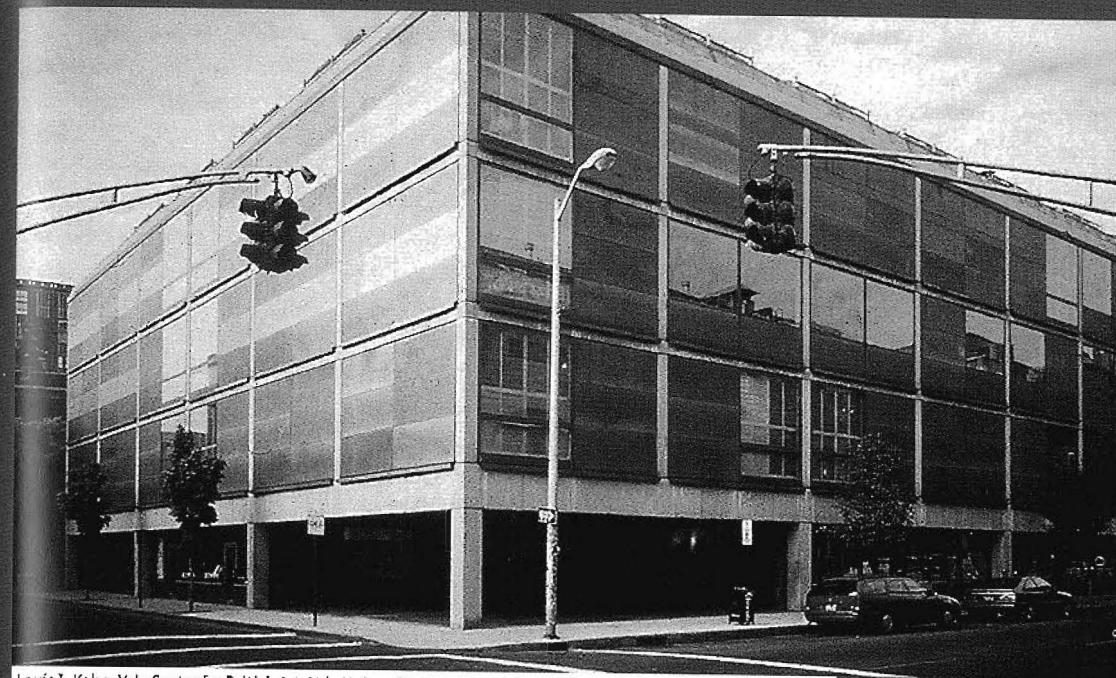
It is in this spirit that we might try to think about language here, try to grasp the linguistic dimension of loving architecture. Let's start with the obvious. As architects, we love lines. That's the beginning of the affair. Get a line, any line, and the architect starts to talk the day away. It could be a detail, surface, texture, or space. But first a line, like the big fat one drawn right through the middle of this conference, literally bisecting the posters and brochures, the line between white and black, between enlightened tradition and angst-ridden doubt, between classical certainty and avant-garde uncertainty, between reassuring order and destabilizing disorder, between known precedent and unknown future, the line between Leon and Peter, a line that, by the way, seems to become sharper and sharper as the day goes on. If you look at the poster, it is clear that I belong to one team and Demetri belongs to the other as part of an ever-escalating tournament. It is as if all the speakers are meant to attack each other in public for the amusement of the gathered throng, pair after pair taking each other apart and their remains being cleared away until at last the heroic gladiators themselves will arrive, having killed all of their disciples by encouraging them to foolishly take part in this conference. Now the gap between these two gladiators seems far too big to be bridged by any kind of civil debate, too big even to fire missiles across it. If you forget for the moment what seems to be the yawning division between classicism and the avant-garde, one side seems to be about city planning and

the other one not. One asks, "What is the appropriate code?" and the other doesn't even care about the question. In a sense, no exchange is possible, not even the beginning of a discussion.

And yet these two quarreling friends of ours, these two family members, are not so different in the end. To quickly point to an obvious symptom: both are equally strict about rejecting the so-called radical architecture of the 1960s and early 1970s. That is to say, both emphatically detached their architecture from technological expressionism, electronic pop culture, reprogramming, infrastructure, systems theory, radical mobility, operations research, media interfaces, drugs, sensory intensification, and so on. A vast terrain of experimentation is dismissed. This is a very particular rejection. If we did a little homework we could locate the point of rejection, looking again, for example, at *Design Quarterly* of 1970 on conceptual architecture, in which the radical work of Archigram, Superstudio, Haus Rucker & Co., and so on is introduced by Peter Eisenman with a textless set of footnotes. In that moment he is close to this group, alongside them, but even then his lonely footnotes start to establish a polemical distance. On the side of Krier, we could look at the close relationship between himself, Adolfo Natalini, Peter Cook, and Rem Koolhaas, as would become evident at Günter Bock's Städelschule in Frankfurt. With some research we could monitor the moment he was blended into that milieu in order to see more precisely his disconnection from it, as marked by his scathing 1975 review of the book *Architettura radicale* or, to put it more correctly, his lightly scathing review, more scathing than scathing because the work had not even aroused real anger on the part of the reviewer. He simply suggests that the book is just a demonstration of why one should not bother thinking about any of these architects. In the end, the approach of Eisenman and Krier will be to act as if all of that architecture, all of those remarkable experiments, had never happened. You can go through all the pages of *Oppositions*, for example, looking for even a trace, a passing footnote, pointing to these suspect practices. Why do these two strong, thoughtful architects want to act like so much work never happened? Presumably to make a space

for themselves, to clear a space in which they could stage their gladiatorial combat. In the same way that it was demonstrated so well today that Leon Krier removes the extraneous elements from his images, extraneous architects and ideas are removed in order to allow for the showdown between classicism and avant-garde, a death match that will be endlessly restaged, a bloody road show that has arrived today in New Haven.

These two rivals are therefore occupying exactly the same space. When a space is cleared for occupation, an architecture is already constructed. If you construct and occupy the same space you have to share a certain amount of language. You have to agree on what the rules of the combat will be, and therefore you are very close. In the background, you might faintly hear electronics beeping as experimental architecture goes through all its permutations, but it is way off in the far distance. You find yourself looking into a small defined circle, as we are today, a circle in which the new-new fights against the new-old, the new anti-urbanist versus the new urbanist, both cherishing the word *new* but flipping it in opposite directions. There is the rule that the rules can never change for one gladiator and the rule that the rules have to keep changing for the other, and that that is what they are going to fight about. Now it is obvious that in this particularly arcane form of combat, both teams depend on each other. In a sense, they are simply two matching brands. Two rival products pushed by two pitchmen, front men locked together in what could only be a pseudofight, since so much negotiation has to have gone on to agree on these obscure rules of combat that by the time the fight begins, it is really a kind of decorative gloss, an ornament, like a bow tie covering the fundamental agreement that got the two of them together in the circle. They even draw pictures of each other. At their first meeting in 1977 at Princeton, one of them does the poster for the other. Krier devotes great care to an image of Eisenman for an exhibition publicizing House X. The same image appears a year later when *Oppositions* publicizes Krier and Maurice Culot, and eventually the same image is used at the end of *Houses of Cards*, a book in which Eisenman tries to explain his whole sequence of experimental houses.



Louis I. Kahn, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 1969–74.

What we are talking about here is a couple. The affection between the two was first declared in 1977 at Princeton, then six years later in an interview for *Skyline* magazine, then exactly six years after that in *Architectural Design* with the "My Ideology Is Better than Yours" issue, and now exactly twelve years later. I have a feeling that there must have been an event six years ago of which none of us is aware, which is surprising, since the level of publicity has gone up each time. The first time they got together was a small event, and do we know that it really happened? On what basis are we deciding that there was this 1977 meeting they refer to? It was an unpublished conference. Then there is the *Skyline* interview, published with pictures of them sitting around a table. Then the special issue of *Architectural Design*, now with color pictures. Today, there is the exhibition catalog at Yale, with a web site, the book of this conference, and who knows what else. In a sense, what is going on here is just a further symbolic intensification of the relationship between these two lovers. This family gathering is something like a wedding. Or to be more precise, it is the twenty-fifth anniversary of a wedding, a renewal of the vows. The bride, no doubt, will wear a white suit. Of course, this means that the bride's family has to pay for the event, so we have to thank their step-dad, Bob, for being the gracious host. But before making one of the required bad speeches at the wedding, what side of the aisle am I supposed to sit on, what side of the line dividing the room in half? Obviously, I will sit on the side of Peter Eisenman. I know him, like him, and respect him. Also you get to see more if you sit on the dark side. At first you see nothing, then your eyes become extremely sensitive. It is paradoxically harder to see when you sit in the light, the full light of the classical tradition. You only see yourself, even imagine yourself to be the source of the light. The advantage of sitting in the dark is that you can see the one sitting in the light, and can maybe criticize, or attack, or just think. It may be harder to think when you are at the center. So I sit on Peter Eisenman's dark side, and speak here as a friend of the groom, but I will not defend him. That is probably why I belong on his side. One of the characteristics of the people who sit on

the side of the light is that they will defend each other loyally, talking about each other's brilliance. They will act like a family or a certain kind of officially happy family. The dark side is the side of the people who misbehave. You do not defend anyone else on your own team; you earn your spot on the team by not being a team player. Anyway, I have no interest in falling on my sword for the nonclassical. Peter can take care of himself perfectly well. More precisely, the two of them can take care of each other.

They are, as it's said, a charming couple. The charm of Peter is that he is so extraordinarily inefficient. He is an absolute model of inefficiency, smothering his projects and colleagues in words, a kind of baroque excess of words, concepts, and drawings, always trying to irritate people into some kind of reaction, always trying to shake the tree to see what will fall out. Don't be fooled by the bow tie. Nothing in the room or in the discourse is safe. Peter is an unmatched provocateur, and is therefore absolutely essential. It is hard to imagine architectural discourse in recent years, indeed for many decades, without this level of relentless intelligent provocation. So easy to make fun of, as was done last night, but so difficult to emulate. The charm of the partner, Leon, is that he, on the opposite side, is so relentlessly efficient. One slogan per drawing. One drawing per idea. He even thinks in capital letters like Le Corbusier. In early drawings, he refused even to draw a complete line. He dotted the edges of the buildings—that would do to define them. Always the absolute minimum use of resources. And notice in those early drawings that there is no surface, no materiality to the buildings. They are strictly modern drawings, all about the efficiency of communication. An elegant writing style, it should also be said, combined with a kind of machinelike manifesto efficiency in the name of an argument that will attack exactly that—machinelike efficiency. So a kind of efficient modernist argument against modernism. Throughout all of this, he is trying to sustain a sense of clarity in stark contrast to those around him, but probably in the end he is just acting as another well-dressed lawyer, drafting mechanical rules legislating an all too safe

lifestyle. So we are back to the lawyers again. One thinks, for example, of other elegant writers in architecture, like Alois Riegl, who were originally trained as lawyers.

So, a well-matched pair, and I am not going to speak for one side of the couple or the other. We should just be happy for them to reaffirm their bond in public. Rather than analyze their unique contributions to architectural discourse, I want to insist on their similarity and quickly question the basic conceptual opposition that allows them to so famously appear to be on opposite sides.

In my view, the classical versus avant-garde distinction is a red herring and has been so for a long time. I, for one, am perfectly happy to embrace the so-called classical tradition precisely because it is riddled with inconsistencies, confusion, and transgressions, which may not be true of the avant-garde. Actually, you can only transgress within the classical tradition, a tradition that has been, for thousands of years now, one of intense and endless debate. It is all about certainty, but it has never itself been certain. The rules in the classical tradition are only established so that a genius can demonstrate genius by breaking them and making the work even more beautiful. That is to say, there is a kind of doubt about the rules built into the very discourse that celebrates the rules. The entire tradition stages a dynamic between imitation and innovation. Architects have argued endlessly about the meaning of the rules. It was a thrill when I was able to go to the top of the famous columns of the Parthenon a few years ago during its restoration, to stand way up there where only the original builders had stood before, and to hang off the scaffolding in a strong wind to touch the traces of the original decorative paintwork that somehow survived the raging fire after the devastating explosion and the centuries of exposure to the elements. To go, that is, to the heart of the central paradigm of the classical tradition and hear the expert who is lovingly taking care of the building, restoring it fragment by fragment, describe with great pride the various ways in which his building breaks almost all of the very rules for which it acts as a paradigm. The classical tradition is never fixed.

It is dominated by disagreement. If you really want to find people who disagree, head into the classical tradition. Paradoxically, that tradition maintains an intense sense of modernity. When continuing the ancient struggle with the rules, there is always the feeling that your struggle is the unique struggle of your own day. In the avant-garde tradition, a revealing contradiction in terms, there is a too-smug reassurance that shock is the name of the game, which cannot be so shocking in the end. The very expression "avant-garde architecture" is probably a contradiction in terms. The word *architecture* has meaning in our culture only inasmuch as architecture has offered reassurance by resisting time, a dream exemplified by the classical tradition with its supposedly eternal geometries. Inasmuch as architecture can seem to escape time, it can act as a framework, or a mirror, allowing the unpredictable flows of daily life to be exposed, offering the thought that there is an order beyond the disorder. Anyway, the so-called avant-garde tradition in architecture is almost one hundred years old, already officially an antique. Modernism is the next antique. It's highly likely that there has never really been an avant-garde in architecture. Its advocates seem far too certain about the need for uncertainty. Anyway, the myth of the avant-garde has always had classical temples as its reference point. Again and again, the Parthenon pops up as the key. This is unsurprising since the cult of transgression requires the idea of the classical to give itself force. At the same time, the classical tradition is so much stranger than its most ardent promoters could ever acknowledge, so much more perverse in its complications.

All this is just to say that the debate between the classical and the avant-garde doesn't really seem to be a debate to people of my generation, which is why we find ourselves here for an event like today's, like ungrateful children who take advantage of what we have been given by turning against the people who gave it to us. We are not so interested in this struggle between two forms of nostalgia for things that architecture never had, two choices of how slow architecture should be. Very slow or just a little bit slow? Echoing the sixteenth century or the 1920s? The

whole classical versus avant-garde distinction is a distraction. The only real difference, perhaps, is just on that finer point between doubt and certainty, between alienation and comfort. If you look at the writings of Leon Krier and Peter Eisenman, you will repeatedly see that they ultimately disagree only on this exact point. So the line drawn through the conference is really between comfort and alienation, a choice that exists within the classical and within the avant-garde, rather than between them. And since this is the panel on language, the question becomes, what does it mean to be uncertain or alienated in architectural language? Or more important, in reverse, what does it mean to be certain or comfortably at home in architectural language? It is easy to demonstrate that language is always riddled with insecurity, paradoxes, and so forth, and that architects are actually in love with these dilemmas. Yet it is also easy to show that language is inevitably more stabilizing than those who promote instability would like us to think; that you are locked into a very tight geometry once you start to talk. This is again exactly the point, that order arises through and depends upon disorder, rather than being dissolved by it.

The opposing views structuring this conference are therefore both inadequate. If you associate language and architecture in order to associate architecture with stability, or if you identify architecture with language because language is unstable, you share the basic understanding of architecture's basic representational operation. Both, that is, are committed to a certain language view. The classicism versus avant-garde debate is therefore not about language at all. Indeed, architects do not have a choice about language. Or to put it slightly differently, to choose to be an architect is already to have chosen language. We do not have the physical environment—buildings—and then the various attempts to describe it as a language. Rather, there is only the ongoing attempt by architects to persuade people that buildings are a form of language, that buildings themselves speak. **Architecture in its most ordinary definition is articulate building, building that speaks.** It is not simply that buildings are seen to act like a language. Rather, architects describe buildings literally as speaking objects. In this sense, the

whole point of architecture is to talk and the role of the architect is to stitch words to buildings, which they are extremely good at doing through a kind of ventriloquism. Drawings, models, and buildings are passionately described as representing certain ideas in the hope that after a while people do not have to hear the description, believing that it is the building itself that is talking, believing when walking down the street that they hear buildings whispering this and that about themselves and the world, unaware that the buildings might have been invisible, silent, not even thought of as architecture, if there had not been so much talk. There is no architecture without talk. Words, words, words. All architects talk, have to talk. The only issue is how they talk.

To talk about language here, we have to talk about how the architect, as a unique species, talks. Before addressing the way architecture might be a form of language, we have to look at the very specific language applied to it, that of the architect. **We teach our students how to talk. We do so much more effectively than we teach them how to draw.** In fact, since Walter Gropius, it is entirely possible to be an international architect of great influence without learning how to draw. In some circles, it is considered a serious advantage to not know how to draw. But to not know how to talk is to immediately have left the discipline. This special form of talk needs to be analyzed at length, but for now I just want to quickly address the way we hear it.

If architects have a unique form of speech, what is it for us to listen? How do we listen in architecture? This is the side of the conversation that is usually left out. For example, we speak of "talking on the phone" but never of "listening on the phone." If two people are talking, the question of listening does not come up. It is almost as if we think of listening as being private, what goes on in the head, and talking is what is public. In pointing to a conversation, we point to that which is visible, that which is public. And because listening is thought of as a private and passive activity rather than a public one, we have not developed a science of listening. We have not thought about the nuances of how to listen. In our field, we have not asked, what is it to listen to an architect, or to listen to



Paul Rudolph, Art and Architecture Building, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 1961–63.

a building? Architects are so busy talking that they forget to listen. They act as if they do not have time to listen to each other or to their clients. In fact, listening to your client is a polemical position. For architects to declare that they are very interested in the unique interests of their clients is already to take a particular position, like Neutra, presenting himself as an especially gifted listener and having himself photographed listening to his clients, blurring the role of the architect and the role of the shrink, the shrink being the paradigm of the listener. Most architects simply pretend they are not listening because it is a sign of strength not to listen, to be the one who talks. As architects get more and more successful, they stop going to conferences that they are not speaking at and spend less and less time listening to the other speakers. They stop listening, even to their own voices, perhaps.

Most architects talk past each other. In a sense, they are simply rivals competing for a part of the audience share. This audience, for example, has been carved up again and again by each successive speaker. But architects do listen in private. Privately they actually admit a lot of doubt. What is unique about the teaching of architecture in the university is the extent to which architects are able to tacitly admit that they do not really know what a building is. Even the buildings they inhabit every day. Do we really have the capacity to understand the effect of the ceiling above us here, for example? I am not so sure, despite the fact that most of us are architects and we have been in this room now for a long time. There is an enormous difference between the way architects operate in private, that is, in the studio, whether it be the studio of a school of architecture or the studio of an office, and how they behave in public, whether it be in a lecture, a conference, or a publication. The difference between the way we talk and listen in the studio and the way we talk and listen in conferences is much bigger than that between classical and avant-garde traditions. The line between the private side of the discourse and the public is the real line to discuss.

A quick example. When the first Royal Academy of Architecture was founded in the late seventeenth century, the whole point was that the leaders of the field,

the select eight members of the academy, would go behind closed doors once a week to debate the fundamental issues, arguing about what the rules should really be, trying to establish agreement on what constitutes the language. When they made an agreement on a key issue, like whether the proportional module should be adjusted here or there, the conclusion would be presented publicly in lectures given by the director twice a week, starting with François Blondel in 1671. That is to say, doubt behind closed doors, although the members kept detailed private minutes of the disagreements, and then unambiguous public pronouncement. Very public. Anyone was welcome to walk in and listen. The lectures were certainly not compulsory for what were later understood to be architectural students. The young architects would go to hear the lectures simply to get some idea of what the jury would be thinking when they were judging the drawings submitted for the big competitions. In other words, students went looking for design clues. Eventually, the public lectures were turned into books and published as standard doctrines, starting with Blondel's *Cours* of 1675. The most confident statements circulated in the most public space. So we have a superconfident classical tradition in public, a tradition that even says that the classical is the very source of all confidence, which is actually filled with doubt behind closed doors.

In these terms, you could say that Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building preserves the classical architecture of the discipline. What is put near the front door, if "front door" is a term you can still use with that building, is the exhibition space, library, and below, lecture theater. That is to say, there is a series of large public spaces in which the most confident statements of the discipline will be made. In a sense, the whole operation of the discipline is laid out between the café on the roof and the lecture hall in the basement, from the small space above, where everybody is eating, drinking, and talking at once, to the big room down below, where there is only one person standing in front with a clear message and everybody is respectfully quiet. Just below the café are the studios: massive disorder. This does not look anything at all like the Rudolph drawings of what was meant to go on there, with all his

carefully drawn furniture neatly organized in the plans. What happens these days in the studios is that a kind of clearing is made in the middle of the wilderness for the pin-ups. It is usually a mess in the outer fringes of the space where the work is produced. This disorderly fringe ringing the volume is not just the space of production. It is also a space of reception, where teachers listen to students in a particular way. They sit side by side at the drawing desk, with one listening to the other and speaking lightly like a shrink: "So, what do you think you were doing with that column this week?" "Well, I don't know, but . . ." Eventually, enough confidence is built up in the evolving projects that the students can talk about their work in front of each other in the weekly pin-up. This is slightly more public, so a little bit of a clearing is made in the middle of the space, but all of the chairs of the class are usually gathered in a very tight defensive circle around the drawings and models as if it is understood that no one knows for sure what is going on and the outside world has to be kept at bay while the unformed shapes and ideas are nurtured. But something is already growing, gaining force. Eventually, the new life form becomes so strong, with a sufficiently strong story being told about it by the student, that it can be exposed a little more. So now the middle of the studio floor is really cleaned up and some teachers from other studios are invited in to see it and offer their reactions in a midterm review. Hopefully the work survives that assault, which involves a range of people with different philosophies throwing alternative descriptions at the project, seeing which words stick and which do not, and the student agilely adjusting to the rival narrative streams and learning how to talk. When the project and the story told about it finally mature, all disorder in the entire studio volume is cleared away and a group of outside experts comes in to judge it, the final jury. Big names from near and far. Now the lines of seats for the jury, class, and visitors are exactly parallel, the clear organization of the room matching the clear organization of the project and its narrative. The confident student is positioned in front of the firing line like a lecturer delivering a decisive presentation. Cameras and tape recorders appear to keep a public record. And if the project is really

successful, it might then make its way down to the public exhibition space where anybody can come in off the street and see it. There is not so much talk in the display area, just a single set of images; the speaking voice of the designer is replaced with a few statements attached to the boards, as if the work now speaks for itself. And if it is one of the very best projects of the year, it will move out of the school as part of the official publicity. So the project gradually moves from doubt, mess, and multiple voices upstairs toward the front door and eventually out into the world as a clear singular statement.

And in that outside world, absolute confidence. Architects act as if any public admission of vulnerability or doubt will ruin a project. As if architecture, to be architecture, has to be certain. Even certain about uncertainty. Peter Eisenman may cultivate uncertainty relative to traditional norms but still must look society in the eye and say the impossible: "I know exactly how this project of mine is going to be uncertain. I am certain of that." And it is hard because deep down he loves architecture. He loves the fact that he has no fixed definitive idea of what the object is. Nor does Leon Krier, who must look the client in the eye and say, "I am certain that this is certain." There is surely a voice inside both saying, "perhaps . . . I am not sure . . . I wonder if . . . I hope . . ." What has happened at this conference today is that we have left the Art and Architecture Building behind, and crossed the street to an even bigger space, presumably to make even more confident statements. Which is why it was a pleasure to listen to Maurice express doubt, to see him place a remarkable image—the one of the car, the two doors open, the mother, the son, and the father presumably taking the photograph—alongside one of Rudolph as he asks, "Why? Why was I copying Rudolph? I do not know." The discipline works hard to resist such admissions of doubt. It literally structures itself to keep doubt private. If you look closely at Rudolph's original drawings for the A&A Building, for example, the jury space on the upper levels is in a semicircle, individual seats organized in a tight defensive formation, while the jury space that he draws inside the exhibition space below has all the seats absolutely in parallel, as if there is

a sense that the discourse, when it is able to go down into the public world, is lined up, open, has nothing to hide.

And here we are, lined up in our teams, confident, expressing with great certainty what we believe, who we like and do not like. This event is supposedly all about making conflict public, bringing a big fight from the private meetings of Leon and Peter into the public sphere. But this is a conflict that has always been staged in public. In private, there is absolutely no evidence of conflict between these two figures—intellectual, emotional, physical, or otherwise. This is because it is not really a conflict. **The positions are so symmetrical that there is no dissonance or exchange. Each side, in fact, adjusts to become the opposite of the other. It is funny reading the 1983 Skyline interview. Peter is desperately trying to seek agreement, and he keeps saying, "I think you will agree that..." and every time Leon is very careful to not agree.** There is no agreement at all, no real discussion, just a kind of simultaneous intergalactic missile launch: all the weapons launched by the protagonists pass each other overhead, hitting people in the back of the room but leaving the two of them intact, superintact, given the flames that now rise up in the distance. In fact, it seems that they use each other in public to finely tune their positions: **"If Leon is going that way, I should have gone that way." It is enormously useful to find out who you are by looking at somebody who is meant to be what you are not. It's so relentlessly symmetrical in the end that it is actually a single position.** So tight, so organic, so ecologically balanced and sustainable is this relationship that it is a single position. **Which is why, I suppose, the catalog for the exhibition here at Yale puts one-half of each of their heads together to form one combined head.** It is inconceivable that one of the sides, left brain or right, will today hear something in the other that changes it. They will not really listen to each other; they cannot listen and preserve their radicality. And yet, if they are typical architects, they will listen to each other in private. The doubt will yet again be behind closed doors. On April 8, 2002, in Milan, Peter Eisenman was asked by an interviewer, "Do you discuss your work with other architects?" And he answered immediately, "Yes, all the time. Like Leon Krier;

today we had lunch." And this is how it goes, the public statement of an affectionate meeting in private. He moves on to say that he also enjoys having lunch with **Rafael Moneo, Philip Johnson, Jeff Kipnis, Mark Wigley, and Robert Stern** before repeating the point that he really disagrees with Leon Krier, but respects him a lot. When asked, "Where do you work on your designs and projects?" he says, "I have a studio. My office is like an atelier and I have a desk in there. I do not have my own office. I sit in the middle of my studio. We have about 20 or 30 people, and I am able to listen to what is going on. I have no private telephone. It is where I do all my work, my drawing, my thinking." This is a classic image of the architect's studio as a laboratory, in which architecture is somehow mystically created, with a listening post at its center. The architect's images of certainty, the precise drawings and clear public statements, are created out of a confrontation with doubt. Anyway, it is only when facing doubt that you are forced to make a decision. It is only when there is no clear rationale that will tell you what the next move is that you must make a decision, that you must draw a line, must act as an architect. So it is not a surprise that architects secretly cherish doubt. Doubt is, as it were, the beginning of architecture. Unsure, the architect listens. Leon Krier is even wary of people who sit in the middle of their studio and listen too much. When he negotiates his separation from a once close relationship with Jim Stirling, he writes his open letter of 1976, in which he complains that Stirling did not admit to the effect Krier had on his designs when he worked in his studio, and indeed went so far as to remove Krier's name from the credits of projects. In 1976, a year before Peter and Leon came out as a couple, we have this statement from Krier about Stirling: "I have never, in fact, met a professional who could like you be a patient listener, who could accept ideas and suggestions so candidly. You seem in certain cases to appropriate some of these strange collective design objects only as they merge into the public realm." He is not complaining that Stirling did not listen, which is what every generation accuses the other generation of—the young saying that the old don't listen and the old saying that the young don't listen. Rather, the

accusation is that the older generation listened too closely, absorbing and claiming what was said.

But such a literal absorption of what the other says is not listening. To listen is not just to hear and repeat somebody's words. To listen is to be open, to obey what is said, not who seems to be saying it. To listen is to take the risk of being deeply affected in ways you cannot predict. This does not mean that you obey the explicit letter of what you hear. Listening is never the simple absorption of a message. It is the way of opening yourself to the unknown, welcoming whatever lurks within whatever you hear, welcoming, as it were, whatever stranger might walk in. It includes listening, by the way, to interruptions, like those of today. It is not passive. It is highly active. To listen is to be faithful to what you hear, but in order to be really faithful you have to invent new norms, new ways of listening, new contexts for what you hear, in the very name of what you hear. **To listen carefully is to hear what the person who is talking cannot hear in what they are saying.** And there cannot be any outside authority for these new norms, no way to legitimate these new ways of listening. Good listeners always rearrange what they hear. Listening, I am suggesting, is an art, an art that can be taught. **In my opinion, architectural studios are an extraordinary model of this teaching. Without ever discussing it, we teach our students how to listen.** And yet it is disappointing that this special form of listening always gives way to an overconfident rhetoric in public, this kind of generic arrogance of the architect, the strutting confidence about that thing we secretly know and love simply for the fact that we have never figured out really what it is. The risky art of listening unfortunately gives way to the safety of loud speeches. Perhaps the rise of so-called theory in architecture in the last fifteen years, this rise that people like Roger Kimball pretend to be so upset about—surely one could not really be so upset about what architects are talking about today, since they have an absolutely minimal impact on the cultural and political world—is simply the fact that the doubt has perhaps been taken from behind the closed doors and made somewhat public. So-called theory in architecture, I would suggest, is simply listening. It is not taking a singular position. It is

not a call to arms. Nothing ever comes directly out of it. On the contrary, it is a deepening and widening of the possibilities at any one moment. It is simply a form of research that puts the doubt that permeates the studio world into the lecture hall and the exhibition space. The unembarrassed display of doubt acts as an invitation, even a demand, for people to take responsibility for their next move, calling for thoughtful gestures without specifying them. Making public this doubt is utterly in the spirit of a university like this one, and utterly in the spirit of our love of architecture.

Architects, to conclude, are obsessed with the intimate play between certainty and uncertainty. All of us know that the objects we and our students produce act for our society as the very image of certainty. And yet we also know that we do not really know what these objects are, how we produce them, or how they will be experienced. We have plenty of theories, plenty of what was yesterday called opinions—when, remarkably, Alberti was described as somebody who just had opinions. Nevertheless, it is precisely there, in this obsession with the play between certainty and uncertainty, that our irrational love of architecture lies. This is just simply to say that what we love about architecture is precisely that it forever blurs and defeats the line drawn right down through the middle of this conference. That is to say, the line between certainty and uncertainty, comfort and anxiety, the line that supposedly divides our happy couple but actually binds them together forever and forever.