I, Daniel K Elkin, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
Seeking Silence Through GARAP: Architecture, Image, and Connotation

Student's name: Daniel K Elkin

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Aarati Kanekar, PhD
Committee chair: Michael McInturf, MARCH
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Committee Chairs
Professor Aarati Kanekar, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Michael McInturf

Seeking Silence Through ‘GARAP’
Architecture, Image, and Connotation

Daniel K Elkin
B.S. in Architecture
University of Cincinnati
Abstract

The valuation process within architecture attaches connotative meaning to productions of architectural practice, especially imagery created by the architect. Architecture, through the written word and escalating masculinization of drawing and imagery, transforms visual aesthetic image objects of marks on a page into connoted aesthetic image objects with possible consequences and meaning in the real world. Architects understand this process as imparting meaning to their work and differentiating their practice from the aesthetic praxis of art, understood to be solely aesthetic.

However, the relationship between imagery and the consequences illustrated thereby is not so simple in the time of mass-publication of imagery and the simulation of architectural outcomes. The connoted aesthetic objects created by the architect, through repetition and publication, become re-feminized into visual aesthetic objects, carrying along the consequential information imparted by the architect and transforming that information into atrophied signs or consumer demographics. The aesthetic of the architectural image/artifact and consequences or narratives become equated, threatening the reductive degradation of both. Connotation of architectural images, therefore, can work at cross purposes to both architecture and the narratives it attempts to connote.

This effect is increasingly prominent, this research will argue, as the indicative property of architectural images- the possibility of construing virtual images as reality- increases through high verisimilitude images, images attempting to include non-visual information, and images attached to socio-cultural claims. This paper argues the possibility that images of these types can insure a connotative connection between aesthetic and narrative that equates the two, allowing the posited feminization.

This research will analyze the connection between visual culture and material culture as basis of the connotation of architecture, and propose possibilities for the interrogation of the connotative apparatus. In conjunction, this research shall include a body of design research work investigating imagery and image processes, culminating in a connotative perversion of Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion and the connoted imagery attached thereto. Through the foiled exercises of academic research and structured design play, this research shall seek the limits of the connotation of architectural images, and discover the tentative connection between speculative imagery and consequences thereof.
Architecture does not prove anything

This is a difficult point to prove

I send my profoundest thanks to the following:

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Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Introduction 24

Section One: Visual Culture, Connotation, and Simulation
Introduction 52
The Freeing of Signs Part One: Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord 53
Lexicon For Layers of Simulation: Signs and Systems of Signs 67
The Freeing of Signs Part Two: Jean Baudrillard 67

Section Two: Architecture Connoted in Sign and Simulation
Introduction 106
Architecture and the Architectural Claim-Connotation Through the Written Word 107
Automatic Realities: The Indicative Quality of Images in Architecture 140
Virtually-Real: High Verisimilitude Images, Qualitative Information Images, and Socially Complex Architectural Claims 155
Apologia: The Consumption of Images 186

Section Three: Staging, Research, and the Work
Introduction 200
Methodology and the Seductive Architectural Practice 203

Section Four: Appendices
Introduction 242
Commercial Visual Culture in India 242
The Baining 243
Public Man and Playacting 247
References 250

Interludes
The House, Part One 30-41
The House, Part Two 42-51
The House, Part Three 80-105
The House, Part Four 190-199
The House, Part Five 208-241
The House, Part Six 254-303
Index of Figures

Fig 1: Site Study Photograph 1  
Property of the Author  
32

Fig 2: Site Study Photograph 2  
Property of the Author  
33

Fig 3: Photograph 1 of ‘Egg Inspector’  
Property of the Author  
34

Fig 4: Photograph 2 of ‘Egg Inspector’  
Property of the Author  
35

Fig 5: Digital Still from Fountain Square Installation  
Property of the Author  
36

Fig 6: Photograph from Fountain Square Installation  
Property of the Author  
37

Fig 7: Digital Still from design presentation  
Property of the Author  
38-39

Fig 8: Photograph 1 of ‘Photo inspector’  
Property of the Author  
44

Fig 9: Photograph 2 of ‘Photo inspector’  
Property of the Author  
45

Fig 10: Photograph of figure-ground investigation  
Property of the Author  
46-47

Fig 11: Photograph of plaster and glass installation  
Property of the Author  
48-49

Fig 12: Photograph of Walter Benjamin  
Image Credit: desconciertos.blogspot.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
54

Fig 13: Photograph of a Parisian Arcade  
Image Credit: travel.webshots.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
55

Fig 14: Photograph of a replica of a medieval shoe  
Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download  
58

Fig 15: Photograph of a Nike Shoe  
Image Credit: runblogger.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
59

Fig 16: Photograph of a Nike Ad  
Image Credit: adrants.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
62

Fig 17: Photograph of people in a movie theater  
Image Credit: mrrzine.monthly.review.org, January 29, 2011 Download  
63

Fig 18: Photograph of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara  
Image Credit: newazerbaijan.blogspot.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
64

Fig 19: Iconic Image of El Che  
Image Credit: photos8.com, January 29, 2011 Download  
65

Fig 20: Photograph of an automaton  
Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download  
72

Fig 21: Photograph of industrial robots  
Image Credit: hwsystem.se, January 29, 2011 Download  
73

Fig 22: Photograph of ‘Kojiro’ Android  
Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download  
74

Fig 23: Drawing of Humans from the Mercury Spacecraft  
Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download  
75
Fig 49: Photograph of the Vanna Venturi house  
[Image Credit: connect.in.com, February 3, 2011 Download]

Fig 50: Photograph of Bagsvaerd Church  
[Image Credit: picasaweb.google.com, February 16, 2011 Download]

Fig 51: Photograph of fashion model Freja Beha  
[Image Credit: fashionnotes.com, February 16, 2011 Download]

Fig 52: Photograph of paintings at Lasceux Cave  
[Image Credit: picasaweb.google.com, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 53: Photograph of Still Life with Game Fowl  
[Image Credit: lib-art.com, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 54: Photograph of No. 3/No. 13 by Mark Rothko  
[Image Credit: arthistory.about.com, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 55: Photograph of No. 5 by Jackson Pollock  
[Image Credit: phamu.wordpress.com, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 56: Photograph of Lozenge Composition by Piet Mondrian  
[Image Credit: artnectar.com, February 16, 2011 Download]

Fig 57: Photograph of the Rietveld Chair  
[Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 58: Photograph of Rhythm of a Russian Dance by Theo von Doesburg  
[Image Credit: 'de_buurmann' via flickr.com, February 16, 2011 Download]

Fig 59: Plan of the Barcelona Pavilion  
[Image Credit: Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion. Page 34, Werner Blaser]

Fig 60: Photograph of Guggenheim Bilbao  
[Image Credit: archive.com, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 61: Photograph of Olympia by Edouard Manet  
[Image Credit: commons.wikimedia.org, January 29, 2011 Download]

Fig 62: Digital Rendering from HOK  
[Image Credit: HOK from autodesk.usa.com, February 3, 2011 Download]

Fig 63: Digital Rendering of UC Davis Facility  
[Image Credit: autodesk.usa.com, February 3, 2011 Download]

Fig 64: Plan of Villa Savoye  
[Image Credit: public.ia.state.edu, February 9, 2011 Download]

Fig 65: Photograph of Villa Savoye  
[Image Credit: inbetween-the-cracks.blogspot.com, February 3, 2011 Download]

Fig 66: Digital Rendering of Villa Savoye  
[Image Credit: dpcdsb.com, February 3, 2011 Download]

Fig 67: Collage from War and Architecture by Lebbeus Woods  
[Image Credit: lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com, February 3, 2011 Download]
Fig 122: Digital scan of CMYK print 4 of 6
Property of the Author

Fig 123: Digital scan of CMYK print 5 of 6
Property of the Author

Fig 124: Digital scan of CMYK print 6 of 6
Property of the Author

Fig 125: Digital scan of first floor wallpaper 1 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 126: Digital scan of first floor wallpaper 2 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 127: Digital scan of first floor wallpaper 3 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 128: Digital scan of second floor wallpaper 1 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 129: Digital scan of second floor wallpaper 2 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 130: Digital scan of second floor wallpaper 3 of 3
Property of the Author

Fig 131: Digital scans of large magenta wallpaper
Property of the Author

Fig 132: Digital copy of conversation with Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 133: Digital copy of original final presentation script
Property of the Author

Fig 134: Digital Scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Unaltered proof
Property of the Authors

Fig 135: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 1 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 136: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 2 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 137: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 3 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 138: Still from digital film of movements on the site with Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 139: Reality approximation tool screen for filming exercises
Property of the Author

Fig 135: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 136: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 137: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 138: Still from digital film of movements on the site with Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 139: Reality approximation tool screen for filming exercises
Property of the Author

Fig 132: Digital copy of conversation with Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 133: Digital copy of original final presentation script
Property of the Author

Fig 134: Digital Scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Unaltered proof
Property of the Authors

Fig 135: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 1 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 136: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 2 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 137: Digital scan of failed stencil quadtych for Kory A Beighle - Movement 3 by Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 138: Still from digital film of movements on the site with Kory A Beighle
Property of the Authors

Fig 139: Reality approximation tool screen for filming exercises
Property of the Author
Introduction

As much as the praxis of architecture consists of the production of material things, whether buildings or more ephemeral artifacts, there is also a consistent written, or generally language-based, narrative that accompanies the objects created by architects. This narrative, encapsulated in architectural theory, takes numerous forms and speaks to the motivations behind created objects: justification, valuation, and critique are general schema. In addition, this narrative can be structured both retroactively and proactively in regard to the architectural artifact, giving valuations and justifications to the architectural product both after and before that product exists. In a sense the language narrative of architecture comes to connote the products of architecture, establishing ideological and cultural connections of meaning and consequence with these objects.

Given that the majority of architectural product, especially in the academic setting, is imagery rather than physical things, let alone buildings, this research will argue that this valuation narrative causes a masculinizing conversion of architectural images from being merely visual or strictly aesthetic objects to being connoted aesthetic objects with purported or expected consequences, regardless of their aesthetic nature and detachment from consequential structures of agency and cultural narrative. Especially as the valuation of these products, once again particularly in the academic environment, is done proactively and in a relative vacuum of agent constraint by other parties, arguably these connoted aesthetic signs are made without any substantive consequence and serve to convert the cultural and agency narratives they attempt to connote to, at best, meaningless signals or, more dubiously, tactical consumer demographics without any use beyond connoting the desires of a user group without result.

These contentions made here are based in the connections between visual and material cultures established by theorists Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, and Jean Baudrillard, who collectively form a lineage establishing the development of contemporary consumer capitalist visual culture and the possibility that aesthetic visual signs may be taken to connote cultural narratives. Benjamin describes the beginning of industrialized visual culture with The Arcades Project, framing the beginning of consumer culture in which the connoted imagery attached to commodity objects became more significant than the objects themselves. Following this, Debord’s Society of the Spectacle explores the possibility of image and sign-driven consumer capitalist culture facilitating a detachment of the proletariat from cultural and political agency in the context of Marxist struggle. Finally, Baudrillard’s works Simulacra and Simulation and Seduction delineate complex systems of connoted cultural signs that are capable of pacifying any and all opposing narratives through aesthetic expression, revealing the consequential nature of the mutability of connoted signs and the risk to cultural agency posed by connotation of aesthetic cultural productions. This research argues that the architect, through the written valuation process proposed here, stands at considerable risk of exposing the culturally and politically agent parties with which he or she interacts to this mutability and reversability of signs by ascribing valuate connotation to architectural aesthetic products.

This point is expanded upon by an investigation of three major epistemes of architectural theory evaluation narratives corresponding closely to Jean Baudrillard’s three orders of aesthetic simulacra. This document argues that the Classical, Modernist, and Post-Modern theoretical constructs of architecture correspond closely to the first, second, and third orders of simulacra, respectively, and consequent an increasingly flexible system of valuations to be attached to aesthetic artifacts of the architectural discipline. The second section begins with Leon Battisti Alberti’s Ten Books.
on Architecture, describing the similarity between the idealistically-formulated and rigid system of Classical architecture and Baudrillard’s description of a first order simulacrum. Second, Le Corbusier’s Towards an Architecture is analyzed as a potential second order simulacrum of architecture, similarly confined and based in the ideal, but with an industrialized aesthetic basis. After this point this document argues a shift in the basis of architectural theory grounded in Robert Venturi’s Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, described here as the first in a series of third order simulacra of architectural aesthetics. Argued here is the possibility that Venturi’s writing opens architecture to the total mutability of signs and connotations described by Baudrillard as a flexible, third order aesthetic system, in that Venturi’s aesthetic valuation system is, first, established on highly flexible criteria and, second, posited explicitly as an aesthetic system that is self-contradictory. Though Venturi’s aesthetic system itself is not particularly grounded in systems of agency or cultural narrative (it is, for the most part, grounded in aesthetic preference) this document will compare Venturi’s system with Kenneth Frampton’s theory of critical regionalism described in Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance to describe how this flexibility of architectural valuations can be made to include theories of cultural narrative and agency using very similar aesthetic criteria and, often, the same architectural artifacts. This research argues that, after Venturi and the beginning of Post-Modern architectural theory, the valuation process of architecture has become so flexible as to engage in the total reversibility of signs and connotations described by Jean Baudrillard.

Granted, this argument is based on certain assumptions of what could be called honesty or even naivete in the consumption of architectural valuation. It is assumed with this argument that the consumer of architectural imagery and the theory accompanying it accepts claims made with a relative lack of cynicism and good faith in the architect. This, of course, is not always the case, especially in architectural discourse. However, the second half of Section Two argues that the particular qualities of architectural images, especially with the increasing possibility of high verisimilitude renderings, do everything possible to discourage any measure of cynicism or doubt in the connection between the connotations described in architectural claims and the artifacts put forth by the architect. Any notion of theater or suspension of disbelief is, arguably, inhibited by what is termed the indicative property of architectural images: the communication of architectural images as either real buildings or nascently real buildings, and thus potentially connected to consequential narratives in a way that built artifacts may be. This indicative property is argued to be latent in the architectural discipline, but highly accentuated by the increasingly ‘real’ appearance of architectural images. This document examines three categories of images: high verisimilitude images, qualitative information images, and socially complex architectural claims. High verisimilitude renderings, particularly those developed using building information modeling (BIM) software are argued to have a particularly high indicative quality due simply to their ‘real’ appearance, which assigns them the warrant of objective reality carried by photography despite their aesthetic, virtual, and speculative nature. Lebbeus Woods’ Sarajevo Project, as analyzed by Neil Leach and Aarati Kanekar, is presented in this section as a case study of the correlation between this indicative property of an architectural image and its connection to agent connotations. Secondly, this research argues the particularly high indicative quality of qualitative information images and socially complex architectural claims due to their presentation of supposedly scientific information understood to be objective. Though these images are
speculative and may be understood by the architect to be so, this research argues that such images make no effort to suspend a direct connection to consequences in reality and, in fact, insist that the consequences displayed will exist or do exist in reality. REX PC’s Low2No urban planning project is studied as an example of an extremely complex speculative claim made through architecture that is given great indicative connotative quality through presentation of scientific information coupled with high verisimilitude images. In addition, REX PC’s project makes specific claims to socio-cultural and environmental agency without giving indication of the virtual and speculative nature of architectural images, establishing a strong connection between possible agent narratives and what are, in the end, aesthetic architectural artifacts. This document will argue that such a connection provides a substantial opportunity to expose these agent narratives to use as reversible consumer tactics as described by the visual cultural theorists explored in Section One.

Again, all of these arguments are made with the implicit constraint of a measure of naiveté. This assumption is described and dealt with in a brief apologia. Additionally, concessions are made here for the earnestness and necessity of the architectural process, as this argument is made with a degree of cynicism that may seem exclusionary or pedantic. As undue restriction or indictment of the architectural discipline is not the aim of this document, this section argues for the specific scope of this thesis and a measure of nuance in its application.

As staging and preface for the design work included in this document, Section Three describes a particular architectural lineage in which this connotation of image signs has taken place. As described by George Dodds in his work Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion built in 1929 became, over the course of the twentieth century, equated to and connoted by the twelve Berliner Bild-Bericht photographs taken of it before its demolition in 1930. These photographs, visual aesthetic objects, were critiqued and analyzed as if they were the Pavilion itself by Philip Johnson, Henry Russell Hitchcock, Lewis Mumford, and numerous other architectural critics up to the present day. Authors made and continue to make arguments about the nature of the spaces inside the Pavilion, Mies’s motivations in designing it, and even its place in political history, based largely on the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints, even though these prints cannot possibly give a full indication of the narrative connected to the Pavilion in and of themselves. As aesthetic images allowed to become heavily and variably connoted, these prints provide fertile ground for an architectural exploration into the connotation and indicative property of architectural images.

However, engaging in this exploration in a way consistent with the argument put forward here suggests that a complex type of architectural theater may have to take place to avoid contradicting that same argument. That is, this thesis must include design work without connoting that work as proof of the argument, a complex task. Therefore the final segment of this document includes a brief description of the duplicitous methodology with which this research was conducted. As a detachment between argument and design-as-proof is impossible within the context of both such a document and an inclusive publication, this methodology is included post-mortem. Still, this argument and the method in which it was explored may provide a way of working, along with an understanding of the relationship between designed objects and narratives, which will give more facility to both the architect and the persons with which he or she collaborates.
Each who lived on the street of the house would remember it differently, and this was the true and lasting genius of its design. The consistent facts between each account were the following: that there was around the house a perfectly still and glass-like pool, and that where the property met the sidewalk edge there was a knee-height fieldstone wall, beyond which the pool began. Beyond this what was reflected in the limpid water could not be agreed upon, and two friends standing near the same mailbox could argue passionately about what was before them with neither changing his opinion nor able to see the other’s point of view about the building before him.
The Images: Stills taken from a digital film of site exploration exercises. The author is visible wearing work gloves with mirror tiles epoxied to them. This work sought a method of site exploration that would allow for reciprocity between viewer and viewed, something not always present in architectural exploration of a site. Two mirrors, rather than one as tested in previous films, provided the third reality of the reflection, to be more present.

The Indication: There is a reality external to this document, possibly an unstable one, that the author is attempting to explore. Also, this work deals with reality in an unusual way. Also, this work is a clever one. Also, this is the work. Images have been altered in Photoshop.

The Images: Digital photographs of wide angle door viewers epoxied to hollowed-out hens’ eggs. These works pictured are early explorations into the dichotomy between the image of something and that something itself, two things codependent yet, especially in architectural parlance, detached. The objects pictured obviate the process of observation more directly, and call the ambiguity between image/substance into being.

The Indication: The work is possibly about viewing and vision, even emphatically so. It is implied that these were produced for the purpose of this document, though that is not directly the case. They were created some time before, but remain relevant. The full experience of these objects is displayed here. The objects are also for sale.

The author has read Georges Bataille.

The Images: Still from digital film, digital photography, large plywood mirrors, and Chevrolet Suburban. Another early exploration of site survey techniques, as well as an attempt at creating a reciprocal paranoid state. The aim of this work was to simulate a car crash, but it did not entirely work due to safety concerns. Seeking the possibility of a simultaneously created and recreated environment.

The Indication: A beginning indication that there is something external to this document itself, but the tie is still tenuous. The impromptu nature of the design presentation, the give and take between critic and student are visually present here, but to conceive of them properly in a written document such as this one is difficult. The presence of the work’s first chair and the author himself provide subtle warrants to veracity.

The author has read J.G. Ballard.

Images have been altered in Photoshop.

The Images: Still from digital film. Depicted in this image is the author, giving an early design work presentation. This work is an early exploration of presentation methods, attempting to accentuate the possible difference between virtual and real in architectural parlance.

The Indication: The author is interested in doing things differently, even transgressing. Statements are to be made about urbanism and public art, possibly the automobile. The automobile and the impact it has upon our understanding of reality are relevant subjects here.

The author has read J.G. Ballard.

Images have been altered in Photoshop.
When I first placed my foot upon the walk between the street and the house I perceived a change in the appearance I had understood it to have: from my car the house was clean-lined and tucked behind trees, the reflecting pool green and tense as a swamp. But as I mounted the curb the building before me resembled my aunt’s house from when I was young, squat and modest with a chain-link fence drawing in a small yard, a black rubber mat on the concrete porch. Already I knew of the rooms awaiting me inside, of the knitted oval rug in the front room, the china dolls in a class case, opposite which stood an aquarium full of hermit crabs. The walk underfoot metamorphosed to cracked cement
The Images:
Digital photograph of photograph viewing device. Baltic birch plywood, bass wood, acetate transparencies, wide angle door viewers. This piece attempts to further accentuate the detachment present in the viewing of a photograph. Photographs carry the warrant of reality, supposing to convey real experience, despite the fact that they are aesthetic creations like any other image.

The Indication:
The second appearance of the wide angle door viewers may indicate that this image is part of a body of work, as well as the author’s intent to create ‘real’ things. The presence of this work in reality, however, is not as indicated as this work has been destroyed.

Images have been altered in Photoshop.

The Images:
Digital photograph of plaster work. Early exploration of collapse between figure and ground as an architectural condition.

The Indication:
More ‘real things’ being created to testify to the project’s veracity.

The author knows the work of Anish Kapoor.

The Images:
Digital photograph of cast plaster and plate glass installation piece. This work falls under the category of ‘real’ objects describing virtual architecture. With this work the author sought conditions analogous to the virtual architecture, but visible in nearly one-to-one terms. Working in this way allows the virtual architecture to be more substantively agent, at least in the creation of phenomenological conditions. Le Corbusier’s aphorism about drawings ‘lying’ is tested with this method of exploration: drawings and words both deceive, though drawings are more eloquent. Is the architect to create anything in reality in the end?

The Indication:
The architecture being created is material, at least ostensibly a real thing. The author has interests in materials and how they work, and is capable of exploring them in reality.
Section One: Visual Culture, Connotation, and Simulation

Introduction

To understand the connotation of architecture and architectural images an understanding of the relationship between images and those who consume images, society, is useful. Visual culture describes the relationship between society, psychology, anthropology, and other disciplines and the world of imagery, making this term workable for this writing; this section comprises a focused study of the visual culture of architecture and Western society after the industrial revolution and the implications thereof within and without the discipline. While the invention of the printing press in 1440 AD marks the definitive beginning of visual culture in the Western world, the European Industrial Revolution begat the most significant expansion of imagery’s influence on society as it first allowed mass-consumption of imagery by all classes of society. It is at this point that visual culture, rather than being subdivided into the visual culture of the elite and the visual subculture of the plebian, became a consistent and widespread part of human life. Similarly, the European Industrial Revolution had serious ramifications for the world of architecture due to improvements in materials production, leading to the possibility of architecture that would reach all classes of people in the same manner.

To that end, this research begins with an investigation of the key writers on the relationship between visual culture and aesthetic material production beginning with the Industrial Revolution. Though there are many texts written on the subject of cultural production beginning at this time, including Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the school of Marxist thought, those dealing explicitly with the relationship between this expansion of material production and the expansion in the mass-production of imagery are fewer and farther between. What this survey requires is an analysis of the aesthetic implications of the Industrial Revolution in terms of mass-produced imagery, and an understanding of how this phenomenon affected the development of Western Industrialized society. For this perspective this thesis turns to the writing of Walter Benjamin, literary critic and aesthetic philosopher, and author of the seminal essay, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ and The Arcades Project.

The Freeing of Signs Part One: Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord

Walter Benjamin’s volume The Arcades Project is an unfinished work added to throughout most of the author’s life, gathering together passages and contemplations about the world around him. It centers pointedly around the newly erected indoor arcades of Paris and the growing consumption culture Benjamin witnesses growing within them. At the advent of the Industrial Revolution, a unique spatial condition is taking shape:

Once the socialist government had become the legitimate owner of all the houses of Paris, it handed them over to the architects with the order[...]. To establish street-galleries[...]. The architects accomplished the mission entrusted to them as well as could be expected. On the second story of every house, they took all the rooms that faced the street and demolished the intervening partitions; they then opened up large bays in the dividing walls, thereby obtaining street-galleries that had the height and width of an ordinary room and that occupied the entire length of a block of buildings[...]. When all the blocks of houses were thus traversed by galleries occupying[...]. their second story, it remained only to connect these isolated sections to one another in order to constitute a network...embracing the whole city. This was easily done by erecting covered walkways across every street[...]. Walkways of the same sort, but much longer, were likewise put up over the various boulevards, over the squares, and over the bridges that cross the Seine, so that in the end[...]. a person could stroll through the entire city without ever being exposed to the elements[...]. As soon as the Parisians had got a taste of the new galleries, they lost all desire to set foot in the streets of old-which, they often said, were fit only for dogs.¹

¹ Benjamin, Walter. The Arcades Project. Page 53
The Image: A photograph of Walter Benjamin, German Aesthetic Philosopher

The Indication: A proof of conceptual heritage for the argument. The photograph provides evidence that Benjamin did, in fact, exist in the consensual reality humans inhabit, an assumption upon which this research depends. Without the conceptual warrant of his life and thinking, proven by the photograph, the argument forwarded here is less valid. This photograph is, in this case, a monument or marker for Benjamin’s posited life and existence.

The Image: A photograph of a Parisian Arcade, contained street of pure commerce, emptied of traffic

The Indication: Another type of conceptual veracity proof, but this time with an associated spatial condition. This is useful in the construction of an architectural argument because it provides proof in terms used by other architects.

Of course this could also be...

The Image: An indoor mall in Copenhagen, Denmark

The Image: The original Chicago stock exchange entry hall

The Image: Interior rendering of a new restaurant being built downtown
The arcades provide the first environment of truly uninterrupted commercialism in the city of Paris. Functions of trafficking and mingling are dispensed with, as the arcades become the stronghold of trade. And as the shops crowd into the arcades, the methods of commerce are simultaneously becoming more advanced: fixed-price selling strategies integrated with manufacturing procedures and, most importantly, complex commerce-image technology:

In those parts of the city where the theaters and public walks […] are located, where therefore the majority of foreigners live and wander, there is hardly a building without a shop. It takes only a minute, only a step, for the forces of attraction to gather; a minute later, a step further on, and the passerby is standing before a different shop […]. One’s attention is spirited away as though by violence, and one has no choice but to stand there and remain looking up until it returns. The name of the shopkeeper, the name of his merchandise, inscribed a dozen times on placards that hang on the doors and above the windows, beckon from all sides; the exterior of the archway resembles the exercise book of a schoolboy who writes the few words of a paradigm over and over. Fabrics are not laid out in samples but are hung before door and window in completely unrolled bolts. Often they are attached high up on the third story and reach down in sundry folds all the way to the pavement. The shoemaker has painted different-colored shoes, ranged in rows like battalions, across the entire façade of his building. The sign for the locksmiths is a six-foot-high-gold-plated key; the giant gates of heaven could require no larger. On the hosiers shops are painted white stockings four yards high, and they will startle you in the dark when they loom like ghosts […].

The combination of the enclosed arcades and the production power of the Industrial Revolution have unleashed a heretofore unheard of cultural condition: product and image have spread promiscuously across the city of Paris taking over whole blocks in a festival of consumption. And as they do so the meaning- in terms of human narrative connection between source, object, and consequence- of the purchased object has profoundly changed. Originally the object was something unique, either needed or perceived so, purchased at one point and time from a particular other person, usually after a complex social process of haggling or price comparison. However, with fixed prices and all the other new commercial innovations this logic is breaking down. Now the object is not unique at all, may have competitive imitators, can be purchased in multiples in several locations, and has a discrete monetary value. The object has become the commodity- an object whose connective significance or ‘aura,’ as Benjamin called it, has been negated through its place in a series, its physical and connotative ubiquity. Moreover, it is in the lack of this aura that the manufactured connotative information accompanying the commodity becomes important- the image-package that persuades the consumer to buy one product and not its identical competitor. As products and the images accompanying them grow in numbers the buyer begins to consume not so much the object itself, but the images associated with it, a connotative duplication of the object. Consumer culture comes into being, and, critically, the connotative connection between the consumed object and the referential elements of living- emotions and aspirations- becomes the norm in Industrialized Western culture.

External to Benjamin’s thinking the association between the visual culture phenomenon of connotation and the development of industrialized society is not frequently drawn. Marxist and post-Marxist theory of cultural production largely focuses on the material relationships of economies that govern society’s relationships with material goods, not aesthetic relationships. However, Guy Debord, member of the Situationist International, writing in *The Society of the Spectacle* continues Benjamin’s thinking in many ways, but at the accelerated register of film and television culture coming into existence with the progression of the twentieth century. His writing constitutes a direct connection between Marxist theories of cultural production and the oppression of the proletariat with Benjamin’s thinking on imagery-based commodity culture.

With mass media, image culture is given
The Images: Photographs of a replica of a medieval, and then a contemporary, shoe, unique object versus object in transition to image. The two objects fulfill nominally the same material consequence, but one depends heavily upon image-notation structures for its ‘meaning’

The Indication: Material-image relationship progression parts one and two. The implication is that the progression of relationships described in the text is evident in the images. Additionally the use of images that relate to ‘everyday’ life of the reader provide for a relatable discussion through metaphor, even if the relationship between shoes and architecture isn’t as clear-cut as it is presented.
the means to spread and become engrained, especially towards the end of the twentieth century as television becomes ubiquitous. Within the society of the spectacle, the human being is totally passive, motionless:

The images detached from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream in which the unity of this life can no longer be reestablished. Reality considered partially unfolds, in its own general unity, as a pseudo-world apart, an object of mere contemplation [emphasis added]. The specialization of images of the world is completed in the world of the autonomous image, where the liar has lied to himself. The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living.3

Commodity image consumption has grown to the point, Debord contends, that human beings do not actually live their lives (though they assume that they do), but merely watch others live and watch themselves live through secondary representation, static spectators of a life stabilized and normalized by the television script and the advertisement. What the connotative stream of images attached to commodity products allows for is the divorce of any meaning from a given action or object in favor of connotation. The spectator consumes connotations, and since the relevancy of the actual object or act is obscured by its aspirational meaning, the spectator cannot perceive the lost reference. Through mass-dissemination of visual media the image-brand package attached to a given commodity product is given even further range and volume than was lent it by mass production, leading to a total erosion of narrative consequence. An illustrative example of this, especially given the Marxist base of Debord’s aesthetic thinking, is the iconic ‘Che shirt’ that became popular in the 1990’s and the turn of the second millennium AD. The original image printed onto the shirt is an iconic portrait of Argentinean Communist Ernesto ‘El Che’ Guevara, who helped lead the Cuban Communist Revolution and spurred a number of other revolutionary efforts throughout the world before his death at the hands of the C.I.A. This portrait was first drawn in 1958, and since then has been printed onto millions of t-shirts that can be purchased online and in stores. Within this is a double irony: first, El Che’s image has become a commodity in a capitalist market, a participating member in the very thing he and his followers violently opposed. Second, those who wear the Che shirt do so to communicate Marxist sensibilities, paradoxically by buying a consumer product. This, Debord might say, is the power of spectacle functioning through the mass-produced image. The connotative image erases the meaning, here perhaps better termed ‘efficacy’ or ‘consequence,’ of El Che’s life and actions. Through secondary representation, Ernesto Guevara is literally doing work for the capitalist interests he so despised, as is the person buying the shirt. In addition, and more importantly, the spectator buying the shirt believes this act to be in defiance of the capitalist system, where it obviously is not: at some upper end of the shirt’s production chain there is a capitalist using the communist’s image for monetary gain. Through this mechanism, the spectator is unable to truly accomplish anything, occupied as he is with consuming the sensibilities of his demographic market group. The revelation of the connection between the aesthetic representation process of the image and the material culture oppression of capitalism, the fruit of Debord’s thinking, is extremely problematic for his Marxist hopes of revolution, since as soon as he or anyone else posits these hopes, the system of the spectacle will represent and circumvent them through cultural expression. The role of the liberator, becomes difficult:

A revolutionary organization existing before the power of the Councils (it will find its own form through struggle), for all these historical reasons, already knows that it does not represent the working class. It must recognize itself as no more than a radical separation from the world of separation.4

The revolutionary organization is that which cannot be represented; a complex

3Debord, Guy. Society of the Spectacle. Passage 2

4Debord, Guy. Society of the Spectacle. Passage 119
The Image: A photograph of basketball player Lebron James, part of a spectacle ad

The Indication: This is part of the readers’ life and reality, correct? Therefore the discussion of spectacle is relatable to the reader, and provable in terms of a consensual reality both author and audience can understand. The argument made is, therefore, evidently provable, at least at the time of writing in 2011. In this case the referent of the sign no longer exists- Lebron James was transferred to the Miami Heat, so this particular referent is outdated. The question is, does the image-sign, James’s usefulness to Nike, still function?

Image Credit: adrants.com, January 29, 2011 Download

The Image: A photograph from a movie theater, spectacle come to life

The Indication: This image is an allusion to an authoritative text, used as the cover for many editions of Society of the Spectacle. In a way such an image both illustrates the concept of spectacle and attests to the knowledge of the author. Supposedly the author actually has read the work and understood it in some way. Is the referent a proof or a sign in place of authority?

Image Credit: mrzine.monthly.review.org, January 29, 2011 Download
The Image: A photograph of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, Communist Leader

The Indication: Susan Sontag stated that all photographs are ‘memento mori,’ memorials to death and life in the same breath. This photograph functions this way, memorializing a man with a number of interpreted pasts. In this context the photograph proves that Che also existed, much like Benjamin and others. A photograph is understood as a reality-proof, even if it is an arbitrary visual signal like any other.

The Image: The famous icon of El Che

The Indication: A demonstration of the progression between photograph and icon. The possible mutability of even a highly ‘personal’ photograph seen before is evident here: whatever the man was before, the icon will convey whatever the carrier of that icon wishes.
hope, to spur spontaneous response towards revolution, all without revealing the source of the spur. This is much like the wish to see oneself the way one appears while not looking in a mirror: it is impossible, either through the mirror itself or the mirror of the camera, as the self-conscious conceit will be apparent in the perverted, ab-natural appearance of the self that results. The ‘spectacular’ process of the connotative image, Debord reveals, forces all members of a society into self-consciousness and circumvents any deviation from the system, simply by expressing it in terms of the system, and often through connoted images.

Debord’s writing illustrates the possible power of a connoted image to influence societal systems of production and expenditure, a sea change in the world of visual culture not possible before the Industrial Revolution and ensuing explosion of mass media consumption. The connotative image at the time of Debord’s writing is powerful enough to make one societal construct- capitalism in his writing- absorb the aesthetic imagery of another- Marxism- and in doing so neutralize its ‘opponent.’ The complexity of connotative representation systems allows the reduction of all distinguishing characteristics from consequential facts into tactical aspirations- the Che shirt expressive of revolutionary sensibilities; wood and leather expressive of warmth, steel of technological advancement, and so on. It is at this point in Debord’s theory, at the maximum flexibility and assumptive power of representational systems that a new type of aesthetic cultural system can be conceived of. Theorist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard refers to Debord’s writing on the Society of the Spectacle in his writing of the 1980’s and 1990’s, and his works Simulacra and Simulation and Seduction deal principally with the phenomena Debord has described. Baudrillard terms this new visual culture system ‘simulation,’ a highly evolved form of spectacle, and it is at this peak of spectacle that Baudrillard centers his work.

**Lexicon for Layers of Simulation: Signs and Systems of Signs**

Before proceeding a clarification of the lexicon used in the following chapter is necessary to prevent confusion. Notions of ‘representation’ and signs are used on two registers in this writing in different ways. To begin with ‘representation’ may refer to a visual aesthetic sign for something else, as in a photograph, drawing, print, or other image-sign. These representation images carry with them systems of connotation, aesthetic cultural structures, which form the second definition of ‘representation.’ An image connects itself to the aesthetic cultural system through the apparatus of connotation. Aesthetic signs of objects can originally be connected to cultural narratives forming a system of signs. For instance ‘representations’ of El Che or the hammer and sickle form a ‘representation’ system of Socialist aesthetic culture. Within the systems of spectacle and simulation the connection between these signs and the narrative consequence that gave birth to the sign system becomes highly flexible. The increase of this flexibility is the subject of Benjamin, Debord, and Baudrillard’s work.

**The Freeing of Signs Part Two: Jean Baudrillard**

What can be proposed that is external to a cultural representation to which there is no possible outside? Extending from Debord’s thinking of the society of the spectacle Jean Baudrillard poses this question to contemplate systems of cultural representation, at the most extreme complexity of which he proposes the theory of simulation. In a sense, Baudrillard has reached the conclusive paradox of Debord’s thinking: how can an opposition of a system be posed (capitalism in Debord’s case) when the system is able to absorb its opposition as soon as it is made cohesive by appropriating
its aesthetic cultural attributes? To begin with, he constructs a theoretical history of these simulacrum systems, codified into three types or ‘orders’ of simulation. The first order of simulation is that of direct and opposed representation of reality, which Baudrillard theorizes coming to its height at the end of the middle ages and through the European Renaissance:

The first order he identifies is that of the counterfeit, based on what he calls the ‘natural’ (‘OS,’ 83) law of value, and it runs all the way from the Renaissance up to the Industrial Revolution. In the counterfeit, the sign for the first time breaks free from the ‘reciprocal obligation’ (‘OS,’ 84) between classes, castes and clans that marked feudal society, and begins to refer to some external reality. It is no longer directly exchanged from person to person but only through some common or agreed-upon third, which performs the role of the medium of exchange. Thus two signs can be compared to each other insofar as they both seem to refer to the same object or reality. This is why Baudrillard can call this era of the sign that of the counterfeit, but also why it is through this counterfeit that signs are true. It is because within this first order signs do not directly attempt to pass themselves off as real, but only exchange themselves for each other through their shared recognition of some external real.

Cultural and aesthetic representations of the first order are ‘honest’ in their difference from the reality beyond them. To describe the first-order simulacrum Baudrillard refers to a man performing next to an automaton shaped in his image: the two stand on the stage together, the man mimicking the other’s movements and manners to appear as similar to his creation as possible. However, the automaton cannot be the same as the man, and it is the difference between the two that entertains the audience. The measure of the similarity between the man and the automaton is at the same time a measure of the difference: the audience seeks to find discrepancies. Whether they exist or not, the difference holds the thrill. First order simulacra lack the verisimilitude and flexibility to approximate the life and reality they represent, and therefore are judged in difference from that reality. This is how the first-order simulacrum functions: as an ideal separated from life.

To illustrate this concept in the schema of a previously mentioned societal system, a first-order simulacrum of capitalism would possibly take as its warrant the divine will for or against power and acquisition of wealth. Given that a first-order simulacrum, in Baudrillard’s temporal framework, must be posited before the birth of Adam Smith, this simulacrum must be speculative. Still, it is useful to conceive of the Christian doctrines connecting worldly wealth and either damnation, in the Catholic schema, or salvation, in the Protestant. Those wealthy on Earth are seeking a divine writ in their acquisition of wealth or lack thereof, depending on the perspective of the culture, and this goal is a reflection of the state of their soul in the hereafter. In this first-order simulacrum of capitalist thinking the only comparison structure by which the reality of the believer may be judged is heaven; wealth on earth is understood in terms of its difference from a represented wealth of a religious system separate from that wealth in reality. The divine system and the ‘real’ system, in this case, are never to be confused or blended, but compared. This is the structuring mechanism of the first-order simulacrum.

Second-order simulacra, Baudrillard theorizes, come into being with the Industrial Revolution. These representation systems are based on ‘pure’ laws of production and maximization, and as such make themselves irrelevant to the reality they represented quickly.

The second order of simulacra is that of production, based on the ‘commercial’ (‘OS,’ 83) law of value, and it corresponds to the period of the Industrial Revolution. This is only an intermediate period, says Baudrillard, ‘rather inadequate as an imaginary solution to the problem of mastering the world’ (‘OS’, 98) […] What we find in this second period is the gradual loss of the difference between sign and reality, copy and original, that characterized the first period and made their resemblance possible. Within this second order, sign and reality simply become equivalent. The sign does not merely allude to the real via its difference from it, but wants to be the same.
Representations of the second order escape the logic of verisimilitude by establishing their own logic— they are, if carried to completion, alien to the human reality they attempt to emulate, and eventually unable to relate to the model they once followed. If the first-order simulacrum is the automaton, the second-order is the robot: as the robot becomes more complex, more developed and superior in its productive capacities to the human being, the two eventually have no relationship to each other. The robot becomes a species separate from the human and comparison between them is no longer possible to the point that the robot is no longer a representation of the human, but self-referential.

Returning to our example, Adam Smith’s description of the principles of ‘pure’ capitalism consequent the second-order simulacrum of capitalism. Similar to the first-order simulacrum of the divine writ toward wealth the structuring mode for this societal representation is that of comparison. The judgment of a capitalist system in reality is its favorable or unfavorable comparison with the ideal of Adam Smith’s perfect capitalism. How ‘free’ is the free market? How many barriers are there to total commerce? The difference between this simulacrum and the first is the positing of the productive ideal, versus the divine ideal of the original. That is Smith’s capitalist system is not judged against a world known to be counterfeit of the real, but against a profound intensification of one aspect of that real—that of production. As this ideal is realized and drives itself to completion, what was originally a representation structure becomes a separate reality of production, eventually irrelevant to the previous referent system. In addition, the foregone conclusion of idealized capitalism’s irrelevance to reality is obvious. There is no perfectly free market, there are no flawless economic actors, and there is no perfect guarantee of competition. Externalities, as economists call them, loom large, as do resistances to the representation system in forms of Marxism (itself a second-order simulacrum). However, the evolution of capitalism which leads to our Che shirt example has not yet occurred.

Finally third-order simulacra are representations built in such a way as to approximate reality as exactly as possible. Through built-in ‘errors,’ incongruencies, and flexibility they come closer and closer to their referent in reality to the point that the two become indistinguishable:

It [the third order of simulacra] continues that liberation of the sign we see in the first and second orders, but with this difference: that whereas there we seem to witness the progressive disappearance of the real in the self-referentiality of the sign, here we have an attempt to speak of it again. By means of a mediated and deliberately introduced difference within the code, the system seeks to recapture something of the contingencies and fluctuations of the real—a little like those small ‘variations introduced into the system of objects to bring about a stream of marginally differentiated objects (‘OS,’ 101,105)[…]That is, if the system justifies itself on the basis of capturing some pre-existing real or expressing a prior reality, what is realized is that this real is possible only because of the system, only leads to a further extension of the system.

Representations of the third-order of simulacra approach a near-perfection of verisimilitude through the act of self-compromising their own logic. Thus we have the final stage in our series of human-to-machine simulacra, the android. The android is like the robot in sophistication and capability, but intentionally compromises itself in order to be more relatable to its human counterpart. It maintains a human appearance. It reduces its physical, social, and cognitive capabilities in order to relate better to the biological humans around it. Eventually the similarity between the android and the human becomes such that distinguishing between the two is virtually impossible—there is no substantive difference. It is this state of perfect verisimilitude of cultural representations that Baudrillard posits as the hypothetical ‘society of simulation.’

The third-order simulacrum of capitalism

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The Image: A photograph of an automaton capable of ‘writing,’ first-order simulacrum

The Indication: This image is as much proof as demonstration. Automata may be esoteric subjects to certain readers, making a visual demonstration of their existence and visual characteristics useful. Of course, the implicit indication of this photograph is that the image displayed is an automaton and not something else. The warrant of the written word, as well as that of publication, makes this question less likely to be raised.

The Image: A photograph of robots, second-order simulacrum

The Indication: A similar demonstration, but in this case more specific. Everyone “knows” what a robot is, but this image is specifically chosen to convey something about robots. Their isolation, lack of relationship to the human form, and industrial surroundings prove the point of their distance from the human referent. Of course, there could be human beings out of the shot, but they might as well not exist if we cannot see them.
The Image: A photograph of emotive android 'Kojiro,' third-order simulacrum.

The Indication: Kojiro is sometimes referred to as a robot, but the term ‘android’ is more a _propos_. His physical and programming characteristics are specifically designed to relate to humans, even though he has no explicit ‘function’ in and of himself. The personal-quality of this image, the gaze of Kojiro looking out of the page, strengthens the proof of the image: the android seeks to relate to its own referent, while the robot does not. Still, he is a machine with physical characteristics relatable to those of the robots previously pictured. In addition, this image is only a photograph, not Kojiro ‘himself’.

The Image: The drawing of humans carried by the Mercury spacecraft, representation of the human referent.

The Indication: First, this image provides a relatable cultural reference that makes the argument more evident. The reader can be assumed to have seen this image before. In addition, this image carries more indicative weight due to its history and connection with science. This image is supposed to carry the image of the human referent into space, to unknown civilizations. A more earnest attempt to express who humanity ‘is’ there could not be
formulates our example of the Che shirt, and describes the final evolution of the capitalism representation structure. Where Adam Smith’s idealized capitalist system of ideal competition fails, consumer capitalism fills in nicely. Faced with its potential irrelevance due to being unattainable, resistance in the form of Marxism, and dissatisfaction of its participants faced with a world of cold commerce, capitalism flexes itself into a new system. With consumer capitalism there is always a consumer demographic to satisfy the most desperate anguish of a society-member. Feelings of anonymity can be assuaged with ‘customizable’ products. Activism groups and products alleviate feelings of powerlessness. Most profoundly, aesthetic expression of discontent with the system can soothe even direct, expressed opposition thereto. Using the tools of visual and aesthetic culture, especially the connoted image, third-order simulacra such as consumer capitalism become flexible and all-inclusive. There is nothing the consumer capitalist system cannot deal with, so long as it can be expressed in aesthetic terms. How, then, is one to conceive of something that is outside of such a system, whichever it may be?

Theorist and critic Rex Butler offers an illuminating critique of how Baudrillard proposes and, arguably, is able to accomplish this paradoxical goal. What the philosopher must do, Butler proposes, is to seek the limit of such systems not through attempting to negate them, but by hypothetically accelerating them and thinking the limit of their possible influence:

There is thus a certain ‘double strategy’ (SSM, 107) necessary on the part of Baudrillard in attempting to think the outside to these systems of simulation. On the one hand, he has to name this outside, something they actually exclude. But, on the other hand, he must realize that he cannot name this outside, that any outside is only an effect of the system itself. He has to think, therefore, not so much what is outside or other to the system of simulation as what is excluded by the fact that it has no outside. He has to think what is excluded by the very conformity of the world to the system, the fact that from now on it can only be seen in its image. And it is in terms of this necessary ‘double strategy,’ his ability to keep both of these constraints simultaneously in mind, that we would judge Baudrillard[…]

Thus since it is impossible to conceive of something truly external to a given simulative system without it being absorbed into the system, the solution Baudrillard posits is to draw the entirety of reality into the system and see what is left out. Once again consumer capitalism is a useful example for Baudrillard: theoretically the consumer capitalist system is capable of absorbing and responding to any aspiration that a human being might have, even those theoretically anathema to capitalism itself. Therefore, all needs of any human should be satisfied at all times within the capitalist system, correct? However, as the reader will intuit, this is not the case: Baudrillard uses the examples of the Manson killings, random violence without material ‘reason’ of any kind, and increasing incidence of clinical depression to describe this ‘limit’ of the capitalist system.

‘Anguish,’ as he calls it, is the necessary limit of the consumption system, the thing that it can never eliminate even expanded to its greatest extent, as Butler notes:

That is, it is an anguish that arises not because our desires are unsatisfied but because they are fulfilled, because we have nothing left to desire. And it is a ‘solicitation’ that responds to this ‘anguish in one of two ways:

1. For the one part, it attempts to re-absorb this anguish by the proliferation of varieties of solicitude: treatments, procedures, innumerable collective services—to inject everywhere a pacifying, succouring, deculpabilizing psychological lubrication […]. A larger and larger budget is spent to console these ‘miracles’ of abundance for their anxious satisfaction.

2. Society tries—and in a systematic fashion—to recuperate this anguish as an opportunity for consumption, or to recuperate this culpability and violence in their turn as merchandise, as easily consumable, or as distinctive cultural signs. […] Whatever, violence and culpability are mediated by cultural models and return as pre-consumed violence. (CS, 284-5)

We appear to have the same circularity here as we saw earlier between waste and consumption and waste and production. The
system of consumption leads to anguish, but it is an anguish that leads in turn to an increase in the system. [...] It is on the basis of this anguish that a whole new range of therapies and social services is instituted, a new set of experiences and images made over into media models. We can even imagine, as in the third order of simulacra, that normal, positive society is never seen as such but only in the form of this anguish-an anguish, however, which calls up this society and leads to its expansion. In a sense, therefore, as with production, there is no limit to the system of consumption. Even its other, anguish is only possible because of it, brings about an increase in it. And yet what we can also see here is Baudrillard trying to think the limits to this. For this anguish arises not directly from want or lack because there is no want or lack. That is, the very process of getting rid of it is also what causes it. If anguish is always being soaked up by the system, it is this soaking up itself which leads to anguish. In this regard, we would say that anguish-like waste-means that the system is always expanding, there is no limit to the system, but also that the system is never complete, has a limit. 8

Anguish, or existential desire for fulfillment, therefore, is the outmost delineation of consumer capitalism. It is this anguish which causes and allows consumption society to function, and anguish which consumption society seeks to eliminate and cannot survive without. What any knowledge of this need outside of consumption society forces us to acknowledge is that no matter how many Che shirts we buy and how much it satisfies our need to express our sensibilities, it is this same need that will always remain, but simultaneously cannot be totally expressed.

This possibility of thinking the outside of a simulative system is the result of Baudrillard's thinking, which he terms 'seduction.' 9 Seduction is the possibility of positing the internal limit to a representational system that has no outside. But what is unique about the theory of seduction, as compared to Debord's frustrated efforts to escape the simulative logic of capitalism, is that seduction at once thwarts and relies upon the simulation hypothesis:

The two [simulation and seduction] are respective sides of the same phenomenon. What is this phenomenon? It is that paradox of representation we spoke of in our Introduction where, if the copy comes too close to the original, it no longer resembles it but is another original. There is thus an absolute limit to how close a copy can come to the original while still resembling it, or the copy only resembles the original insofar as it is different from it. And it is this limit that simulation is subject to. Simulation attempts to resemble the real, to 'realize' it, to bring out what is only implicit in it and make it explicit. But at a certain point in its progress it draws too close to the original, and further increases in perfection, instead of bringing the system closer to this original, only drive it further away. The system begins to reverse upon itself, gives rise to the opposite effects from those intended. It is this reversibility, this difference between the original and the copy, that we call seduction. 10

Therefore, the instinct to call seduction the 'opposite' or refutation of simulation is incorrect, for the two are reliant upon one another. Rather, seduction is an asymptote of simulation, a point at which its own logic causes it to nullify itself. Moreover, as cultural systems of representation become increasingly flexible, more adept at absorbing all possibilities into themselves, the asymptote of reality becomes more evident. It is this point of conversion that this research shall seek.

At what point does the connotative connection between imagery and consequences, aspirations, begin to break down? How are connotations connected to architectural images and artifacts in general, and what would be the limit of a complete system of architectural simulative connotation? The conditions of spectacle and simulation society are taken as given for the second section of this research, which will explore the questions above and describe how the connotative simulation process operates within architecture, as well as the implications of a highly evolved system of architectural simulation.
It was said that the man who drew the house’s plan, in the manner of architects of the time, had stitched his mouth shut at the beginning of his career. He had approached a young surgeon shortly after finishing his classes and had requested sutures running from one cheek to another, extending beyond the line of the lip to maintain a clean and chaste seam, as if the mouth had never been there. Young students working for him acted as his voice, and as time went on and the practice of sewing went out of fashion the older man was surrounded by others to interpret for him at necessary periods. Aside from this the owners of the house were left with merely the man before them scratching drawings into a tray of white sand, making declarations and guesses that would cause the architect to either pause and glance up or, silently, to continue
The Doppleganger

1. Envision the subconscious as a dark
2. Realize the truth of inner existence. Carpe diem
3. Fulfill your fate. Be the master's alter ego.
4. Beyond the fallen idol, there
5. The potential for transformation exists.
6. The power of the subconscious.
7. An oracle's vision.
8. The hidden truth.
9. The key to reality.
10. The path to freedom.

Deep Picture Plane

1. The reality of the medium can
2. Hyperobjectifying relationships. An object
3. Becomes a present subject and object recognition
4. Beyond the signs and symbols.
5. 2: "An endless McLuhan
6. The medium is the message, beyond the
7. All is history. Designation as the rule becomes..."
Exposure of the Threshold

Theological difference is the only possible object of understanding, for the
issue is how knowledge differs and whether or not a common understanding
is possible.

Valutative Collision

1. Conscience between evil and right black and white
2. Good and evil will reveal the truth of each nothing is not
3. man does not designate
4. just as philosopher Jean
5. Brandenhard expressed it is reality that is seen and and that
6. is seen something!
7. Without straightening itself in such
8. thing instead like his life is endlessly meaningless!
9. But the
10. only constant truth is the lack of preception!
11. Reality is per
12. tect and apparent while Marx charges in Augustinus!
13. wth connected position and equivalent bacteria until can
be the stuff of ignorance or purity it is only the question of the
14. Plato says and end together as mean the truth
The Images: (Pages 76-79) Digital scans of woodblock prints, oil based ink on chipboard. Desaturated by the author. These images are adaptations of Albrecht Durer woodcuts manipulated to explore the dubiousness of claims attached to architectural conditions. Architectural presentations containing speculative imagery often also contain verbal indications of the consequences of this imagery. A word-and-image-board format, emulated with these images, is a common medium. These woodcuts seek to question the validity of these connections between images and claims.

The Indication: A notion of transgression could be brought to bear here, given the use of religious imagery, though this is not necessarily the aim of the author. But then, the associations between architecture and its purported consequences are often ideological, so why not? Positivism is a kind of religion.

The Images: (Pages 80-95) Digital scans of woodblock prints, oil based ink on chipboard. Desaturated by the author. These woodcuts are based on digital scans of twelve Kwikset house keys. One key was copied, then a copy was made from that duplicate, and so on to obtain twelve. These images explore the tenuous nature of singular objects in the age of mechanical and digital reproduction, and a method for lowering the indicative quality of images.

The Indication: The images are repeated to imply multiples, but in this case the scans presented are all the same. Multiple proofs of each block do exist in reality, but this fact would be irrelevant were the images published alone. Of course, presented in this codex format, there are still, once again, a warrants of identity, singularity, and novelty.

The Images: (Pages 96-97) Digital photographs of two of the woodblocks. Laser-etched MDF and oil based ink.

The Indication: Is this work about the resurrection of older techniques of image making? Perhaps the author wishes to become a printmaker, as architecture has become unsatisfying. Also, these objects are for sale. Images have been altered in Photoshop.
Section Two: Architecture Connoted in Sign and Simulation

Introduction

If it is proposed that for the purpose of this thesis that architecture, like capitalism or Marxism and other societal representation systems conceivable, is something purely imagined by the society that conceives of it, what are the implications of a highly complex simulacrum of architecture? To brashly simplify the answer to the question, ‘what is architecture?’ one could imagine the discipline as a set of artifacts (buildings and other objects), created by architects and students of architecture with a set of connotations and representations (images, writing, theory, criticism) attached to them. That is to say architecture could be said to be made at least part something ‘real,’ perceptible in the consensual, lived reality, and at least part a representation, something created secondarily in the world of imagery and aesthetic cultural systemization. As such, the interaction between imagery and material production leading to commodity culture, then spectacle, then simulation culture, is relevant to the architect. The architect, after all, participates in both: he or she creates images and connotations which have a relationship to a material product, whether one leads to another or not. The position of any type of design professional, whether in industrial and product design or digital design professions could be similar, but the architect is unique even among these. The architect’s discipline can lay claim to social and political complexity that leads practitioners to connote the artifacts they make in terms of sweeping sociological change; one need look no further than the early work of Le Corbusier and the Congres International d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) for evidence of this claim. Additionally the vision initiated by the architect, because of its environmental nature, is necessarily more encompassing of the reality beyond it than the vision of a graphic designer or product delineator. With the rise in the possibility of highly ‘realistic’ architectural images, this environmental vision is also becoming increasingly compelling as ‘real.’ Finally because of the complexity of the representations and the artifacts created by the architect, members of the discipline have an extensive supply of written theory and ‘justifications’ to support their individual works, supplying an endless pool of possible connotations for the architect to pick from. Almost any architectural project on the frontier of the discipline carries with it a written element- a series of written connotations. These connotations may be theoretical or prosaic, but in either case, they provide for the projected justifications or consequences of architectural objects. If the possibility of a first, second, and third-order simulacrum of architecture exists, what are the implications of this expansion in complexity? This section will examine the formation of these architectural simulacra in terms of the representational construct of theoretical writing on architecture to argue the possibility of a third-order simulacrum of architecture and propose possible implications of such a construct. The relationship between this third-order simulacrum and the increasing connotation capability of the architectural image will then be examined to better describe possible consequences of architectural connotations construed into reality.

Architecture and the Architectural Claim-Connotation through the Written Word

The written word attached to architectural artifacts is the most direct way in which the simulacra of architecture are created through connotation of architectural works. An architectural claim, a statement making an evaluative assertion regarding the nature or purpose of architecture, bears with it unequivocally the warrant of truth while the architectural object or image may, all things being equal, not necessarily do so.
At the beginning of his 1973 broadcast *Television: a Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment* psychiatrist Jacques Lacan begins with the words, ‘I speak the truth’ before proceeding to speak about his research and work. Why would a psychiatrist, lecturer, and accomplished orator feel it necessary to make such an ostensibly redundant assertion? There is implicit in this a need to reveal a perception that is normally oppressed through the operation of daily living: speech, and especially the written word, implies truth. That is to say while a piece of wood or an image of a stone will be hard pressed to be argued as ‘true’ or ‘false’ words bear with them the warrant of truth as an underlying assertion (though more will be said on the possible ‘truth’ of the image, especially in the context of architecture, later). As discussed in the introduction to a 1990 transcript of the broadcast the redundancy of this statement carries its implicit parallel in the paradox of another phrase, ‘I am lying.’ Thus, the written words attached to architecture provide the opportunity to search out the three orders of architectural simulacra with relative impunity from ambiguity, at least as can be found in architecture. By writing about architecture, rather than merely designing it or building it or even creating drawings of it the architect places forth the warrant of truth, making the written architectural claim the surest locus of how the discipline of architecture self-represents.

A first-order simulacrum of architecture would portray the world, and the architectural artifacts in it, as an aspiration to one or another ‘pure’ ideal separate from that world. Such a simulacrum would represent architecture in idealized terms, such that reality could be measured against this perfected standard and the differences noted. Evidently enough, the beginnings of architectural theory and the classical treatises of architecture fit the bill of such a description well. Leon Battisti Alberti’s *Ten Books on Architecture* will serve as

the beginning, as it is for the most part a substantive copy of the most ‘original’ treatise of architecture, Vitruvius’s, with better writing and more faithful and scholarly translations. One edition of Alberti’s treatise reads as follows:

> The Philosophers have observed, that Nature in forming the Bodies of Animals, always takes care to finish her Work in such a Manner, that the Bones should all communicate, and never be separate one from the other: So we also should connect the Ribs together, and fasten them together well with Nerves and Ligatures; so that the Communication among the Ribs should be so continued, that if all the rest of the Structure failed, the Frame of the Work should yet stand firm and strong withal its Parts and Members.  

Here and throughout his writing on architecture and other subjects Alberti makes direct comparison between the architect’s practice and the work of nature, impugning the architect to follow the example of natural guidance and follow the rules of proportion, commodity, and so on. In good Catholic fashion, Alberti capitalizes the important subjects of each sentence into archetypal signifiers, converting nature into immortal Nature and the architect into the Architect. In Alberti’s estimation and indeed in the estimation of classical theorists in general, including Marc-Anton Laugier, John Ruskin, and Gottfried Semper, the architect is a figure compared to a god and to be held to a god’s standard. Nature is the standard, as is God, the Judeo-Christian one in the Western world of architectural theory. To posit, then, the Classical period and schools of architecture as a first-order simulacrum of the type Jean Baudrillard described is not beyond reasonable thinking. The body of architectural thinking and claims, extending as Baudrillard described from the Medieval period to the Industrial Revolution, relies on counterfeit metaphor and comparison between the discipline of architecture and reality to function, defining it as a first-order simulacrum attached to the artifacts of Classical architecture.

As described above the first-order simulacrum is both a blessing and a curse for
The Image: A drawing of Bramante’s Tempietto, an artifact obedient to the tenets of the first-order simulacrum

The Indication: Such an image is an important warrant in an architectural document. Treatises and theses cite Vitruvius as a beginning to call into being the architectural mythology of theory. This drawing serves the same purpose. Vitruvius and the Classical theorists are part of the founding myth of architecture, and help to frame an argument as ‘architectural’ rather than something else. Perhaps after the presentation of this image the argument is now more evidently relevant to the architect. Perhaps now it carries a certain weight as testimony to something ‘real’.
the definition of an aesthetic visual culture. On one hand, the aesthetic culture created by such claims is elite and transcendent. The rigor required for the execution of the Classical Orders of Architecture, and the proportional constraint in control of everything done by the architect (Architect), definitively separate architecture and the architect from everything else in the world. The tenets of classical architecture are strict and infallible, but also carry with them the ideal writ: done this way, architecture will be beautiful to a greater or lesser a degree according to the competency of the architect in following the rules. Additionally, however, the writing of Alberti and classical theorists bears with it aesthetic imperatives that exclude everyday life: public buildings and ecclesiastical buildings take center stage in descriptions, and the concerns of the architect are either totally aesthetic or assume a certain level of pragmatic competency before beginning to describe solutions. There is no mention of poverty or architecture for ‘common people;’, let alone architecture as a utilitarian tool for the masses. Architecture is elitist, and only the elite artifacts of building will become part of it. This elitism may be taken as a negative for architecture’s relationship to the rest of reality, and to a large extent it is: the purely-aesthetic drive of the architectural claims presented by Classical theorists posits an architectural discipline incapable and uninterested in improving the world in anything but an aesthetic manner. Architecture defines itself in terms of visual aesthetic artifacts and thinking, never connoted aesthetic artifacts designed to change something ‘substantive’ about the world. Thought of a different way, however, this removal of the architect from ‘real’ concerns of the everyday through theory may not be a wholly negative thing: to an extent, this removal protects the everyday and reality of common life from the influence of the visual culture of architecture. With the polemics of the first-order simulacrum of architecture, the elitist limitations of the aesthetic culture preclude the consumption of reality by the aesthetic that occurs in spectacle or simulation. The aristocracy are the only people who consume architecture— they have a particular aesthetic culture, while the aesthetic culture of the ‘other’ in the proletariat has yet to conjured into being. In this state our ‘Che Guevara shirt’ scenario is impossible— Alberti and his claims, to extend the metaphor, don’t know who Che Guevara is. Architecture can connote only two things: natural will in the form of the architect, or the lack thereof. As such, the aesthetic culture of architecture cannot express anything outside itself. Architecture’s first-order simulacrum is rigid and aesthetically defined

As an illustration consider that the United Kingdom’s royal cadre and their stately London home of Buckingham Palace by architect John Nash may perfectly coincide in both their grandeur and their complete lack of that persistent capitalist virtue, utility. As of 2011 the reigning Queen Elizabeth II, with the rest of her family and associated relatives, has no substantive duties related to ruling the United Kingdom. Her and her family’s figurehead role is, at this point, almost completely aesthetic: her duties include public relations appearances, representation of the country in humanitarian affairs, and liaisons with international leaders. It even would seem that one of the most important duties of the monarch of the United Kingdom, supposedly once an agent figure in national politics and decision-making, is to appear, and appear well, on television at intervals. A comparison between this aesthetic state of the royal family and the former agent state which it used to occupy almost always meets with favorable criticism from the British public: in the current time period monarchial government is considered outdated and ineffective: ‘democratic’ or representative government is considered more prudent. So, an analog could be drawn between the monarchs and their home: the classical vocabulary of architecture, and especially its theoretical claims, is viewed
The Images: A photograph of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip, and a photograph of Buckingham Palace with the flag of the United Kingdom projected onto it. Artifacts of the first-order aesthetic cultural simulacrum relegated to antique status by the third-order simulacrum. Non-agent figures of a referent long disposed of.

The Indication: These images illustrate the reality-veracity of the argument, but are also particularly chosen to obviate the point. The aesthetic quality of both the Queen and the building are emphasized through their use in media, whether television or publicity art. The Queen and her Palace are aesthetic ideas. Their existence in reality is, to an extent, irrelevant.
as too inflexible and irrelevant to everyday life. But what does this condition allow for everything that is outside the claim of architecture? If Classical architectural theory exists in a totally aesthetic state it is this state that precludes it, much like the Queen and royal family, from affecting the agency of the people and narratives not under its influence. The first-order simulacrum of architectural claims, for all its elitism, still allows the existence of something external to its aesthetic realm: Classical theory is not expected to lend agency to architecture any more than the Queen of England is expected to dictate policy.

It is this characteristic that places the first-order simulacrum of Classical architecture on the edge in the event of epistemological change. In addition, Classical architecture’s guiding ‘truths’ are based upon naturalistic, platonic, and religious metaphors, making them precariously positioned at the advent of the European Enlightenment and the onset of the Industrial Revolution. If the referent upon which the representation structure of architecture is based is no longer commonplace, then that representation structure will soon become outmoded and will have to be replaced by a ‘truth’ based on something more relevant. This is what begins to happen with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and it is at this point that the change in image culture and material culture described by Benjamin begins to occur.

The Classical teaching of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, exemplary of Classical theories and claims that created the first-order simulacrum of architecture, largely prompted Le Corbusier to write the most cohesive treatise of modernist architecture, Vers une Architecture beginning in 1921. Through his writing Le Corbusier characterizes the Beaux Arts architecture and teaching method as outmoded and irrelevant to the increasingly secular, commerce-driven, and industrial world. In a sense, he has come to the same conclusion drawn above: Classical theory is bound to become outmoded because of its static, precariously founding myths. In opposition to this, Le Corbusier posits ‘une architecture’ based partially on principles similar to Classical aesthetics, but also emphatically geared towards the age of industrial production.

The prime consequences of the industrial evolution in “building” show themselves in this first stage; the replacing of natural materials by artificial ones, of heterogeneous and doubtful materials by homogenous and artificial ones (tried and proved in the laboratory) and by products of fixed composition. Natural materials, which are infinitely variable in composition, must be replaced by fixed ones.

On the other hand the laws of Economics demand their rights: steel girders and, more recently, reinforced concrete, are pure manifestations of calculation, using the material of which they are composed in its entirety and absolutely exactly; whereas in the old-world timber beam there may be lurking some treacherous knot, and the very way in which it is squared up means a heavy loss in material.

Lastly, in certain fields, the technical experts have already spoken. Water supply and lighting services are rapidly being evolved; central heating has begun to take into consideration the structure of walls and windows- surfaces which tend to cooling for instance- and in consequence stone, the good old material stone, used for walls 3 feet thick or more, is seen to be more than outmatched by light cavity walls in breeze slabs and so on. […] 12

Easily enough we can here posit a second-order simulacrum of architectural claims. Images of airplanes, automobiles, machined parts, all the ephemera of the ‘modern age’ litter the pages of Le Corbusier’s harangue towards an architecture updated from the days of Classicism. Le Corbusier’s writing extols the virtues of an architecture driven by the machine and by mass production. The idea and the possibility are relevant for the time: with the Industrial Revolution, building materials and production capacity are improving at a rate unprecedented. Cities are becoming more populous, and the purchasers of architecture are increasingly secular and bourgeoisie, rather than religiously-minded and aristocratic. Something must change, and the myth and method for architecture chosen by Le Corbusier’s treatise is that of the machine. He paints a
The Images: A photograph of an antique automobile and a photograph of the terrace at Villa Savoye, two objects obedient to second-order aesthetic simulacra

The Indication: Presented as such these two images function as cause and effect to one another, and this is the way Le Corbusier presented them. Images of automobiles, of airplanes, are used to describe what the architect will do in the future.

Each image poses the question, given this, ‘what will the architecture do?’ The connotations of one image are transferred to another, with the aesthetic simulacrum described in the claim as medium.
picture of a limitless frontier of industrial architecture, a utopia world achieved through the manufacturing line. More poignantly, the ideas of the previous Classical representation of architecture are reframed by Le Corbusier’s claims to be included in the second-order. Throughout the course of his writing in *Vers un Architecture* Le Corbusier makes reference to the Parthenon as a paragon of architectural skill, citing its proportional systems, composition, and siting as examples to be emulated. However rather than the divine myth framing these perfected aesthetics there is a prosaically secular and industrial one. Rather than inspired by nature the source of the ‘regulating line’ is human beauty and efficacy. Here he adapts Laugier’s myth of the ‘primitive hut’ to his own aesthetic system:

*But in deciding the form of the enclosure, the form of the hut, the situation of the altar and its accessories, he has had by instinct recourse to right angles- axes, the square, the circle. For he could not create anything otherwise which would give him the feeling that he was creating. For all these things-axes, circles, right angles- are geometrical truths, and give results that our eye can measure and recognize; whereas otherwise there would be only chance, irregularity and capriciousness. Geometry is the language of man.*

A more picture-perfect description of a second-order simulacrum there could not be. Le Corbusier frames the ideal of architecture as the very ideal of production: clean, maximally efficient, and productively perfect. In addition, when once the inspiration of these ideals was the capitalized paragon God or Nature, here it is man alone who is the judge of his achievements, through the language of industrial ‘maximization.’ Once again, architecture is cast as an ideal, but this time the ideal of the sacred production-machine.

However, the perfection-comparison structure of even this second-order simulacrum is both the system’s blessing and curse, as before. The ideal of Le Corbusier’s architectural modernism is as similarly easy to codify as is the Classical, and it is just as prone to irrelevance. In this case, the party partaking in architecture is not the elite- the divine human- but the industrial production society itself. Driven to completion the puritan and utilitarian logic of production is as irrelevant to the human being as is the logic of divinity. Consider the possibility of Le Corbusier’s tenets driven to absolute completion, at a facile level without contradiction: no decision made without consideration of the efficacy and agency leant by the decision, no aesthetic choice taken without knowledge of its improvement of the human condition in the terms of productive capacity. The manifestation of this deficiency in architecture is the post-modern complaint against the ‘coldness,’ ‘inhumanity,’ or ‘bleakness’ of modern architecture: what need has the manufacturing process for the comforts of a human? Granted, this is the ideal of the machine taken to extremes, but that is the functioning mechanism of any ideal: even Le Corbusier’s ardent call to action on the part of the architect is framed as a kind of idealized statement. He appeals to the better morals of the architect and the public, not the basic humanity thereof.

Although, once again, if the second-order simulacrum of architecture’s failure is considered another way benefits of the failure of this aesthetic system can be argued. The first-order and second-order’s unattainable standards share the same advantage for the narratives of humanity outside of architecture. To return to the ever-present example, Le Corbusier’s logic of efficiency and efficacy precludes the creation of the Che shirt. What purpose does the expression of these sentiments in the form of a garment serve? A shirt is a shirt, is it not? If it performs its functions of covering the body and providing warmth without fail, while being reasonably attractive, then what need has it for a silk-screened image of anything? Sustaining the perfect logic of production and the machine allows the reality of the human to exist outside the aesthetic representation system of architecture. Every architect secretly knows that Le Corbusier’s ideal is
unattainable- that is an unspoken dictum. But as long as this ideal is unattainable reality beyond the theory of the ideal can function unimpeded. This is the mark of the second-order simulacral representation.

As modernism’s ideal becomes irrelevant in architecture the architectural connotation structures are poised on the brink between second- and third-order simulacra. Simulacra described between modernism and the beginning of the third-order simulacrum of architecture still posit themselves in a similar way- through the ideal. Writing of Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Phillip Johnson, and other proponents of the modernist dictum constitute variations on a theme, the particular aesthetics of which do not constitute any substantive theoretical reframing. A reframing that launches architecture into the third-order simulacrum, however, does come.

In the imaginary of the architectural claim, Robert Venturi creates the third-order simulacrum of architecture with the publication of Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. The post-modern movement that positioned itself in direct opposition to the modernist movement provided the opportunity for the claim made by the architect to evolve from a simple aesthetic claim to a complex third-order simulacrum attempting to absorb the reality external to it. Though writings by theorists such as Lewis Mumford and Kenneth Frampton make similar claims, the notoriety and claim-flexibility of Venturi provides the most influential example to alter the nature of the architectural claim. Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture is an architectural representation of reality that makes direct, explicit claims to absorbing that same reality. Quoting August Hecksher, Venturi tips his hand:

But now our position is different: ‘At the same time that the problems increase in quantity, complexity, and difficulty they also change faster than before,’ and require an attitude more like that described by August Hecksher: ‘The movement from a view of life as essentially simple and orderly to a view of life as complex and ironic is what every individual passes through in becoming mature. But certain epochs encourage this development; in them the paradoxical or dramatic outlook colors the whole intellectual scene[…]’ Amid simplicity and order rationalism is born, but rationalism proves inadequate in any period of upheaval. Then equilibrium must be created out of opposites. Such inner peace as men gain must represent a tension among contradictions and uncertainties[…]. A feeling for paradox allows seemingly dissimilar things to exist side by side, their incongruity suggesting a kind of truth.

Rationalizations for simplification are still current, however, though subtler than the early arguments. They are expansions of Mies van der Rohe’s magnificent paradox, ‘less is more.’ Paul Rudolph has clearly stated the implications of Mies’ point of view: ‘All problems can never be solved… indeed it is a characteristic of the twentieth century that architects are highly selective in determining which problems they want to solve. Mies, for instance, makes wonderful buildings only because he ignores many aspects of a building. If he solved more problems, his buildings would be far less potent.’

The doctrine ‘less is more’ beoms complexity and justifies exclusion for expressive purposes. It does, indeed, permit the architect to be ‘highly selective in determining which problems [he wants] to solve.’ But if the architect must be ‘committed to his particular way of seeing the universe,’ such a commitment surely means that the architect determines how problems should be solved, not that he can determine which of the problems he will solve. He can exclude important considerations only at the risk of separating architecture from the experience of life and the needs of society [emphasis added]. If some problems prove insoluble, he can express this: in an inclusive rather than an exclusive kind of architecture there is room for the fragment, for contradiction, for improvisation, and for the tensions these produce. Mie’s exquisite pavilions have had valuable implications for architecture, but their selectiveness of content and language is their limitation as well as their strength.14

Here Venturi explicitly frames his simulacrum of architecture in contrast to modernism in the form of Mies, interestingly calling into being the ‘selectiveness’ of Mies and other modernists at the same time. It is his representation of architecture that attempts to take into account the ‘contradictory’ in architectural artifacts and practice. He wishes to include in the ideal the possibility of vernacular meanings and forms, as well as the possibility of ‘accidents’ and apparent ‘errors’ that, in his mind, enrich the quality of the work. What marks this representation of architecture particularly as a third-level simulacrum, rather than an eccentric stylistic manual, are its claims to reality and the profound flexibility in the ideal it frames:

This book deals with the present, and with the past in relation to the present. It does not attempt to be visionary except insofar as the future is inherent in the reality of the present. It is only indirectly polemical. Everything is said in the context of current architecture and consequently certain targets are attacked—

general, the limitations of orthodox Modern architecture and city planning, in particular the platitudinous architects who invoke integrity, technology, or electronic programming as ends in architecture, the popularizers who paint ‘fairy stories over our chaotic reality’ and suppress those complexities and contradictions inherent in art and experience. Nevertheless, this book is an analysis of what seems to me true for architecture now, rather than a diatribe against what seems false.15

Here is a paradoxical thing: a treatise framed as a non-treatise. A theory framed as a reality, even proposing to adopt ‘chaos.’ Taken at face value Venturi’s theory has every capability of absorbing any and all aesthetic possibilities into the representation structure of architecture. The graphic evidence given in his account is so far-reaching, so all-encompassing, that Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture often begs the question of what isn’t part of Venturi’s aesthetic vocabulary. Now that the dicta of production, chasteness, rhythm, and geometry are assumed, rhetorical value, promiscuity, arrhythmia, and randomness fill in the gaps until the representation system that is architecture includes almost everything possible. It must be admitted he possibly had no such intention: in the beginning of the book, he describes the volume as a humble ‘apologia’ for his own work and not much more. But this is contrary to how he frames his thinking, as in the passages above, as yet another discussion of architecture’s ‘relation to the present.’ This is a representation, a treatise, and an aesthetic simulacrum of architecture, without question.

Again, it is not the specific subject of Venturi’s reframing of architectural theory that is critical, but the flexibility of the relationship that he establishes between the idealization structure that is theory and the once-distant phenomenon that is reality. Venturi postulates a non-elitist architecture, a non-rigid architecture, and a non-mechanistic architecture in such a way that the meaning of these terms could be manifold. With Venturi the theory-structure of architecture makes its attempt to absorb the reality it once described—the ‘Che Shirt’ example becomes possible.

Arguably this need not have drastic consequences for anyone except for architects, who now are landed with the problem of figuring out exactly what it is that they do and responding in kind. The rest of humanity, one must not forget, isn’t necessarily that interested in what the architect does, and the absorption of the language or aesthetics of reality into architecture isn’t the same as the absorption of the consequences of that reality. Additionally, Venturi’s claims and the expansion of the representation structure he proposes are largely aesthetic: his treatise is actually gentle in this way. But alternate claims are, after and during the time of Venturi, made that have significant, non-aesthetic tenets that expand the representation of architecture to a much greater degree.

Kenneth Frampton’s essay ‘Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance’ is one such body of claims. In his writing Frampton takes on the tradition of regionalism largely led by Lewis Mumford.

15Venturi, Robert. Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. Page 21
The Image: A photograph of a painting of King Louis XIV of France, demonstration of a garment following the first-order aesthetic simulacrum

The Indication: An image such as this allows a familiarity with the concept of simulacra by providing a concrete example that is relevant to most people. Any American highschool education will provide information on the content of this image, which provides the necessary connection between the aesthetic of the painting and the ancien regime aesthetic construct described in the argument. The presence of the garment provides a closer relationship, but is partially incidental. Would the garment without the man indicate the same argument?

Image Credit: redslipperdiary.wordpress.com, January 29, 2011 Download

The Image: A photograph of a Muji Incorporated reused yarn shirt, a garment following the second-order aesthetic simulacrum. While the connotation of the object as “green” or “environmentally conscious” could push this into a third-order simulacrum, the motives behind such a shirt, if conceived of innocently, are totally related to production and therefore closer to a second-order simulacrum. The production values of re-use and efficiency, taken to an extreme, result in a garment such as this one.

The Indication: Another evidentiary proof, this time presented as “innocent”

Image Credit: acollective.com, January 29, 2011 Download
The Image: A photograph of the ‘Che shirt,’ demonstration of the third-order aesthetic simulacrum

The Indication: Here we have the ending of yet another aesthetic progression. The three objects have no real relationship, and are actually in a scrambled chronological order. Yet the message of hierarchy is relatively clear: this leads to that, leads to that, and so on. Of course, as discussed previously, part of the logic of third-order simulacra defies chronology. Any of these three, deployed again, can demonstrate a third-order simulacrum. The aesthetics of the Sun King can become again relevant given the appropriate connotation circumstances in the third-order simulacrum.

Image Credit: yaf.org, January 29, 2011 Download

The Image: A photograph of a parody ‘Che shirt,’ demonstration of the mutability of the third-order aesthetic simulacrum

The Indication: A perversion of the chronology? Perhaps a demonstration of how chronology is nullified by a nimble and intelligent aesthetic construct. Does the revelation of the aesthetic simulacrum dismantle it, or create another simulacrum?
The Image: A photograph of the Vanna Venturi house by Robert Venturi, showing the flexibility of the third-order aesthetic simulacrum. The contemporary pulls influences and aesthetics from the ancient to imply meaning, both earnestly and ironically.

The Indication: One of a great many and varied causes...
in his work *Architecture of the South* and proposes his own version, a type of anti-chauvinist regionalism that will allow the practice of contemporary architecture to accommodate for the traditions, building customs, and needs of the global locales it touches. Frampton’s theory of regionalism differs from the previous theories through the element of ‘critical’ distance that he proposes the architect should adopt, ‘defamiliarizing’ local elements through adaptation into the global influence the architect carries with him or her. In this way the architect will be a force against the homogenizing effect of globalized capitalism and the global practice of architecture, rather than merely an agent for its continuation.\(^{17}\)

Two things are interesting about Frampton’s writing: first, the theory of Critical Regionalism, similar to Venturi’s writing, is posited as a direct cure to the theories of modernist architecture and globalization that Frampton considers homogenizing. Critique following Frampton’s essay often cites the resistance of Mumford and Frampton to the modern movement, and even members of the modernist schema, such as Walter Gropius, who sought the adaptation to local circumstances that Frampton frames. In this way, the claims of Critical Regionalism similarly provide the representation system of architecture with flexibility in that they allow it to account for an element of ‘reality,’ the element of cultural difference, that the rigidity of modernism could not take into account. Secondly, however, and more importantly, Frampton’s writing makes certain claims to agency about the practice of architecture that are only peripherally aesthetic, and begin to approach the realm of the socio-political. His argument is framed in such a way that the successful Critical Regionalist project, following his writing, can be expected to express and further the cultural interests of a marginalized, non-globalized group of people.

This claim, and there are others in architecture like it, reveals the problematic tendency of an extremely flexible cultural representation system such as architecture after post-modernism. Frampton has taken a theoretical representation of an aesthetic system and made a claim to socio-political agency within it. It must be admitted that the claim to agency is made more softly than depicted here: Frampton is careful not to say that Critical Regionalist practice will ‘solve’ anything or ‘help’ anyone. However, the argument Frampton makes is framed against the context of both globalization and capitalism, and in favor of localization and marginalized cultures, making the Critical Regionalist argument if not explicitly socio-political, than at least so through implication.

Inasmuch as this building is organized around a regular grid and is comprised of repetitive, in-fill modules- concrete blocks in the first instance and precast concrete wall units in the second-we may justly regard it as the outcome of universal civilization. Such a building system, comprising an in situ concrete frame with prefabricated concrete in-fill elements, has indeed been applied countless times all over the developed world. However, the universality of this productive method- which includes, in this instance, patent glazing on the roof- is abruptly mediated when one passes from the optimal modular skin of the exterior to the far less optimal reinforced concrete shell vault spanning the nave. This last is obviously a relatively uneconomic mode of construction, selected and manipulated first for its direct associative capacity- that is to say, the vault signifies sacred space- and second for its multiple cross-cultural references.\(^{18}\)

Frampton goes on to describe the signifier connection between the concrete vaulting and a world-wide dialogue about sacred space, citing the church as an example of a cultural mediation between local and global. An interesting characteristic of Frampton’s

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claim, especially in this case, is the potential similarity between his writing and Venturi’s. The contrast between regular and irregular, rational and arational, that Frampton is speaking of is not too distant from Venturi’s notion of contradiction, is it not? However, Frampton, through use of language positing ‘civilization’ against ‘culture’ and the global versus local, uses images of Utzon’s architecture as a sign of a sociological conflict that Venturi might present as merely architectural. Not only an ironic example of the mutability of architectural image-signs, but the susceptibility of architectural claims to connotation in terms of sociological agency.

Once this connection is accomplished the architectural claim essentially extends itself to non-aesthetic, agency-based interactions that may or may not have anything to do with architecture.

Which begs the question, ‘so what?’ First, part of the game of architecture is making claims that may or may not be substantively true for the sake of polemical aggrandizement and furthering of a particular aesthetic. Le Corbusier knew this very well and made it part of his practice in writing, and this is to say nothing at all of Phillip Johnson. Secondly, the architect is bound to consider himself or herself a purveyor of something that is more than strictly aesthetic in nature. At least some part of every practice of the discipline of architecture is dedicated to something considered ‘not aesthetic,’ be it called ‘pragmatic,’ ‘functional,’ ‘performative,’ what have you. The building, the basic unit of architectural product after all, has to at least ostensibly serve some program or it wouldn’t come into being, necessitating some element of the non-aesthetic or not strictly-aesthetic in architecture. So what of it if Frampton and others make claims to the agency-enhancing properties of a particular type of architecture?

Obviously, given the aesthetic tendency of architecture as a discipline and profession, the guarantee of this agency, even if the aesthetic goals of the theory are accomplished, is not ironclad. A building designed following the tenets of Critical Regionalism is not the thing that guarantees the agency of the regional culture, or its continuation- this is a lesson the architect should understand from Michel Foucault’s body of writing on Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon; eventually Foucault grants that freedom itself, not architecture, is the guarantee of freedom.19 The thing in the architectural process more closely capable of guaranteeing this agency is the architect, whether his or her aesthetics align with Frampton’s theory or not. However, more importantly, given Baudrillard’s theory of simulacra, what if the aesthetic goals of Critical Regionalism are accomplished in a given project, brought to total fruition? A given regional culture is given a monument to itself by the efforts of an international architect, and Frampton’s standards see the project express something about the state of that regional culture in the environment of global capitalism. At least according to the theory, everyone should be satisfied and the purpose of regionalism served.

Nevertheless, as in the story Jean Baudrillard might contend, what Critical Regionalism and socio-economic agency claims allow is the expression of things outside the globalized system in terms of the system itself. It cannot be forgotten that the globalized architect, no matter what his or her intentions might be, will never be anything more than that: an agent of the globalization system. Rather than assist the culture he or she is trying to ‘help,’ what the architect has done is enabled the globalization structure to aesthetically connote and express the culture it is soon to absorb, effectively destroying it. Baudrillard’s parable of the ethnographers and the Tasaday natives in the South Pacific describes a similar situation to the one Frampton attempts to alleviate: the Tasaday natives, brought into modern society, are beginning to disappear. They

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19Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish. Pages 195-228
The Image: A photograph of Danish Model Freja Beha
The Indication: ...and another kind of aesthetic sign, also perhaps for Danish culture. As aesthetic objects the photograph of a model, or an architectural artifact, may be used as signs for anything, making Frampton’s claims to socio-cultural agency through architecture suspect, even damaging.

The Image: A photograph of Bagsvaerd Kirke, by Danish architect Jorn Utzon. For Frampton, an example of a critical approach to regionalism.
The Indication: One kind of aesthetic sign, perhaps for Danish culture...
are assimilating into the society around them and so becoming part of the global culture rather than the distinctive culture they once exhibited. The ethnographers studying them, like Frampton, are vexed by this and come up with a novel solution: return the Tasaday to the jungle. However, this solution, seemingly innocuous as it is, bears with it a problem. The Tasaday are back in their homes, however, as Baudrillard writes:

Of course, these savages are posthumous: frozen, cryogenized, sterilized, protected to death, they have become referential simulacra, and science itself has become pure simulation. The same holds true at Cruesot, at the level of the ‘open’ museum where one museumified in situ, as ‘historical’ witnesses of their period, entire working-class neighborhoods, living metallurgical zones, an entire culture, men, women, and children included—gestures, languages, customs fossilized alive as in a snapshot. The museum, sited of being circumscribed as a geometric site, is everywhere now, like a dimension of life. Thus ethnology, rather than circumscribing itself as an objective science, will today, liberate from its object, be applied to all living things and make itself invisible, like an omnipresent fourth dimension, that of the simulacrum. We are all Tasadays, Indians who have again become what they were—simulacral Indians who at last proclaim the universal truth of ethnology.30

The plights of the Tasaday, Debord’s proletariat, and the victimized cultures Frampton attempts to help, are identical: representation systems of simulacra are attempting to absorb them through representation, analysis, and, most effectively, commuted aesthetic imagery. Which calls into being an additional problem of the architectural claim: the persistent connection between aesthetic images and the connotation claims made by architectural theorists.

The architect is, at least ostensibly, an agent figure in the delineation of culture and identity for the people he or she represents. The architect can make actual decisions that will affect, in the case of Frampton’s goals for regionalism, the sustenance of a particular culture through improved or much-needed architectural artifacts that will allow them to continue what they are doing. The intention of this thesis is not to argue that the architect is incapable of affecting such agency-driven goals. Far from it, there is always a great potential for the architect to do ‘non-aesthetic’ good for the people he or she represents. Moreover, largely this is what architectural claims, especially contemporary ones, propose that the architect do: motivate architecture towards the improvement of human agency in various forms. Again, this body of work will argue that this is beyond commendable and perfectly possible for the architect.

However, something must be remembered in the positioning of the architectural claim. Any such claim, because of the visual nature of architecture, will be published in a particular way: even Alberti’s treatise is filled to the brim with images. Le Corbusier presents a photograph of an airplane, a steamship, and Venturi fills his writing with pictures of practically everything conceivable in architecture to make his point—each image corresponds more or less exactly to something Venturi is trying to prove. This is the norm and expectation of architectural publication, and indeed increasingly of the non-architectural publication. But what is often innocently overlooked in the creation of such publications is the peculiar relationship between the architect and imagery. This property is here termed the indicative property of images in architectural context, the constant possibility that, to the architect an image is not merely a visual aesthetic object, but a connoted aesthetic object, capable of describing real objects, real environments, and, by extension, real narratives.

This relationship is a complex one with complex implications. For though, as stated above, neither a piece of wood or the image of a stone may be ‘true,’ words may be considered true. However the association between the written word and images imbibes the image with the same element of truth intrinsic to the words. No matter what the intent of the author, an image placed within text will be assumed to

20Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and Simulation. Page 8
connote the consequences or circumstances contained in the text. This is exacerbated by the unique use of imagery made by the architect: architectural images, at their base level, lead to constructed realities with narratives associated to them. Therefore, when Le Corbusier shows us a photograph of an airplane, and describes a narrative of industrialization, that photograph becomes that narrative. The narrative is instantaneously part of an aesthetic. That aesthetic is instantaneously a narrative. It is this aesthetic-consequential relationship that founds the connotation of architecture.

Automatic Realities: The Indicative Quality of Images in Architecture

Images, it is easy to forget, begin their lives relatively innocent and free of associations. The basis of an image is the human eye, without which there is only light hitting other things and bouncing around without being received. This is an anthropocentric viewpoint, of course, but for the sake of this thesis it is more productive to say that a human being is in the room with eyes that can receive the light bouncing off of things; through this mechanism light reflecting off of matter becomes perception. This process of the eye receiving light through nerve cells on the retina forms the visual basis of what we call reality which, as Jean Baudrillard described it, is perfectly inclusive of all possibilities we will ever conceive of and essentially unchangeable to us. That is, reality is a perfect void. In truth human beings perceive a mass of color and value fields of varying degree with no significance at the moment of their perception: this is reality (percept). At basic level humans connote these perceptible phenomena into ‘things’ of various kinds which have significance. This is a very basic, low-level representation (concept), which humans combine with other information and representations to form higher levels of representations and thought structures (cultural representations and simulacra).

The making of images by humans, classified most easily under the definition of ‘visual art’ and documented as beginning 32,000 years ago in Lasceaux Cave has dealt in differing ways with the percept and the concept over time. The school of classical visual art images deals mostly, though not exclusively, with the image’s movement in the viewer’s mind from the percept to the concept. The term for this type of image is ‘objective art,’ and the image uses color fields to portray something and move the viewer from the percept of the fields to the concept of the thing or, in more advanced art, the narrative or circumstance attached to that thing. Juan Sanchez Cotan’s Still Life with Game Fowl from 1602 is one example of this movement from percept to concept. The image is still composed of color fields, just as is reality, but the fields are arranged in such a way that the viewer is able to make the cognitive movement from the percept of the fields to the concept of dead game fowl and vegetables, onward to more complex concepts of the reason for their arrangement.

The significance of their presence, and the possibility of a narrative beyond the canvas become additional possibilities. These images are indicative in that they all indicate and denote something other than themselves.

During the 19th and 20th Centuries, however, the images created by humans began to deal more insistently with the percept rather than the concept, giving birth to the idea of non-objective (or non-indicative) images. Beginning with painters such as Paul Cezanne and Vincent Van Gogh, images created in this period gradually become less focused on the movement from percept to concept in the viewer and focus on the phenomena of the viewer’s perception alone. That is, artists become increasingly interested in the color fields the eye perceives and less interested in what they make up. Mark Rothko’s painting No. 3/No. 13 is an example of such an image, in that it strives not to be understood as a conceived object.
The Images: A photograph of ‘The Horse’ painting in Lascaux cave, and a photograph of *Still Life with Game Fowl* by Juan Sanchez Cotan, two examples of objective art. 

The Indication: Once again an aesthetic progression, though this time with an element of stasis. Both images are examples of objective art, though one is more complex than the other, thus providing comparison between the ‘beginning’ of objective art and where it travelled from that beginning. These images help to construct a narrative of visual culture that may be a reductive one: are their progressions outside this one? Is this progression as obvious as it is portrayed?
but as a number of perceptible fields of colors.

All images would end as they began but for the human eye and brain, which assemble them into objects of denotative and connotative significance. The struggle of the non-objective painter is to slow this process, which is instinctive in human beings and thus very difficult to overcome. Human viewers look for the conceived image in all images, partially because that is how they have been taught by the classical practice of visual art and partially because everyday life in reality is hazardous without this categorization: finding food is easier if it can be categorized as food, not fuzzy color blobs of differing consistencies. Still, painters such as Rothko were able to overcome this indicative function of the human brain to a degree. Paintings such as No. 3 / No. 13 can be conceived of as 'containing things,' but the artist has done what he can do to prevent this from happening and to allow the percept to override the concept.

However, to the architect all images have an indicative quality that is beyond the scope of even normal human beings. What is typical of the architect is, at first glance, typical of the typical viewer of an image: say for instance a man or woman out on the town steps into an art museum and encounters Jackson Pollock’s No. 5 displayed on the wall in one of the gallery rooms. A viewer less educated in visual art and culture might give the following response: ‘It doesn’t look like anything.’ Similar responses of ‘What is this a painting of?’ or ‘What is that supposed to be?’ may occur. Following this there is a general response is to either accept the non-objectivity of the work, or attempt to fill the canvas with subject matter, in spite of the painter’s intentions. The mind of the viewer functions normally as an association engine and describes part of No.5 as a tree or a face or whatever subject matter the viewer might choose. And, as the cognitive movement from percept to concept becomes more complex, Pollock’s painting transforms from something inactive to that viewer’s mother, pet, or place they once visited. A viewer more educated in visual art and culture, however, is more likely to understand the concept of a nonobjective painting, and thus to conceive of the possibility that there may not be anything ‘in’ the painting, but that No. 5 simply ‘is’ and doesn’t have any content to be conceived of. Given this minor preparation, based either in formal education or experience of being exposed to non-objective paintings, there is a substantially higher chance that the educated viewer will look upon No. 5 and attempt to conceive how the painting alters the quality of the space around it. How it effects his or her perception and what visually ‘happens’ over time as the viewer is exposed to the painting becomes the subject of the work, rather than a visible concept within the work.

In the hands of the uneducated viewer No. 5 begins as a static visual aesthetic object and is, over time, converted into a connoted aesthetic object by the assumption that there is an object within the painting and that the painter is attempting to ‘show something.’ What was intended to be and is, substantively and, in truth, like all paintings, a field of colors on a canvas, becomes a connoted object for the uneducated viewer. In terms of gender and sexuality the image, previously feminine, becomes masculine over time, releasing its visual staticity to become activated by the person viewing it. Most of the art and effort on Pollock’s part consists on staving off this transformation. For the educated viewer, however, there is a higher possibility that the image will remain feminine, or a visual aesthetic object, for much longer. The educated viewer has trained his or her perceptions to perceive a non-objective work, raising the possibility that connotations or consequences will never be attributed to the originally feminine presence of the canvas. This training in effect coaches the educated viewer into a state of learned seductive readiness.

Enter the architect. In the same gallery
The Image: A photograph of Mark Rothko’s No. 3/No. 13, an example of non-objective art

The Indication: A visual example of the content of the text, giving the reader yet more proof that the text is speaking of something ‘real.’ What is omitted, however, is the indescribable difference between a photograph of one of these works and the works themselves. The photograph may present itself as the work, but it is not—anyone who has been in a gallery with a Rothko work will know this. Still, the photograph does not always make this claim, or its falsehood, evident.

The Image: Jackson Pollock’s No. 5

The Indication: The image description above has intentionally been made in a different way to demonstrate the point made with the previous image. Often the difference between the work itself and the image of the work is never called into being. This may seem like semantics, a minor issue, but it proves the point of the indicative quality of images, especially photographs in publications. If the author states something, it is taken to be so to a greater or lesser degree. If he or she provides a photograph as proof, the degree of veracity of both photograph and argument becomes greater. Overcoming indication can become comically redundant. This is not a painting.
is the same No. 5 painting in the same position with the same lighting, and once the educated and non-educated viewers have left the architect-viewer arrives to appraise the work. Unique to the architectural education is a certain attitude toward images, phrased as ‘indicative’ attitude above. The architect works through image in a way peculiar to most in that for the architect the image usually is leading to something else. A plan, section, or elevation all three are, for the architect, indicative of a building to come. Due to the architect’s spatial comprehension training those drawings are also indicative of the oncoming building’s spatial characteristics to a greater or less degree. Images with a high degree of verisimilitude are highly indicative of the oncoming building because they are specific about it, while others may be less indicative. However, arguably, to the architect even No. 5 is indicative of a building to come. Architects have a documented history of converting artists’ images, even especially non-objective ones, into buildings in one way or another. No. 5 may not be a ready example in this case, but De Stijl architecture and design by exponents such as Gerrit Rietveld were obviously and expressly based on the non-objective paintings of Piet Mondrian. It is from this beginning that Rietveld’s Schroder house obtains its graphic look of planes and lines, a painting of a kind directly translated into a building. More explicitly the Rietveld Chair attempts to convert Mondrian’s compositional objects into consequential, material facts.

Similarly Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion of 1929 was derived from a De Stijl composition titled Rhythm of a Russian Dance by Theo von Doesburg. Van der Rohe simplified the composition of the work, reduced the number of elements, and then converted this new drawing directly into the plan of the Pavilion. What was originally a visual aesthetic object of the painting, with a certain set of experiences attached to it, becomes in Mies’s hands a connoted aesthetic object to be created into a building. The painting originally displayed nothing, if the painter’s success is to be taken as total. But thanks to the unique perspective of the architect, it is now the preliminary plan for a building with a long and complex architectural history of connotation. Ludwig Meis van der Rohe has effectively undone von Doesburg’s work, for better or worse.

How this indicative transformation affects the painter of non-objective works is not for this research to search out. However, implicit within this quick and effortless connection between images and buildings made by architects is a problematic assumption: images = buildings. Not drawings and images lead to buildings, or that they imply buildings, but drawings and images inevitably become, and implicitly are, buildings.

There are two potential consequences of this for the architect: one, an ever-increasing goal of verisimilitude in the architectural image, and two, the mistaken assumption of veracity between aesthetic image and agent outcome.

First, if the architect assumes that any image is a nascent building than his or her logical goal arguably becomes to make that nascent building more and more obvious within the image, if he or she is to make that building legible to others and bring that building into being. An architect may begin with the non-objective painting’s composition, but he or she cannot necessarily end there if the indicated vision of the building is going to come to fruition. For instance, the difference between the original composition by von Doesburg and the constructible plan drawn by Mies is substantial. First, the composition had to be altered by removing some of its elements, then altered to gradually resemble something human beings may inhabit. As a concession to the objective world of the architect the non-objective painting must absorb lines denoting stairs, doors, and other elements of a scale not necessarily in resonance with 21 The Barcelona Pavilion. 1986 Documentary Film
The Image: A photograph of Lozenge Composition, painting by Piet Mondrian, non-objective art

The Indication: Both proof and cause, but also that this is the image of the work. Of course, it is a photograph and only a stand-in for the reality

The Image: A photograph of the Rietveld Chair, transformation object from non-objective painting to objective, constructed object

The Indication: Both proof and effect. Is it possible that this image also does not display the full photograph? How did this chair floating in nothingness come to pass? It is not a chair, but a virtual aesthetic possibility
The Image: A photograph of *Rhythm of a Russian Dance*, non-objective painting by Theo van Doesburg.

The Indication: A proof of the veracity of the argument as well as cause, just as before. Again, the reader should note the difference between the quality of the photograph here and of the actual work, which is included in the New York Museum of Modern Art collection.

Image Credit: de_buurmann via flickr.com, February 16, 2011 Download


The Indication: The effect of the previous image, though in this case a number of narratives are concealed. This particular image is an interpretation of several others, and was not drawn by Mies or his office. Differences such as the denotation of furniture in the drawing and changes in denotation of vegetation indicate a complex history of change, and yet such a drawing does not admit to such a history. Much like a photograph, an architectural drawing carries a certain warrant of truth and memorial that is difficult to call into suspicion.

Image Credit: Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion, Page 34, Werner Blaser
the rest of the compositional elements and certainly not non-objective. Eventually it will most likely be leached of color into a drafted pencil composition such as the Barcelona Pavilion plan drawn by Phillip Johnson, which contains none of the non-objective effect of the colored version. In addition, eventually the ultimate indicative stamp of verisimilitude is added: the composition will be converted into shop drawings specifically designed to lead to the physical presence of a building.

But at the same time the connotation of one image into another into the building obscures this translation process until it is no longer the subject of the narrative. Rather than Rhythm of a Russian Dance being nominally compositional and feminine, it has been injected with a masculine quality of meaning: it helped bring the Barcelona Pavilion into being.

As time goes on the feminine image becomes consistently increasingly masculine: more of a connoted aesthetic object. Non-objective composition becomes plan becomes mass-produced plan, becomes publication which leads to any number of different connotations, such that a static, place-based object has become something utterly universal and connoted. To use the words of Jean Baudrillard, the architect precludes the possibility of seduction within images: to him or her, all images are masculine, connoted. By reversal, and more to the point, so all connotations are imagery.

This understood equivalency gives rise to the neurosis of the architect, sending out his or her image-phalli into the world with the understanding that just as all images carry consequences to him or her, so all consequences will be carried by his or her images into the world. The disappointment of the architect upon arrival in a newly constructed artifact, along with the bravado of connotative claims in architectural writing, give evidence of this misunderstanding, sometimes traumatic, that all architects carry. They, we, assume that if a drawing shows a consequence, that consequence will come true. It is only a question of degree to which the transformation occurs. In addition, this process becomes reciprocal for members within the architectural profession. For instance, an architect may design a building and have it built, then submit it for publication to a peer journal from which its image is sent throughout the world. From then on, the architects and students who receive those images assume, partially because of the indicative function of images and partially that of publication, that they have, not images, but the very building in front of them.

It is during this process accomplished through publication that the architect may cry foul and claim that his or her work has been reduced, aestheticized, by image and publication. In fact, his or her work has undergone a spectacular transformation from masculine to feminine to masculine once again. However, as in any sex change, certain things are bound to be lost in the translation. For instance a duplicated architectural aesthetic, the architect might claim, will not have the same consequences in terms of spatial ambience that the original did, as the copy taken from the publication cannot possibly be accurate. There may not be the same constituents involved in the conversation that led to the original in the duplicate, leading, arguably, to a diminished aesthetic vision. The visual aesthetic can be interpreted incorrectly, meaning that the aesthetic of the duplicate is simply incorrect. No matter what the case, the architect’s response to this problem of the duplicated aesthetic image is complex, and potentially destructive.

Virtually Real: High Verisimilitude Images, Information Images, and Socially Complex Architectural Claims

The architect could arguably be uncomfortable with the possibility that
The Images: A photograph of the Bilbao, Spain Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry and a photograph of Olympia, an objective painting by Edouard Manet. On one hand an architectural odalisque, and on the other a painted odalisque (in this case a more aggressive one than most)

The Indication: The presence of these images together draws an association between them that might not be evident otherwise: the author is constructing a visual metaphor. This is assisted by the visual similarities between the two images. The Guggenheim Bilbao stretches out along the banks of the river much as Olympia reclines on the couch. The Guggenheim and Olympia, it is implied, are equivalents.
discipline. Thanks to AutoDesk REVit, Maya, 3D Studio Max, Maxwell Render, and other software, there is the possibility that architects can release images for publication that ‘look like’ the spaces that will result. REVit in particular, as part of a Building Information Modeling (BIM) package grants a great amount of utility to the architectural firm in that it allows the architect to show the client exactly what the project will ‘look like’ in complete terms, even including HVAC and other systems often input by others not of the architectural office. At least that is the implicit claim: what you see on the screen and in the magazine is what you will get in real life.

The VHV architectural image can make a claim to connotation and masculinity that no other architectural image can make. In effect, the images are so ‘real’ that, ‘what you see is what you get,’ or WYSIWYG (pronounced ‘wizzeewig’) as graphic interface designers call it. A REVit drawing claims masculinity in a way that a normal floor plan cannot because of its claim to veracity. What is within the drawing will be within the artifact, without variation or alteration, what is in the building. This functions as both a graphic claim and an information claim, as the BIM model is organized into systems just like the ‘real’ building and ‘contains’ much of the same information.

Now the indicative claim within the architectural image (also just color fields, remember) is so strong that the package of information contained within the computer is the building, essentially. It looks like a building, can be inhabited (visually) like a building, and is so detailed as to include all the information, so it is claimed, that the ‘real’ building will contain. Of course, the reader will intuit that this is not ‘actually’ the case in reality: whether the drawings delineate a fact about a building is never the sole determinant in whether or not that fact comes into being in the building itself. But this veracity discrepancy is not the more critical point. What VHV images allow is

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The Images: REVit Rendering and digital montage of an HOK project from AutoDesk’s website. VHV image using REVit with additional veracity claims added by ‘placing’ the ‘building’ on the ‘site.’ REVit Rendering and digital montage of UCDavis new facility from AutoDesk’s website. These images compare well with photographs, approaching a high level of verisimilitude.

The Indication: These images act as another proof of concept for the argument put forward. Here if we pose the question, given the image, ‘what will the architecture do?’ the result is a one-to-one statement- the image and the architecture are equivalent. To make the argument more succinctly, consider...
THE BEGINNING OF MODERNISM

...what is the difference between this...

...this (photograph, desaturated by the author)...

Image Credit: public.ia.state.edu, February 9, 2011 Download

Image Credit: inbetween-the-cracks.blogspot.com, February 3, 2011 Download
...and this (digital rendering and montage created from drawing)...

Image Credit: dpcdsb.org, February 3, 2011 Download
Leach goes on to indict Woods complete lack of rigor in proving how the architecture depicted in his drawings will lead to such a future, and this is part of the issue with such statements. However, Woods’s grandiose claims are made more concrete by his exacting, high verisimilitude style of drawing. Kanekar writes:

While the delineation and detail of Woods’ drawings are unquestionably artful, evocative and arresting, they undoubtedly seem to aestheticise destruction. This aestheticising of war is criticism levelled against Woods by Neil Leach, for whom the lack of any rigorous work through a social and political agenda makes the work fall into a category of techno-science fiction that increases the distance between his drawings and reality. In Sarajevo. Considering Lebbeus Woods’ work in relation to Walter Benjamin’s writings on aesthetics and politics, it is obviously true that the drawings could be seen as creating a seductive spectacle that encourages the viewer to gloss over a problematic socio-political agenda. Whilst we can to a certain extent agree with Leach’s argument that, ‘Woods seemingly fails to acknowledge the aestheticization that lies at the heart of his project, a condition that is exacerbated by his proposed architectural solution’ there are two points that need clarification: one, the equation of Woods’ work to fascist thinking; and two, the nature of drawings which lies at the core of much of the criticism. Kanekar asserts that Leach’s connection between Woods’ drawings and fascism is untenable due to the Socialist politics of Woods and his narratives accompanying the drawings. She then addresses the issue of the drawings themselves, and the indicative connection between imagination and reality therein:

The second issue, which in my opinion lies at the heart of much of the criticism, is linked to the very nature of Woods’ drawings. While Wood’s drawings certainly do not fall into the genre of digital images that create the very realistic-looking inhabitable environments with a utopian atmosphere, they are very unlike the seductive computer-generated smooth de-contextualised images at the other end of the digital spectrum, in that Woods’ sharply drawn images seem to have actual technological constructability. So, more than what for Leach is the fetishisation of technology in Woods’ projects that further abstracts the work from its social context, it is this precision within the drawings (which at times is at the level of details and joints) that makes the viewer translate him into a possibility of a building. This is precisely where we begin to see them not as merely theoretical exercises but can imagine them as spaces of inhabitation. This aspect is also promoted with the collage process that was discussed earlier, with laying on photographs and real places on the one hand and a deliberate use of cinematic techniques on the other hand; Woods plays with extreme close-ups of building skins and details along with long shots. Low-angle shots and oblique or canted shots that are used in sci-fi genres and instills sense of fear and awe. There is also a pretty deliberate cross-cutting and split-editing when one looks at the continuous ribbon-like depiction and overlaps of the Sarajevo [sic] drawings. All this adds to the tension between imagination in reality and intensifies the aestheticisation of war.

What Kanekar is describing is the increasing indicative quality of Woods’ architectural imagery at increasing levels of graphic verisimilitude. Leach’s argument
...or this (drawing from Lebbeus Woods' studies for Sarajevo)...
of aestheticization, she would argue, is not necessarily valid but for the compellingly ‘real’ nature of Woods’ drawings. To an extent, parallel can be drawn here between the accelerated complexity of architectural claims, progressing from the first- to the third-order simulacra, and the progression of architectural images from the obviously graphic and visually aesthetic to the virtually real and indicative. In the same way that Alberti’s claims about architecture pose the discipline in terms of a comparison to reality, a typical architectural drawing such as a hand-drawn plan admits a measure of imaginative distance and distinction from reality. The VHV image, however, such as those created by Woods and through use of advanced software, makes claims to reality, mutability and chaos in much the same way as Venturi and Frampton’s claims do. Nor does the visually radical quality of his aesthetic make any difference, as the possibility of aesthetically radical buildings has been a common reality since Gehry’s Guggenheim was constructed.

Of course, very high verisimilitude in architectural images is only one possible solution for the problem of architecture’s femininity caused by images. Is there a possibility that architectural images may convey information that is not strictly visual? Could tactile or other consequential information be communicated by architectural images and thus overcome the visual aesthetic nature of architectural images exposed to publication?

The architectural imagery associated with this need to transcend the visual is the qualitative information drawing or diagram created by the architect, a different attempt to make architectural images masculine. Norbert Lechner’s reference book *Heating, Cooling, and Lighting* provides a useful, content-ambiguous example of such drawings: experiential qualities are translated into graphic gestures to make them manageable for the architect. Diagrammatic indications and qualitative claims in drawings such as Lechner’s indicate further what the space is supposed to be like in terms of non-visual information. A gradient from the top of the image moving downward on the page is not a blob of tone, but warmth coming from radiant heating pipes in the ceiling of the space. This is not a line on a page, but a wall made of split planks of wood. The drawings reek of possible sensuality and information: we see what the space will ‘be like’ before we are there and we have some comprehension of what it will feel like to be in that space.

Or, at least, the architect who draws this drawing hopes. Again, the indicative relationship between the architect and the drawing has not been re-examined carefully, and has lead to a deception within the discipline that can have serious consequences. At a basic level, there is no insurance whatsoever that sketching a gradient over the image will guarantee that the space function in that way. A gradient is not thermal warmth, and the architect does not necessarily know how it operates, even if he or she knows how the gradient-drawing button in Adobe Photoshop does. Granted, an argument can be made that this is just a drawing to convince a laymen, that some aspect of willful deception and theater is involved. However, the indicative quality of the image is not questioned within the image itself. Minus the presence of the architect offering a verbal disclaimer (probably a rare occurrence), the image states, ‘This is true. This is real.’ After that point, insurance between the image and the enacting of the displayed reality becomes suspect. This begs the question of why architects create these drawings to begin with: is it to help the architect understand something about the space in non-visual terms? Possibly, but the analog between the visual representation of the non-visual phenomenon need not necessarily be that close. Is it to help the client understand the quality of the space in non-visual terms? Possibly, but often as not a visual analog of this kind can be misinterpreted or simply seen as visual clutter rather than anything architectural.
The Image: *Environmental Section Diagram of the Carnegie Center for Global Ecology in Stanford.* Qualitative information drawing describing ventilation and insolation. A visual aesthetic object highly connoted, indicative of something that may or may not exist. As time passes the image becomes a sign for the condition, allowing the condition's existence to become irrelevant.

The Indication: Here is proof of the argument of qualitative information images. Of course, every consequence contained in this image may well have come into being, that must be said. But then, was the drawing necessary to prove that this would come to pass?
There is also the possibility that the architect wishes to be considered more than an aesthetician, and therefore wishes his or her drawings to be more than visually aesthetic. Perhaps there is a claim internal to the discipline that the architect should be something greater than just a designer of facades and a planner of spaces. Enter another type of architectural image, what could be called the **socially complex architectural claim**, or proof.

What the socially complex architectural claim attempts to do is to couch the artifact to be created in terms of one sociological or programmatic consequence or another. Through abstract analysis of different forces, framed in the architectural device of program or urban design, the socially complex claim describes what the architecture will do for different constituents once it is built and, in a roundabout way, why the architecture should be built as opposed to some other architecture. The implicit claim within such images and presentations is that the very architecture proposed will lead to the very consequences proposed.

REX PC, an offshoot of Rem Koolhaas’s Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) and a leader in contemporary program-based design, is one professional firm who places its expertise in this particular kind of claim. One particularly good example of such a claim is REX PC’s project for Finnish urban redevelopment ‘Low2No,’ part of a 2009 design competition to develop a framework for urbanization in Finland. The REX PC project package is elaborate: graphs of demographic movements between urban and rural areas, animated graphics describing relative increases or reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, and high verisimilitude images of what a potential solution could look like, all argued logically with accompanying text. REX PC studiously researched its solution with appropriate resources and displays information in an attractive but still ostensibly objective way. Most importantly, this proposal, given by an architectural firm, frames itself as a highly effective sociological plan. Possible consequences of the plan are given in a type of utopian air, hinting at possibilities of strong social lives for the people living in REX PC’s solution-city, beautiful surroundings indicated by the photograph-like images, and a future of more ecologically conscious growth and culture.

Once again, the notion of theatre and suspension of disbelief could be brought to bear in defense of a proposal such as this one. The images shown by REX PC could arguably show one of many possible scenarios based on their research and strategy. Aesthetic choices within the images arguably serve as placeholders for a reality that is hard to envision without them, especially from the perspective of a layperson viewing the proposal. Additionally one could argue that the proposal does not make any aggressively aesthetic statements and is, rather, totally concerned with consequences. The work that REX PC does is not the images and the renderings, or indeed the strictly spatial and construction-based solutions that it offers through the renderings, but the research done that led to them and the potential consequences of the research indicated by the data graphics and the verbal descriptions.

This kind of argument, however, once again underestimates the indicative power of the image in the context of architecture and the context of a proposal such as this one. No matter what claims REX PC may make, the images provided simultaneously with the text assert that sociological and aesthetic consequences of the images are co-instantaneous. Likewise, in the same way that the data graphs and the research assert that the consequences of solutions are at least ostensibly true in the future, the VHV images assert that the aesthetic consequences are similarly true in the future.

What this equivalency between aesthetic consequences and sociological claims does
The Image: Graphic describing demographic progression of Finnish carbon emissions over time designed by REX PC as part of their Low2No design proposal

Indication: A graphic such as this one, scientific, mathematical, is highly indicative of veracity, even more so than a photograph might be. A graph such as this presents itself as ‘objective’ no matter what the context, whereas even a photograph or perspective is obviously given a subjective viewpoint. As such a graphic like this one is understood to be ‘true’.

Image Credit: rex.ny.com/work/low2no, February 3, 2011 Download

The Image: Comparison diagram illustrating possible carbon footprint emissions given different urban development strategies in Finland, designed by REX PC as part of their Low2No design proposal

The Indication: Though less scientific in appearance, the quantitative information in a graphic like this one still bears the warrant of truth that is the mark of a socially complex architectural claim. Societal consequences, in terms of improvement of the relationship between humans in the environment, are directly implied in this diagram. The progression is clear: this strategy is superior to that one, and will lead to more positive results. A heavily connoted aesthetic object.

Image Credit: rex.ny.com/work/low2no, February 3, 2011 Download
The Image: Digital rendering of a courtyard space designed by REX PC as part of their Low2No design proposal

The Indication: Here is the reality that the Low2No proposal will bring into being. The rendering compares quite favorably with a photograph, understandable in terms of human scale and conditions in such a way that the reality described by the proposal is almost tangible. While the consequences described in the graphs are not explicitly tied to this aesthetic consequence, the association is unmistakable. Especially taken out of context of the rigorous work of REX PC, the aesthetic and the narrative become equivalent.

The Image: Digital rendering of an office and interaction space designed by REX PC as part of their Low2No design proposal

The Indication: Another part of the virtually-real reality is described here, lending yet more credence to the indicative possibilities of these architectural images. These spaces are virtual, but every effort is made to make them seem real. As these high verisimilitude images become more convincing, so does the connection between the aesthetic of the rendering and the consequences of the diagram presented previously.
is establish a causality that, whether it comes to fruition or not, provides opportunity for the aesthetic of the sociological event to replace the sociological event itself. What comes into being is an architectural ‘Che Shirt.’ Whether or not the solution offered by REX PC in this proposal and proposals like it is immaterial in the same way that what El Che actually achieved in terms of combat against capitalism is immaterial. In its quest to depict itself as more than a mere artist or aesthetic actor the architect has created what should be a masculine drawing, but will end as a feminine sign, capable of meaning anything and being reinterpreted over and over again.

The effect of this process, rather through VHV images, qualitative information images, or social complex claims, is to perform an operation upon the constituents involved in the architecture similar to that of the Tasaday mentioned previously. Despite the best intentions of the architect, even the most innocent description of a sociological or cultural condition when made by an architectural image is a form of aestheticization. As the Tasaday were sacrificed to the truth of ethnology the cause championed by the architect runs the great risk of being sacrificed to the truth of the architect, converted to an aesthetic stasis that has none of the original vitality and agency of the original sociological construct. Consider the possibility of REX PC’s Low2No proposal coming to fruition: no doubt some goals described by the proposal could be achieved. But what if the criteria of these goals change? Can the difference between the aesthetic sign of sociological improvement in the form of the beautiful rendering and the actuality of sociological improvement be recalled? It is irrelevant. The drawing is convincing enough, one equals the other.

Consider the possibility of an architectural practice that releases images making claims similar to that of REX PC, but without the research and collaboration rigor to back them up. Given the high verisimilitude of the images, will the society consuming them, and the accompanying architecture be able to tell the difference? Is there a possibility that the aesthetic of the artifacts created by REX PC may become a sign for a sociological agency which may or may not be present? And also, is there the possibility that while the characteristics of the agency structure may evolve, the aesthetic architectural artifact proposing to encapsulate it may not, leaving both frozen ‘Tasadays’ referent without any flexible, living meaning.

In addition, as each of these drawing types attempt to connote the specific consequences of the architecture attached to them, they implicitly play against the single greatest strength of architecture: the possibility that it may be experienced in a non-contemplative way. In his essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ Walter Benjamin describes the relationship between reality and two art forms, architecture and film, as fundamentally different from that had by other art forms. In his view film and architecture are uniquely positioned among art forms to be consumed as part and parcel of reality through what he calls ‘habit,’ rather than static ‘contemplation.’

Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception- or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation alone.26

Benjamin cites the uniqueness of the

tactile in the consumption of architecture, in a way similar to Frampton. But in this case the language used is critical to understanding: a contrast between contemplation and habit. Connotation, the possibility of consequences and meaning connected to a physical object, is very much the territory of contemplative exercise; connotation has nothing to do with habit. To use an example visualized earlier, a Nike shoe and the medieval shoe pictured serve the same habitual function, with minor variations. They both slip on the feet, they both protect the feet from the ground. The substantive difference between the two is the contemplative connotation structure attached to each, the second of which is essentially nil at the time of its manufacture. The Nike shoe, on the other hand has associations with athleticism, success, and all the other carefully branded and marketed connotations attached to it through the connoted aesthetic objects of advertising material. It is in the contemplation of one’s status as compared to someone else’s, in the contemplation of the superiority of one essentially identical shoe over another, that connotation comes into play.

The extent to which an architectural image can be connoted, can be turned into a sign of its meaning and consequences, therefore, is a measure of the extent to which it is contrary to the greatest strength of architecture over the other arts, at least as conceived of by Benjamin. What matter is it that a great architectural artifact actually exists, if a photo can convince someone he or she has already been there? As the image is allowed to consume everything the architect wishes to control, to become super-masculine, the architectural artifact will become consequently diminished, whether proactively or retroactively. The architect who creates a drawing including all consequences of the artifact before it is built, or, additionally, describes these consequences completely through writing beforehand, aestheticizes and freezes these consequences into a sign, a bauble, or a consumer demographic. However, the priesthood of the silent and distant hero-architect called into being by an assertion such as Benjamin’s (an assertion that might resonate well with Frampton) bears within it a contradictory difficulty that will soon become obvious to both the architect and the critic: the possibility of any architectural artifact remaining unconnote to all people forever is none, zero, in the globalized practice of architecture for a number of reasons. First, the need for critique in the architectural discipline, if it is to continue its existence, leads to some notion of connotation of architectural artifacts at some point. Even the most prosaic critique of new architect connotes it to an extent through association: publication of a critique connotes notice or fame, to begin with. Second, and more to the point, someone at some point, is going to photograph the architecture. This event almost certainly will occur. The implications of this event for the silent, hero architect are complex.

For instance, Peter Zumthor’s architectural works are known for their interesting and evocative spaces, beautiful details, and masterful handling of the physical environment. Zumthor himself is known for his reticence to talk about his work and his interest in architecture as a discipline of presence and silence, as written of in his short book Thinking Architecture. To an extent it would seem that Zumthor fits the model of Benjamin’s architect, seeking a minimalism free of connotation that allows architecture to exist in its place; but then here is a frustrating point: much like minimalist works of art, Zumthor’s works can be taken also as a sign for the freedom from signs. This may seem like a neologism, and to an extent it is, but consider this fact: architectural students ‘research,’ ‘analyze,’ and ‘describe’ the works of Peter Zumthor, particularly Therme Vals, without ever having been there. There is, after all, a beautiful volume released by Zumthor’s office filled with photographs and drawings, highly indicative images, of the baths, which allows the unconnote to be connoted. However, the priesthood of the silent and distant hero-architect called into being by an
The Images: Photographs of Therme Vals by Peter Zumthor. An architectural supposedly free of connotations reabsorbed by the third-order simulacrum of architecture.

The Indication: Here is Therme Vals, one of my favorite buildings

Here is Therme Vals, an example of tectonic forms at play

Here is Therme Vals, a minimalist, contemporary interpretation of masonry

Here is Therme Vals, a phenomenologically intensive experience of architecture

Here is Therme Vals, example of healthy lifestyle choices to be made...
is more complex, than one may have hoped. Resistance, in short, does not work. The architect clamming up and insisting on any kind of non-referential interpretation of his or her work, let alone images thereof, is most likely to meet with failure.

The naturalistic theory of architecture, the strong connection between architectural cause and architectural effect, is now highly suspect. In short, nothing of the architect is of reality. But, as Baudrillard might argue, it is surprising what strength can be found in artifice. This, the possibility of knowing the unreality of architecture and embracing it, is the means of seduction.

**Apologia: The Consumption of Images**

As a short apologia, this writing asserts that architects and architectural practice are not incapable of charting or achieving sociological change, nor of designing with intention for all possibilities in the built environment. The architect possesses a unique position within society connecting public relations, development, politics, and myriad other actors putting him or her in place to affect the actions of numerous agency groups towards ‘greater good’ if he or she so chooses. Additionally REX PC in particular makes great effort towards connecting itself with consultation groups and experts to insure that its design proposals are as near to possible to actual solutions with very possible and real consequences. This writing is in no way meant to impugn the rigor of the REX PC project staff or proposals.

Neither is the intent of this writing to deny the importance of drawing in the design thinking process of the architect. Qualitative information drawings are sometimes important in the creation of architecture to describe intents and to generally communicate. Certain possibilities about architectural spaces cannot be learned without drawing a visual analog of them, and graphic comparison between possible, virtual, and real remains the most effective way of proceeding through the design process. The generative sketch, the conceptual argument, and also the high verisimilitude rendering, are all important in the process of architecture, and the intention of this thesis is in no way to disallow their importance or validity.

Nevertheless, the architect should never, ever underestimate his or her role as an aesthetic actor. Drawings connected with consequences such as these constantly beg the question: why the graphic? Why, if the solution claimed is bound to be effective, is the drawing necessary? Yes, the renderings of the Low2No proposal make it much more attractive and make it much more likely to get attention. Additionally, as mentioned before, renderings such as these allow those outside the architectural profession to envision a future they would otherwise be unable to see. However, can this future be envisioned in a way less concretely indicative of a specific aesthetic truth? Who is the qualitative information graphic drawn for? Is it drawn to learn and communicate, or as a sign for work not done or totally understood? Most importantly, can the indicative power of these images be brought into question?

Obviously, such an aim is a complex one, given the indicative power of the image in the context of the profession of architecture. Is it enough to include a verbal injunction against unquestioning belief? As artist Renee Magritte attempted with *Ceci ne’st pas une pipe, ceci n’est pas une maison? Une Cite? Une monde?* The complexity of overcoming the indicative power of architectural images increases as the audience of such images grows larger. From the beginning, while an architect or design professional may be capable of acknowledging the suspension of belief necessary for the viewing of an architectural image, the client of the architect may not be assumed to be as conscious of this accepting state. This assertion is not made in elitism: the architect, ostensibly at least, is educated in visual culture in a way
that most of society is not. In addition, the architect is at least partially familiar with the process leading to an architectural image, a kind of perspective ‘behind the curtain’ that others may not be privileged to. At least if society consumes architecture in the way that Walter Benjamin imagined appropriate, something must change in the way that architecture’s relationship with image is understood. Any image, after a certain period, is indicative. Any architectural image, after a certain period, is connoted. How will the architectural image come to seduce, and not to so definitively connote? At the end of her article Kanekar invokes Robin Evans, stating:

‘I would put forward the incisive observation by Robin Evans that ‘the recognition of drawing’s power as a medium turns out, unexpectedly, to be recognition of drawing’s distinctness from and unlikeness to the thing represented, rather than its likeness to it, which is neither paradoxical nor as disassociative as it may seem.’”

The house remained that of my childhood aunt for most of my walk between curb and threshold. Occasional flickerings of other realities would come into being as I came closer, and I recognized the glass and aluminum of my first apartment, I smelled the carpet cleaner in the lobbies of endless hotels.

With certainty each time I remembered the same front rooms differently: now a German shepherd peered in upon the hermit crabs, now an aged border collie with a slim nose. The house had belonged to my brother, to whom I had not spoken in years. He had left behind his wife, who had called me to her home to retrieve some of his possessions
The Images: Digital photograph of surface ambiguity drawing, consisting of etched homasote tiles painted with cadmium yellow medium acrylic paint. The work pictured seeks an indictment of drawing, specifically an aerial perspective, a typical architectural drawing. The insistent surface-based nature of the object causes a reversal between the depth/content of the drawing and the object itself. Instability results, causing the aesthetic and pattern-based nature of drawings to become more evident. This work is also possibly a ‘real’ thing describing a condition in the virtual architecture.

The Indication: An interesting tendency in the documentation of architectural artifacts is to present them a-contextually, as is done here. The abstraction required of architectural thinking is revealed in such a condition, and yet architects consider ‘context’ part of their practical purview. These objects are not for sale; the author wants them.

The Images: Digital photograph of iterations on a possible concrete block. Both iterations seek the ‘pixel’ condition created in the homasote tile works, but also in three dimensions. The iteration pictured on the right led to further exploration.

The Indication: These images, presented together, carry an important warrant unique to the practice of architecture and design: iteration. Formal explorations are often depicted in sequence to show the evolution, or rather, suppose an evolution of the idea and object in the mind of the designer. Is this proof that work has been done? In fact, the iteration pictured on the right was the first of many and the one chosen for further exploration, making the iteration process irrelevant to the development of the final solution. If, of course, design processes are believed to progress linearly.

Images have been altered in Photoshop.
Section Three: Staging, Research, and the Work

Introduction
In 1929, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe oversaw completion of the German Pavilion for the Barcelona International Exposition, bringing to the end the image translation process from non-objective painting to building mentioned previously. At last, von Doesburg’s composition stilled into a built object made of onyx and chrome, steel, travertine, and concrete. Over the course of several months, the King and Queen of Spain, Exposition visitors, and the public viewed the Pavilion before it was dismantled and its pieces sold for salvage. At this point in 1930, the Barcelona Pavilion ceased to exist.

However, before workers dismantled the Pavilion Mies had the building professionally photographed to create a visual record of his achievements. There were thirteen original photographs published from this effort, called the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints, and from these few photographs an immense mythology of the Barcelona Pavilion generated. George Dodds provides a detailed account of the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints through his book Building Desire: On the Barcelona Pavilion. A limited account of the story is as follows: following their development in 1929, the photograph prints remained relatively dormant until architectural publications slowly picked them up. In 1932 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Philip Johnson, and Lewis Mumford featured the prints along with an idealized plan in MoMA’s Exhibition 15, Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, and the prints were again featured at the Moma in the Mies van der Rohe exhibition in 1947.28 External to this the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints made their way into the architectural popular imaginary through publication in architectural journals. After the Pavilion was dismantled the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints allowed Mies’s creation to enter into the world of architectural criticism despite the fact that few to no architectural critics ever actually went to and inhabited the building. For instance none of the critics involved in the MoMA exhibition of modern architecture ever physically saw the Barcelona Pavilion, though this did not stop them from writing about it and expounding on the importance of the Pavilion to Mies and his career as a modernist architect. In addition, numerous books, art works, and other publications make the Pavilion their subject matter, despite the fact that, once again, very few people ever saw the building and so very few know what the space of the Pavilion was actually like. Johnson and others, in their criticism of the building describe the qualities of the flowing space and environment in Barcelona as if they had actually been there; but the reader should note that these descriptions of space initiate from photographs and nothing else.

The Berliner Bild-Bericht photographs of the Pavilion are an enigma because over time the indicative quality of these images grew larger and larger without necessarily being questioned: Dodds’s work reveals this process of discussion and elaboration of meaning based entirely on image. What is more, the qualities ascribed to the Barcelona Pavilion based on the photographs could not possibly be more varied: in a 1996 publication Werner Blaser uses the Barcelona Pavilion, among other works, as proof of the East’s influence on Mies.29 Claire Zimmerman’s overview of the Barcelona Pavilion compares it to ‘an antique temple,’ and references the Pavilion as a beginning example of Mies’s affinity for Classicism in his works.30 The anthology The Presence of Mies contains a number of architect’s interactions with the deceased master, many of whom describe the influence of the Barcelona Pavilion on their work and thinking, and this is to say nothing of the innumerable architectural tourism books simply describing the Pavilion in ‘objective’ terms. Most poignantly

29 Blaser, Werner. West Meets East. Pages 90-97
Mies’s desires for his work’s immortality are reprehensible, but they do indicate an interesting challenge for the discipline of architecture.

As mentioned previously, if Walter Benjamin’s view on the strengths of architecture over other arts is to be believed than this should be contrary to the instinct of an architect as designer of space. So Mies’s barely veiled attempt at immortality through his works constitutes an anathema to his profession, viewed in this way. He was patently more interested in the Barcelona Pavilion becoming part of a connotative image structure than it remaining a living architectural object. The intention of this research is not to indict his decision, nor to stage an argument in the conflict between universality and specificity that is implicit in architecture, but rather to make the reader cognizant of the relationship between architecture and imagery and the implications thereof. The actions of the architect thereafter will be determined by the values of that architect. The architect would do well to be aware of the indicative quality of the images he or she creates in the world, as well as his or her ability to consign to imagery the very thing he or she wishes to assist.

In short, the architect must learn to seduce the results he or she wishes to see- to lead astray the expectations of efficacy, agency, and narrative that the architectural image carries with it.

How would a seductive practice of architecture perform?

Methodology and the Seductive Architectural Practice

The design component of this body of work has been, and shall remain, an exercise of play the entire time. Here I put forth designed experiments used to ascertain information about the design process and the concepts this research pursues, but it must be stated that from the beginning this has been play, in a structured form. Often the requirement for going forward with a design
research experiment would be as simple as my desire to execute it, or a possibility for a certain aesthetic experience that I had conceived and wanted to carry to fruition. The intentional aspect of the experiments has been the choice of a general milieu of subject matter, centered on image-processing technologies and objects such as lenses, mirrors, photography, film, along with image and object replication processes, particularly print- and moldmaking. The Barcelona Pavilion and the Berliner Bild-Bericht prints became media for the later explorations: subjects of prints or manipulations of maquettes. Otherwise there is next to no relationship between Mies’s work and the work here. Beyond these small and loose constraints the author has done nothing more than play with materials and respond to the results of this play. Additionally the body of written research previously presented in this document has almost no bearing on the decisions made in the carrying out of the experiments, or in the design work done in conjunction. The aesthetic experiences presented in the design work should be considered as detached from the written document as much as is possible.

Of course, this detachment cannot be accomplished in this format, but the assertion must be made to argue a point.

The seductive practice of architecture is a difficult thing in the environment of a thesis research document; it is so difficult as to approach impossibility. This begs the question, ‘what is a seductive practice of architecture to begin with?’ which is a difficult question to answer in kind. Seductive practice must embrace the femininity possible in the architectural media observed and analyzed previously: the claim, the drawing, and the artifacts of the seductive architect would strive to be as passive as possible and make no claims to agency or affect-to embrace the artifice of themselves. Architectural artifacts of a seductive nature would present themselves as completely aesthetic objects, whether conventionally beautiful or not, without any consequences beyond themselves whatever. The concept of ‘play’ governing the practice of architecture, then, might make sense: play, as it is understood in Western society, is juxtaposed to ‘work’ as something that has no inherent purpose or desired goal; something that is done for no ‘reason.’ Aesthetic play is utterly feminine in architecture and thus the locus of seduction’s possibility.

To explain this assumption here is a thought experiment, similar to those conducted by Baudrillard, applied to architecture. Conceive of an architectural simulacrum of maximum possible agency and use-value to its consumers: architectural drawings are created to levels of maximum verisimilitude giving clients an exacting understanding of what their building will look like and what it will do. In addition, perfectly accurate data accompanies architectural images describing the social consequences of an artifact’s creation and construction. Without exception every outcome is understood and predicted beforehand, then maximized to improve agency of users. Even ‘aesthetic’ and ‘environmental’ factors are predicted through drawings and models to insure that no decision is made that does not maximize the effectiveness of the architects’ work. The clients and their respective narratives no longer have to worry about the distance between the architect and their concerns, as the architect perfectly embodies the client, and the architect’s drawings perfectly embody the building which will ‘solve’ the narrative needs of the client. The map of the architect perfectly covers the territory of both client and reality.

Given this system of perfected architecture exists and is carried to completion, what is left out? To answer this question, extend the metaphor between architecture and gender studies one step further. In his work Seduction Baudrillard describes the crisis of the female orgasm and its purpose
‘resolution’ in both the women’s movement and the triumph of psychiatry. Women were liberated by the acknowledgement of their sexual fulfillment needs and the refocusing of societal attention on the sexual being of womanhood, at least the women’s liberation movement might contend. Baudrillard, however, has a differing viewpoint on the subject: does the ‘solution’ of this ‘problem’ truly empower women in the end? Is the possibility that the masculine society that oppressed women in the first place has taken it upon itself to solve the problem of this oppression, especially through an anatomical and ‘productive’ sexual method, actually a good thing for the woman? He posits that in the scenario previous to women’s ‘liberation’ in the acknowledgement of the orgasm this ‘problem’ may have never existed in the first place; the problem of the woman’s sexual ‘uselessness,’ and ensuing solution was imposed upon the woman by men.29 The addition of a theory of agency upon something that is originally without agency, especially in the name of liberation, Baudrillard might argue, is always a further act of the removal of agency of the oppressed party. In fact the sexual uselessness and un-productivity of the woman may have been the source of her seductive strength. The masculine society is forced into anxiety by its inability to convert feminine sexuality into something productive, leaving this very lack of supposed agency on the part of women the greatest advantage they have over men.

Applying this to architecture it can be argued that the maximum agency of the architect may constitute the minimum of agency on the part of narratives exterior to architecture. The architect must entertain the possibility that his or her expression of a connotation or consequence of an architectural artifact, rather than calling that consequence into existence, may serve as the exposure of that narrative to the mutability of the aesthetic sign and the use as a production-capacity driver. In this case the architect, like the masculine structure of sexuality, may be forcing a narrative into a productive expression which neutralizes its agency and vitality. Especially given the architect’s and the architectural image’s claims to objectivity this process may go completely unnoticed and in fact be welcomed. It is, after all, the consequence of the architect ‘looking out’ for the narratives in his or her charge, correct?

But then, is there a possibility that as the architect becomes more and more active, that the narratives in his or her care may slowly, inexorably, still into nothingness?

In the reverse of this, what if the woman, in Baudrillard’s depiction of feminism, is not the reality outside of the architect, but the architect itself? Drawings of increasing indicative quality convince the architect and others that he or she is agent and capable of influencing narratives, but, as argued before, much of this agency is merely an aesthetic sign therefore. What then of the possibility of a totally non-agent architect, or of an architectural image which strives for non-indicativity, arguing its own status as a visual aesthetic object?

To be abundantly clear, the argument is not that the architect should ignore the so-called ‘practical’ concerns of the profession and act irresponsibly. Far from it, the architect should consider the possibility that the emphasis of those concerns, especially in the media of images and publication go furthest to both undermining the greatest strength of the discipline and run great risk of assuring the hope of agency on the part of the architect never comes to fruition.

These exercises and everything that comes of them, therefore, are merely play; a type of aesthetic meditation on phenomena and possibilities is all they sought, nothing more.

The ending project is not a solution; these are nothing but drawings and artifacts.

The reader knows better than this, of course. Something more convincing than a mere statement is needed.

29Baudrillard, Jean. Seduction. Pages 1-10
With the same spasming of existence the doorknob turned under my palm. I stepped over the threshold into the lobby of my elementary school and took a seat in the brown upholstered chairs. The owner had expected me and arrived in this foyer (whatever her version of it might be) to answer my questions. She sat across from me, folded her slim wrists, and we began to talk
the soda company is less successful as it is unable to find an appropriate market for its brand, the cellphone brand launch is extremely successful, in part due to its hip buzz phrase of being ‘very Bombay.’ The Indian markets targeted by these advertising efforts are essentially having their own culture sold back to them, and to greater or lesser degrees the effort is paying off for the corporations behind the products. These corporations, it should be noted, are multinational and largely based in the Western Hemisphere, not India.

So what does that make of these cultural connotations that were supposed to be Indian? If Thums Up, an ‘Indian’ cola brand, is made and bottled by Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia with an altered recipe specifically engineered for the Indian market, where does the globalization system start and the local identity end? And what exactly is the substance of that local identity? Is it the cumin in the Thums Up? Is it the young Indian individuals in the Kama Sutra ads? Is it the silicone backing on the phone that helps it survive the streets of Mumbai?

Mazzarella’s account reveals the transitory quality of the sign, the endurance of which is the basis of the commodity culture system. In effect, a culture’s own identity, ‘authentic’ or not, can be marketed back to them for the benefit of whoever can most effectively define the cultural aesthetic.

The Baining

In 1997 Jane Fajans, an anthropologist, published a text titled They Make Themselves: Work and Play among the Baining of Papua New Guinea. Her writing describes the Baining, a group of natives in Papua New Guinea who have continuously thwarted anthropological efforts to document their existence. Reports previous to Fajans’s describe the Baining cultural life as boring to the point that it is almost non-existent: the Baining have no visible traditions, no substantive social structure, no annual or repeating holidays, and no elevated arts to
The Image: A part of a Kama Sutra condom ad

The Image: A photograph of a Baining tribesman during one of the dances
cultural infrastructure that would help keep the Baining together. Obviously, though, something about this is effective. Something about the way Baining society is structured is able to give it unusual persistence and endurance.

What the Baining possess is a society formed without any self-connotation: the only thing that makes the Baining the Baining is the transfer of food. In fact this idea is vehemently reinforced through the adoption mechanism: blood children are considered less important because they are related only through genetic ties, while adopted children have been taken on through exchange of societal value. This is the significance of Fajans' title— the Baining exist only inasmuch as they make themselves. There are no associations beyond this, no greater cultural infrastructures, no theology, nothing whatsoever. The Baining have achieved a static, materialist-anarchy society that doesn't appear to go anywhere. It is exceedingly boring in concept, yes. But, at least apparently and in terms of longevity and endurance, it is effective.

Public Man and Playacting

Richard Sennett's work The Fall of Public Man argues a socio-cultural condition he considers unique to the late 20th and 21st Centuries in the Western world. Sennett argues that, due to the prevalence of vernacular psychoanalysis and an increasingly self-centered worldview of the Western population, society is becoming increasingly incapable of genuine social interaction, as social interactions are gauged only in terms of an expression of the individual sexuality and personality. He bases his argument on a comparative study of psychoanalysis between the 19th and the 20th Centuries, noting the difference in conception of the self and the effect this conception may have on the conception of social interaction. In Sennett's case, the use of the term 'self-centered,' or more appropriately 'self-centric,' is not necessarily pejorative, but...
fragile self, he argues, destroys the social

fers to a condition in which psychological
conditions of others are judged against
the psychological condition of the self.
Sennett argues that this conception process
becomes the norm due to the expansion of
psychoanalysis and the erosion of social
norms of ‘playacting’ and social distance.
In effect, Sennett argues that contemporary
persons are able to interact with each other
only inasmuch as they perceive themselves
in other people. They understand other
personalities only in terms of their own.

He argues that this condition precludes
any possibility of public life due to the lack
of separation between the private personality
and the public social personality, a separation
he characterizes as normal during the 19th
Century. Playacting exercises of formal
social interaction during the Victorian
age provided the possibility that public
interaction could be perceived, not as an
expression of the individual self, but as a
distant and truly multiplicitous exercise
external to the self. Sennett contends that,

for all the social rigidity of the Victorian era
and the accompanying sexual neurosis, the
separation between social self and private
self provided a milieu for an aspect of
the personality which did not express the
personal. This condition relieves the anxiety
felt by the individual that their actions will
be taken as an expression of their personality,
leading to exposure in the public eye and
causing erosion of the self.

On the other hand, vernacular
psychoanalysis’s tendency to portray all
personal actions as an expression of either
a past or present individuality, he contends,
has led to a society of persons completely
incapable of playacting, equating their public
actions with personality and thus unable to
understand what ‘true’ social interaction
looks like. Sennett describes contemporary
society as a number of individuals attempting
to absorb each other out of anxiety, rather
than the collective social projection of
individuals attempting to work together.

In short, the anxiety and paranoia of the
Referenced Texts


She had lost weight since the funeral, which I had attended out of a sense of duty to my children. I asked after her health, her happiness; we traded news and grim conversation. From a shelf near the window (now my father’s office lit in yellow incandescent, now an office park suite) she pulled the box of my brother’s belongings that awaited me. The influence of the house released this particular thing: it had once held my brother’s baseball shoes, and I recognized it in this state without variation. His wife gurned an obliging smile and I prepared to leave.
Dan: Good Morning
Kory: Good Morning
Dan: We are two thesis students who have come to discuss a method of working...
Kory: We are two thesis students who have come to discuss living in a state of inquiry...
Dan: We are two human beings who have come to discuss living in a state of inquiry...
Kory: We are two human beings who are learning the art of architectural experimentation...
Dan: I am a human being who are learning the art of architectural experimentation...
Kory: I am a human being who is learning the art of patient meditation...
Dan: I am a human being making pretty things on a fairly consistent basis...
Kory: I am a human being making things using tools to which I have also made...
Dan: I am an inconstant student making things using tools which I have also made...
Kory: I am an inconstant mind making things...
Dan: I have an inconstant mind making me do things...
Kory: I have a mind which participates in the thinking-doing continuum...
Dan: I have a mind obsessed with beautiful stuffiness and not-stuffiness....
Kory: Beautiful stuffiness and not-stuffiness has been made as a result of my minds obsession...
Dan: I have realized I'm always seeking the same thing as a result of my mind's obsession...
Kory: As a result of my mind's obsession I have begun to see the reality of time in my work...
Dan: As a result of my mind's obsession I have begun to see there is no reality in my work...
Kory: As a result of my mind's obsession I have learned that reality is the work...
Dan: My obsessions have learned that reality is the work...
Kory: Reality is the work because the work is an embodiment of its process of coming into being...
Dan: Realities do and don't exist because the work is an embodiment of its process coming into being...
Kory: The work is an embodiment of my learning and of the knowledge gained through its process of being made...
Dan: The work is a collection of beautiful things, nothing else...
Kory: The embodiment of knowledge does not mean that the work means anything...
Dan: The embodiment of knowledge sometimes is sending a hole in anything nearby...
Kory: Knowledge sometimes is non-knowledge...
Dan: That lack of reasoning behind the pretty thing is non-knowledge...
Kory: Behind the pretty thing is always non-knowledge...
Dan: Behind the pretty thing is the good thing...
Kory: The good thing is not the object, the process or the letter grade used to designate success...
Dan: The good thing and the pretty thing are each other at cross corners, like boxers...
Kory: Like boxers, we dance and perform but perhaps not for your amusement...
Dan: We perform, and it is amusing...
Kory: We perform to illustrate a point...
Dan: We perform and you enjoy it...
Kory: We perform and we enjoy it because the performance is the point...
Dan: There is no point because the performance is the point...
Kory: There is no point because the performance is the work, just as a pretty thing is the work...
Dan: There is no point, just as a pretty thing is the work...
Kory: There is no point, it's all just a process of restating a thought over and over again searching for a way of working...
A and B: Good afternoon, and thank you for coming. My name is Daniel Elkin, and if you follow me we will begin the presentation of my work.

At this point, Dan A and Dan B lead their respective groups away from their starting points. Dan A is leading the 'Intelligent group,' Dan B (Me) is leading the 'Innocent group.' The Innocent group will move through the first floor. The Intelligent Group, will move through the second. Both groups will understand the project they are seeing to be 'The Project.' Both Dans speak the following before moving into their respective control rooms.

A and B: The work I have been conducting is an investigation into the connotation of architectural images and artifacts. I make the contention with my research that the aesthetic works of the architect are connected to cultural narratives and agency structures through connotation through theory, and that this connection creates the possibility that aesthetic architectural products may be taken as equivalent to those agency structures, transforming these structures into aesthetic tactics without consequence. The example I always use to explain this idea is the 'Che Guevara shirt' that you can buy either in stores or online: a person buys the aesthetic image of Che Guevara in order to express his or her socialist leanings and sentiments. Wearing the shirt, they believe these values are expressed. However, what this person forgets is that he or she has taken part in a capitalist transaction in order to express these socialist values. Thus the aesthetic is totally detached from any consequence. If you will please follow me into the control room.

Once this is done, the two Dans move group A and group B into the respective control rooms. At the perimeter of each control room is a wall blocking the Exploration Space which displays the thirteen BBB photographs of the Barcelona Pavilion. The Dans will stop before these and discuss with the group.

A and B: My design work in particular has sought methods to disrupt what I call the 'indicative quality' of architectural images. That is, the possibility that an architectural image is not merely an aesthetic thing, but a nascent building with consequences. It is this quality, I argue, that allows architectural products to be connected to theories of cultural narrative and agency. The project for this research is based upon the thirteen Berliner Bild-Bericht photographs taken of the Barcelona Pavilion before it was demolished in 1930. These photographs, over the course of the 20th Century, took on their own virtual life independent of the reality of the Barcelona Pavilion, coming to stand for narratives such as the life of Mies van der Rohe, the end of the German Weimar Republic, and particularly the early Modernist narrative within architecture. I have sought with my design work to emphasize this virtual life of architectural images, both in the way I work and in the project I have designed, to seek the detachment of architectural products from any vestigial notions of veracity, reality, or connection to practice. If you will please follow me.

The Dans lead their charges beyond the front walls into the body of the two control rooms. Each control room faces the other through the panes of a glass curtain wall. Upon this wall the first and second floor plans for The Project are pasted on transparent vinyl. For Group A, the first floor plan is on the left, the second on the right, and each plan is 'true.' For Group B, the plans are mirrored. Beneath the feet of both groups is a carpet of images describing The Project: plans, sections, perspectives, elevations, images of the BBB photographs, all the information necessary to reconstruct the work.

To the left of the first floor plan, for Group A, is a white panel onto which a film is projected. The film displays linear perspectives of the journey they will take: from the bottom floor entrance of The Project up to the top and back. Projected to the right of the second floor plan for Group A is a walkthrough of a digital model of the Barcelona Pavilion, on loop. The two are timed to coincide.

To the left of the second floor plan, for Group B, is a white panel onto which a film is projected. The film displays linear perspectives of the journey they will take: from the bottom floor entrance of The Project into the lower-level projection rooms and viewing areas. Projected to the right of the first floor plan for Group B is a composite film taken from the replica of the Barcelona Pavilion in Spain, on loop. The two are timed to coincide.

Dan A and Dan B distribute laser pens to their groups and prepare to begin the tour.

A and B: If you will use your pointers to follow mine...

A: We will now tour The Project. Moving around the exterior of the building the thirteen Berliner Bild-Bericht photographs are displayed in low relief on the building's facade. (He guides his laser pointer in a slow, counter-clockwise circle around the plan, stopping briefly where the images will be displayed). Moving into the foyer we come into a small indoor-outdoor space on and through the doors to the West.

B (Simultaneously): We will now tour The Project. Moving around the exterior of the building the thirteen...
Berliner Bild-Bericht photographes are displayed in low relief on the building's facade. (He guides his laser pointer in a slow, counter-clockwise circle around the plan, stopping briefly where the images will be displayed.) Moving into the foyer we come into a small indoor-outdoor space and on through the doors to the North.

The two Dane conduct the laser pointers of their respective groups on the tour they describe, taking care to keep them together. The laser points of each group interact with those of the others.

A: Moving into the first gallery we encounter a narrow, tall space that is the entryway visible to your left. From here we can see outside and into the interior of the project.

B: Moving into the first theater we arrive in a low, darkened room with benches, visible to your left. A film is projected on the North wall. This film displays tours through the Barcelona Pavilion in Barcelona Spain. The tour is constantly changing and depicts a number of different viewpoints.

A: From the first gallery we head up the ramps on the South side and head back outside into the first court. We see stairs to the top floor, as well as a theater down below, but we can't access the theater, and won't use the stairs to reach the top floor. In the facade, one of the photographs is visible.

As these descriptions continue, the films change to show the conditions the Dans talk about.

A: We move up the ramps on the Northern side, coming into the upper foyer and the first control room. If you would, follow my pointer to the second floor plan, please. In this room is a display, upon which are computer control terminals. On the Northern Wall is a computer screen, displaying film editing software. Together, we approach the computer terminals and use them to assemble a film about the Barcelona Pavilion from video clips of the replica Pavilion taken from the Internet. Over the course of a limited 10 minutes, we assemble a film about the building collaged from the experience of being there.

B: We move to the second theater, where there are benches in the center, and films projected upon the North and South walls. Each is different, and each changes constantly. Below us a channel of water flows under a galvanized steel grating, creating reflections about the room and allowing us to see in the darkness.

A: We move into the second control room, where we separate into two groups. We approach the dwell, half of us composing a film made of snapshots of models of the Barcelona Pavilion on the Northern wall. On the Southern wall we hack together perspective drawings of the Pavilion taken from architectural schools all over the world.

B: Moving to the third theater we finally see the sun again, and find a bench seat along the Western edge. From here we can see a walkway and stairs above us. Below the stairs a television screen displays one last film. This one shows the life of the genius Mies van der Rohe. From this point you are free to wander about the floor of the building. The guided portion of the tour is now over.

A: In the final control room we overlook our previous paths. One last talk gives us a chance to compose one more film. We put together pictures and film clips of Mies van der Rohe's life, creating a narrative of the man who brought the Barcelona Pavilion into being. From this point you are free to wander about the top floor of the building. The guided portion of the tour is now over.

The Dans will indicate to each other that the tours are completed by moving their laser pointers to a previously-arranged and marked spot. After this point...

A and B: This concludes the presentation. If you will follow me to the discussion area, I will take questions and comments.

The Dans lead the groups to the discussion area where there are chairs, as well as the work done previously to this place. Conversation about the work takes place.
At this point the design work attached to this research made an abrupt turn

At the edge of a limit of research is a limit: a point at which the research becomes irrelevant, or necessitates considerable additions to its original brief to continue into certain areas.

It has become evident over time that the limit of this particular design research is fast approaching. It is a limit unusual for architecture: physical occupation and space are the limits of this vein of design work.

To this point the Images and products associated with the design have worked as an image-based fiction to which there is no physical counterpart. This approach is useful to the argument presented here, and has allowed a peculiar and productive line of inquiry to develop. However, the question of 'what about reality?' still remains, and a progression from the image-based fiction into any such reality is not necessarily logical or productive.

Fortunately, the research and design work presented here was not conducted in a complete vacuum, and I have had at my disposal the entire time a helpful and energetic partner in my friend Kory A. Belghe. This work has been developed, in part, as a manifestation of a conversation between the two of us. We often discussed the related and, often, antipodal approaches that we took.

The question around which the two of us orbit is the following: when does reality start and the architect end? To be more concrete, there is a moment at which the architect ventures out onto a physical location, a site, and the project upon which he or she works ceases to be contained within his or her head alone and begins to have some relationship to the 'real' world.

At least, this is how the process is understood to work.

This threshold between imagery and the real, artifice and original, is, in part, what we attempted to probe. Kory's work, if he will forgive me for representing him, became over time the search for a light touch in this conversation from a real place to an artificial construct. He sought ways in which the reality of the site could influence his work, thus allowing the thing upon which he worked, as the architect, to be closer to the site itself than a distant abstraction thereof. I describe his approach in terms of empathy and responsiveness, a desire to be influenced as much as he prescribes influence.

My approach is different, and somewhat cynical. I view the actions of the architect as totally abstracting and distant from any notion of reality. As such I have attempted to emphasize artifice in my work and expose any notion of reality as complex artifice, rather than something separate.

The collision, the hairy and complex limit, between these two ideas, struck the two of us as interesting and productive.

As such, the design work continuing from this point of the document depicts a markedly different project. On one hand, my work is confronted with the possibility of images of reality that, unlike the Berliner Bilderdigit photographs, bear more warrant of a present and consensual lived experience, something my work has been unable to work with before. Kory, meanwhile, is left with the prospect of reacting to something that is not primordial, that declares itself as artificial even before he acts upon it.

It is our hope that this exercise will be fruitful, and shine light more directly on the questions we are exploring.
HERE IS THE SITE
BEGIN FILMING HERE
Here is the finality
The work is complete, afterall