Intro: Ecologies and Architecture
Article: D. Orr, "Architecture, Ecological Design, and Human Ecology"

Basic synopsis:
Architecture has consequences. We try to foresee these consequences, or to even bring them about. For all of the intended consequences of architecture there is also those consequences that are unintended. These unintended consequences are unforeseen and can often be quite detrimental. One area where we often only see the consequences well after the fact is ecology. In our relentless pursuit of technological progression we have raped our resources and destroyed our ecology, we have started to realize this, yet we continue in our pursuits, hoping that technology will save us from ourselves, likely this course of action will be our downfall. The main issue of the technological course of action is that it separates man from nature, assuming that man can manage or control his/her environment. The article postulates that current design is not able to cope with this schism and is therefore doomed to fail from the beginning, hence why we have the negative effects arising out of our lifestyles. Furthermore, our reliance on technology is leading us toward a loss of what makes us human, our connection to nature.

A change must occur, but what can we do and is there enough time to do it? The answer, according to the article, is an "Ecological Design Revolution". This revolution would seek to bring us back to nature through a deeper more consistent understanding of our connection to nature and our impact on nature. Our self-imposed separation from nature has led to our current predicament, it is time to break free and embrace ecological design. We must live with a smaller ecological footprint, designing and living in a net zero world (or as close as possible). We must learn from nature on how to work with nature, not from repeating past mistakes. Nature has survived without us for millennia, it can teach us many things if we simply stop to look at what is happening and learn to apply it in our lives and designs. This harmonization balances and encompasses more than built form, all inputs and outputs need to be considered without compromising, while simultaneously incorporating fairness and human dignity.

Thoughts:
Similar in premise to systems theory, the article certainly elicits some very important points. Ecological design, would be beneficial, however, as the author does point out, the almighty dollar has precedence in our society, this is something that will be most challenging in the progression toward ecological responsibility. Technology certainly is relied upon to a great extent, is this eroding our humanity? Maybe, or maybe it can be incorporated within a natural world as well, I don't believe it is one or the other. There must be a balance of technology and nature to allow us to work with nature while being efficient.

Space and Power:

Architecture is concerned with space. Until recently, space has existed only inside of buildings, we now conceptualize inside and outside space.
Space is infinite, extending beyond and bounded by invisible structure or geometry. Architecture attempts to fill in and reinforce these lines. This ordering of space helps to reinforce and strengthen the relationship to the space. Space can flow, cause comfort, or uneasiness through its interplay with infinity. Modern architecture, according to the author, lacks a secure connection to the infinity of space, instead focusing on form, function, structure and materials. However, modern architecture has realized the use of light in defining and emphasizing space, this in turn has meant that modern architecture uses large amounts of power.. Psychology and power can shape our space.

Towards a plastic architecture:
Architecture needs to start with a fresh outlook, not drawing on the past. Elements, economy, and function are key components.
architecture is formless yet defined in rectangular surfaces with no individuality. Architecture is open, functional and extends outward from the structure. Asymmetry is preferred over the symmetry and repetition that plagues historical precedents.

Thoughts:
While I may have missed a few pages of the last reading the main ideas were still there, elemental architecture is about functionality and economy. To fulfill these needs, rectangular open plans are employed.
Space offers many opportunities and should be considered carefully in design. Elemental ideas can be incorporated as they lend themselves to a sense of purity within the structure, begin true to the materials and methods. I do not, however, believe that it is the only method of design that can allow space to permeate a structure.

Place and Dwelling

Heidegger - Building Dwelling Thinking
Heidegger's paper delves into what dwelling and building mean. He ties them together in terms of his concept of the 'fourfold' (earth, sky, mortals, divinity). Dwelling is more than a building that we reside in. There is a deeper connection and meaning intrinsic to its essence. Dwelling safeguards mortals, while they help to safeguard and unfold the fourfold. in this process, dwelling sets free the fourfold and allows it to become one within dwelling. This oneness of the fourfold is only possible because of the mortal being.
Buildings exist in the domain of dwelling. They form locales which gather together the fourfold. Locales then, by their nature become things, things in turn can come together to allow a site. Only something that is a locale can provide a site. These sites are buildings existing in a specific place and time and thus able to be abstracted and exist outside of the physical. These locales allow for space. Mortals are able to move

through this space by their essence of thought, they can be in any number of locales simultaneously, therefore, because I know of the locale of the door I can move through the door.

The Phenomenon of Place
Norberg-Schulz takes us through his interpretation of Heidegger and others. Place is a complex entity, comprised of space and character. Space is comprised of the inside and the outside. Space is used to orient man, to delineate through building. However, place requires more than space. Character is needed as well to make a place. Character is the meaning the non-quantitative aspects of a place. We associate the character of a place to its spaces, both inside and outside, allowing us to relate to the peculiarities of the gathering at these specific locations. These spatial and character parts come together to help define the spirit of the place. To dwell we have to come to terms with this spirit of place. Boundaries help to define the structure of space in terms of its three dimensional existence. The character of these places is the atmosphere, the sensory conglomeration that brings a particular place and time together, the part of place that triggers memories and recollection of experiences. Thus bringing together dwelling and place, we find that to dwell means to gather our everyday life and our experience into a physical space that is defined in terms of its character and allows for us to feel peace and protection. Dwelling is therefore the concrete gathering of these things.

Thoughts:
These articles reflect the old adage that home is where the heart is, that is to say that dwelling is more than simple structure or spatial delineation. There is a psychological phenomena that is inextricably linked to our concept of true dwelling. To understand dwelling we must see that there is a larger coming together of environment of outside and inside via openings or gathering.

Narrative, Event and the Production of Space

Situationist Space
The Naked City was envisioned as a reaction to the typical ordered and governed conception of urban space. The plan followed and mapped the derive through the social space of the city as opposed to the capitalist ascribed space that had been seen to usurp and overcome the traditional social space. This space the derive travels trough is a social construct and does not have set values of length and distance. This is seen as a new way of perceiving space from the eyes of the derive, seeing space while being dissociated, similar to the flaneur, but without social class or gender privileges. It attempts to recapture the myth of public space in its historical richness and purity.

The Production of Space
The Bauhaus defined a global conceptualization of space that involved the production of space. They sought to bring together forms and structures to master

global space. They realized an object in space could be moved around and therefore all aspects could be considered simultaneously through temporal sequence. Through this realization a new consciousness of space evolved wherein a space could be explored by reducing an object to its planes. Facades disappeared (except in fascist design) and global space became a void waiting to be filled. The principles and theories of the Bauhaus came to be utilized to produce state architecture. Still the dichotomy of inside and outside space prevails. Also prevalent is the visual dominance of space, it must be visualized to be understood.

Reading architecture ties into language and meaning. Architecture in its structure and forms can be broken down into the texture of the architecture and thus the meaning behind that texture. Reading of architecture can only be done after it is produced, otherwise it cannot be read as it needs to be lived. Form can be used to make architecture more readable to direct the user and provide a narrative. Often the most readable products are the most deceptive. The impression of weightlessness in architecture is much sought after, due to the dominance of the visual and readable. Thinning the structure to blur the line of inside and outside space Abstract space is about geometry, optics, or visualization, and phallic representation. Geometry reduces the 3d space into two dimensional qualities. Visualization reduces the object into an image, reflecting or refuting meaning. Phallic representation is the inserting of male (political, ideological) power, dominance and violence on nature and the people. What space seems to be is not what it necessarily is, "space is illusory, and the secret of the illusion lies in the transparency".

Discipline and the Militarization of Space

Means of Correct Training + Panopticism
Discipline is the key to exercising power over people. It is achieved through observation, normalized judgement, and examination. Observation involves everyone surveilling everyone else, making sure that they follow the rules of conduct. Everything is scrutinized and checked against the norms. Normalization of judgement records these individual differences and catalogs what is normal and therefore conforming and what is abnormal and non-conforming. It allows for a determination of levels and aptitudes. Examination combines observation and normalized judgement to determine where individuals fit int he hierarchy of things. How severe their punishment for non-conforming will be and it tracks and catalogs behaviors to create an individual history specific to each that can be used to keep people in check and force them into compliance. This panoptic system, where we are constantly observed and therefore comply to avoid discipline, guides the capitalist system of production and space. It aims to make us docile and more efficient and useful to the state. In terms of architecture it has become a mechanism with with to see and discipline the people.

Total Accident
It is the Total Accident that drives politics and warfare. They exist because of the accident and are perpetuated by new accidents. the accident starts the process of annihilation.

Endocolonization and the State as Destiny
Virilio takes us into the dark side of the state. Military driven economies. It is not the act of war but in the preparation for war that militaries take over, in doing so they stagnate civilian evolution, leading to a state run by military oversight and constant fear of reciprocity. The constant status of preparation for global war leads to execution of policing civil unrest with military might, as a show of state power. These military states are constantly posturing to outdo each other. If political leaders start to sway from this objective they are removed by military pressure. As the military grows civilian society stagnates. As the military takes over order, the capacity of societies to self regulate is taken over by multi-nationals. We live for the instant as time becomes intensive. Pure war drives itself and makes mankind obsolete as it strives to produce more and more preparations and technologies for war.

Thoughts:
These reading certainly look at the dark side of society. I do agree that disciple pervades our society, yet whether it is good or bad depends on the situation. Having societal norms that are regulated via disciple can help to hedge off anarchy and chaos within the societal system, conversely this discipline system also ensures the self perpetuation of the power structure.
In terms of Total accident and pure war, I think that these concepts can be seen in today's world, although there has been a slight stabilizing shift with the fall of the cold war and the rise of terrorist states and groups (although, it depends on what side you are on as to who exactly is a terrorist). The power of the hegemonic states is weakening, leading to more wars and the stretching of resources (military), perhaps leading to the ultimate annihilation via a different route, but the end remains.

Deleuzian Space

1440: The Smooth and The Striated
Striated space and smooth space are interconnected, they are constantly turning into one another. Striation, on a basic level, incorporates parallels intersecting perpendicularly, one set fixed and the other variable, as the intersections become more regular and tighter, the closer it gets to becoming smooth space, which is seen as homogeneous (even if not, as smooth space has a fundamental heterogeneity). Smooth space is identified with the haptic whereas striated space is identified with the optic. Smooth is the local which frames the global or striated. The two concepts flux between each other and are redefined continually. The passages and combinations of striated and smooth space are the interesting areas. Forces continually striate the space while it develops its own forces to smooth the space. Again there is a constant flux.

Thoughts:
This seems to be quite a complex idea. I can see that one space flows into the other and that that other flows back into the original, it is a circular transition as it were,

directed by external and internal forces and events. Perhaps reading the related reading would help to clarify some of Deleuze's points.

FORM - Reading Responses

Tuesday September 29 - Natural Form

E. Grosz - In-Between: The Natural in Architecture
The in-between is not a space in the common sense. It is an area of negotiation and transformation between identities. This space is the at the fringes of an identity where it becomes undone, but at the same time it creates a condition where an external identity starts to become internalized, or in other words where identities meet and inform one another, an act of becoming as Grosz puts it. This dualism is about renegotiation and redefinition. In architecture this is presented in the form of nature and culture, or rather the natural versus the culturally created (i.e. technology). There is a renegotiation between these forces where architecture attempts to act as facilitator. This renegotiation takes place over time and thus there is a temporal aspect to the in-between that relies on the possibilities of futurity. neither of the identities involved in this dualism are limiting but rather can be generators and dynamic forces acting on each other.

M. Foucault - 28 March 1979 (Fr. the Birth of Bio-Politics
Foucault discusses the economic man in this lecture. He discusses Adam Smith's concept of the blind sovereign who allows the market to be free. Basically he comes to the point that economics cannot be applied to every situation, but in terms of governance can be used as a guide but cannot be used as the rationality for governance.

Thoughts:
While Foucault's ideas of the economic man can be used to explain the markets and the drive to consume, I'm not really sure how to fit it into a discussion of form. Perhaps, it can be related to the theoretical form of things created by man's economic activity. The inter-relationships created by a market economy and neo-liberalism. Grosz's ideas on the other hand bring to mind the way that architectural forms can inform us about how a space is to be negotiated and what feedback we get from the experiences of traversing that space. As we travel through spaces, the material forms can force us into specific negotiations as an intention of the architect. These negotiations create a dialogue between the building (or object) and the user (one occupying). This dialogue serves to redefine what is thought about and experienced while allowing for a renegotiation of the space due to a different understanding gained from the initial negotiation.

Friday October 2 - Le Corbusier and Form

M. Tafuri - Critique of Architectural Ideology

Tafuri's argument basically comes down to the idea that modern architecture fails for the same reasons modern art (and its associated movements) fails, it comes down to the ideology that supports it. the idealogical underpinnings are not enduring enough to sustain themselves. Their emphasis on geometries and purity of space is an antithesis and a contradiction to the dynamism of reality and therefore the modern fails.

Tuesday October 6 - Typology and Morphology

A. Vidler - The Third Typology
Vidler's third typology revolves around the city and its relationship both to the past and its constituent elements. The first two typologies are the primitive hut, or man's development of architecture to protect against nature and its evolution toward the second typology which is characterized by the elements of architecture becoming mass produced, leading to a focus on the method of production. The classification of the form is provided by the city. The third typology lies within the city, The city and the third typology as an extension must be seen as a whole, past-present relationships and evolutions must be considered as they inform the form, meaning there is a temporal aspect to consider. This new typology is critical of the modern movement. It draws from the 18th c city to rebuke the tenant of the modern. There must be a continuity of urban fabric rather than the fragmentation of the modern. The role of social meaning must be de-unitized and the city and typology must be reasserted to bring back the critical role of architecture in an endless cycle of production and consumption.

M. Weinstock - Metabolism and Morphology
Morphology and metabolism are separate. Morphologies, such as those in cities are metaphors, they do not have the same relationship as those found in nature. The processing of materials and energy is what links morphology and metabolism. Metabolism defines the relationship of individuals and populations to their local environment and natural forms. This metabolism relies on energy. Morphology acts as a transport network for the transfer of this energy. Size or scale is an important factor in metabolism. We can look to the natural world and find relationships that explain these relationships between morphology and metabolism, for example, plants with large surface areas can photosynthesize more light and therefore increase their size and metabolism, creating a balance of structure and surface area that finds an equilibrium and optimal balance. This can be seen in buildings with the balance of windows to structure. Geometry is used to create spaces that can flow into one another, thus increasing metabolism within the space. The morphology of these spaces contributes to the success of the space.

M. Foucault - The Discourse on Nature
Language is an important part of our natural history and cannot be separated from it. It contains a system of arrangement of knowledge, ordering this knowledge so as to make it representable via a system of names. This knowledge and language allow for man to perceive and describe spaces. Nature is dynamic, but at the same time

presents us with situations and objects that are similar, thus with the benefit of language, we can classify new things in reference to prior representations and experiences.

Friday October 9 - Freespace and politics

Lebbeus Woods - Anarchitecture: Architecture is a Political Act
Woods' premise of freespace is that it is an undefined space whose function is defined by the user. It cannot be prescribed and is therefore quite difficult to create.

Thoughts:
The idea of creating freespace is a powerful one. Allowing the user to define the space leads to a space that can truly be called the users. However there is quite a bit of difficulty in creating this space. How does one create a space without defining what it is, this is the issue i have with freespace, I am not sure that it can be truly designed, but rather it must likely be appropriated by the user.

Tuesday October 20 - Postmodern Form

R. Venturi - Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture
Complex and contradictory architecture is based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience. It must be complex and contradictory in its inclusion of traditional elements while aiming for vitality and validity. There must be a richness of meaning over the clarity of that meaning, there is a special obligation toward the whole, truth or implications must be in its totality. Rationalism proves inadequate in times of upheaval, equilibrium must be created out of opposites. Forcing simplicity in architecture will lead to oversimplification. This oversimplification cannot be applied to the abstractness of living. Blatant simplicity also leads to boredom in design. Complex programs are necessary to address not only problems that may arise, but to address the inherent ambiguity of visual perception and exploit it. Ambiguity relates to form and content as manifestations of program and structure. incorporating ambiguity in architecture of complexity and contradiction promotes richness of meaning over clarity.

P. Eisenman - Post Functionalism
Modern architecture has an obsession with functionalism. The way forward lies in the past. Form and function can both be preserved while focussing on the humanist tradition, this is because form (type) and function are both invested with humanist ideals of man's relationship to his object world. Industrialization has disrupted this balance. Neo-Functionalism idealized technology. it continued the tradition of creating architecture that constituted form-giving, thus making it an extension, albeit a late one, of humanism. Modernism dichotomy of form and function is a cultural phenomenon, it is simply indicative of a changed attitude toward the artifacts of the physical world. The complex contradictions inherent in functionalism make a form of neo-functionalism necessary to any new theoretical dialectic. This new theoretical base changes the humanist balance of form and function to a dialectical relationship

within the evolution of form itself. This dialectic described as the potential co-existence within any form of 2 tendencies: to presume form to be a recognizable transformation from some pre-existent geometric or platonic solid and to see form as something simplified from some pre-existent set of non-specific spatial entities. Together these tendencies constitute the essences of the new modern dialectic -they suggest that the theoretical assumptions of functionalism are in fact cultural rather than universal and therefore Post-functionalism is a term of absence.

Friday October 23 - Topologies, Fold, De-from, Surface

P. Eisenman - The End of The Classical: The End of the Beginning, The End of the End
In the mid 15th century the idea of temporal beginning was introduced, referencing the past and a beginning. The Modern movement sought to substitute a universal idea of relevance over a universal idea of history to make its appeal. Modernism, far from breaking free of history actually fell into an illusion, they were traped in their own eternal continuum. With the fall of modernism and our progression forward we have recognized that there is an end to the ability of architecture (or neo movements) to express itself as timeless. All movements, including the classical and modern, are part of a single historical continuum, and as such it is unimportant whether the origins of an architecture are natural, divine or functional. Fiction becomes simulation when it fails to realize it is fiction. The simulation of representation in architecture has led to an excessive concentration of inventive energies in the representational object. The simulation of reason in architecture has been based on a classical value given to the idea of truth. Simulation of modern movement's history was that any present day architecture can simultaneously be about presentness and universality. Simulation attempts to obliterate the difference between real and imaginary, dissimulation leaves untouched the difference between reality and illusion. A new architecture proposes a condition of reading architecture as a text.

I. Sola-Morales - Weak Architecture
Architecture finds clarity in the comparison of two opposing forces. Relationships between forces are constantly in flux and cannot be defined in a specific order. Architecture gains its strength through discreet flexibility, contrast, diversity and tension. Cohesive flexibility allows the context to weave and find connection points which momentarily unify the world around us. Weak architecture uses a non-dominant approach, which is its strength.

Deleuze and Guattari - Introduction: Rhizome
The Rhizome is an attempt to organize neither an object nor a subject. The Rhizome is an assembly of speed, acceleration, and rupture. The Rhizome brings logic to the in-between as it acts as a method of constructing the elements that comprise the middle. It brings a logic and connectivity between the strata via organization.

Body: The Modern vs the Post Modern Body

October 26, 2009

Vidler The Building in Pain: The body and Architecture in Post-Modern Culture; Martinetti: The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism (1908)

Vidler: The long history of humanism in architecture is changing, no longer based on the human ideal or vitruvian proportions, the post-modern seeks to dismember the body and seek a new form that rather than being limited by the body, embraces "all of human existence." This transformation, as Vidler puts it, has occurred in three stages, which he attributes to historical periods for the sake of chronological clarity: the building as body, the building as representing a bodily state or state of mind based on sensation, and finally the environment as whole endowed with bodily (organic) characteristics. The building as body ties into the Vitruvian concepts of ideal proportion and man as the ideal basis for that proportion. This ideal dominated architecture well into the 19th century. this concept began to be challenged by the Baroque and the concept of the sublime. Baroque sought to redefine the body through seeking a different clarity. The sublime especially sought to change things by evoking sensation, particularly for architecture, sensations of awe and wonder, bordering on our subconscious fears and desires. This evolved into the post-modern and modern concepts of the building as organism. The building was anthropomorphized. A new definition of body came to exist, one that was outside of simple proportions and or feeling. This new body was a part of its environment and reacted to and from outside and inside stimuli. The building began to BE, the building took this being and placed it onto those occupying it. Buildings could turn the user's own body inside out. the body of the post-modern building placed not only physical but psychical effects and affects on the user. There is also an uncannyness about the post-modern building body, as Vidler puts it in Freudian terms. There is a return of the body and ideas which were repressed, animism, magic, totemism and the like recur putting material reality into question. Secondly, there is a return of the infantile complexes which had been repressed, taking us back to a blurring of psychical reality. Vidler ends his discussion with a look at where the body is in relation to the environment. Taking from Sartre we learn that the body exists because of the environment in which it inhabits, therefore it is a part of it and the individuality brings it back to those instruments that define and create the environment. The body exists because there is a world. Taking these thoughts we are placed into the final issue of the post-modern building-body relationship: suppressed terror. The building embodies the body and as such the bodies desires, fears and potentials. The building is an extension of the individuals occupying it, it is to serve them. Buildings can use their bodily presence to become what we want them to, places of comfort, discomfort, life or death, however, while buildings can hint at these things, only we can make a building become an instrument.

Martinetti: Martinetti outlines the futurist manifesto, primarily concerned with speed, struggle and danger that the future is bringing during this time (1908). He celebrates the products of industrialization and technological progression as triumphs and things of beauty. The old establishments are dead, the future awaits. Museums, libraries and academies are graveyards of vain efforts. Futurism is a defiance of their

past clinging ideals. For Martinetti, the future (technological) is what we should cling to, discarding the past.

Thoughts: Vidler's thoughts are interesting and well laid out. I think that what he says does make sense but I think that there is a meshing of all of the three stages of body in (most) buildings. Buildings can certainly elicit feeling and emotion, or they can disrupt the spaces of occupation, throwing a body out of place. I think his exploration of the suppressed meaning behind a building's body relationship is an interesting angle and could use further delving into.
Martinetti writes very poetically, bringing his enthusiasm of futurism's prospects to life through his words. However, he seems to miss the negative aspects of technological drive, perhaps this can be forgiven him due to the time period (hindsight is our advantage here).

I think that the drive and excitement for the potential of futurism and the modern led to a period of throwing away (or separation of) the past in art and architecture. This meant the body shed it's human proportions and restrictions while new technology spurred new forms. Philosophical and psychological theories of the day were incorporated into new ways of comprehending building and architecture's role in interpreting the world. While this period experienced some measure of accomplishment, it is of note that post-modernism focused on incorporating the gains of modernism with the lessons of the past. While some post-modern ideals appear to reject modernism, I do not think that is the case, they have simply removed themselves from the modernist trajectory and reincorporated what was felt to be missing, the human side of things, or the uncanny as Freud put it and Vidler re-emphasized.

Freud Surrealism and the Mind

October 30, 2009

A.E. Balakian – Breton and the Surrealist Mind – The influences of Freud and Hegel
The article discusses Freud and Hegel's contributions to the rise of surrealism out of Dada and what they contributed to them.
Freud's work in psychoanalysis was a key contributor to surrealist thought. Andre Breton was an avid fan of Freud and sought to marry Freudian philosophies with surrealism. Breton wanted to combine the experiences of the dream state and reality to create a surreal existence, or as he called it an absolute reality. The various dream states were seen to be able to become complimentary to the waking life of reality transforming how we experience reality. Aside from dream analysis and incorporation into reality, the surrealists were also interested in automatic writing, letting the subconscious lead writing (or drawing), enabling it to marry the subconscious and the waking, leading to an art or writing that was pleasing to the senses. the third major influence of Freudism was the intentional simulation of states of mental abnormality. They used this simulation to delve into the states of man's mind and experience. Through these experiments they sought to bring in the full range of human mental experience into their work. Unlike Freud, the surrealists sought not to interpret the

mind but to colonize it.

Hegel's contribution was most felt as the surrealists sought to combine their need for long range knowledge and the short range goal of expression. The surrealists used Hegel's thoughts to help them define the relationship between object and subject. In other words they were seeking a unity between their contradictions.

Both Hegel and Freud served as guiding forces to the Surrealists, providing a starting point for them to derive their ideas as they sought to overcome and redefine the realities of life.

A. Breton – What is Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute

Breton goes about defining what surrealism is and what it is trying to accomplish. The basic definition he provides for surrealism is: "pure psychic automatism", or as he expounds on it, thought in the absence of conscious controls. Breton describes how autonomous writing is done. He sees surrealism as a way to escape the restrictions of rational thought that are holding down the experience of reality and merge dream and reality into absolute reality.

Thoughts:

Surrealism is an interesting concept. While it may be an interesting endeavor to try to delve into the subconscious and combine it with reality, I think that trying to remove the limits of rational thought that the Surrealists sought to remove may lead to interesting discoveries, but as a way of life and experience it may not work in a world that runs on rationality as it would be hard to integrate the two realities. This is not to say that surrealist methods can not be utilized in architecture or design, but I do not think that they should be the sole reliant factor, as rationality is needed in all projects.

The Phenomenological Body

November 2, 2009

The Phenomenological Body

Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology of Perception

One recognizes ones body as being of space rather than existing within space. our bodies are extensions of ourselves, we 'see' them as if from a third person view. We can grasp an object for example by looking at the object and just thinking of grasping, our bodies, as extensions, move to accommodate this desire. Alternatively, we can see that the body is not bound by its physicality by recalling phantom limbs and the feeling of extending oneself throughout a space. These ideas all revolve around how we perceive ourselves and our bodies. We use the sensory feedback from our bodies to inform us about our environment. This information is compared to experiences and then assigned meaning. This process allows us to perceive and conceptualize ourselves within space.

Peter Eisenman: Visions UnFolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media

Architecture has remained rooted in the mechanical. It has generally resisted a change in its relation to the 'four walls' and the traditional object/subject, inside/

outside relationships, utilizing vision as the dominant discourse. These relationships are mechanical and serve to ground reality. Eisenman questions if this need be. While cubism flirted with changing these perceptions, there has been little impact, even modernism didn't change this relationship. Eisenman believes that we need to change the relationship so that architecture looks back and distorts the meaning of reality. It should seek to be but not be understood, it should be question the problem of vision. Perhaps one method of doing this is by using folded space – a concept of Deleuze that creates a new relationship between vertical and horizontal by denying framing in favour of temporal modulation. Folding is affective space, rather than effective space and unfolds in space along with its function and meaning, dislocating vision in the process.

Eisenman's Alteka Tower is one example that he states falls into this type of space (or attempts to). By dislocating vision, the architecture can look back, allowing the possibility of the gaze – the light of otherness that is obscured by vision.

Thoughts:
Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on perception and the body make sense. They explain many phenomena that are experienced outside physicality.
Eisenman presents an interesting argument. That of media failing to change architecture. His paper was published in 1996 and I think that architecture has started to change direction with new forms of computer generated architecture (algorithmic and parametric design) and augmented reality. Architecture can now exist outside the real of reality and in the hyper-real. I think that Eisenman, if he were to re-examine what is occurring, would have to agree that a shift is beginning. His thoughts on folded space are interesting but I am not sure if pushing folded space far into architecture will remove the humanity engrained in it or if it will enhance it, perhaps it would lead to a space that is too ambiguous or one that is so compounded with meaning and unmeaning that it alienates the user.

Marx, Feminism and the Political Body

November 6, 2009

Diana I. Agrest – Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex
Exclusion and inclusion are parts of the same system, as systems are defined by these two characteristics. In architecture the woman is repressed (or excluded). As she tries to resurface, she is labeled abnormal and placed back into repression. Renaissance books on architecture further confirm this idea. Renaissance texts place man (a 'well proportioned man') at the center, a figure from which proportions are derived and architecture is continually related to. If the building is metaphorically a man, and therefore alive, it needs to be bron and created. In this action the architect becomes feminized as the 'mother' of the building, the client therefore could be seen by extension as the father. By becoming the mother, the architect (a man) usurps the femininity of the woman and represses her further. The qualities of motherhood and femininity are consistently usurped and ascribed to the male body. the system of architecture places women to the outside. Being on the outside of the system women

are given the power to write to use public space as a forum of issues and try to place themselves into the architectural homogeneity to make it heterogeneous.

Donna Haraway – When Man is on the Menu
This article discusses how technological innovations have become cultural actors, creating new realities. The question is asked that as technological innovation continues and we realize that man is comprised of a deeper technological being, then what is to stop us from changing the inherent nature of man.

Thoughts:
While I do agree that woman has been traditional removed from architecture I also think that this traditional view is changing. The fact remains though that male dominance is very prevalent in architecture and architectural theory.

Performance and Body-Oriented Concepts

November 9, 2009

K. Hayles – Liberal Subjectivity Imperiled: Norbert Wiener and Cybernetic Anxiety
Cybernetics changes how the body's boundaries are defined. Instead of merely being modifications to compensate for deficiencies such as hearing aids or canes, cybernetics become extensions which can enhance our limits and functioning. As we integrate man and machine questions arise leading one to wonder how far do we go and as we dissolve the boundary where does anxiety end and ecstasy begin? Cybernetics cannot be applied to everything. It was intended to increase our awareness and perception, but being so invested in our world may not make us good probes., therefore cybernetics may not be suitable for the human sciences. As Weiner observed it would leave us with exaggerated expextations and that as we lose the control of desires, we lose the ability to derive pleasure from those desires. Cybernetics was meant to enhance rather than subtract from human freedom, but in the end lost momentum as a universal science.

Thoughts:
Cybernetics was an interesting idea. The idea that we could extend our bodies into the world augmented by machines. While there is some validity into the discussion, I think that I would have to agree that these extensions eventually come to a point where they diminish our humanity and the balance is tipped, not necessarily for good either.

The Socius and the Body

November 17, 2009

E. Thacker – Biological Sovereignty

Modern threats to nations (ie. bio-terrorism, etc.) have generated a condition in which the state uses a militarized imperative to push and develop research into preparing AND responding to biological and public health emergencies. This push has also helped to develop treatments for naturally occurring pathogens as well. Through these advances, governments have come to see biological as more than biological, meaning that biological impacts are not simply organisms, there may be other factors involved, such as economics. To push this militarized research, the state employs a state of exception, meaning that it operates in the gray area that exists with one foot within the law and one foot outside the law, all in the best in the interests of the state (on behalf of the population, see below). This leads to a shift in the traditional role of the state acting for defense and war, to a preoccupation with security. This is further complicated by not looking at the security of the state but rather the security of the population. But how do you define the population or the life within? The population is separated into those who are threatened and those who threaten. The state wants to provide security for those who are threatened against those who threaten. The sovereign begins to operate at the point where the nature of the individuals interferes with the articulation of nature itself. This further complicates issues because one now has to define the difference between life and life itself. Life being the population, and life itself as nature. All this comes back to defining the thing that threatens and the thing that is threatened. This life is in perpetual conflict. Life creates its own threats, therefore it is its own enemy and creates its own security issues, but these issues need to be problematized due their multiplicities and complexities within the interconnected relationships of life and life itself; which is the role of the biological sovereign.

Thoughts,
Although I quickly summarized this article, (as I felt it was quite a circular argument), it was an interesting take on how governments, or sovereigns, have shifted priorities and have now come to focus on the body and biology and its security rather than defense and war. I think that it poses some interesting and relevant ideas about the relationships and the need to define one or the other, however I do not think it is all one or the other. I believe that there exists a mixture of threat and the threatened. Furthermore, the way the sovereign defines and takes security actions against those who it deems threats (as it must delineate in order to justify and validate its existence as protector of the biological populace) leads to the prejudices and inequities that further create threats, thus creating a vicious cycle that is self perpetuating (much like discussed in the article).

Technique

Mechanization, Instrumentality and Science

Thomas Khun: The Nature and Necessity of Scientific Revolutions

Khun discusses the role of paradigm shift in science. Revolutions, or paradigm shifts, occur as new methods and approaches to thinking are accepted and incorporated. Paradigms come out of research and the problems that are being examined. Each

paradigm has its own methods, and approaches, this often leads to debate between those who follow differing paradigms. Each viewpoint will solve a different set of problems and have differing approaches. As the scientists debate what the core issue is and compare paradigms they can find new methods and approaches that will lead to a new paradigm.

Alberto Perez-Gomez: Introduction to Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science

Man is always seeking to put the world in order. We form our perceptions about the world through our body's engagement with the world. Architectural design seeks to put the world around us into an order that is resonant with the body. We have tried to reason through the world using a series of models and systems, each with their own pros and cons, but we are finding that no system is perfect and change needs to occur. The answer, according to Perez-Gomez, is to be found in contemporary phenomenology, which would allow us to rediscover primary perception and overcome the pitfalls brought into our current models and philosophies. Phenomenology allows us to understand that theory alone cannot solve the fundamental problems of architecture and that contemporary architecture strives to find a new metaphysical justification through perception.

Hyperphysical, Techtonics and Engineering

Cecil Balmond: New Structure and the Informal

The real is a complex notion, rich in entanglements. How can we look at structure as something other than our generalized definition? Using interpretation we can move forward and find the answers. the informal relies on overlap of elements to bring forward a series of shifting certainties. There are no distinct rules to how to progress from the initial conditions using the informal. The informal acts as an agent of release from the traditional notions of Cartesian grid topography.

New structure utilizes overlap and ambiguity deriving from it as a basis for design. Animating geomerty it becomes rythm and sequence. It uses a holistic approach that uses the inner logic as the basis for informing the whole.

New sciences are being incorporated into architecture. These revolve around living systems. while they cannot be translated one to one, the methods can be used and form a paradigm of building up the internal processes. A deeper resonance emerges as there is more than superficial visual cues for the body to experience.

These methods and strategies lead to rhythms that have hidden connections that are implied but not seen. This forces interpretation by its nature of ambiguity. There is a point where all these things coalesce into a coherence and the object becomes defined. The method is informal, the framework is new structure, the inspiration new science.

Lars Spuybroek: The Structure of Vagueness

Otto experimented with material form finding, using low-tech methods to create geometric shapes that became rigid, yet soft (as it is not frozen). These experiments yielded a system that restructuralized as it formed. He felt geometry should inform materiality. This shows the point Spuybroek is trying to make that we should investigate ways to change the ordinary grid system and variate it, using the flexibility of vagueness

Kenneth Frampton: Rappel a l'ordre, the case for the Tectonic

The tectonic condition is of great importance. How materials come together and support each-other is essential to great architecture, therefore we need to consider these points carefully.

Technology and Authenticity

W. Benjamin: Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproduction

Reproduction has been around for a long time, but reproduced art is never the same as the original, as reproductions lose the original intent and meaning the author had placed into the image. Digital techniques (and their associated technologies) change this, but also open the door to examine what authenticity really is. Is the hand of man being removed and therefore the essence of humanity that is placed into a piece by the hand? Art was originally used for ritual and had deep meaning, as we have become a society of mass reproduction and image consumption has art lost this connection? Have we reached a place where art just exists, as image or as simple 'art'? The traditional roles have been shed and their new ones need to be examined.As we progress in technology we find new ways of expression, photography, film, CGI, etc. each one taking a new dimension of expression. Has this evolution of technology changed the actor, subject and experience? I would have to say yes. But is quality lost as well? I think that Benjamin may be wrong in his leanings toward a loss in quality, I think that while there may be some, we have also found new methods that allow for a new mastery of the medium. There will always be examples of average work, but we will also be able to spot the truly great as well. We see this in architecture as well as the proliferation of pedestrian architecture in North America has exploded. Truly great architects still find a way to stand out and differentiate themselves, I think that is a mark of great skill, regardless of medium, the difference is that the skilled master knows how to manipulate his medium to maximize the vision.

Communication and Information Technologies

Jean Baudrillard: The Ecstasy of Communication

Our world has shifted from the live stage to the projected screen image and the hyperreal. In doing so we have also brought about the obscene. Baudrillard wants to explore this obscenity and the ecstasy and sexuality associated with it. Baudrillard sees the changes in perception from real to hyperreal as facilitating the shedding of

the body as it is now superfluous. As we shed the real for this simulated reality our organic perspective of sexuality is shifted to the network and the technology surrounding it, therefore becoming about communication and the ecstasy surrounding it. He proposes that this new eras of scene "excites us, the obscene fascinates us".

Biosystems
Kevin Kelly: Coevolution

Relationships of co-dependance are constantly found in nature, as evidenced by Kelly's examples. On the surface the world appears linear, but in reality is comprised of a very complex network of dependancies that effect each-other being reflectors and reflected. In terms of co-evolution, Kelly relates the concept of the world 's evolution relying on a co-evolution of instability, in other words, there are balancing forces such that there is stable instability. As these forces are dependent on each other, they develop feedback loops to respond to each-other. These feedback result in a flux, which creates a system of co-existence, parasitism and evolution. While most of these systems appear to result in one 'winner' and one 'loser', there are situations where there is a win-win situation, in these instances you have coevolution. Coevolution may be a way to analyze how to proceed in our conflict ridden world without mutually assured destruction overtaking us. We can learn from nature and perhaps make our society stronger and more constructivly collaborative.

Assemblage Theory (and Ecology)

J. Macgregor Wise: Assemblage

Assemblage theory derives from the work of Deleuze and Guattari. It is a proess, ever evolving and organizing itself in a non-determinate way. Assemblages can be composed of many different parts, or many of the same. As assemblages organizes they territorialize themselves. We gain a way of thinking about the relationship between man and technology through the relationship and organizations that arise from assemblage theory. Assemblages link us to a context and allow us to examine our relationships more sucessfully than from isolation. Assemblages do not exist on their own, rather they are constantly re-territorializing, shifting due to a variety of influences, such as the entry of a body into the system. We must look at all the parts of the assemblage to understand them, not just the core technology behind them.