1990

From Constructivism to Deconstructivism

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Virginia Commonwealth University

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From Constructivism to Deconstructivism
Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Alejandro Brenner, who followed me to this country, and encouraged me throughout the process.

Special thanks to Marta Zatonyi, my History of Art teacher in Argentina. A Hungarian graduated from La Sorbonne, Paris, she introduced me to history, art criticism, and aesthetics. Most of the concepts presented in this thesis are based on her teachings.

Special thanks to Robert Meganck, my thesis advisor, who gave me great support. I am thankful both to the teacher and the human being. Without him this project would not have materialized.

Thanks to John Malinoski, thesis reader, who made contributions to the content and design of this project.

Very special thanks to Professor Robert Armour from the English Department, who patiently read my thesis and helped me to edit it. He stayed with me after hours and volunteered his precious time to help me out.

I would also like to thank the following people: Ben Day, for helping me to get started and focused on the project. His invaluable teachings during several semesters, made the whole program meaningful; John DeMao for helping me get financial support, without which I would not have had any chance to finish the program; Richard Carlyon and Phillip Meggs, for keeping my interest in history alive, with their teachings; Keith Jones for teaching me everything I know about the Macintosh.

Finally I would like to collectively acknowledge the creators of works which appear in this thesis, as well as the authors of the texts in which this thesis is based.
From Constructivism to Deconstructivism

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with four major design movements, beginning with Constructivism, and ending with Deconstructivism, including two other movements, as intermediate links, that developed in the period between International - Swiss Design and Postmodernism.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain in a visual time-line, the interrelationships of these movements while at the same time visually represent their concepts. Also it leads to an analysis and discussion of the role of Deconstructivism in graphic design.

The International - Swiss Design movement emerged from ideas that flourished in the 20's and 30's, including Constructivism, Neoplasticism and the Bauhaus movement. I believe there is a direct line between these movements, the School of Ulm, the Zurich and the Basel Schools of Arts and Crafts, and the International - Swiss Design.

The Postmodern design emerged as a reaction to the International - Swiss Design. There is a direct link between Postmodernism and Deconstructivism.

How can two movements, Constructivism and Deconstructivism be opposed and related at the same time?

At the outset of this thesis I needed to understand why Deconstructivists claimed to be highly influenced by the Constructivist movement and what lead to the design that we have today.

This thesis is also a reflection of my thoughts about life and design. I think a society makes progress by understanding the past. Studying and understanding history has always been an important part of my life.

This thesis researches the past, and the present, and their processes and concatenation. This thesis is an
*Note of the author:
The classification into first source movements and second source movements was created by Marta Zatonyi. Her ideas have not been published, at the time this thesis was written. All the information was taken from her classes held in her private school called Ethos, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between the years 1985 and 1988. According to her definitions, first source movements are those where everything is included in a strong order or structure. Everything is systematized, unitarian and coherent. There is a search for perfection and objectivity.

Second source movements are periods where the order collapsed. They are aysystematic, plural and subjective.

Examples of first source movements are Greek Classicism, Renascence and Modernism.

Examples of the second source movements are Helenism, Mannerism and Postmodernism.

historical survey but not in the traditional way of analysis; information is not presented in a linear mode but in an interactive way.

I understand history as an active and cyclic process, as a succession of systems. I define a system as a group of elements that interrelate and are mutually determinate. The components of a system are undefined. The system receives external elements and incorporates them into it. Each system can be considered as having three periods: pre-classic, classic and post-classic.

**Pre-classic period:** The elements of the system are still disordered, lacking structure or hierarchy.

**Classic period:** The elements find their places within a structure and there is a selection process by which some elements are deleted from the system.

**Post-classic period:** The system can not absorb any more external or exogenous elements, and the system begins to collapse.

Every classic period contains in itself its own antagonism; at the outset the embryo of antagonism is already there. The German philosopher Goerg Wilhelm Friederic Hegel, thought that “something is because it is its own other.” Hegelianism is defined as “The philosophy of Hegel, who held that every existent idea or fact belongs to an all-embracing mind in which each idea or situation (thesis) evokes its opposite (antithesis) and these two result in a unified whole (synthesis), which in turn becomes a new thesis.”

Small quantitative changes that turn into a qualitative change over time are the cause of the shift from system to system. The alternation of systems makes history an active discipline.

New ideas that are revolutionary departures from the stated, accepted and current ideas begin to flourish simultaneously in different places (antithesis). Once these ideas are spread, understood and accepted, they begin to establish cohesive ties between them; and they constitute a recognized body of thought (synthesis). New revolutionary ideas, will oppose to it (new thesis).

Marta Zatonyi, my History of Art teacher in Argentina. A Hungarian graduated from La Sorbonne, Paris, bases her teachings on the idea that the systems are divided into two different "sources" which have opposite characteristics and alternate throughout history.

The art periods considered as first source are characterized by their strength, structure, and order. Whatever does not fit in “the order” is left out. According to the Hungarian teacher Marta Zatonyi, the advantage of the first source periods is that they address social issues and problems of the mass; the disadvantage is that the individual is outrageously eliminated.

The art periods in the second source lift the fragile flag of the individual, accept the “non sacred,” involve an anti-order, and oppose the stream. They look for answers where nobody looked before. The danger of this approach is that social concerns are rejected. These periods constitute an evasion into the self, into the future (utopia), into the past or into a “no-place.”

The understanding of this classification is very important. My goal is to position the four movements that I am going to address within this frame of thought.
Characteristics of first and second source movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Source</th>
<th>Second Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with society</td>
<td>Concerned with the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with the object</td>
<td>Concerned with the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of ideas</td>
<td>Prevalence of materialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalakagathia</td>
<td>Anti-kalakagathia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homotopia</td>
<td>Heterotopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concinmitas</td>
<td>Non-concinmitas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tectonic</td>
<td>A-tectonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>Pre, and Post-classic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Concinmitas*, from the Greek, means “a skilful arrangement of parts, a harmony, parts cut together so as to fit.”  

Concinmitas space is under control. Nothing is left to chance, everything is programed. There is no surprise or unexpected feelings. Everything is perfect. Clarity, unity, and repeatability are qualities of concinmitas.

Non-concinmitas makes room for the eventual, the surprising, the intervention of the other. It accepts changes because its structure is not rigid. It is unique.

Tectonic means safe, structured, useful.

A-tectonic is when something unsafe is supporting something safe. The elements combined look as if they were going to collapse. Anguish is involved in the process of perception.

Kalakagathia from the Greek, was coined in the time of Plato, and means: what is beautiful is good. During the modern period it read as meaning that the beautiful is the functional, the function determines form. This concept of beautiful is beyond the individual, the subject is denied.

Heterotopia, a term originated in biology, is defined as the conditions of gradual displacement of cells or parts by adaptation to the changed conditions of embryonic existence.

For Demetri Porphyrios (architectural critique) “this word should be taken in the most literal sense: that is, the state of things laid, placed, and assigned sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to define a common locus beneath them all.”
According to the cited classification, I consider the Constructivist movement as a first source movement, together with Futurism and Neoplasticism. It was concerned with society, and with the construction of utilitarian designs. This movement though, presents some characteristics of the second source, such as the a-tectonic quality of some of the designs, the heterotopic, the non-connocinitas quality, which are the characteristics upon which the deconstructivists draw to formulate their ideology.

The International-Swiss Design, can be undoubtedly inscribed in the first source. The Postmodern Design is second source. The Deconstructivist movement can hypothetically be included within second source and is a prolongation of the former movement, an exacerbation of the fight against first source movements. It represents a post-classic period and a pre-classic at the same time because it is already pregnant with the next classic period which has still to be defined. It will only be understood when history generates some perspective that will enlighten us about it.

By comparing the evolution of design and architecture through these periods, I developed a critical attitude towards visual communication today and tried to understand what might happen with it globally in the future. Visual communications are reflections of the development of the human being and history. The future will probably be affected by computer technology and by social, political and economic events, such as the awareness of a need to save the earth resources, the abolition of the ideological dichotomies, and the global and instantaneous characteristic of new communication systems. These kinds of events influenced design along history and they are influencing design today.

The emphasis of this thesis concentrates on the deconstructivist movement. The three other movements Constructivism, International-Swiss Design and Postmodernism are presented in order to better understand Deconstructivism.

The nature of this thesis is predominantly visual. I investigated the characteristics of each movement, and I have visually described them using multi-panel exhibit format.

An analytical approach helped me to make connections between theory and applied product.

The following were used as a point of departure:

**History:** The diachronic survey of events that were, are or will be relevant as witnesses of human development.

**Analysis:** Breakdown of a concept, object, material or event into its minimal parts or put in evidence its deepest structures with the purpose of having a better understanding of it. The action of establishing relationships between a concept, object, material or event with concepts, objects, materials, or events from different disciplines.

**Metalanguage:** The language that speaks or explains the language. It is a second order system, according to Barthes, that takes over a first language, through a structuralist method, a discourse able to master all the varieties of language and culture.

**Constructivism:** Russian artistic movement influenced by cubism and futurism, and thought to have begun in 1913 with the "painted reliefs" of Vladimir Tatlin. The term
Constructivism was derived from the Realist Manifesto, a publication written by Tatlin and his followers in 1920. In keeping with the new technological age, proponents of the movement were artists-engineers who constructed their work.

**Deconstruction:** A view that challenges the values of harmony, unity and stability, and proposes instead a different view of structure, that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure, they cannot be removed without destroying it, they are indeed structural. Deconstruction is not demolition or dissimulation, it is the understanding of the inherent dilemmas of a structure and tries to identify the symptoms of repressed impurity, which brings to the surface, by a combination of gentle coaxing and violent torture, the form is interrogated.

**Deconstruction:**Suspends all that we take for granted about language, experience and the normal possibilities of human communication. Deconstruction is the antithesis of everything that criticism is, if one accepts its traditional values and concepts. Deconstruction suspends the assumed correspondence between mind and meaning and the concept of method which claims to unite them.

**International Typographic Style:**
Typographic movement also known as "Swiss Style", that begun during the 1950's, attained great force through the 1960's and 1970's, and is kept alive by purists of the 1980's. Practitioners of this style believing that design is of necessity a socially useful activity, advocated a universal approach to design. Clarity, precision and objectivity are achieved through the manipulation of timeless, elemental form.

Characteristics of the style include the use of mathematical grids, sans serif typefaces set flush left and ragged right, and straightforward photography or diagrammatic material.

**Post-Modernism:** Term used to describe the close of the modern era, and the beginning of a new period in art, design, architecture and literature. Awareness of changing environmental, social, and technological conditions brought many the conclusion that the modern aesthetic was not relevant to the late twentieth century. In graphic design the seeds of post-modernism were first shown in Europe with practitioners breaking the traditions of the international typographic style. Objectivity and logic were replaced with intuitive play as designers sought to broaden their visual vocabulary by breaking established rules. Violating grids, creating dynamic spatial fields with disparate elements, employing extreme weight and size contrasts within typographic material, and drawing upon imagery from all periods and cultures are some of the characteristics of this approach.

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7 Carter, Rob. Ibid. Page 131.
8 Carter, Rob. Ibid. Page 140.
Structure

Because this thesis deals with the diachronic nature of history, the principal component of this project is a timeline, which includes visual responses illustrating the concepts that developed from the research.

The exhibit timeline format was decided upon for two reasons. First the timeline allows the simultaneous view of the information related to the four movements, and lets the viewer formulate visual comparisons. Second, the exhibit format with its three-dimensional nature, as opposed to the bidimensional nature of a book or a poster, opened the possibility to use three dimensionality as a way to explain certain spatial manipulation that turned out to be vital to the understanding of subject.

The visuals are composed of four panels each corresponding to a different movement, and two intermediate panels showing the transitions between movements. The intermediate panels play the role of bridges, a condition that is stressed by their form and transparent quality.

Certain constants were imposed to bring visual continuity between the four panels:

- The sizes of the panels
- The insertion of dates
- The title of each panel.

The use of a grid was applied differently for each panel and not considered to be a unifying factor; on the contrary the differences were used to explain the diverse use of space, modular and systems concept, achieved by each movement.

The color was also used in different applications, directly related to the way in which color was used in each period.
Methodology

The structure of this thesis evolved from general research conducted towards the definition of the theme. My initial investigations were directed towards Deconstruction in literature and architecture.

Deconstructivist architects claimed that Deconstructivist architecture has its roots in Constructivism. To understand better the relationships that exist between Constructivism and Deconstructivism, a timeline was established. It includes International - Swiss Design and Postmodernism, as two relevant alternate periods that existed between the two movements.

During my research, I scanned books, evaluated their relevance to my study, and extracted parts of them as background information to document that research. I included those parts in an addendum. I compared these four movements in visual communications and identified key words that define the most outstanding characteristics of each movement. I created a matrix, comparing those key words, to show the interaction that provided the basis for the visual translations of the final product.

To introduce more information related to the four movements, I wrote a series of short paragraphs about them and I presented the characteristics of those movements in the field of graphic design. I compared the use of space, type, form, color, and technique made by each movement, as well as the different way in which each movement approached ideology and content.

These six parameters were determined because I considered them important to the generation of visuals. All the concepts used to define the characteristics of the movements were taken from texts included in the addendum. The concepts selected are shown in the addendum, in bold type.

Some of the concepts were literally extracted from the texts and others were paraphrased. To maintain the formal coherence and since a copy of the sources is included in the thesis, no quotation marks were used.

I created a second matrix comparing the six parameters considered. This second comparative matrix is a conclusion of the investigation related with the four movements.
DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

CONSTRUCTIVISM

STRUCTURE
Construction
Asymmetrycal balance
Function
System

DIVERSITY
Diverse typography
Use of geometric figures
Use of horizontal, vertical and diagonal arrangements

JUXTAPOSITION
Use of Photomontage
Simultaneous action
Addition of images but each image keeps its identity
INTERNATIONAL DESIGN

ESSENCE
Structure emerges from content
Absence of superfluous elements

UNITY
Unified typography
Linearity
Unified grid
Unified arrangement
System

CLARITY
Geometry
Absoloute order
Mathematical thinking
Rationality


Harry Bertoia. Steel wire chair, 1952.

POSTMODERNISM

SEGMENTATION
Extreme contrast
Break of traditional rules
Non-linear

ECLECTICITY
All kinds of typography
Elements from diverse historical periods
Abstract geometry + ambiguous reality

AMBIGUITY
Simulation
Unreadability
Intuition vs. Logic
Superimposition
Inclusion


Sandro Mendini. Infinite furniture, 1981.
DECONSTRUCTIVISM

DISRUPTION
Dissection
Dislocation

INSTABILITY
Distortion
Deviation

IMPURITY
Shows inside out
Pluralism


Katherine McCoy. Page of a brochure for Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1989
Nothing is static.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONSTRUCTIVISM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>System</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CLARITY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*El Lissitzky. Cover for Brochure, 1919.*
*Jacqueline Casey. Poster for an exhibition, 1970.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSTMODERNISM</th>
<th>DECONSTRUCTIVISM</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEGMENTATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>DISRUPTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme contrast</td>
<td>Dissection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break of traditional rules</td>
<td>Dislocation</td>
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<td>Non-linear</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>ECLECTICITY</strong></th>
<th><strong>INSTABILITY</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>All kinds of typography</td>
<td>Distortion</td>
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<td>Elements from diverse historical periods</td>
<td>Deviation</td>
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<td>Abstract geometry</td>
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<td>Ambiguous reality</td>
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<td>Intuition vs. Logic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superimposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Jackiën Pinski. Catalog cover for Adesso, 1985.*

In Russia, after World War I, three art movements emerged: Rayism, Suprematism and Constructivism.

Mikhail Larionov in 1913 developed the movement called Rayism. Rayism was composed of several influences; the folk tradition and national realism were brought together with the futurist influence. The speed of a car was represented not by the car but by the sign that it left, by its energetic lines. The object was fragmented and related to the spatial environment.

The coming together of two different art movements: Cubism (generated in France) and Futurism (originated in Italy), created a third movement called Cubofuturism. When this movement was introduced in Russia, it provided the basis for the development of Suprematism.

Suprematism wanted to build a supreme world based on logic and reasoning. Mathematics was thought to be the most perfect thing in the world. A metaphysic art was created but it failed to generate its own antithesis, so it did not last very long. Does mathematics generate new themes, as the Suprematists thought, or does life generate new themes? Suprematists searched for images generated in a superior world not in the degraded human world of the wars, and they eliminated real material in favor of pure form.

Constructivism, on the other hand, searched for the material and utilitarian qualities of the objects. Design was at the service of function. The aesthetic territory was defined as a functional area. Constructivism proclaimed the end of the art and the beginning of the construction of a new world.
Characteristics of Constructivist Graphic Design

SPACE

- Organization of the space into geometric planes.
- Creation of a visual program for organizing information into a cohesive whole by the construction of structural relationships.
- Mathematical and structural properties of architecture become a basis for graphic design.
- Gestalt was based on an induced structure.
- Design style based on strong, static horizontal and vertical forms placed in machine-rhythm relationships combined with the use of dynamic axes in asymmetric balance, that generated an heterotopic dynamics.
- Design was based on visual relationships, contrast of elements, and the relation of forms to the negative space of the page.
- Design was conceived as a series or sequence of independent works unified by common elements or an underlying structure.¹

TYPE

Typographic elements become predominant in the design. Dynamic mix of type weights, sizes and styles. Letters built from letterpress ornaments.
- Letterforms constructed of geometric elements.
- Number and letter become compositional elements, concrete form as well as verbal signal.²
FORM

Visual art removed from the world of natural forms and appearances. The visual form became the content, expressive quality developed from the intuitive organization of form and color in combination with the mathematical order of geometric planes.

- Decisions related to balance, space and form shaped the message.

COLOR

- Pure vibrant colors used creating great contrast with white planes.
- Predominant colors were white, black and red. Red was used as a symbol of the revolution.


TECHNIQUES

- Use of photograms and photomontage.
- Exploration of printing possibilities like overlapping colors.
- Overprinting (printing on top of a previously printed surface).
- Show of simultaneous action; superimposing images.
- Use of common techniques with film.
- Use of extreme close-ups and perspective images, often together; and rhythmic repetition of an image.*
IDEOLOGY

- Relationship between visual form and meaning.
- Geometrical figures used as metaphors with political symbolism.
- Non-figurative images used to express feelings.
- Photomontage and overprinting used to express metaphorical content.  
- The dominant aesthetic was the machine aesthetic.
- Architecture, painting and sculpture, and design were interrelated, there was a synthesis of the arts.  

1/6 All these concepts were taken from the book "A History of Graphic Design" by Phillip Meggs. Chapter 17, p. 317/320, included in the addendum, p. 5/6.

7 All these concepts were taken from the book "Form Follows Form" by Kestutis Paul Zygas. Chapter 1, p. 8/11, included in the addendum, p. 7.
In 1904 the Austrian architect Adolf Loos with his statement “ornament is crime,” inaugurated a new trend in design and architecture that provided the basis for the modern movement.

The ideas developed by the Constructivists in Russia, by the Neoplasticists in Holland, and later by the Bauhaus School of design in Germany and by the French designer LeCorbusier, formed the basis for the modern design movement. Its ideology was that function predominates over form, and that the superfluous in design should be suppressed.

This movement generated the so-called “International Style.”

Architectural manifestations of this style were brought to the United States by the German architect Mies Van Der Rohe.

In visual communications the International Style developed primarily in Switzerland. The Swiss design schools at Zurich and Basel inherited the ideas of the Bauhaus, the modern architecture, and the “new typography” introduced by Jan Tschichold.

The International Style which began to coalesce into a movement by 1959, realized the need to establish a universal principle in design based on clarity.

After the World War II there was an awareness both of the social role of design and of the need to establish links between different cultures to build a unified world, undivided by wars. In order to fulfill these social and political premises, design become more structured, unified, clear and reductive. Individuality and self expression were set aside, with the idealistic belief that purity in design will generate a better world and that the role of the designer was to make these universal principles accessible to the public.
Characteristics of International Graphic Design

Space

- Layouts were constructed of simple geometric elements organized with absolute order.
- Use of mathematical proportion, geometric spatial division and use of the golden mean.
- Development of cohesive visual organization: linear division of space into harmonious parts, use of modular grids, arithmetic and geometric progressions, permutations, and sequences; equalization of contrasting and complementary relationships in an ordered whole.
- The unprinted white space was important as a design factor.
- The concepts of information and readability were simplified.

Type

- Use of sans serif type.
- Use of the ragged-right margins and paragraphs indicated by an interval of space instead of a paragraph indent.
- Purely typographic work took great liberties with the tradition of typography.

Form

- Form was in a dynamic harmony where all the parts of a design were unified.
- Relationships of contrasting elements were the means to breathe life into visual design; these contrasts included light to dark, curved lines to straight lines, form to counterform, and dynamic to static.

Color

- A one color typographic design was believed to achieve the visual impact and power of full color graphics through the strength of the concept and the manipulation of form, visual form, space, shape, and tone.

Techniques

- Photographs were carefully cropped and lighted with attention to shape and texture as qualities that caused an ordinary image to reach out from the page.
- The visual tools were typography, photography and constructive drawing.


Max Bill. Exhibition Poster, 1945.
Ideology

- The roots of the international style grew from De Stijl, Russian Constructivism, The Bauhaus and the new typography of the 20's and 30's.
- Solution to the design problem should emerge from the content.
- Effective communication of information, expression of the content, and visual harmony were the priorities.
- Expression of originality through the idea, not through visual style.
- Absolute and universal expression.
- Objective and impersonal presentation.
- Avoidance of designer's subjective feelings and propagandistic techniques of persuasion.
- Remarkable intensity and clarity in communicating the message.
- Combination of clear, efficient presentation of information with a dynamic visual quality.
- Use of straightforward photography with drama and impact as well as symbolic content. 6

1/6 All these concepts were taken from the book "A History of Graphic Design" by Phillip Meggs. Chapter 20, p. 379/397 included in the addendum, p. 9/13.
Many things helped the development of the Postmodern movement: the lost of faith in the institutions, the tension of the Cold War, and the needs to reject massification and peace talks that hide a desire for war. Postmodernism was an attitude towards life, a rejection of things taken for granted, of dogmas.

The human being wanted to become part of the environment, to create his own space and time.

There was a change in the concept of "beautifulness"; beauty was not only in the utilitarian objects. Perfection was not "the hero" anymore. The hero was expression, the concept of "archetype man" was rejected.

The architect Robert Venturi inaugurates the Postmodern era with his book "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" (1966). There he questions the homotopic art, and proclaims the crisis of rationalist architecture. He does not reject the achievements of modernism but puts its values in question.

Postmodernism gave recognition to the past and to history. It did not dream with a metaphysic world of perfection like the modern movement; it exalted heterotopia, each space has its own characteristics.

Postmodernism preferred the small, articulated, subjective, and ludic spaces.

Wolfgang Weingart, as a representative of Postmodernism in graphic design, proposed a dialectic opposition between structure and freedom. Experimentation and playfulness were involved in the creative process.

Postmodernism was symbolic; it recognized the individuality of each human being and the multiple interpretation of the signs.
Grids were violated, creating dynamic spatial fields with disparate elements.\footnote{1}

**TYPE**

- Extreme weight and size contrasts within typographic material.
- Imagery from all periods and cultures.\footnote{2}
- Exploration of all the possibilities of classical typography, systematic typography, ugly typography, research typography, rigid typography, computer typography, crazy typography, painting typography, do it yourself typography, Swiss typography, and letterspacing typography with great freedom and a serious design process, although it might have been harmful for the readability of the text, the relatively high stimulus of such a text was adequate compensation for low readability.\footnote{3}

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**FORM / COLOR**

- Typography, abstract geometrical forms, linear elements, and gestural shapes combined with psychedelic color and vivid texture were used to fool the eye, to shock, and to surprise the viewer with an ambiguous reality.
- Linear elements suggested perspective; trapezoidal shapes hovered in space; drop shadows suggested light sources; and graphic elements were set against wide angle.
- Use of expansive photographs.\footnote{4}

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**TECHNIQUES**

- Transparent films, collages made with repro camera.
- Graphic images created by the computer and the combination of all above.
Contradiction, inconsistency, discontinuity, pluralism, cultural autonomy, and a set of discordant punctuations left open for the viewer to supply the interpretation and ultimate judgement. But it was a necessarily incomplete method until it was supplemented by a symbolic program or some unifying plot.\textsuperscript{a}

- Continuous attempts to break away from trusted design patterns.
- Attempt to test experimentally the semantic and syntactic possibilities of typography, and to brake through its ideological borders by consciously ignoring the traditional limits and recipes for typographic design.\textsuperscript{3}
- Use of contradictory propositions from which anything can be deduced, understood as a kind of perpetual warfare of different language games against each other. "Intertextuality" was the cliche of Postmodernism.\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{1} All these concepts were taken from the book "American Typography Today" by Robert Carter, p. 56/63, included in the addendum. p. 15/16.
\textsuperscript{3} All these concepts were taken from the Magazine Design Quarterly 130. From the article "My Typography. Instruction at the Basle School of Design Switzerland 1968 to 1985" by Wolfgang Weingart, p. 8/16. included in the addendum, p. 17.
The Postmodern movement which emerged in the effervescent 60's was a protest against the general established order. It was revolutionary in its roots; but as it evolved and was accepted by society, it became a mere style or "façade," sometimes superficial and empty of content.

Deconstructivism, as opposed to Postmodernism, has nothing superficial in it. It is a movement which claims to have its roots in the challenges to stability posed by Constructivism. It has a relationship to the philosophical movement called Deconstruction.

Deconstruction is a new concern that has become involved with architecture and design in very recent times. In the 70's the French philosopher Jacques Derrida published his first texts on Deconstruction. In 1987, Derrida wrote the "Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Forward" as a preface for a collection of papers which established a relationship between philosophy and architecture, one of the first attempts to connect this philosophy with design. These papers were presented in March 1988 for the first Deconstruction Symposium in New York. The first exhibition and public presentation of Deconstructivist Architecture took place in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in 1989. In the same year a publication called "Deconstruction Omnibus Volume" ties together painting, architecture and philosophy. In 1990 the design historian Phillip Meggs wrote his first article on De-constructing Typography.

The newness of the subject attracted my attention. Deconstruction in graphic design is a new application of theories developed in philosophy, literature art and architecture.
Any movement based on new ideas has an impact on every discipline. Diverse manifestations related with that ideology take place spontaneously in different parts of the world. Those expressions can later be analyzed and inscribed within the ideological frame of the movement. It is not that they were created with a certain ideology in mind. They are a reflection of the era's Zeitgeist and a response to it. At some point in time that convergence becomes evident, and research begins to develop to understand the coincidences and the global character of the movement.

One principle of deconstruction is dismantling traditional ways of thinking about history. It also entails a sense of "in-betweeness" which rejects rigid classifications in which one idea belongs to any defined group. This leaves the door open for reconsideration of assumptions about the appropriateness of labeling. What is deconstructivist and what is not?

Questioning is the nature of Deconstruction. Meaning is achieved by de-understanding, by de-learning learned models, by putting into question the taken-for-granted things. Deconstructivism challenges the values of harmony, unity and stability. It advocates disruption, distortion and imperfection which are seen as inherent in any structure and emerging from within.

In visual communications the impact of Deconstructivism generates a twist in the concept of design and communication. The readability of a message is of less concern than the visual impact that it will cause and the context in which it is delivered. The acknowledgment of the tools used to convey the message proves to be a main concern. The structure used to shape the design is shown inside out.

The body is cut in the middle and the heart shows, pumping in its ugliness. The intermingling of arteries and veins comes to the surface. The heart is not the idealized red, rounded, soft shape. Symbols are replaced by the crude impure reality.

Deconstructivism deals with inter-penetration. Everything is connected, related, overlapped, as in nature. Polarities are dissolved.

Deconstructivism is a reflection of the complex information era. It acknowledges that opposed ideologies have been dismantled, that extremes touch each other at opposing poles and that everything is connected.

Every social, political and economical system shows its impurity inside out. A new era is being born.
The symptoms of the repressed impurity are identified. The impurity is drawn to the surface by a combination of gentle coaxing and violent torture: the form is interrogated.

The space is characterized by disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion. A sense of dislocation occurs between forms and their context.

Deconstruction space is multi-layered. The multi-layered space is above all metonymic. This is because it is generated by systematic activity such as aberration, overlapping and transformation. The space is polysemic. This does not mean simply that the space has diverse aspects that can be interpreted in multiple ways but that the space offers multiplicity itself, a multiplicity of irreducible meanings. Diversity and polysemy themselves constitute the true character of language, metonymy and metaphor are such attributes in amplified guise.
FORM / COLOR

- Instability of forms.
- Contrast between perfection and violated perfection.
- Diagonal overlapping of rectangular or trapezoidal forms.
- Pluralism.
- Attempt to disturb our thinking about form.
- Forms themselves are infiltrated with a characteristic skewed geometry, and distorted.
- Distortion is peculiarly disquieting.
- The form distorts itself, yet this internal distortion does not destroy the form.

Daniel Libeskind Project for the Mies Van Der Rohe memorial.
Constructivism instilled a state of imbalance, disharmony and instability, enhanced by dynamism. These qualities are diametrically opposed to the compositional principles behind Classical architecture. The result was a system in which the axes and hierarchies that had hitherto controlled forms no longer existed.\textsuperscript{4}

Constructivism is twisted. This twist is the "de" of "de-constructivist". The projects draw from Constructivism and yet constitute a radical deviation from it. Deconstruction is not demolition, or dissimulation. Deconstruction gains its force by challenging the very values of harmony, unity, and stability, and proposing instead a different view of structure: the view that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure. Deconstructivist seeks the unfamiliar within the familiar.\textsuperscript{5}

Deconstruction locates certain crucial oppositions or binary structures of meaning and value that constitute the discourse of "Western metaphysics". These include the distinctions between form and content, nature and culture, thought and perception, essence and accident, mind and body, theory and practice, male and female, concept and
metaphor, speech and writing, 'the traditional opposition between structure and decoration, abstraction and figuration, figure and ground, form and function. These distinctions could be dissolved, an exploration of the between within these categories could begin.

The system is undone, so to speak, from within; the second or subordinate term in each pair has an equal (maybe a prior) claim to be treated as a condition of possibility for the entire system.

To deconstruct traditional sanctions - theoretical, philosophical, cultural - effectively, 'solid' structures need to be displaced, not only in the sense of material structures, but 'solid' in the sense of cultural, pedagogical, political, economic structures. Deconstruction means also the putting into question of design itself.

Traditional values can't simply be dismissed, a new set of values has to be constructed, reinscribed, that is, to set up and build new structures implying the work of Deconstruction.

Deconstruction goes through the boundaries of disciplines. The grafting of one art on to another, the contamination of codes, the dissemination of contexts, are sometimes 'methods or stratagems' of Deconstruction, but most importantly they are moments of history.

Deconstruction is different from one context to another. The idea that Deconstruction denotes any theory, method or univocal concept is rejected. Deconstruction is not simply an activity or commitment on the part of the designer; it is also on the part of people who read, who look at the messages, who apprehend the communication, who experience it different way. The designers also have to negotiate with norms and practical constraints.

Deconstruction is always unfinished, heterogeneous, and there is no such thing as a 'pure' Deconstruction or a deconstructive project that is finished or completed. Deconstruction pays the greatest attention to multiplicity, to heterogeneity, to these sharp and irreducible differences. The specificity of discourses, needs to be respected, especially that of philosophical discourse, everything can't be homogenised. There is nothing monological, in Deconstruction, that's why the responsibility is never an individual voice. It is always a multiplicity of voices, of gestures.

Deconstruction generates a flexion and fragmentation of vision instead of the integration of the whole by means of a sweeping view. As a result of overlapping, there are always parts that are hidden. A hidden part, if one changes one's viewpoint, becomes patent, and what had been visible becomes latent. There is something to be discovered in the way the parts are connected.

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1 All these concepts were taken from the text 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Mark Wigley, p. 11/17, included in the addendum, p. 29/30.
2 All these concepts were taken from the text 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Hiromi Fujii, p. 68/69, included in the addendum, p. 48/49.
3 All these concepts were taken from the text 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by David Berlinski, p. 7/11, included in the addendum, p. 15/19.
4 All these concepts were taken from the text 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Mark Wigley, p. 16/18, included in the addendum, p. 30/32.
5 All these concepts were taken from the text 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Jacques Derrida in discussion with Christopher Norris, p. 5/9, included in the addendum, p. 39/43.
6 All these concepts were taken from Architectural Design, 'Deconstruction II', from the article 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Mark Wigley, p. 16/18, included in the addendum, p. 30/32.
7 All these concepts were taken from Architectural Design, 'Deconstruction II', from the article 'Deconstructive Architecture' from an article by Mark Wigley, p. 16/18, included in the addendum, p. 30/32.
The following matrix is a synthesis of concepts used to explain characteristics of graphic design in the four movements being addressed in this thesis.

The purpose of this matrix is to make possible a comparison of the different parameters between movements. It allows to look at each movement (vertical access) as well as each of the five parameters considered (horizontal access).

No footnotes were added, since the concepts used are the same as the ones on former pages.
**Constructivism**

**SPACE**
- Organization of space into preconceived planes
- Division of natural objects into irrelevant or nonexistent planes, which is organized from a structure that is incorrect by nature.

**Materialism and subjective approaches of perspective become a basis for graphic design.**
- **Interpersonal design**
  - Create external or internal confusion
  - Establish a relationship with the use of certain space in consecutive behavior, discovering an impersonal and impersonal mass determining.
  - **Develops**
    - Model
    - Model
- **Designs**
  - A number of elements are formed, the relation of form to the shape.
  - **Ornaments**
    - Ornaments
    - Ornaments
- **Synthesis**
  - Synthesis
  - Synthesis

**TYPE**
- Phonic character becomes perturbation in the design
- **Contrast**
  - Contrast
  - Contrast

**FORM / COLOR**
- **Form**
  - Form
  - Form

**TECHNIQUE**
- **Color**
  - Color
  - Color

**IDEOLOGY**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction

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**International Design**

**SPACE**
- **Concept**
  - Concept
  - Concept
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

**TYPE**
- **Aesthetic**
  - Aesthetic
  - Aesthetic

**FORM / COLOR**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction

**TECHNIQUE**
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

**IDEOLOGY**
- **Interaction**
  - Interaction
  - Interaction

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**Postmodernism**

**SPACE**
- **Concept**
  - Concept
  - Concept
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

**TYPE**
- **Aesthetic**
  - Aesthetic
  - Aesthetic

**FORM / COLOR**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction

**TECHNIQUE**
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

**IDEOLOGY**
- **Interaction**
  - Interaction
  - Interaction

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**Deconstruction**

**SPACE**
- **Concept**
  - Concept
  - Concept
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

**TYPE**
- **Aesthetic**
  - Aesthetic
  - Aesthetic

**FORM / COLOR**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction

**TECHNIQUE**
- **Material**
  - Material
  - Material

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**GENERAL COMPARISON BETWEEN MOVEMENTS**

**SPACE**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction
- **International Design**
  - International Design
  - International Design
- **Postmodernism**
  - Postmodernism
  - Postmodernism
- **Deconstruction**
  - Deconstruction
  - Deconstruction

**TYPE**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction
- **International Design**
  - International Design
  - International Design
- **Postmodernism**
  - Postmodernism
  - Postmodernism
- **Deconstruction**
  - Deconstruction
  - Deconstruction

**FORM / COLOR**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction
- **International Design**
  - International Design
  - International Design
- **Postmodernism**
  - Postmodernism
  - Postmodernism
- **Deconstruction**
  - Deconstruction
  - Deconstruction

**TECHNIQUE**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction
- **International Design**
  - International Design
  - International Design
- **Postmodernism**
  - Postmodernism
  - Postmodernism
- **Deconstruction**
  - Deconstruction
  - Deconstruction

**IDEOLOGY**
- **Construction**
  - Construction
  - Construction
- **International Design**
  - International Design
  - International Design
- **Postmodernism**
  - Postmodernism
  - Postmodernism
- **Deconstruction**
  - Deconstruction
  - Deconstruction
7 ANALYSIS OF TIME-LINE

The following are explanations of the ideas that were used to shape the time-line. In order to analyze it, the time-line has been divided into four parts, each corresponding to the four movements addressed.

The analysis covers the structure, the use of the surface, the orientation of parts and the titles of the panels, as well as some particularly relevant aspects of each panel.

Part of the concepts applied on the analysis are based on those presented in chapters one, two, three and four, which describe the characteristics of graphic design in each movement. No additional footnotes were added because the information has been previously presented and is also included in the addendum.
CONSTRUCTIVISM
Structure

Independent elements are unified by an underlying structure. The Gestalt is based on that induced structure. A visual program is created to organize information into a cohesive whole and to establish structural relationships. There is a combination of a geometric grid with an intuitive organization of balance, space, form and color.

Orientation of Parts

The treatment of the space in this composition shows the organization of the space into geometric planes and the use of dynamic axes in asymmetric balance.

The use of combined vertical, horizontal and diagonal axes generates heterotopic dynamics, which nevertheless are not chaotic.
The design is based on visual relationships, contrast of elements, and the relation of forms to the negative space of the page. There is a relationship between visual form and meaning and non-figurative images are used to express feelings.

The generation of this title involved a metaphorical concept. The verbal signal becomes three dimensional, built, constructed. It adopts mathematical and structural properties of architecture. The typographic elements present a mix of type weights, sizes and styles.
After World War II increased trade and communications turned the world into a "global village." There was a need for clear communication enabling people from around the world to comprehend signs and information. New graphic design called international design developed in Switzerland and spread around the world.

Printed communications during the period were based on a mathematically drawn grid. Visual unity was achieved by asymmetrical organization and the use of sans serif type (particularly Helvetica after its introduction in 1957). Typography was set in flush-left, ragged-right arrangements. Visual organization was characterized by dynamic harmony where all parts were unified, with clarity of communication and an objective and impersonal presentation. One essential goal was to activate the unprinted areas (white space) as a design factor. The visual tools were reduced to typography, photography and constructive drawing. Everything was ordered through materials and the hand setting process. The concepts of information, communication and readability were simplified.

achte sinfonie von gustav mahler

The grid as an aid... in catalogues, posters, advertisements.
Concert posters for the Tonhalle Gesellschaft Zurich.
Structure

The design uses as a base a modular grid where everything is based on the right angle.

Orientation of Parts

The design is based on mathematical proportion, and geometric spatial division. It has a cohesive visual organization and a linear division of space into harmonious parts.

The layout is constructed of simple geometric elements organized with absolute order.
The concepts of information and readability are simplified.

The perfect circle is a metaphor for the search for perfection and simplicity; every component is in perfect balance. Impact is created by playing with subtle changes. Movement and color create a sense of three-dimensionality.

Form is in a dynamic harmony where all the parts of a design are unified.

**Space**

Design becomes expressive by establishing contrasting relationships, regarding format, color and balance. The unprinted white space is important as a design factor.

The objective and impersonal presentation avoids the manifestation of designer's subjective expression.

There is a remarkable intensity and clarity in communicating the message, a combination of clean, efficient presentation of information with a dynamic visual quality. The elements included are only those that count the most. The structure becomes evident.
The postmodern movement marked the end of the modern era and the beginning of a new period in art, design, architecture, and literature. In graphic design, the seeds of Postmodernism were first shown in Europe with practitioners breaking the traditions of the International Typographic Style.
Structure
Grids are violated, creating dynamic spatial fields with disparate elements. Linear elements suggest perspective; trapezoidal shapes hover in space; and graphic elements are used to emphasize meaning.

There is a break with the traditions of the international typographic style. Objectivity and logic are replaced with intuitive play.

A ‘disharmonious harmony’ is created, rejecting all models of totality, a discontinuity which is exaggerated by change of rhythms and change of order.

SPACE

Typography, abstract geometrical forms, linear elements, and gestural shapes are combined to fool the eye, to shock, and to surprise the viewer with an ambiguous reality.

Contradiction, inconsistency, discontinuity, pluralism, cultural autonomy, and a set of discordant punctuations leaves openness for the viewer to supply the interpretation and ultimate judgement.

There is a kind of perpetual warfare of different language games against each other, an “Intertextuality”.
The circle is broken, as an attempt to break away from trusted design patterns. This stands as a metaphor: a traditional form, the pure circle is broken; there is a powerful sense of visual drama, and a new and different conception of form and space.

There is an attempt to test experimentally the semantic and syntactic possibilities of typography and to brake through its ideological borders, to ignore the traditional limits of typographic design.

There are extreme weight and size contrasts within typographic material, that draw upon imagery from all periods and cultures.

There is an exploration of all the possibilities of classical typography, systematic typography, ugly typography, research typography, rigid typography, computer typography, crazy typography, painting typography, do it yourself typography, Swiss typography, and letterspacing typography with great freedom and critical judgement.
Deconstruction emerges as a movement both in literature and architecture.

In the architectonic sphere, it returns to the first period of constructivism, between 1918 and 1920, characterized by the instability of forms, and the contrast between perfection and violated perfection. Deconstruction disturbs our thinking about form. It challenges the values of harmony, unity, and stability. It identifies the symptoms of the repressed impurity. The impurity is drawn to the surface by a combination of gentle coaxing and violent torture. The form is interrogated. Deconstructivist forms are infiltrated with skewed and distorted geometry. The internal distortion is particularly disquieting. But it does not destroy the form.
Deconstruction gains its force by **challenging** the very values of harmony, unity, and stability, and proposing instead a different view of structure: the view that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure. The **system is undone**, so to speak, from within.

The space is characterized by **disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion**. A sense of dislocation occurs between forms and their context, where those forms are oriented in multiple directions.

The space offers **multiplicity** itself, diversity and polysemy. Metonymic and metaphoric relationships are established and the symptoms of the repressed impurity are identified. That impurity is drawn to the surface by the multilayering of the space.
Type is used as image creating an active composition by the combination of type from different sizes, weights and fonts; computers are the main tools used to generate the images.

There is a dialogue between opposed forms but that is not a dialectic one. This dialogue originates a domain of an inbetweenness, as a result, readability is less of concern than the context of the message itself. The inbetweenness is metaphorically manifested by the interpenetration or interlocking of the forms. The form becomes multidimensional and loses its purity. More than one reading is possible.
This thesis is a study of four movements and their visual manifestations. Each of the four movements has had an influence on the way communications are shaped today.

At the beginning of this thesis I departed from the cyclical-Hegelian concept of history and the alternation of what I defined as first source and second source movements. My approach was at the same time structuralist. I considered history not as isolated events but as a web, a network of interrelated events that are inscribed in a structure in which every one of them has influence over the others. After reading about deconstruction I decided that the best model is one in which our vision is diverse, complex, and multi-layered, because human beings are not uni-dimensional. Though my first classification was an attempt to perceive and systematize concepts to a limited extent, I realized that every movement has a deconstructive quality of what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida called difference.¹ We can think of constructivism as a first source movement, with some second source characteristics, that constitute a pair inscribed in a systematic structure of hierarchical privilege. But from the Deconstructive point of view the system is undone from within; the second or subordinate term of the pair turns to be a condition of possibility. It is on that condition, on the second source characteristics of the constructivist movement, that the Deconstructivists base their work.

On another level there is the issue of the appropriateness of the name. Are we talking here about Deconstructivism, Deconstructionism or Deconstruction?
The very nature of this discussion brings to the surface the undefined status of the movement itself. Deconstructivism proclaims that it does not draw from the stream of thought called Deconstruction; it does not want to be called an “ism” because it is not a style or a short term fashionable way of approaching the work of art, architecture or visual communications. What is it then?

Demetri Porphiryos calls it the Deconstruction branch of Postmodernism, together with the Classic Postmodernism and the Technologic Postmodernism. Can deconstruction/ivism be understood as Deconstruction, Deconstructivism and Postmodern Deconstruction at the same time? Is that multi-layered, multi-sided multiplicity an inherent condition of the movement?

How does Einstein’s theory of relativity affect our perception of history? Can we still go on thinking of history as boxes within a big box or as a dialectic cyclic rhythm of alternation? Is it not time to put in crisis our conceptions and to understand that the present is the domain of the undefined and the doubtful?

Are not the present and the future the times of the unanswered questions?

There is a process of reinscription, a multi-layered process that establishes a new structure that can generate a diversity of visions instead of a unified view.

Deconstruction uses systems analysis to redefine the boundaries of everything it examines. While constructivism was influenced by traditional physics, where the parts determine the whole, deconstruction is influenced by quantum physics, where the whole determines the parts.

The universe is no longer seen as a multitude of objects, but has to be pictured as one indivisible dynamic whole, but that whole is so infinite that we can only focus on a tiny part at a time. A world of parallel parts exists somewhere else. Everything is unfinished, undefined, is an infinite web. Connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and determine the texture of the whole.

For Deconstructivists, the things do not have objective properties independent from one’s mind. The difference between observer and observed does not exist.

This thought is coincidental with my idea that an objective perception does not exist. Since we are subjects and not objects, we could never have an objective perception of the world. This leaves us in the domain of relativity and doubt, but the doubt which is painful and dangerous at the same time is something that we cannot control. That questioning is where everything is tilted, distrusted, demystified.

“What would happen if, instead of heightening perception, enlarging the cone of vision, and thereby achieving integration of thoughts through transparency, the mind travelled from one distorted fragment to another in accordance with shifts in the point of view?”

Those shifts will then involve time; deconstructive space is then measured by time. Time, the forth dimension is present. Deconstruction, then, does not deal with the physical aspect of constructing any object, but in a linguistic sense it deals with the way in which information is understood or exchanged. This brings us back to time.
Deconstruction is not material; it is the deconstruction of ideas, and systems of thought.

The world is not black or white as it used to be. There is no right or left anymore. We live in a global world where everything intermingles, interpenetrates, melts, contradicts. Tyranny and authoritarianism are being broken. Constructivism didn't last long either, but it left its mark in history.

Deconstruction came into existence in the second machine age, in the age of information technology. It grows as a need to fill a space, in a transitional, crisis period where the questions are still unanswered. Deconstruction establishes a relationship between what a thing causes to happen, the way it will be used, and the way it is understood in space and time. It generates dissociative or probabilistic statements, for demonstrating a non-structure, and questioning conventional connectivities.

But does really tyranny not exist anymore or is it coming back stronger than ever? Is this dangerous domain of the doubt about to generate a strong positivist-pragmatist reaction? Is that our immediate future? and if so, for how much longer can we develop ourselves in this age of individuality and self-expression?

Herbert Muschamp, on a recent article about Eisenman's last work, describes Eisenman as liberating architecture from conventions of reality and delivering it into neurosis. According to Muschamp, crisis thinking has passed its peak of influence; even in Paris interest has shifted from the so-called "prophets of extremity" as Derrida or Baudrillard to more pragmatic theorists.

History showed us that the self expressive movements have shorter life than the massive-authoritarian-pragmatic-positivist movements. Constructivism didn't last long either, but it left its mark in history.

Constructivism had some roots amongst the precursors of linguistic structuralism as well as among literary circles. Constructivism didn't last long either, but it left its mark in history.

Constructivism dealt with the aesthetic of the machine. Deconstructivism deals with the aesthetic of the computer output.

John Griffiths states that both Constructivism and Deconstruction are part of the same complex of uncertainties as the late 20th century mathematics and physics of indeterminacy and uncertainty. Griffiths also expresses that "in an extra Derridean sense, Deconstructivist works are disconcerting, iconoclastic, irreverent, subversive of complacency, eclectic, pretend an interest in the ruling order, face several ways, are streetwise, apolitically political, trust no one, nothing, not even themselves, declare all multinational efforts criminal while decrying the solipsistic individual, used only to explode the imagery of the electronic and previous technological decades."
Deconstruction's subversion of all categories is dangerous. Reason and emotion erode one another to the point where all ambiguous forms are suspend into nullity.  

The impact and meaning behind this thesis would somehow be lost if visual concepts were not applied. The visual time-line made up the applied component of this thesis. It was in both defining the essence of each movement and doing the time-line that the learning occurred. On another level, defining the words that identified each period, has widened my understanding.

The time-line was approached from a metaphorical and a metonymous point of view. Metaphor and metonymy can coexist through latent polysemy or semantic operations, as in the multi-layered spaces typical of deconstruction. I approached the applied work, trying not to generate design that will "look like" the movements they represented. My goal was to present them in a fresh, personal way, in a polysemic, pluralistic way, but still holding their substantial meaning.

Metaphors are formed through similarity, substitution and choice. Metonymy is formed through a transparency that does not depend on penetration from a single, privileged point, its a relationship of contiguity.

I used the concept of metaphor mainly in the creation of the title of each panel. I used metonymy to express the content of each movement.

These two methods intermingle and generate concatenation and system (syntagme). The space is defined by an alternation between transparency and movement that constitute a multi-layered and diverse terrain. Those differences create a rhythm and represent a mechanism for generating meaning.

The movements discussed here are directed to gain an understanding of the current development of design, the process that led to it and the process that will direct design in the near future. My point of view is that only by understanding history can the human being grasp the present and the future.
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Deconstructivism


Bauhaus: A “Significant German design school founded in 1919 by the architect Walter Gropius. The initial aims of the school sought the unification of all creative arts under the umbrella of architecture and the restoration of crafts as a fundamental. In 1923 the goals of the school shifted slightly to include a new thesis: “Art and Technology: A New unity.” (Carter, 1989. p. 116)

Constructivism: “A non figurative art movement that began in Russia around 1920” which advocated “the application of artistic creation for social needs.” (Meggs, 1983. p.493)

Cubism: “A French art movement that began around 1906. It expressed natural forms in terms of lines, simplified planes, and elementary geometric forms.” (Meggs, 1983. p. 493)

Cubofuturism: “Term coined by the Russian avant-garde during the second decade of the twentieth century to describe their painting style that was strongly influenced both by Cubism and by Futurism.” (Meggs, 1983. p. 493)

Deconstruction: “A method of literary analysis originated in France in the mid-twentieth century and based on the theory that, by the very nature of language and usage, no text can have a fixed coherent meaning.” (Websters New World Third Collegiate Edition, 1988. p. 359)

Deconstructivism: “A view that challenges the values of harmony, unity and stability, and proposes instead a different view of structure, that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure. Deconstruction is not demolition of dissimulation, it is the understanding of the inherent dilemmas of a structure and tries to identify the symptoms of repressed impurity, which brings to the surface.” (Wigley, 1988. p. 11)
Derrida, Jacques: (b. 1930). French philosopher born in Algeria. Is one of the founders of the trend in philosophy called Deconstruction, antagonistic to Structuralism. He did many works in collaboration with Deconstructivist architects. see Deconstruction.

Einstein, Albert: (1879-1955); U.S. physicist born in Germany who formulated the theory of relativity Some of its principles state that "there is no observable absolute motion, only relative motion; time is relative; space and time are interdependent and form a four dimensional continuum." (Websters New World Third Collegiate Edition, 1988. p. 1132)

Eisenman, Peter: (B. 1932) American architect educator and writer. Started his professional work in 1960. One of his major concerns was the relationship between architecture and other disciplines such as philosophy and history. His early projects attacked structural formalism. His recent work in collaboration with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida show the connection between his architecture and the philosophical trend called Deconstruction. In 1989 his work was included in the exhibit of Deconstructivist Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Futurism: "A literature, art, and music movement that began in Italy in 1910 and was characterized by a violent rejection of traditional forms and an effort to express the dynamic energy and speed of the machine age." (Meggs, 1983. p. 122)

Heidegger, Martin: (1889- 1976). German existentialist philosopher. Existentialism was based on the idea that "individual existence takes precedence over abstract conceptual essence and holds that human beings are totally free and responsible for their acts and that this responsibility is the source of their feelings of dread and anguish." (Websters New World Third Collegiate Edition, 1988. p. 476)

International - Swiss Design: A movement that "began during the 1950's, attained great force through the 1960's and 1970's, and is kept alive by purists of the 1980's. Practitioners of this style believing that design is of necessity a socially useful activity, advocated a universal approach to design. Clarity, precision and objectivity are achieved through the manipulation of timeless, elemental form." (Carter, 1989. p.131)

Le Corbusier: (1887- 1965) French architectural designer that coined the term "machines a habiter" which means machines for living. His architecture is based in geometry and logic. His buildings show a rationalist architecture. He based his designs on the idea that form follows function.

Metaphor: Involves a comparison between two things of a different nature. Is a relationship of similarity or resemblance and substitution.
Metonymy: Involves a sequential association between two things. It is a relationship of contiguity or adjacency and replacement.

Mies van der Rohe: (1889-1969)
“American architect, furniture designer, and educator. Born in Germany, immigrated to the United States in 1938. As an early exponent of the “new architecture” van der Rohe is important for introducing a machine aesthetic - simple geometric form stripped of ornament- that grew from the unification of modern materials and engineering technology.” (Carter, 1989. p. 149)

Movements from first source: Are those movements where everything is included in a strong order or structure. Everything is systematized, unitarian and coherent. There is a search for perfection and objectivity. Examples of first source movements are Greek Classicism, Renascence and Modernism.

Movements from second source: Are periods where the order collapsed. They are asystematic, plural and subjective. Examples of the second source movements are Helenism, Mannerism and Postmodernism.

Neoplasticism: Also called Dutch Constructivism. Was founded in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg. “Formal elements were reduced to horizontal and vertical shapes and lines; color was limited to red, yellow, blue, black and white.” It established “formal laws of universal harmony through complete nonobjectivity.” (Carter, 1989. p. 124)

Postmodernism: “Term used to describe the close of the modern era, and the beginning of a new period in art, design, architecture and literature. In graphic design practitioners broke the traditions of the international typographic style. Objectivity and logic were replaced with intuitive play. Violating grids, creating dynamic spatial fields with disparate elements, employing extreme weight and size contrasts within typographic material, and drawing upon imagery from all periods and cultures are some of the characteristics of this approach.” (Carter, 1989. p. 140)

Rayism: A “Russian movement developed from Futurism by Mikhail Larionov in 1913” that involved “a concept of fragmentation of the object and its relationship to the spatial environment. Spatial forms [arise] from the intersection of reflected rays from different objects.” (Lodder, 1983. p. 17)

School of Ulm, Institute of Design: Founded in Germany in 1950. Max Bill was one of the organizers and its first director. It intended to continue the rationalist design tradition initiated by the Bauhaus using a multi-disciplinary approach to design.


Suprematism: A Russian movement that began in 1915 based on the idea that art should reject “practical artistic applications for supreme expression of feelings attained through the use of simplified form and color.” (Carter, 1989. p. 136)
Syntagme: Is the combination of signs concatenated in a linear way. A syntagme is always composed by two or more consecutive entities. The entity's value is relative to its position.

Tschichold, Jan: (1902-1974). “Swiss graphic and type designer. Tschichold was the guiding behind the “new typography.” It rejected ornamentation and anything artificial, it was purely functional, and it reflected the new age of the machine.” (Carter, 1989. p. 147)

Venturi, Robert: (b. 1952) American architect who in the 1960's rebelled against modern architecture. He proposed a new approach to architecture in which urban communication and ornamentation drawn from historical periods where included as vehicles of information.

Weingart, Wolfgang: (b. 1941) Swiss graphic designer and educator who expanded upon the established Swiss doctrines introducing the Postmodern ideas into the graphic and typographic design fields.
ADDENDUM

This is a partial compilation of information that I used to develop my thesis. The paragraphs shown in bold type, are the ones that were incorporated into the matrices and into the sections that describe the characteristics of each movement.
1 CONSTRUCTIVISM

Text extracted from the book "A History of Graphic Design" by Phil Meggs.

A more typographic and formal approach to graphic design appeared in Holland and Russia, the influence of cubism was translated into the invention of pure form. The shapes and ideas about composing space were applied to problems of design.

The decade, beginning in 1910 with Marinetti’s Russian lectures, saw Russian artists absorb the new ideas of cubism and futurism with amazing speed.

The Russian avant-garde saw sufficient common traits in cubism and futurism to coin the term Cubo-Futurism. Experimentation in typography and design characterized the Futurists artists books. Symbolically, the Russian Futurist books were a reaction against the values of the Czarist Russia.

The use of coarse paper, handicraft production methods, and handmade additions expressed the poverty of peasants society.

Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935) founded a painting style based in pure colors and basic forms that he called Suprematism. Malevich created an elemental geometric abstraction that was new, nonobjective, and pure. Both utilitarian function and pictorial representation were rejected. Malevich sought the supreme “expression of feeling, seeking no practical values, no ideas, no promised land.”

Malevich realized that the essence of the art experience was the perceptual effect of color.

The Russian movement was actually accelerated by the Revolution, for art was given a social role rarely assigned
to it. The “leftist” artists had been opposed to the old order and its conservative visual art. In 1917 they turned their energies to a massive propaganda effort in support of the Bolsheviks. But by 1920, a deep ideological split developed concerning the role of the artist in the new communist state.

Some artists like Malevich and Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) argued that art must remain an essentially spiritual activity apart from the utilitarian needs of society.

Led by Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953) and Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956), twenty-five artists advanced the opposing viewpoint in 1921 when they renounced to “art for the art’s sake” to devote themselves to industrial design, visual communications and applied arts serving the new communist society.

An early attempt to formulate Constructivist ideology was the 1922 brochure *Konstruktivism* by Aleksei Gan (1893-1942). He criticized abstract painters for being unable to break their umbilical cord to traditional art, and boasted that Constructivism had moved from laboratory work to practical application. Gan wrote that tectonics, texture, and construction are the three principles of Constructivism.

*Tectonics* represented the unification of communist ideology with visual form. *Texture* meant the nature of materials and how they are used in industrial production. *Construction* symbolized the creative process and search for laws of visual organization.

The constructivist ideal was best realized by the painter, architect, graphic designer, and photographer El (Lazar Markovich) Lissitzky (1890-1941). At age nineteen, after being turned down by the Petrograd Academy of Arts because of racial prejudice against Jews, Lissitzky turned to the study of architecture at the Darmstadt, Germany, School of Engineering and architecture. The Mathematical and structural properties of architecture become a basis for his art.

In 1919 Marc Chagall, principal of the art school in Vitebsk asked Lissitzky to join the faculty, Malevich was teaching there and became a major influence on Lissitzky, who developed a painting style that he called PROUNS (an abbreviation for “projects for the establishment (affirmation) of a new art”). In contrast to the absolute flatness of Malevich’s picture plane, PROUNS introduced three-dimensional illusions that both receded (negative depth) behind the picture plane and projected forward (positive depth) from the picture plane. Lissitzky called the PROUNS “an interchange station between painting and architecture.”

Lissitzky saw the October 1917 Russian Revolution as a new beginning for mankind. Communism and social engineering will create a new order; technology will provide for society’s needs; and the artist/designer (he called himself a constructor) would forge the unity between art and technology by constructing a new world of objects to provide mankind with a richer society and environment.

Rebelling against the constraints of metal typesetting, Lissitzky often used drafting instrument construction and pasetup to achieve his designs. In 1925, he correctly predicted that Guthemberg’s system belonged to the past, and photomechanical processes would replace metal type and open new horizons for design as surely as radio has
has replaced telegraph.

In 1921, Lissitzky moved to Berlin. At this time, postwar Germany had become a meeting ground for eastern and western advanced ideas in the aftermath of the world war and the Russian revolution. His contacts included de Stijl, Bauhaus, Dadaist and other Constructivists.

His experimentation with photomontage, printmaking, graphic design, and painting enabled him to become the main conduit through which Suprematist and Constructivist ideas flowed into western Europe.

During the early 1920s, the Soviet government offered official encouragement to the new Russian art and even sought to publicize it through an international journal. Editor Ilya Ehrenburg was joined by Lissitzky in creating the trilingual journal Veshch (Russian) /Gegenstand (German) /Object (French). Lissitzky's Berlin period enabled him to spread the message of Russian Constructivism through his frequent Bauhaus visits, important articles and lectures. Major collaborations included the joint design and editing of a special double issue of Merz with Kurt Schwitters in 1924, title pages for the American magazine Broom and advertising for the Pelikan Ink Company.

In For the Voice, a 1923 book of Vladimir Mayakovsky's poems, Lissitzky designed exclusively with typographic elements. Visual relationships and contrast of elements, the relationship of forms to the negative space of the page, and an understanding of printing possibilities such as overlapping color were important in this work.

Lissitzky pushed the potential of montage and photomontage for complex communications messages. Print composition and photographic images were used as building material to assemble pages, covers and posters.

One of the most influential graphic designs of the 1920s is the book, The Isms of Art 1914-1924, which Lissitzky edited with the dadaist Hans Arp. The format that Lissitzky developed for this book is an important step toward the creation of a visual program, for organizing information. The three column vertical grid structure used for the text, the three column horizontal grid structure used for the title page and the two column structure of the contents page become an architectural framework for organizing the illustrated pages. Also the way the sans serif typography and bars are handled is an early expression of the modernist style.

In 1925 Lissitzky returns to Russia and in 1941, six months after Germany invaded Russia he died from tuberculosis.

Alexander Rodchenko was an ardent Communist. He investigated typography, montage and photography. His interest in descriptive geometry led to an analytical precision and definition of form in his paintings. In 1921 Rodchenko abandoned painting and turned to visual communications, collaborating with the writer Mayakovsky, Rodchenko produced graphic designs with strong geometric construction, large areas of pure color, and concise legible lettering. His heavy sans serif hand lettering became the source for the bold sans serif types that are widely used in the Soviet Union.

In 1923, Rodchenko began to design a magazine for all fields of the creative arts entitled Novye lef ("Left front of the Arts"). A design style based on strong,
static horizontal and vertical forms placed in machine-rhythm relationships emerged. Overprinting, kiss registration and photomontage were regularly employed in Novyi Lef.

Rodchenko delighted in contrasting bold, blocky type and hard edge shapes against the softer forms and edges of photomontages. His interest in photomontage was a conscious effort to innovate a new illustration technique appropriate to the twentieth century rationalist era. The beginning of Russian photomontage coincided with the development of montage in film - a new conceptual approach to assembling cinematic information - and shared some of its vocabulary. Showing simultaneous action; superimposing images, using extreme closeups and perspective images, often together; and rhythmic repetition of an image: these are some of the common techniques.

The concept of serial painting - a series or sequence of independent works unified by common elements or an underlying structure - was applied to graphic design by Rodchenko. In 1924 his series of ten covers for Jim Dollar Mess Mend books used a standard, geometric format printed in black and a second color. The title, number, and photomontage elements changed with each edition and express the unique content of each book. The standardized elements bring consistency and economy to the whole series. Each design did not have to be developed from ground zero.

Georgy (1900 - 1933) and Vladimir (b. 1900) Stenberg were talented brothers who collaborated on theatrical designs and film posters. They made meticulously realistic drawings for their posters by enlarging film-frame images using projection and grid methods. These three-dimensional illusions were contrasted with flat forms in dynamic, well designed posters with strong graphic communications qualities.

By 1922 the Russian government, having turned hostile, accused advanced artists of “capitalist cosmopolitanism” and advocated socialist realist painting, painters like Malevich who did not leave the country drifted into poverty and obscurity.
Malevich, Tatlin, Yakulov, Popova, Vesnin, and Meyerhold were introduced as major figures of the Soviet art scene before and throughout the early 1920s.

Significantly, the machine aesthetic had not yet implanted itself in the imagination of the participants just mentioned, although it is precisely this aesthetic with which Tatlin, Vesnin, and Popova come to be associated. It is this aesthetic which will bring them fame.

But initially, the technological inspiration is missing. Machines are not yet fetishes. Engineering is still to be romanticized. Aesthetic considerations are still to follow.

At best, we only see the faint glimmer of technocratic icons in Vesnin and Popova’s set, the “City of the Future,” intended for Meyerhold’s “Struggle and Victory” Mass Festival.

We have, instead, the application of inflated forms derived from Malevich’s cubo-futurist paintings and Tatlin’s Corner Counter-Relief, that is derived from two prototypes both indifferent to technological concerns.

As is well known, Tatlin and Malevich were elaborating the propositions stated by pre-World War I cubist paintings and collage reliefs.

Both artists were participating in an art polemic and in this context, their respective works were challenges to the old order.

The Cafe Pittoresque is not to be disparaged or casually dismissed.

It documents an important breakthrough. By magnifying the forms of its two and three-dimensional sources, the Cafe’s designers worked in an architectural scale. ...the Cafe Pittoresque is sculpture through which man may move and in which man may live.

In other words, the Cafe suggests that if sculpture is sufficiently enlarged, it becomes architecture.

The implications are considerable. We are confronted with an architecture derived from painting and sculpture, specifically, an architecture of inflated collage.

It is not expressionist architecture since the genealogy is entirely unrelated to expressionism.

In the search for appropriate categories, we might be tempted to coin another label of questionable value, namely, “cubo-futurist architecture.”

It would encompass the Cafe Pittoresque together with the other designs presented above.

Indeed, Vesnin and Popova’s, Altman’s and Tatlin’s projects are cognate, and even if a common label is declined, all three may be classed as life-sized architectural models derived from large scale, cubo-futurist sculpture.

In view of discussions about the synthesis of the arts so common in this century’s first quarter, the derivation of architecture from painting and sculpture should not be surprising.

It may even be suggested that the projects discussed here originated as demonstrations and examples of a synthesis of the arts.
During the 1950s, a design style emerged from Switzerland that has been called Swiss design, or more appropriately, the International Typographic Style. The objective clarity of this design movement won converts throughout the world. Its approach to graphic design remained a major force for more than twenty years, a period of vitality longer than most twentieth-century artistic movements.

The visual characteristics of this international style include: a visual unity of design achieved by asymmetrical organization of the elements of the design on a mathematically drawn grid; the use of sans serif type (particularly Helvetica after its introduction in 1957); typography set in a flush left and ragged-right margin configuration; objective photography and copy that present visual and verbal information in a clear and factual manner, free from the exaggerated claims of much propaganda and commercial advertising. More important than the visual appearance of their work is the attitude that the early pioneers of this movement developed toward their profession. Design is defined as a socially useful and important activity. Personal expressions and eccentric solutions are rejected in favor of a more universal and scientific approach to design problem solving. The designer defines his role not as an artist, but as an objective conduit for spreading important information between components of society. Clarity and order is ideal. The initiators of this style
believed that sans serif typography expresses the spirit of the present age, and that mathematical grids are most legible and harmonious means for structuring information.

The quality and discipline found in this movement can be traced to Ernest Keller (1891-1968). In 1928 Keller was twenty seven when he joined the Zurich Kunstgebäwereschule to teach the advertising layout course, Keller developed a thorough professional course in design and typography and headed the program until 1956. In teaching his own creative projects in lettering, trademarks, and poster design, Keller established a standard of excellence over the course of four decades. Keller advocated that solution to the design problem should emerge from the content.

The roots of the international Style grew from De Stijl, the Bauhaus and the new typography of the 1920s and 1930s. Two principal links between the earlier Constructivist graphic design and the new movement that formed after World War II are two Swiss designers who studied at the Bauhaus, Theo Ballmer (1902-1965) and Max Bill (b.1908).

An original application of De Stijl principles to graphic design using an arithmetic grid of horizontal and vertical alignments was made by Theo Ballmer in 1928. Ballmer studied design under Keller, studied briefly at the Dessau Bauhaus under Klee, Gropius and Mayer during the late 1920s. In 1931 Ballmer joined the faculty of the Kunstgewerbeschule, where he remained for over thirty years.

Max Bill attend the Bauhaus from 1927 until 1929 and studied with Gropius, Meyer, Moholy Naghy, Joseph Albers and Kandinsky. Bill moved to Zurich and began a career in his native land in painting, sculpture, architecture and product, exhibition and graphic design. It was in 1931 that he embraced the concepts of Art Concrete, that Bill began to find his way clearly. Eleven months before his death, Theo Van Doesburg formulated a Manifesto of Art Concrete in April 1930 which called for a universal art of absolute clarity. The visual controlled arithmetical construction of the painting that would be completely created from pure, visual elements, that is planes and colors.

These pure elements, which have no meaning other than themselves result in a painting that has no meaning except itself. Of course graphic design is the antithesis of this concept in the sense that, when a graphic design does not have a symbolic or semantical meaning, it ceases to be a graphic communication and becomes fine art. But as can be seen in Bill's poster designs, the aesthetic of Art Concrete can be applied to the problem of graphic design. His layouts are constructed of elemental geometric elements organized with absolute order.

As the 1930s gave way to the war years and Switzerland sat in splendid neutrality in the midst of a ravaged Europe, Bill played a major role in evolving a Constructivist ideal in Graphic design. Mathematical proportion, geometric spatial division, and the use of Akzidenz Grotesque type are aspects of his work on this period. He explored the use of the ragged-right margin and indicated paragraphs by an interval of space instead of a paragraph indent in some of his 1940s book designs. The evolution of Bills Art and design was based on the development of cohesive visual organization. The linear division of
space into harmonious parts; the use of modular grids; arithmetic and geometric progressions, permutations, and sequences; and the equalization of contrasting and complementary relationships in an ordered whole are important concerns.

In 1949, he wrote that “I am of the opinion that it is possible to develop an art largely based of mathematical thinking.”

In 1950, Bill became involved in the planning of the curriculum and buildings for the Hochschule fur Gestaltung in Ulm, Germany. This school, which operated until 1968, attempted to establish a center of research and training to address the design problems of the era and fill an educational need that had been lacking since the Bauhaus closed. Bill left Ulm directorship in 1956, and the school evolved along scientific and methodological approaches to design problem solving. On counterpoint to Max Bill’s evolution toward a strong purist approach to graphic design during the 1930s and 1940s, there was also a strong tendency toward complexity in graphic design in this period. This is evidenced in the work of Lester Beall, for example.

In Swiss Design during the same period, Max Huber (b. 1919) brought an extraordinary vitality and complexity to his work. After studying the formal ideas of the Bauhaus and experimenting with photomontage as a student at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts, Huber moved to Milan, Italy, and began his career. Returning to his native Switzerland Huber collaborated with Bill in exhibit design projects. After his return to Italy in 1946, Huber produced dazzling graphics. Bright, pure hues were combined with photography in intense complex visual organizations. Huber took advantage of the transparency of printing inks by designing with forms and images that overlapped creating layers of information.

The emerging International Typographic style gained its alphabetical expression in many sans serif type styles that were designed in the 1950s. The geometric sans serif styles mathematically constructed with drafting instruments during the 1920s and 1930s, were rejected in favor of new designs inspired by nineteenth century Akzidensz Grotesque fonts. In 1954 a young Swiss designer working in Paris, Adrian Frutiger (b. 1928) created a visually programed family of twenty one sans serif fonts named Univers. The “palette” of typographic variations, limited to regular, Italic, and bold in traditional typography was expanded sevenfold. Conventional nomenclature was replaced by numbers. Because all the twenty one fonts had the same x-height and ascender and descender lengths, they form a uniform whole that can be used together with complete harmony. The size and weight of the capitals is closer to the size and weight of the lower-case characters; therefore, the color of a text setting is more uniform than that of most earlier type styles. Frutiger labored for three years on Univers. To produce the Univers family, the Deberny - Peignot foundry in Paris invested over two hundred thousand hours of machine, engraving, retouching and final hand punching to create the thirty-five thousand matrices needed to produce a twenty-one fonts in the full range of sizes.

In the middle 1950s, Edouard
Hoffman of the Haas type foundry in Switzerland decided that the Azkidenz Grotesque fonts should be refined and upgraded. Hoffman collaborated with Max Miedinger, who executed the designs, and their new sans serif with an even larger x-height than Univers was released as the new HAAS Grotesque. When this design was produced in Germany by D. Stempel AG in 1961, the Germans shocked Hoffman by naming the face Helvetica, the Latin name of Switzerland. Helvetica’s well defined rhythm of positive and negative shapes made it the most specified typeface internationally during the past quarter of century. Because the various weights, italics and widths were developed by different designers in several countries, the Helvetica family lacks the cohesiveness of the Univers.

**Design In Basel and Zurich:**

Fifteen years old Emil Ruder (1914-1970) began a four year compositor’s apprenticeship in 1929, and attended The Zurich School of Arts and Crafts when he was in his late twenties. In 1947 Ruder joined the faculty of the Basel School of the Arts and Crafts as a typography teacher, and continued in this position for the rest of his life. Ruder called upon his students to strike a correct balance between form and function and taught that when type lost its communicative meaning it lost its purpose. Legibility and readability become dominant concerns. His classroom projects developed sensitivity to negative and unprinted spaces including the spaces between and inside letterforms. Ruder advocated systematic overall design and the use of a complex grid structure to bring all elements - typography, photography, illustration, diagrams and charts - into harmony with each other while allowing for design variety. Problems of unifying type and image were addressed.

Ruder realized the implications of Univers and the creative potential unleashed by the unity of proportion that allowed the intermixing of all twenty one members of this type family. Ruder and his students exhaustively explored the contrasts, texture, and scale possibilities of the new face in both commissioned and experimental work.

After completing his education in Zurich and working as a staff designer for several studios, Armin Hofmann (b.1920) began teaching graphic design at the Basel School of Arts and Crafts in 1947. At the same time Hofmann opened a studio in collaboration with his wife Dorothe. Hofmann has a deep sense of aesthetic values which enables him to plumb deeply into the essence of form and apply this understanding to both teaching and designing. As time passed Hofmann evolved a design philosophy based on the search for a graphic form language to replace traditional pictorial ideas with a contemporary aesthetic based on the fundamental, elemental nature of visual phenomena. Hofmann seeks a dynamic harmony where all the parts of a design are unified. He sees the relationship of contrasting elements as the means to breathe life into visual design. These contrasts include light to dark, curved lines to straight lines, form to counterform, and dynamic to static. Resolution is achieved when the creator brings the total into an absolute harmony. As with music, painting, or dance, design moves to a higher place of expression when this resolution is accomplished.

Swiss design began to coalesce into a
unified international movement when the journal *New Graphic Design*, began publication in 1959. The editors were four Zurich designer who played a major role in the evolution of the international design Style: Richard P. Lohse (b.1902), Josef Muller Brockmann (b.1914), Hans Neuberg (b.1904), and Carlo Vivarelli (b.1919). This trilingual periodical began to present the philosophy and accomplishments of the Swiss movement to an international audience.

Emerging as a leader theorist and practitioner of the movement, Joseph Muller-Brockmann sought an absolute and universal graphic expression through an objective and impersonal presentation communicating to the audience without the interference of the designer's subjective feelings and devoid of propagandistic techniques of persuasion.

Posters created by Muller-Brockmann in the 1950s communicate their message with remarkable intensity and clarity. His photographic posters treat the image as a symbol. The language of constructivism creates a visual equivalency to the structural harmony of music, in his concert posters.

For all its elemental simplicity his posters successfully combine effective communication of information, expression of the content, and visual harmony.

In a country with such outstanding design schools as Switzerland Siegfried Odermatt (b. 1926) is a rarity: The self educated designer.

He combined the clean efficient presentation of information with a dynamic visual quality. Straightforward photography is used with drama and impact. Ordinary images are turned into convincing and engaging photographs through the careful use of cropping and lighting with attention to shape and texture as qualities that cause an image to reach out from the page.

The visual tools used are typography photography and constructive drawing.

Much of Odermatt's work is purely typographic, and he is willing to take great liberties with the traditions of typography. It is his belief that a one color typographic design can achieve the visual impact and power of full color graphics through the strength of the concept and the manipulation of form, visual form, space, shape, and tone. Odermatt has made mockery of those designers who say that there are only so many ways to divide and organize the space of the printed page.

During the post-World War II era, there was a growing spirit of internationalism. Increased trade resulted in multinational corporations that were active in as many as hundred different countries. The speed and pace of communications were turning the world into a “global village”. There was a need for communicative clarity, multilingual formats to transcend language barriers, and elementary pictographs and glyphs to enable people from around the world to comprehend signs and information. The new graphic design developed in Switzerland helped fill these needs. The fundamental concept and approach began to spread around the world.
April Greiman is considered a post-modernist in the early period of her design work. Greiman began her study of design at the Kansas City Art Institute, where she came under the influence of visiting Swiss designers teaching in the program. These teachers had such a profound impact upon Greiman that upon graduation she immediately enrolled at the Allgemeine Kunstgewerbeschule (the School of Design) in Basel for a year. While at Basel, the writings and works of Emil Ruder and the teachings of Armin Hofmann and Wolfgang Weingart become the nucleus of her own investigations. From Hofmann she assimilated the need to examine the communicative potential of abstract and elemental form; from Weingart, a tireless experimenter, she learned to defiantly question time-honored traditions of typography and to view anything “new” as passe. Of the many things she learned at Basel, it was perhaps Weingart’s unique attitudes towards form and communication, and his bent for breaking the “rules” that affected her the most. This influence remains visibly apparent in her work.

Upon returning to the United States from Basel, Greiman divided her time between teaching and professional practice. In 1976 she settled in Los Angeles, a city that matched her exotic temperament. Upon her arrival, key clients such as Wet magazine and the California Institute of the Arts gave her free rein to explore new ideas. The work produced for these clients brought
immediate national attention, for it was a daring approach that had not yet been experienced in America before.

As other American designers trained in Swiss methods began to enlarge their formal vocabulary, a new trend in graphic design emerged. It was given the label of “Post-Modernism”.

Wolfgang Weingart is directly linked to this development, for his work ten years earlier had already explored much of what was now just beginning to happen in America. When his American students arrived back in the States they brought his influence with them, but broadened it.

Greiman added a new dimension to her Basel training with a powerful sense of visual drama, fresh conception of form and space, and ingenious use of color and photography.

Other developments occurred in American design - particularly in architecture - that set the stage for post-modern graphic design. Beginning in the mid-1960s, architects began to apply ornament to the surfaces of their buildings in response to more than a generation of high-rise glass boxes. Robert Venturi, one of the earliest of this architects reacted to Mies Van Der Rohe’s dictum “less is more” with “less is a bore.” Ornament was applied to surfaces not only to satisfy a basic human desire but also because it was capable of functioning as a language of form that places an object in time and reveals its purpose. Because graphic design and typography are the most ephemeral and fast-changing of the design disciplines, developments in this areas always follow on the heels of major changes in architecture.

Greiman transforms two dimensional typographic pages into dynamic, three dimensional spaces somewhat reminiscent of the Proun paintings by El Lissitzky. Typography, abstract geometrical forms, linear elements, and gestural shapes combined with psychedelic color and vivid texture to fool the eye, to shock, and to surprise the viewer with an ambiguous reality. Linear elements suggesting perspective; trapezoidal shapes hovering in space; drop shadows suggesting light sources; and graphic elements set against wide angle, expansive photographs are part of this lexicon of form.

Most recently Greiman explored the potential of layered information. Her work in this area is closely related with experiments initiated by Wolfgang Weingart in the mid 1970’s. Using film positives, Weingart overlapped images, type and texture to create complex fields of visual information. Greiman uses electronic tools to produce similar results; however her texture layerings are digitally produced, having a quality reflective of the technology.

The Macintosh computer is one of Greiman’s most significant tools. She finds it to be “accessible yet subtle at the same time based on a highly ‘physical’ intuitive, visual, ‘iconic’ language for the user.” She uses this tool both in the early and the late stages of the design process. It has been applied to graphic design as well as to the design of furniture, interiors and fabrics. For Greiman, the Macintosh “contradicts and in fact resolves the usual dualities: right/left brain, loose/tight, man/machine, thinking/feeling”. The responsive character of this machine suits her well, for her design sensibility continually travels back and forth between visual order and chaos.
My teaching approach, which is all about the process of learning rather than the philosophy of teaching. It is a learning process that engages a simple direct and open attitude toward typography and life, a process not of making typography while suffering pain, but rather of having fun exploring all the possibilities of classical typography, systematic typography, ugly typography, research typography, rigid typography, computer typography, crazy typography, painting typography, do it yourself typography, Swiss Typography, letterspacing typography....There is great freedom in our work, a careful observer will see that serious care, critical judgement and visual sensitivity are our highest priorities throughout the design process.

I try to teach students to view typography from all angles: type must not always be set flush left/ragged right, nor in only two type sizes, nor in necessarily right angle arrangements, nor printed in either black or red. Typography must not be dry, tightly ordered or rigid. Type may be set center axis, ragged left/ragged right, perhaps sometimes in chaos. But even then, typography should have a hidden structure and visual order.
The work and teaching of Wolfgang Weingart reaffirm the fundamental importance of experimentation within typographic design. Only through intelligent open minded investigation based upon formal typographic understanding, can a designer develop, become independent, and learn to challenge accepted design standards. In this sense Weingart’s work is a celebration of the infinite communicative possibilities of type and the elemental power of typographic signs. The points at which the history of typography can be seen genuinely to have moved forward are few. We believe this lecture manuscript and Weingart’s work, represent one such progression.

Weingart’s ideas:
- To expand radically the thoughts, theories and visual restrictions of so called “Swiss typography”.
- The freedom requires strict discipline and responsibility.
- Letter spacing
- The ice of the fifties and the sixties was broken, creating a world of new and crazy design possibilities
- Type is lively, relatively free, renounces extensive design dogma, and tends to look unorthodox.

The Swiss Typography tried to establish dogmas, according to Weingart, after years of research, “there is no reliable definition of what is reasonable, fair, unmanipulated message, completely aside from the question of whether there could, or even should be such a definition...it is also difficult to explain how such a message could be translated typographically, yet remain effective.

Swiss typography can be one of many directions. The deciding factor for me is to take the design criteria of Swiss Typography as a sensible point of departure.

Naturally this attitude leads to continuous attempts to break away from trusted design patterns. We attempt to test experimentally the semantic and syntactic possibilities of typography, and to brake through its ideological borders by consciously ignoring the traditional limits and recipes for typographic design.
Ever since Robert Venturi celebrated the notion of contradiction in architecture (1966) the idea of discontinuity has been a conscious tactic of Post-Modernists. Even before this, in the late 1950s, Pop Artists such as Richard Hamilton and Robert Rauschenberg made it a part of their poetics of assemblage and collage. For architects and theorists such as Colin Rowe, collage had the virtues of pluralism, cultural autonomy and all the qualities which might be put in antithesis to minimalism and the Modernist drive towards universalism. An inclusive architecture, it was argued, was better able to deal with social realities than a reduced utopian approach. Modernism and the aesthetics of integration and good taste inevitably led, so the argument went, to the repression of minority cultures. It was crypto-imperialist, or at least smug and middle-class, the veiled hegemony of a ruling bureaucratic taste. Even if this assertion were not entirely true, it had a good deal of statistical evidence behind it: the examples of bureaucratic planning, Park Avenue in New York City and almost any rebuilt downtown area. For artists the position was parallel: the Late-Modern abstraction of Pollock, Rothko and Newman became a kind of aesthetic orthodoxy, upheld by museums and corporate clients, which suppressed the tastes of all but the chosen few. Eero Saarinen's CBS Building in New York, finished in 1965, epitomized both
tendencies. Perfectly integrated in its abstract art, simplified architecture and bland furnishings, its good taste was rammed down the throat of every secretary and junior executive. Only the chairman, William Paley, was allowed his personal memorabilia, dark panelled walls and the evidence that he might inhabit Tudor England in suburban Long Island. For the rest it was all color coordination, Knoll International and paintings which might get into MOMA. In case anyone got out of line, or made a mess with a personalized ashtray, battalions of janitors equipped with floor plans and precise aesthetic commands, would march out every night to edit diverse reality and return it to the perfect corporate dream. It was almost aesthetic fascism as everybody knew, including even the editors of Life Magazine who ran a story on this corporate control (and soon commissioned a worse version in the same genre). And what finally killed it was not Post-Modern protest, but success and the enormous attendant boredom of this success. Anyone who doubts this is challenged to walk around New York at Sixth Avenue near the Time-Life Building, and keep their pulse above 60.

Anything was better than this ennui and one can see why Venturi's complexity and contradiction was quickly welcomed as a stimulant. Not only was it visually dramatic, it also could handle urban reality in a satisfactory way, accepting the discords and discontinuities of use and taste: for instance the different pressures on the inside and outside of a building, which were invariably suppressed in a Modernist architecture. And yet there was obviously one major problem, which philosophers pointed out: from a contradictory proposition anything can be deduced. When one starts and ends in contradiction, there is little at stake and no chance for a coherent architectural language. This problem perhaps explains why Venturi ends his 1966 polemic with the chapter called 'The Obligation Toward the Difficult Whole' (my italics): unity must be continually; sought amidst the plural languages to give them sense. Otherwise eclecticism degenerates into a trivial and evasive form of collage.

More recently the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard has defined 'the Post-Modern condition' (1979) as a kind of perpetual warfare of different language games against each other. Arguing that there are no 'meta-narratives' of religion, politics, social vision or aesthetics that can command universal assent today, he pushes the notion of pluralism to an extreme and decides, rather predictably, that this contentious battleground of 'differences' is a good thing and ought to be supported. While one can well agree with his emphasis on tolerance, his 'war on totality' is so obsessive that it leads to a new form of orthodoxy and one which is as oppressive as his enemy the bureaucratic French culture of consensus. Emphasizing differences, 'otherness', discontinuity and plural languages, leads finally to a confusing babble; not the competition of language games, but rather their cacophony and mutual cancellation.

It is against such a background that one should see the recent work of James Stirling and Jeremy Dixon - their discontinuous architecture proposed for London - and the paintings of David Salle and Robert Longo, the parallel
movement in art. All of this work taken together amounts to a paradigm of discontinuity where one language confronts another, where one theme contradicts another, where cultural pluralism is celebrated as an end in itself. Salle characteristically uses the diptych to set up a dualism of themes that are self-cancelling. Images lifted equally from pulp fiction and high art are juxtaposed, not synthesized, and presented with a studied neutrality. Exotic photographs of the figure are overlaid with graffiti, maps, modern furniture, quotes from Modern art, and all of these contrasts are heightened by the flat, acid colors associated with advertisements. Evidently it's a presentation of the contradictory values purveyed through TV, or any Sunday color supplement, with no editorial line to supply the meaning, because there isn't any significance in our consumer society. So far so good (or bad, and Salle is on the edge of that tradition valued today as 'Bad Painting'): it's up to the viewer to supply the interpretation and ultimate judgement. Is this a telling indictment of our Faustian predicament, or a cathartic presentation of opposed forces; an allegory about the frustration of consumer nihilism, or an appropriation of its methods? You, the neutral Salle implies, should tell him.

James Stirling has told us, or rather the TV interviewer at the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, that he is now interested in the virtues of 'inconsistency', a set of discontinuities generated by contrary urban pressures and internal requirements. His additions, for the Tate Gallery take inconsistency to a new level of poetry. Instead of simply providing a different front, back and sides, as any good urban building celebrated by Venturi might do, Stirling even breaks up these consistent parts into opposed areas. He has called the Clore Gallery, extension 'a garden building', hence its symbolic trelliswork and pergola, hence its episodic informality which is almost picturesque. But no garden building, to my knowledge, changes its formal theme seven times and makes those breaks often in the middle or near the side of a facade. Conventionally one changes theme and material in the corner where two planes meet and can be separated by an edge stop. Not Stirling; in nearly every case he has emphasized discontinuity by breaking a theme at an unexpected point. This is true as much in the details as in the larger compositional areas, so one can be sure there is a polemical intention behind the discontinuities. What do they tell us?

First, as Stirling says in descriptions, they relate the relevant parts to adjacent buildings - the cornice and material of the Tate, and the brickwork of the existing lodge and hospital. His 'pergola' relates to the Tate's rusticated base and many building lines, and proportions are also related if not matched. A more literal approach would have produced a more striking incongruity: an unresolvable battle between an Edwardian-Baroque and a brick structure: palace versus house. Instead we find two things which mediate this clash: Stirling's new 'order' of a neutral stone grid and a series of overlapping themes which avoid a clear break, or cataclysmic confrontation. Both of these tactics are significant contributions to the philosophy of pluralism and the practice of contextualism. They may not be the
final word on fitting into a disparate environment, but they begin to formulate a new rule for this most typical of urban problems. Contrast it with the schizophrenic approach of the nineteenth century - public front/private back, or at St. Pancras Station, fantasy hotel/utilitarian shed. Contrast it with Modernist *tabula rasa* or classical integration, which would have papered over the differences between surrounding buildings and denied a valid pluralism. Stirling speaks of 'an architectural conversation' between different parts of the building, and the different buildings, and since at least three sides of his context are speaking different languages, he has plausibly invented a fourth language game - the square stone order - which can speak parts of all three dialects: Baroque classical to the left, brick vernacular to the right and Bauhaus functional in back. The fourth language, like Esperanto, is not yet as conventional as the other three, but it is based on current technologies and plausible, functional analysis. As if to underscore its unconventionality, Stirling has inserted a set of discordant punctuations - particularly the angular bay windows, bright green metal doors and glazing bars. These are even more discontinuous with the surface and adjacent material than the square 'order' is with the adjacent buildings. Finally, in case anyone thinks this discontinuity is accidental, it is underlined by breaking up the 'order' itself into 1/3 bay rhythms on either side of the entrance and by absent stonework just where it is visually expected on the glazed corner. Here brickwork hangs miraculously in tension, emblem of its symbolic, not structural, role. On the inside the square order is repeated again both in its unity and discontinuity, to divide up the wall like a set of pilasters and give proportion and measure to space. The space is a cross between Le Corbusier and Aldo Rossi, the violent triple-height contrasts of the one set against the severe serenity of the other. Again color harmonies at a large scale are penetrated by disharmonies at a small scale, an overall peach and cream is surprised by a pink handrail, or an ultramarine and turquoise archway. Only when we are right inside the Turner galleries do these contrasts and discontinuities calm down, as they should, to a muted contrapunto. The color and material here is virtually harmonious throughout, with only the doorways and overhead roof lanterns providing accent.

Whether all this juxtaposition and discontinuity make a good gallery remains to be seen, but it does, I believe, make an important contribution to Post-Modern urbanism and is a lesson from which several other designers are learning, if not directly following. Jeremy Dixon's proposal for the Royal Opera House extension is the most eminent successor in this genre. It too changes language three times around four sides of a complex urban site. On the public Covent Garden side where it must complete the square in a desirable way, it adapts the existing Tuscan order and combines it with the typical London grammar of eighteenth-century stonework. Only subtle accents are allowed to break this harmony - a row of rectangular voids, based on those of the Uffizi in Florence, which give welcome light to the arcade; a fifth floor loggia which allows the public to survey...
the delights of rooftop London and the square below; and a roofscape of Post-Modern forms, even the jutting bay window of Stirling (and Breuer). This formula of harmony below the cornice level and ad hoc assemblage above is conventional to the Nash terrace as well as extension building in general, but rarely is the duality built from scratch.

In constructing this ‘disharmonious harmony’ Dixon, like Stirling, is rejecting all models of totalistic planning and imitating the city of memory built over time. In effect he is saying that if we must build £55 million chunks of the environment at one go, then they must look as if many architects constructed them for different, if related, clients. The contrast with the corporate approach, and Foster and Rogers’ integrated imagery, could not be greater. Dixon is asserting the image of individualism and autonomy, as in his housing projects, on a reality that is altogether different and in this case as in the others, we can applaud him for the lie’.

Of course it’s not a complete untruth, there are different functions behind these discontinuous forms and he has sought an appropriate language for each requirement. Thus many large interior spaces are suppressed on the outside while small-scale shops and offices are represented. These relate to the adjacent fabric in a figurative rather than literal way, just as Stirling related to his context at the Tate. On the Russell Street side the language changes abruptly from white stone classicism to a plainer Post-Modern Classicism with a thin layer of cut-out circles, truncated pediments and flat cornice.

There’s a virtual knife-cut between these two systems, a discontinuity which is exaggerated by the window rhythms and change of order. And this facade is peeled back at various stages to show its shallow depth and existence as urban representation, precisely to emphasize its symbolic and visual role. The reason for this is not hard to find, for if Dixon had built a regular facade up to the corners and at full height it would have been oppressive in such a small street.

The episodic skin of Russell Street then ends in what is called a ‘circular tower’, but tower is precisely what it is not: the ribbon windows which spin out of sync exaggerate the horizontal movement, and the overall mass is squat, not vertical. The intention is to relate this curved shape with the turret opposite and had this been done it would have formed a very successful gateway to the square. Here is one case where the strategy of discontinuous urbanism might have been used to more effect, and the choice of a Moderne treatment seems wilfully odd. From here up Bow Street and towards the Opera House the language changes twice more while it also bends to fit into the existing street pattern. Again the basic grammar is a thin skin of Post-Modern Classicism which is eroded and pulled back at various points to reveal a larger mass in back.

With all these different facades we find a similar conceptual treatment; a formal treatment of classical shapes set below an informal skyline which suggests the corporate mass of the project. In effect Dixon is favoring the illusion of small-scale shops and individual ownership over the reality of a single institutional client. By breaking up his facades into five discontinuous themes he gives them not only an urbane coherence - impossible in an
integrated aesthetic at this scale - but a symphonic quality. We can read this score in either direction and still come up with a symphonic ordering, the sonata allegro form, which has a climactic finale at both ends. This musical analogy, which has developed from Stirling's scheme for the Meineke Strasse, Berlin, 1976 - introduction of the theme, exposition, development, recapitulation and coda - has become one of the strongest paradigms of current urbanism. Its virtues are no doubt superior to the totalising model which still prevails in Late-Modernist circles, but like all paradigms it has obvious limits. Discontinuity and fragmentation without an ordering principle and final goal create their own kind of totality, their own style of boredom, every bit as predictable as La Ville Radieuse. Evidently all these strategies of collage need a complementary hierarchy and ordering system to be fully effective. And here we can note a lacuna in both Stirling's Tate and Dixon's Opera House scheme: there is no symbolic and ornamental progression to a climax, no clear iconographic programme, no developed succession of orders (Doric to Ionic to Corinthian), no clear center and sense of climactic arrival. It is true the double spiral stair and opera auditorium are two centers and climaxes to Dixon's scheme, but they still lack an ornamental and symbolic progression that prepares for them.

This problem characterizes, of course, all architecture today and is not an inherent fault of the collage strategy although it may be accentuated by this method. Where one uses many styles and motifs, there is a danger of these languages taking over the plot. "Intertextuality", the cliche of Post-Modern literature, shows that where there are too many texts there is no author. In architecture of any size the client and architect must work out the plot together, and be quite explicit about this, or the story will degenerate into a collage of professional language games, that implicit war which Jean-Francois Lyotard asserts is the condition of Post-Modernism. The plausibility of his arguments rests in the idea that no one, and no ideology or religion, has any great authority in our time; a likely truth. And yet the consequences of this need not be an art and architecture of frustration, of mutually incompatible and self-cancelling acts, because there is still a great deal of shared interest and values between different people and taste-cultures. The challenge is to find this area and give it artistic and symbolic expression.

We are thus left with the conclusion that discontinuity is a legitimate, if limited, strategy for art and architecture in a pluralist age, one that expresses our 'contradictions' and 'inconsistencies', as Venturi and Stirling insist. But it is a necessarily incomplete method until it is supplemented by a symbolic program or some unifying plot.
Deconstructivism returns to the first period of Constructivism between 1918-20 characterized by instability of forms, and a contrast between perfection and violated perfection.

The most obvious formal theme repeated by every one of the artist: the diagonal overlapping of rectangular or trapezoidal bars. These are also quite clear in the work of all the Russian avant-garde from Malevitch to Lissitzky.

The “wrapped” images of Deconstructivist architecture contrast the “pure” images of the old international style.

Pluralism reigns, perhaps a soil in which poetic, original artists can develop.

The dream of pure form has been disturbed. Form has become contaminated. The dream has become a kind of nightmare.

It is the ability to disturb our thinking about form that makes this projects deconstructive. It is not that they derive from the mode of contemporary philosophy known as “deconstruction”.

They are not an application of deconstructive theory. Rather, they emerge from within the architectural tradition and happen to exhibit some deconstructive qualities.

Deconstruction itself, however is often misunderstood as the taking apart of constructions. Consequently, any provocative architectural design that appears to take structure apart- weather it be simple breaking of an object or the complex dissimulation of an object into a collage of traces - has been hailed as
deconstructive. ... Deconstruction is not demolition, or dissimulation. While it diagnoses certain structural problems within apparently stable structures, these flaws do not lead to structures' collapse. On the contrary deconstruction gains its force by challenging the very values of harmony, unity, and stability, and proposing instead a different view of structure: the view that the flaws are intrinsic to the structure.

They cannot be removed without destroying it; they are indeed structural.

Deconstructivism identifies the symptoms of the repressed impurity. The impurity is drawn to the surface by a combination of gentle coaxing and violent torture: the form is interrogated.

The Russian avant-garde posed a threat to tradition by breaking the classical rules off composition, in which the balanced hierarchical relationship between forms creates a unified whole. Pure forms were now used to produce "impure", skewed, geometric compositions.... placed simple forms in conflict to produce an unstable, restless geometry. There was no single axis or hierarchy of forms but a nest of competing and conflicting axis and forms.

The instability of the pre-revolutionary work had never been proposed as structural possibility. The early work was not concerned with destabilizing structure. On the contrary, it was concerned with the fundamental purity of structure. Its irregular geometry was understood as a dynamic relationship between forms floating in space rather than an unstable structural condition intrinsic to the forms themselves.

The Russian avant-garde was corrupted by the purity of the modern movement.

Projects explore the relationship between the instability of the early Russian avant-garde and the stability of high modernism.

... they twist Constructivism. This twist is the "de" of "deconstructivist". The projects ...draw from Constructivism and yet constitute a radical deviation from it.

The forms themselves are infiltrated with the characteristic skewed geometry, and distorted.

This disturbance does not result from external violence. It is not a fracturing or slicing, or fragmentation or piercing. Figures are disturbed from within.

The distortion is peculiarly disquieting.

The form is disturbing itself. Yet this internal distortion does not destroy the form.

This is an architecture of disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion, rather than one of demolition, dismantling, decay, decomposition, or disintegration.

It displaces structure instead of destroying it.

Perfection is secretly monstrous. Tortured from within, the seemingly perfect form confesses its crime, its imperfection.

This sense of dislocation occurs also between this forms and their context.

...deconstructivist .. seeks the unfamiliar within the familiar.

...strange yet familiar, a kind of sleeping monster which awakens in the midst of everyday. This is not freedom, liberation but stress; not release but greater tension.

...deconstructivist architecture does not constitute an avant garde. It is not
rhetoric of the new. Rather it exposes unfamiliar hidden within the traditional. It is the shock of the old.

It is not a "style", not a movement, the disquiet this buildings produce is not merely perceptual; is not a personal response, not even a state of mind.

What is being distorted is not a set of deeply entrenched cultural assumptions....assumptions about order, harmony, stability and unity. Yet this disturbance does not derive from, or result in, some fundamental shift in culture. The disquiet is not produced by some new spirit of the age; it is not that an unsettled world produces an unsettled architecture. It is not even the personal angst of the architect; it is not a form of expressionism....only makes it possible for the tradition to go wrong, to deform itself.

The form distorts itself in order to reveal itself anew.
Of circumstantial detail it is perhaps enough to record that this interview was conducted at Derrida's home near Paris during a two-hour session in March, 1988. The interview covered all the main points I had hoped to raise, along with various related topics.

In so far as one can define, explain or summarize the Deconstructionist project, one's account might go very briefly as follows. Deconstruction locates certain crucial oppositions or binary structures of meaning and value that constitute the discourse of 'Western metaphysics'. These include (among many others) the distinctions between form and content, nature and culture, thought and perception, essence and accident, mind and body, theory and practice, male and female, concept and metaphor, speech and writing etc. A Deconstructive reading then goes on to show how these terms are inscribed within a systematic structure of hierarchical privilege, such that one of each pair will always appear to occupy the sovereign or governing position. The aim is then to demonstrate - by way of close reading - how this system is undone, so to speak, from within; how the second or subordinate term in each pair has an equal (maybe a prior) claim to be treated as a condition of possibility for the entire system. Thus writing is regularly marginalised, denounced or put in its place - a strictly secondary, 'supplementary' place - by a long line of thinkers in the Western tradition, from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau, Husserl,
Saussure, Levi-Strauss and the latter-day structuralist sciences of man. But just as often - as Derrida shows in “Of Grammatology” - writing resurfaces to assert its claim as the repressed other of this whole logocentric tradition, the ‘wandering outcast’, scapegoat or exile whose off-stage role is a precondition of the system. And this curious ‘logic of supplementarity’ operates wherever thinking is motivated by a certain constitutive need to exclude or deny that which makes it possible from the outset.

Now it is not hard to see how such a Deconstructive reading might affect the discourse of current (Post-Modern) architectural thought. Thus Peter Eisenman suggests that: ‘the traditional opposition between structure and decoration, abstraction and figuration, figure and ground, form and function could be dissolved. Architecture could begin an exploration of the “between” within these categories.’ And Derrida has likewise written of an architectural ‘supplementarity’, a movement of difference between and within concepts that would open up hitherto unthought of inventive possibilities. The interview has a good deal to say about this in relation to Derrida’s collaborative venture with Eisenman and Tschumi. His book “The Truth in Painting” also has essays on Valeri, Adami and Titus Carmel. In their work - as in Derrida’s recent texts - one can make out the signs of a close and reciprocal exchange between Deconstruction and a certain problematics of writing and graphic representation. But critics have also applied the term ‘Deconstruction’ to other artists like Duchamp, Jasper Johns and Francis Bacon. Derrida himself makes mention of Magritte in the context of ‘citationality’ and the deconstruction of mimetic illusion through effects of juxtaposed image and text. And again there is his essay ‘Restitutions’ raising the question of painterly ‘truth’ by way of Meyer Schapiro’s quarrel with Heidegger over the true significance of Van Gogh’s Old Shoes with Laces, the question seemingly so vital to each of them as to who really owned those shoes.

So the interview asks what relation might exist between these various forms of deconstructive activity: that is to say - for want of better terms - ‘creative’ Deconstruction on the one hand, and diagnostic or critical commentary on the other. To pose the question like this is of course to fall back into just the kind of value-laden binary thinking that Deconstruction sets out to challenge. But it is equally mistaken to believe that having once seen through their delusory appearance, one can finally come out on the far side of all such ‘metaphysical’ categories. What is required is a vigilant awareness of the way that they inhabit all our thinking about art, about criticism, philosophy and the human sciences, while also giving rise to problematic tensions within and between those disciplines.

In “The Truth in Painting” Derrida writes: ‘We must sharpen the points, the blades or the edges of a certain chiasmus.’ This figure - the trope of crossing or exchanged attributes - is one that plays an important role in his reading of Kant and the “parergonal” discourse that frames Kant’s thinking on questions of aesthetic judgement. It is also important to Eisenman, this and other tropes (like catachresis) that push beyond the bounds of reason or representation by radicalizing language.
in its figural aspect. Thus Eisenman: 'the way to catachresis is not to suppress metaphor but to find the catachresis repressed in metaphor, and the way to another architecture is not to suppress the Classical but in fact to cut in . . . to surgically open up the Classical and the Modern to find what is repressed'. This interview may be read as an improvised commentary on the way that Deconstruction has opened up such questions for philosophy and the visual arts alike.

Christopher Norris

Perhaps I could start by asking a rather naive question: can there be such a thing as 'Deconstructivist architecture'? That is to say do these terms refer to a given style, project or body of work? Or do they not rather signify a certain way of looking at various works and projects, a perception that would break with (or at least seek to challenge) established ideas of form, value and aesthetic representation?

Well, I don't know. . . I must say, when I first met. I won't say Deconstructive architecture'. but the Deconstructive discourse on architecture, I was rather puzzled and suspicious. I thought at first that perhaps this was an analogy, a displaced discourse, and something more analogical than rigorous. And then - as I have explained somewhere - then I realized that on the contrary, the most efficient way of putting deconstruction to work was by going through art and architecture.

As you know, Deconstruction is not simply a matter of discourse or a matter of displacing the semantic content of the discourse, its conceptual structure or whatever. Deconstruction goes through certain social and political structures, meeting with resistance and displacing institutions as it does so. I think that in these forms of art, and in any architecture, to deconstruct traditional sanctions - theoretical, philosophical, cultural - effectively, you have to displace . . . I would say 'solid' structures not only in the sense of material structures, but 'solid' in the sense of cultural, pedagogical, political, economic structures. And all the concepts which are, let us say, the target (if I may use this term) of Deconstruction, such as theology, the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible and so forth - these concepts are effectively displaced in order for them to become 'Deconstructive architecture'. That's why I am more and more interested in it, despite the fact that I am technically incompetent.

Could you say a little more about your work with Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman, and some of the collaborative projects under way in Paris at the moment?

Tschumi told me: 'Some architects today are interested in your work and would you be interested in working with some of them, or one of them, on a project in La Villette?' As you know, Tschumi is responsible for all the architecture at La Villette. Of course I was surprised, but my answer was 'Why not?' And so I had my first encounter with Tschumi and I began to look at those projects and to read some texts, by Tschumi and Eisenman. Then I met Eisenman many times in New York. We worked together, we coordinated everything in discussion, I gave this text to Peter Eisenman and in his own way he started a project that was correlated with but at the same time independent of my text. That was true collaboration - not 'using' the other's
work, not just illustrating or selecting from it... and so there is a kind of discrepancy or, I would say, a productive dialogue between the concerns, the styles, the persons too. And so, after about 18 months' or two years' work, the project is now ready to be 'constructed', you might say... to be realized...

So it would be wrong to see this as a new 'turn' in your thinking, a sudden recognition of connections, affinities or common points of interest between Deconstruction and the visual arts? In fact there are many passages in your earlier writings and I am thinking here of texts like Force and Significance or Genesis and Structure - where the argument turns on certain crucial (let us say) metaphors of an architectural provenance. The context here was your joint reading of the structuralist and phenomenological projects - more specifically, of Saussure and Husserl - as two, equally rigorous but finally incompatible reflections on the character of language and meaning. Thus you write: 'the relief and design of structures appears more neutralized. Somewhat like the architecture of an unhabited or deserted city reduced to its skeleton by some catastrophe of nature or art. A city no longer inhabited, not simply left behind, but haunted by meaning and culture'. And of course these architectural figures and analogies occur more often in your later writings on Kant and the tradition of Classical aesthetics (for instance, 'The Parergon in “The Truth in Painting”). Thus for Kant, architectonic is defined as the 'art of systems', that which articulates the various orders of truth-claim and ensures their proper (hierarchical) relationship one with another. So in a sense one could argue that your work has always been crucially concerned with 'architectural' models and metaphors. Do you perceive a clear continuity there, or am I just imagining all this?

No not at all. But I would like to say something about the concept of analogy or metaphor you rightly used a moment ago. Of course there is a lot of architectural metaphor, not only in my texts but in the whole philosophical tradition. And Deconstruction - the word Deconstruction sounds very much like such a metaphor, an architectural metaphor. But I think that it's more complex than that, since the word appeared or was underlined in a certain situation where structuralism was dominant on the scene. So Deconstruction shared certain motifs with the structuralist project while at the same time attacking that project....

But Deconstruction doesn't mean that we have to stay within those architectural metaphors. It doesn't mean, for example that we have to destroy something which is built - physically built or culturally built or theoretically built - just in order to reveal a naked ground on which something new could be built. Deconstruction is perhaps a way of questioning this architectural model itself - the architectural model which is a general question. even within philosophy, the metaphor of foundations, of superstructures, what Kant calls 'architectonic', etc. as well as the concept of the arche... So Deconstruction means also the putting into question of architecture in philosophy and perhaps architecture itself.

When I discovered what we now call 'Deconstructive architecture' I was interested in the fact that these architects were in fact deconstructing the essentials of tradition, and were criticizing everything that subordinated architecture to something else - the
value of, let's say, usefulness or beauty or living- 'habite' -etc.-not in order to build something else that would be useless or ugly or uninhabitable, but to free architecture from all those external finalities, extraneous goals. And not in order to reconstitute some pure and original architecture, on the contrary, just to put architecture in communication with other media, other arts, to contaminate architecture . . . And notice that in my way of dealing with Deconstruction I suspect the concept of metaphor itself, in so far as it involves a complicated network of philosophemes, a network that would always lead us back at some point into architecture . . .

Yes. This is a topic you raise in your "Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Forward". There you explicitly disown the idea that Deconstruction is in any sense an 'architectural metaphor', a figure that would serve obliquely to name or to specify some ongoing project in the field of building and design. And this for the reason as you say, that it is 'no longer possible to make use of the concept of metaphor'. But might we not say with equal force (as you did some years ago in 'White Mythology') that there is no possibility of doing without some residual concept of metaphor; that if indeed all concepts come down to metaphors - as Nietzsche argued - then it is also the case that we possess only concepts of metaphor, ideas that have always already been worked over by the discourse of philosophic reason from Aristotle on? I take this argument as one more example of the firm insistence. On your part that 'Deconstruction' is not be treated as a break with 'Western metaphysics', a leap outside the logocentric tradition that, thinks to land on some alternative, radically different ground. Is it not this acceptance of the need to work patiently within and against the structures of inherited thought that has chiefly distinguished Deconstruction from other less exacting and rigorous forms of Post-Modern thought? I ask this question- as you may by now have guessed- in the hope that you will be drawn into offering some account of what specifically sets Deconstruction apart from the broader Post-Modern project.

As you know, I never use the word 'post', the prefix 'post'; and I have many reasons for this. One of those reasons is that this use of the prefix implies a periodization or an epochalization which is highly problematic for me. Then again, the word 'post' implies that something is highly finished - that we can get rid of what went before Deconstruction, and I don't think anything of the sort. For instance, to go back to the first point of your question, I don't believe that the opposition between concept and metaphor can ever be erased. I have never suggested that all concepts were simply metaphors, or that we couldn't make use of that distinction, because in fact at the end of the essay 'White Mythology' I deconstruct this argument also and I say that we need, for scientific reasons and many reasons, to keep this distinction at work. So this is a very complicated gesture.

Now as for architecture, I think that Deconstruction comes about let us carry on using this word to save time - when you have deconstructed some architectural philosophy, some architectural assumptions - for instance, the hegemony of the aesthetic, of beauty, the hegemony of usefulness, of functionality, of living, of dwelling. But then you have to reinscribe these motifs within the work. You can't (or you shouldn't) simply dismiss those values.
of dwelling, functionality, beauty and so on. You have to construct, so to speak, a new space and a new form, to shape a new way of building in which those motifs or values are reinscribed, having meanwhile lost their external hegemony. The inventiveness of powerful architects consists I think in this reinscription, the economy of this reinscription, which involves also some respect for tradition, for memory. Deconstruction is not simply forgetting the past. What has dominated theology or architecture or anything else is still there, in some way, and the inscriptions, the, let’s say, archive of these deconstructed structures, the archive should be as readable as possible, as legible as we can make it. That is the way I try to write or to teach. And I think the same is true, to some extent in architecture.

You have stressed your suspicion of post-movements in philosophy and art whether Post-Modernist, Post-Structuralist, or post-humanist (as in your early essays ‘The Ends of Man’) And this for the reason- as I take it - that all steps beyond in the name of this or that radical new way of thinking are liable to find themselves unwittingly reinscribed within the terms of that same oppositional order of thought which they hope thereby to escape. Do you not see a risk of something similar happening with current attempts to break with the so-called Modernist paradigm and its associated structure of concepts and values? Thus Peter Eisenman: For architecture to enter a post Hegelian condition it must move away from the rigidity and value-structure of these dialectical oppositions. ‘(ie figure and ground, ornament and structure, form and function etc.). Or would it perhaps be true to say - as some like Gregory Ulmer have claimed - that things have moved on during the past decade or so from

Deconstruction as a species of meticulous textual critique to ‘applied gramatology as a practice of creative reinscription that goes beyond such basic preliminary work? Would this be borne out by what you have recently achieved in your collaborative enterprise with artists like Eisenman and Tschumi or would you perhaps consider this a wrong understanding, a false opposition?

I wouldn’t say ‘false’ opposition. It is an opposition which, I would say, is pertinent for some forms of appropriation in so far as it amounts to a critical method within texts, within literary texts or even philosophical texts. But I insisted from the beginning that Deconstruction was not simply a method, was not a critique, or not simply critical. The concept of critique or criticism is deconstructive somewhere... It is not negative - it was linked from the beginning with affirmation, with the ‘yes’, an affirmation which is not a ‘position’ in the Hegelian sense. So the move which is described by Greg Ulmer is not so much a move in deconstruction. It is a move we can identify in some places - I wouldn’t say ‘in’ my work, from that point of view at least. And of course the variety of fields, of disciplines, of texts, of publishers - this variety was necessary from the outset, philosophical and literary texts and painting and now architecture and some others too, legal texts and many other things.

So I think it is important, this way of opening up the boundaries, and mainly the academic boundaries between texts and disciplines: and when I say academic boundaries I’m thinking not only of the humanistic disciplines and philosophy, but also of architecture - the teaching of architecture. This crossing, this going through the boundaries of
disciplines, is one of the main not just stratagems but necessities of Deconstruction. The grafting of one art on to another, the contamination of codes, the dissemination of contexts are sometimes 'methods or stratagems' of Deconstruction, but most importantly they are moments of what we call history. And that is why I don't think Deconstruction belongs to an epoch or a period, even a modern one. I don't think Deconstruction is something specifically modern. There are some 'modern' features of what we identify as Deconstruction in some academic contexts, but what makes Deconstruction unavoidable has been at work a long time, even with Plato or Descartes. So we have to distinguish between, let us say, some phenomena which are not the entirety of Deconstruction and which give rise to methods, to teaching, to thematic treatment, and something more hidden, more persistent, less amenable to system or method which makes this thematic Deconstruction possible in discourse and in teaching and the arts.

Isn't it a problem that term 'Modernist' (let alone 'Post-Modernism') means such very different things for philosophers on the other hand, and literary critics or art-historians on the other? And doesn't Deconstruction need to adopt a somewhat different stance with regard to these two phenomena? I am thinking here of your recent essays on Kant, on the 'Principle of reason', and on the Enlightenment tradition in general. There you make it plain that we cannot simply break with that tradition; that any criticism must come (so to speak) from inside and avail itself of the concepts and categories of enlightened critique while questioning their claims to ultimate truth. And I think this places some considerable distance between your own thinking and the kind of project pursued by (for instance) Lyotard or Baudrillard. Whereas the Post-Modern 'turn' in literature, art and cultural theory has a different set of historical coordinates and a different relation to issues of truth, reason and ideological critique. Haven't these distinctions become rather blurred in recent debate?

I wouldn't want to call Deconstruction a critique of modernity. But neither is it 'modern' or in any sense a glorification of modernity. It is very premature to venture these generalizations these concepts of period. I would say that I just don't know what these categories mean, except that of course I can tell more or less what other people mean them to signify . . . But for me they are not rigorous concepts. Nor is Deconstruction a unitary concept although it is often deployed in that way, a usage that I find very disconcerting . . . Sometimes I prefer to say deconstructions in the plural, just to be careful about the heterogeneity and the multiplicity, the necessary multiplicity of gestures, of fields, of styles. Since it is not a system, not a method, it cannot be homogenized. Since it takes the singularity of every context into account. Deconstruction is different from one context to another. So I should certainly want to reject the idea that 'Deconstruction' denotes any theory, method or univocal concept. Nevertheless it must denote something that can at least be recognized in its working or its effects.

Of course this doesn't mean that Deconstruction is that 'something' or that you can find Deconstruction everywhere. So on the one hand we have to define some working notion,
some regulative concept of Deconstruction. But it is very difficult to
gather this in a simple formula. I know
that the enemies of Deconstruction say:
'Well, since you cannot offer a
definition then it must be an obscure
concept and you must be an
obscurealist thinker'. To which I would
respond that Deconstruction is first and
foremost a suspicion directed against
just that kind of thinking - 'what is . . . ?'
'what is the essence of . . . ?' and so on.

Could we perhaps take that point a little
beat further? Some theorists of the Post-
Modern (Charles Jenks among them) have
rejected what they see as the negative even
'nihilistic implications of the Deconstruction
movement in contemporary art. According to
Jenks, 'Architecture is essentially
constructive. It builds up structures, depends
on joint endeavors of mutual confidence, the
combination of foresight, good will and
investment - all of which deconstruction
undermines, if not totally destroys.' I thought
you might like to comment on this and
similar responses, especially in view of
current debates taken up in the American
and British press about the 'politics of
Deconstruction', and its supposed nihilistic
leanings. I'm sure you would say that they
have misunderstood.

Absolutely, absolutely. . . There has
been much criticism, many objections
that we find in the newspapers, in the
bad newspapers . . . Which doesn't just
mean that the people who write such
things are jealous. Often they are
academics who don't read the many
texts in which not only I but many
people insist on the fact that
Deconstruction is not negative, is not
nihilistic. Of course it goes through the
experience and the questioning of what
nihilism is. Of course, of course. And
who knows what nihilism is or isn't?

Even the people who object don't raise
the question 'What is nihilism?'
Nevertheless, Deconstruction is or
should be an affirmation linked to
promises, to involvement, to
responsibility. As you know, it has
become more and more concerned with
these concepts - even Classical concepts
of responsibility, affirmation and
commitment . . . So when people say it's
negative, nihilistic and so forth, either
they don't read or they are arguing in
bad faith. But this can and should be
analyzed . . .

Deconstruction is not simply an
activity or commitment on the part of
the architect; it is also on the part of
people who read, who look at these
buildings, who enter the space, who
move in the space, who experience the
space in a different way. From this point
of view I think that the architectural
experience (let's call it
that, rather than talking about
'buildings' as such) . . . what they offer is
precisely the chance of experiencing the
possibility of these inventions of a
different architecture, one that wouldn't
be, so to speak, 'Heideggerian'

The Aphorisms have a good deal to say
about the International College of Philosophy
and its work in promoting inter-disciplinary
exchange. They also make a point about not
talking about 'projects' in this or that field, as
if the work undertaken could be staked out in
advance or in accordance with some
governing scheme or teleology. Thus you write
in your aphorism 36: 'To say that it does not
have a project does not amount to
denouncing its empiricism or its
adventurism. In the same way an
architecture without a project is engaged
perhaps in a more thoughtful, more
inventive, more propitious work...'
Could you say something more about the
kinds of new and productive thinking that have emerged from this bringing together of people from hitherto separate disciplines? Just what goes on when you 'exchange ideas' - to put it very crudely - with artists like Eisenman or Bernard Tschumi; an enterprise without clear-cut aims and ambitions, without some teleological goal?

I was referring to the French meaning of the word 'project' in the code of architecture. I don't know whether it has the same meaning in English. A project is something which is prior to the work, which has its own economy, a governing role which can then be applied and developed . . . And you have the same kind of relation between the project, or the concept, and its carrying-out in practice as between, say, the transcendental signified and its incarnation in the body, in writing etc. So there is a critical reflection on this concept of the 'project' going on among a number of French architects. When I say there is no project in the College, I don't mean to say that we start without any idea of where we're going, but that the relation between the project and the experience, the act, has no Classical or philosophical equivalent. For instance, the College could be seen from one aspect as having the character of a new foundation. And of course a 'foundation' is something with strong philosophical, as well as architectural links. It has its building, its forms, its shape, its place . . . But in fact within this College we ask questions -sometimes, not always in a deconstructive way - about what grounding means, what the foundation means, what the space of the community means, what hierarchy means, in terms not only of academic authority but also in terms of the pedagogical scenography, the organization of the classroom, the way we appoint people, elect people, the way the hierarchies are stabilized or destabilized, and so forth. And all these things have their architectural models. So since our model was not the Western university as it is organized now, or the philosophy that lies behind this modern university (or modern Western university), we had to invent also the symbolic and physical architecture of this new community without referring to any previous, given model.

Of course all the time we have to negotiate, we have to compromise with previous, given models - that's the political strategy, and I think that architects also have to negotiate with norms and practical constraints and so on. Nevertheless, these tactics are oriented toward something that would be new, or that would bring about a real alteration in the old structure. And I think that from the beginning we had, my friends and I, this certainty that first it was something new something new to be built in the architectural sense, new commitments, a new space, a new field of knowledge . . . But also, more specifically, the sense that we had to work with architects, that the teaching and experience of architecture would be an important aspect of our work at the College. So even though my collaboration with Eisenman and Tschumi was not officially a part of the program, it had to do with the College and indeed gave rise to various conferences, meetings and communications . . . events that led on to a close involvement between philosophers and architects. The one for which I wrote my Aphorisms was an example of it.
You have talked about the relationship between 'modernity' in art and architecture, philosophy etc., and a certain idea of the modern university one that took hold in Germany a couple of centuries back and which still exerts a great influence on the way we think about disciplines, subject-areas, questions of intellectual competence, and so forth. And this would perhaps take us back to what you said previously about Kant's 'architectonic', his doctrine of the faculties, that which enforces a proper separation of realms between pure and practical reason, theoretical understanding, aesthetic judgment and their various modalities or powers... To some extent your work in the International College is a way of deconstructing those relations showing how they give rise to endless litigation or boundary-disputes, often played out in very practical terms as a matter of institutional politics...

Oh yes, I agree with your definition of what is going on. Deconstructing not only theoretically, not only giving signals of the process at work, but trying to deconstruct in a practical fashion, that is, to set up and build new structures implying this work of Deconstruction. It's not easy, and it is never done in or through a single gesture. It takes a long time and involves some very complicated gestures. It is always unfinished, heterogeneous, and I think there is no such thing as a 'pure' Deconstruction or a deconstructive project that is finished or completed.

Isn't there a risk that Deconstruction might become mixed up with that strain of Post-Modern or neo-pragmatist thought which says that philosophy is just a 'kind of writing', on a level with poetry, criticism or the 'cultural conversation of mankind'? That these distinctions are merely 'rhetorical' or imposed by an obsolete 'enlightenment' doctrine of the faculties, so that we had best get rid of them and abandon any notion of 'philosophy as having its own special interests, distinctive truth-claims, conceptual history or whatever? Do you see that as a constant risk?

There are many risks and this is one of them. Sometimes it is an interesting risk, sometimes it opens doors and spaces in the fields which are trying to protect themselves from Deconstruction. But once the door is open, then you have to make things more specific, and I would say, following your suggestion, that no indeed, philosophy is not simply a 'kind of writing'; philosophy has a very rigorous specificity which has to be respected, and it is a very hard discipline with its own requirements, its own autonomy, so that you cannot simply mix philosophy with literature, with painting, with architecture. There is a point you can recognize, some opening of the various contexts (including the philosophical context) that makes Deconstruction possible. But it still requires a rigorous approach, one that would situate this opening in a strict way, that would organize, so to speak, this contamination or this grafting without losing sight of those specific requirements. So I am very suspicious - and this is not just a matter of idiosyncrasy or a matter of training - I am very suspicious of the overeasy mixing of discourses to which your question referred. On the contrary, Deconstruction pays the greatest attention to multiplicity, to heterogeneity, to these sharp and irreducible differences. If we don't want to homogenize everything then we have to respect the specificity of discourses, especially that of philosophical
discourse.

Sometimes you write of the need to maintain 'Enlightenment values'. In this sense the essay appears to side with Kant against those who would claim an immediate or self-present access to truth by virtue of their own inner light, without submitting their claims to the democratic parliament of the faculties. Elsewhere you adopt your own version of the 'apocalyptic tone' as if to defend the right of these characters not to go along with Kant's rules for the proper self-regulating conduct of philosophic discourse. It does seem to me a profoundly ambivalent essay. On the one hand it is establishing a distance - even an antagonism - between Deconstruction and the discourse of Enlightenment critique. On the other it is saying that the Kantian project is somehow indispensable, that we cannot simply break with it as certain Post-Modernist thinkers would wish - or have I misread your essay in some fairly basic way?

No, no, you read it very well. I agree with everything you said. It is a very, very ambivalent essay. I tried - as I often do - to achieve and say many things at once. Of course I am 'in favor' of the Enlightenment; I think we shouldn't simply leave it behind us, so I want to keep this tradition alive. But at the same time I know that there are certain historical forms of Enlightenment, that we need to criticize or to deconstruct. So it is sometimes in the name of, let us say, a new Enlightenment that I deconstruct a given Enlightenment. And this requires some very complex strategies; requires that we should let many voices speak . . . There is nothing monological, no monologue - that's why the responsibility for Deconstruction is never individual or a matter of the single, self-privileged authorial voice. It is always a multiplicity of voices, of gestures. Each time Deconstruction speaks through a single voice, it's wrong, it is not 'Deconstruction' any more. So in this particular essay, not only do I let many voices speak at the same time, but the problem is precisely that multiplicity of voices, that variety of tones, within the same utterance or indeed the same word or syllable, and so on. So that's one of the questions.

But of course today the political, ideological consequences of the Enlightenment are still very much with us - and very much in need of questioning. So a 'new' enlightenment, to be sure, which may mean Deconstruction in its most active or intensive form.

I suppose I'm looking for some kind of equivalence between what we call 'Modernism' in philosophy, let's say Kantian philosophy, and the term 'Modernism' as conventionally applied in architecture and the visual arts. You might compare the attitude that Deconstructivist architects take, but a critical attitude directed toward that particular form of Modernist critique...

Of course. That's why I'm reluctant to say that Deconstruction is Modern or Post-Modern. But I should also be reluctant to say that it's not Modern, or that it's anti-Modern, or anti-Post-Modern. I wouldn't want to say that what is Deconstructive, if there is such a thing, is specifically Modern or Post-Modern. So we have to be very careful with the use of these epithets.
Dispersed- Multi-Layered Space

For several years now, I have been trying - as I designed the Ushimado International Arts Festival Center, the Second Gymnasium of the Shibaura Institute of Technology and the Mizoe projects - to put into order my thoughts concerning a multi-layered quality of space and what I call the 'inscribing' of that quality. Instead of going directly into a discussion of multi-layered space, I would first like to discuss the background to my ideas.

I initially developed the idea of a multi-layered quality of space out of a desire to escape or to reject the compositional principles behind Classical architecture, namely balance, harmony, stability and unity. However, such a desire in itself is scarcely novel. As many architectural historians and, more recently, historians in general, have already pointed out, Modernism in architecture was based on anti-Classicism and replaced ornamentation and compositional principles based on the orders with abstract forms and the idea of function. This was, strictly speaking, true for only a very short period of time, but the statement certainly applies to movements such as Futurism, Dadaism and Russian Constructivism. In particular, Constructivist architecture aspired to a state of imbalance, disharmony and instability, enhanced by dynamism. These qualities are diametrically opposed to the compositionally principles behind Classical architecture. The result
was a system in which the axes and hierarchies that had hitherto controlled forms no longer existed - a system in which distorted geometrical forms contended and collided.

In fact, Constructivist architecture suggests not simply an anti-Classicist stance but a search for a new system of architectural space, the establishment of which might parallel the arrival of the new social order through revolution. However, such movements were but a brief moment in the larger flow of Modernism and the majority of believers in Modernism, though they may have appeared innovative, have simply articulated the surface of forms as had Classicists. As a result they have promoted architectural stability and unity and very little has changed in the nature of architecture.

The movement called Post-Modernism may simply be an expression of impatience with the impasse in Modernism or it may represent a genuine reassessment of the situation. In either case, Post-Modernism is certainly a reaction against the deadlocked condition of Modernism, yet it itself has promoted an excess of ornament and remains concerned with the surface aspect of forms. Post-Modernism has yet to deal with systematic (ie structural) problems that might really shake the foundations of architecture.

Even if we were now to acquire a unifying viewpoint like that of Classicism, we would find that it allowed us to see practically nothing with any real dimension or substance; ie, nothing would accord with our complex and diverse situation today as we know it. The world that such a view-point permitted would be cleansed and countenance the intrusion of no foreign body or noise; such a world could not exist in reality.

In contemplating both the world of Classicism and reality with all its variety and complexity, I am forced to consider the diverse visions that the latter affords. In considering the diverse world of reality, we first need to realize that we ourselves are diverse presences and are a part of that world. The same can be said of the language we use everyday. The viewing subject, which we once regarded as a mirror reflecting immutable images, possesses distortions like language, and it too is confused constituent of that world. That being the case, a stable and closed construct cannot possibly serve as a model of diversity.

A model that will serve is one in which our vision is a diverse and complex mosaic that, continuously shifting in a world akin to a series of boxes within boxes, perceives the traces of that world and manages to crystalize and systematize those traces to a limited extent. That process is what I mean by inscription, and I take a multi-layered space to be a space with a structure that generates such a vision.

Next, the question of why a multi-layered space can be an anti-Classical space and, moreover, can generate a diversity of visions instead of a unified view, must be considered. In order to consider this problem in a clear and efficient manner, I believe it is best to study not complex works of architecture, but the spaces of gardens which reveal their spatial outlines more simply and clearly.

In truth, I already had in my mind images of what I have repeatedly referred to up to now as Classical space
and multi-layered space. In referring to Classical space, I have been imagining the space of French palatial gardens, and in the case of multi-layered space, I have been thinking of the space of Japanese tour gardens. That perhaps reveals the limits of human imagination and the difficulty of conjuring up what one has not already seen or experienced. Be that as it may, let us now investigate actual examples of those spaces in a detailed way.

**Spatial differences between French and Japanese gardens**

From the top floor of the chateau of Vaux-le-Vicomte located in a suburb of Paris, one can see magnificent French gardens organized around a vista beginning at the centre of the chateau and extending in a straight line over a large, nearly level property surrounded by woods. To the right and left of this vista or axis, defined by a central path, are many beautifully trimmed and evenly spaced borders, and between them are intersecting channels of water.

The beautiful gardens of Versailles are founded on balance and proportion; they are said to have been modelled on those of Vaux-le-Vicomte but were laid on an even larger area of land. There, the vista down the middle of the gardens is emphasized to an even greater degree. From the King’s apartments in the centre of the palace one can see it stretching in a straight line, defined in its latter course by the Grand Canal which intersects with a cross-arm, and disappearing into the far distance where the sky meets land. One has the illusion that one’s vision extends much further than is actually possible.

These French gardens are vast in area (those at Versailles are said to cover 300 hectares in all). The royalty and the nobility toured these gardens in carriages. Despite their large sizes, these gardens have extremely simple and clear organizations, making it easy to comprehend them in their entirety. In other words, in each case the spatial order is centered on one point, namely the centre of the chateau. If one stands at that point, then one can see all the gardens and, in that sense, integrate them. Since it is clear from any point in the gardens what the relationship of that point to the centre is, one can readily ascertain where one is and through an awareness of its relationship to the centre, understand the entire layout of the gardens from within the gardens as well.

The availability of an unobstructed view of the entire layout from any point within is what is most notably absent in the Japanese garden. Shrubs, trees and rock arrangements overlap to obstruct the line of vision, creating shadows and eliminating vistas. One may work one’s way past shrubs, circle a pond, cross a stone bridge arching over a stream, and walk over a stone-paved path, all in search of a vista, but the landscape changes in appearance from moment to moment as one moves; no vista appears.

The overlapping landscape bends one’s line of vision and foils attempts to see the entire garden. The landscape is not integrated through vision but is in fact compelled to flex and fragment. This poverty of vista is precisely what is distinctive about a Japanese garden. **The absence of vista, the flexion and fragmentation of vision instead of the integration of the whole by means of a sweeping view represents a positive, rather than a negative principle behind the Japanese garden.**
**Constructed and Deconstructed qualities of space**

However, this principle has no direct relationship to the beauty or ugliness of a view, nor can one develop from it some general theory of Japanese, as opposed to European, culture. Nor do I have any intention of initiating a detailed study of gardens. My intention instead is to examine in a concrete way two sets of gardens, one with vistas and the other without, and by considering the meaning hidden behind human vision to investigate what spatial structure is implicit in that vision.

First, let us consider what a vista, which is absent in one type of garden and available at all points in the other, means. A French garden is not only extremely artificial but constructed. Its flowers and trees do not appeal to one's feelings about nature but rather constitute material subordinate to the entire plan. Form and material are clearly divorced, and the former completely dominates the latter. Consequently, materials are treated as unchanging and unrelated to the generative process. Although trees are continuously changing and being created, the consequences of such activity are not acknowledged; the trees are identified only as conical or cubic forms. All plants as plants have been banished from the garden, and it is only rectangles and circles that are arranged on the extensive, level site paved with gravel, creating a symmetrical, geometrical pattern. There is only a completely static surface that will remain forever unchanged.

To create a unified garden by compelling materials, whether they be trees or water, to take on unchanging forms with no concern for diversity or generative transformations represents the complete dominance of the intellect. The result is a highly constructed space.

Making the object insubstantial confers on it a transparency and endows vision with a privileged character. Visual transparency is a quality or state allowing one to penetrate all parts of the object. It is as if the source of light and power of vision residing within the self were situated God-like at the vertex of a cone-shaped world and the self could see into the furthest depths of the cone. No doubt, transparency according to the law of perspective approaches this conical situation.

We, as subjects that see, cannot, unlike God, separate ourselves completely from the diverse, actual world. This is because the self that gazes upon an object is itself a diverse, opaque presence full of distorting noise. The transparent cone that has been isolated from the infinitely pleated, diverse world is enveloped by the opacity of the self which gazes from the vortex and the opacity of that part of the world that the cone has ignored. One might almost say that transparency is a chance product born of these opaque pleats.

If the self continues to look through the cone, at some point everything undoubtedly will become transparent. The world, however, will not have become truly transparent. It only means that the cone with the self at the vertex has been temporarily isolated. For the world to become truly transparent, the self that gazes must not be an opaque self but a point-like, insubstantial existence from which everything - substance and extension - has been eliminated. The act of looking and the world inside the cone must be decisively
separated, because the homogeneity of the expanse presenting itself to the eyes and the self is by no means always guaranteed. Control and cleaning must be undertaken to see that no noise or distortion enters the cone.

As soon as there is a disfigurement or distortion for some reason, it must be discovered and eliminated; each time new leaves appear on plants and grow unchecked, threatening to distort conical forms and other geometrical patterns, the gardener must wield his shears with utmost severity to correct even the slightest aberration. The planting in conical or cubic form constitutes an enclosure that confines meaning and prevents it from stirring, dissolving or straying. Consequently, a French garden where the spatial order converges on one point can be said to have only one landscape. The diversity or polysemy of landscape and vision is to be completely ignored. That is the basic principle behind a deconstructed garden.

But what happens when, unlike a French garden. The garden is uncropped and the landscape is left to sway and stir as it may? What would happen if, instead of heightening perception, enlarging the cone of vision, and thereby achieving integration of the landscape through transparency at a larger scale, vision travelled from one distorted fragment to another in accordance with shifts in the point of view or the actions of the body? A Japanese garden might be the result.

As has already been pointed out, the absence of vista is characteristic of a Japanese garden. This absence of vista is a consequence of the multi-layered quality of the landscape, evident in the planting, the rock arrangement and the trees, as at Tenryuji or Nanzenji. It is a well known fact that even at the garden of Ryoanji, which seems so lucid at first glance, the rocks are arranged on the white sand so that not all 15 can be seen at once from the en, no matter what the angle. Rock obstructs rock and the landscape is always fragmented. Vision is not allowed to dominate the whole of this garden either. As in the garden of Tenryuji or Nanzenji, the landscape becomes a set of overlapping and contiguous landscapes that deviate slightly from each other. Multiple landscapes coexist.

As a result of overlapping, there are always parts that are hidden. A hidden part, if one changes one’s viewpoint, becomes patent, and what had been visible now becomes latent. This mechanism makes it difficult to apprehend the entire garden. For the viewer, the landscape at each moment certainly exists in front of his eyes, but the plan of the whole is difficult to structure. It is difficult for him to measure his position relative to the entire garden or the distance to a given plant or rock, and without a clear order, multiple landscapes are generated as one’s point of view shifts. The absence of a transcendent centre a vision that can give order to space robs a Japanese garden of perspective and transforms it into an un-constructed space.

However, the Japanese garden is after all an object deliberately created by man, and negative terms such as ‘without order’ or ‘unconstructed’ are surely inadequate descriptions. A Deconstructionist principle that actively promotes irregularity must be behind what appears at first glance to be without order. The multi-layered, contiguous landscapes constitute parts, but
these parts do not simply as wilfully link themselves. Perhaps then there is something to be discovered in the way the parts are connected.

**Dispersal and transparency in multi-layered space**

It is first of all necessary to generate a transparency of vision through the movement of the point of view, from part to complementary part from *fragment to fragment*, and from distortion to distortion. What is indispensable is not an order or a transparency within a conical field of vision but a transparency of vision that bundles together diverse multiple objects as if into *mosaics, chains* and *meshes*, weaving these objects in different dimensions into a sort of patchwork.

In describing transparency in architectural space, Colin Rowe starts with the opacity of such a multi-layered condition and from it abstracts two types of transparency. He notes the following concept of transparency defined by Gyorgy Kepes:

> If one sees two or more figures overlapping one another, and each of them claims for itself the common overlapped part, then one is confronted with a contradiction of spatial dimensions. To resolve this contradiction one must assume the presence of a new optical quality. The figures are endowed with transparency: that is, they are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other. Transparency however implies more than an optical characteristic, it implies a broader spatial order.

Transparency means a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations. Space not only recedes but fluctuates in a continuous activity. The position of the transparent figures has equivocal meaning as one sees each figure now as the closer, now as the further one.

From this Rowe posits the idea of transparency as a physical attribute (real or literal transparency) and transparency as a perceptual attribute or a particular characteristic of an organization (phenomenal transparency). He further suggests that with regard to the physical attribute of materials, there is a transparency that differs from the total absence of opacity. According to this definition, transparency is not the opposite of opacity but signifies a more ambiguous condition.

Transparency in that sense is not a condition allowing visual penetration of a space with depth from a given point, but instead is a bundle of interpenetrating perceptions within a depthless space not conforming to the principle of perspective. For Rowe, it was Cubism that achieved a new transparency in paintings through dispersed perception:

A Cubist painting, with its overlapping layers of grids suggested by the horizontals and verticals of line segments and fragments, creates a space without depth. Gradually, the observer adds depth to this space and an image emerges. The depth of perspective is here replaced by geometrical, entangled grids without depth. Transparency is at last achieved, in a space that cannot be penetrated from one point, through a network of interpenetrating visions.

Transparency is achieved, not by means of a single, privileged position but by the interpenetration of diverse points, that is, solely through the transformation of vision. It is only through dispersal, distortion and
transformation that structural transparency is attained. Vision pierces every corner of each discontinuous and distorted fragment and extends further the perceptual, structural mesh.

The generation of meaning by multi-layered space

The multi-layered garden is above all metonymic. This is because landscape is generated by systematic activity such as aberration, overlapping and transformation. One’s gaze and the objects of vision are dispersed and slide in a zigzag path past fragments of a patchwork landscape where distances cannot be measured. The self is no longer certain of literal transparency. The landscape that had seemed transparent has everywhere become opaque; everywhere it flexes and bears drifting fragments. Here the landscape knows no confinement or cessation. Though one may try to apprehend the significance of each fragment or the whole, it forever eludes one.

Naturally it is impossible to discover and interpret the religious meaning of the landscape based on the teachings of history. From olden times it has been known that the pond symbolized the ocean and the rock arrangement in the pond an island or mountain in the ocean. In particular, the rock arrangement is the nucleus of the Japanese garden and symbolizes the sacred mountain at the centre of the universe.

However, searching for a single meaning aided by signs that have turned into conventions is irrelevant to the issue I am presently addressing. The light moving over the distorted surface of the rocks, of the overlapping fragments of landscape, the stir and commotion they give rise to, and the sound of flowing water - only half their meanings can be identified. The space of the generative garden is above all a place for generating meaning, and to reduce it to a religious or political interpretation would confine the generation of meaning.

Spatial or material expression does not represent a sort of transparent wrap thrown over whatever is meant. Our task is not interpretation but an examination of the way the opaque fabric that is polysemy is woven. Polysemy here does not mean simply that the space or garden has diverse aspects that can be interpreted in multiple ways but that the space or garden offers multiplicity itself, a multiplicity of irreducible meanings.

Do not diversity and polysemy themselves constitute the true character of language? Metonymy and metaphor are such attributes in amplified guise. Paul Ricoeur explains his motive for making metaphor the theme of his study, and states that trope is truly the creative and moreover lucid expression of language. He writes that this is notable precisely when language operates at the limits of its expressive capacity, and that it is also the function of trope to make possible the sorting of meaning so as to give life to a text.

This characteristic found in trope is not limited to linguistic phenomena in a strict sense. It was of course Roman Jakobson who saw language as having two intersecting axes, that of associative relationships and that of relationships of syntagme, the former corresponding to metaphor and the latter to metonymy. This dualistic, contrasting relationship is not limited to language, according to Jakobson, who saw it in a
wide range of human spiritual activities; the distinction between metaphorical expressions based on similarity and metonymic expressions based on contiguity is to be found in spatial arts such as paintings and motion pictures. Since Jakobson made his observations, metaphor and metonymy as polar opposite operations of language have become, not simply a textual issue of rhetoric, but a matter concerning the general process of expression.

Today, there is criticism of such a generalized bi-polar schema. For example, Ricoeur proposes, in place of a semiotic position that considers metaphor only on the basis of the laws of association, substitution, similarity and choice—a position that would reconsider metaphor too as having a predicative character. If metaphor too should have a predicative character, then that would mean it constituted a syntagme. He asserts that the secret of metaphor is to be sought in relationships of syntagme, that is, in contextual connections.

Although the view that metaphor is based on similarity and metonymy on contiguity is still accepted, the two are seen not to function in an antinomic fashion; instead, at times they will form a latent association and at other times they will have a patent semantic effect based on syntagme.

To discover metaphoric or metonymic expressions in a space or a garden, on the basis of the above observations, is not in itself very difficult; for example, there are the already mentioned rock arrangement as sacred mountain and the pond as ocean or a sandy beach. However, a reading of the landscape aided solely by such similarities will result in conventionalized, banal stereotypes which is what all tropes are fated to become. How does one distinguish between conventional metaphors, the intimated meanings of which are easily revealed, and metaphors that appear opaque and yield their meanings only by true discovery? As opposed to the former, which depends on the principles of similarity and substitution, the latter is introduced into a whole where metaphor and metonymy can coexist through latent polysemy or momentary semantic operations, as in the multi-layered spaces and gardens that have already been considered.

Something like a predicative operation that generates fresh meaning so as to shape series and systems in the direction of syntagme is observable.

A word in itself has no meaning, much less multiple meanings. Meaning is generated only when the word is articulated with other words. Moreover, just as a word can take on different meanings depending on a situation, as Ricoeur pointed out, the multi-layered fragments of landscape have no inherent meanings, nor indeed are they even connected to established meanings. In a space or garden created after all out of matter, things cannot operate as smoothly as in language. However, multiple, fragmentary landscapes, wherein no vistas obtain, overlap, and the vision in each situation is connotatively shaped; in this space that approaches a multiplicity of contiguous and slightly divergent landscapes, metaphors are formed through similarity, substitution and choice. Metonymy is formed through a Cubist transparency that does not depend on penetration from a single, privileged point.
Naturally these two methods intermingle and generate the functions of concatenation and system (syntagme). In such a space, we must chart one fragment after another, alternating between transparency and movement and traversing a multi-layered and diverse terrain.

Inscribing dispersed, multi-layered space

People who have thought of architecture as a form of expression and something that is designed will no doubt consider the notion of 'inscribing' architectural space strange. Here, 'inscribing' does not mean what it usually means; ie marking (as with words or characters) in order to express and to transmit some message or meaning. The transmission of a message or meaning is made possible by a conventionalized act or acts of expression (inscribing) that are based on a systematic code. However, inscribing as used here means creating an arrangement or a series of traces and differences that ought to be visible at the source when systems and codes have been stripped away or negated. Such a condition is a text of traces and differences and represents a mechanism for generating meaning. It is completely different from the mechanism for meanings that are transmitted through systematic codes.

The diverse visions engendered by a multi-layered and dispersed quality of space represent an opaque transparency. In other words, they represent perceptions or visions generated by reversals and transfers within the depths of one's consciousness. A simple example of this is Rubin's diagrams in which the figure-ground relationships reverse themselves. However, the vision generated by a multi-layered, dispersed quality of space is not accounted for so simply. It is a vision generated by more complex conditions such as suppression, deficiency and compression that are related to the depths of the consciousness.
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