INTRODUCTION

Discourse is the function of the University. It is here that new ideas are to be formed, articulated and developed. It is here also that old ideas are clarified and tested by new thought.

The classroom, lecture hall and studio serve as the vehicle for this discourse. The results are relegated to notebooks and the inner recesses of the cranium. But another way exists to capture and encourage the discourse generated by a College like ours. Since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, it has been possible to take significant ideas and publish them for all to see. Modern technology makes this even easier, but publishing ideas is still a major undertaking.

It is a credit to the students of this College that they are aware of the need for discourse at this moment in history, and they have the energy and the will to nurture this discourse through publication.

Through their action they have resurrected a dormant function of this institution. It is to their credit that the College will again have an opportunity to serve one of its primary purposes. I am grateful for their initiative and pledge the support of the College in this new undertaking of an important tradition. I believe we will all benefit from this new opportunity for public discourse on topics of mutual concern initiated by the students and faculty of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Robert M. Beckley, Dean
EDITORIAL

It feels great to reintroduce "Dimensions" at the University of Michigan.

We took off from "The Focal Point" to create this publication, which we foresee as the reincarnation of "Dimensions", a magazine that was once published by the students of this college, between 1955 and 1967. We foresee "Dimensions" as a student-run publication for the expression and sharing of thoughts on architecture and planning. It was created out of a need to allow and encourage student and faculty writing that will share and further personal feelings towards design and planning. Towards that fundamental objective we believe this first issue focusing on "Organic Design & its Interpretations" has gone a long way. Our primary concern has been to publish thinking - scholastic or otherwise, that is important to the students and faculty at the College of Architecture & Urban Planning.

In some ways, we feel this issue begins to feel the pulse of this College. It has provided a forum for free expression, simply out of its rudimentary nature. Few of the articles have undergone any laborious editing through us (mainly due to the time constraint). We considered it more important to get the issue out in all its "freshness" for the symposium dedicated to Frank Lloyd Wright (called "The Wright People") whose work originally inspired the theme for this issue.

What we have here, finally is a surprisingly mixed bag of interpretations. Frank Lloyd Wright has been given due credit as a giant figure in the conceptualisation of organic design, but we certainly seemed to have moved on!

To synthesize the contents of this issue - Michael Mitterhuber starts by asking all the relevant questions. He does not claim to have answers - but his provocative questioning suggests the importance of possible answers. Gunnar Birkerts, in contrast, answers some of these questions by presenting an overview of interpretations followed by his own, which he exemplifies through a description of his "Villa Ginny". And in further contrast to these more sympathetic views towards "organic design", Eric Larson disputes and denounces the ambiguity of "organic design".

We were excited to receive John Cady's article. As a psychology student, his contribution furthers a major aim of this magazine, which is to bring forth broader interdisciplinary perspectives. James Chaffers, also in a broader, more humane spirit throws in a life-related interpretation of organic. He takes us across the domain of Wright and organic design to the essence of life and its "organic" relationships. Steve Ghannam, through his writing on Frank Gehry makes an interpretation of "organic" through Gehry's work.

We leave it to you to interpret and critique our own pieces - Pedro Mier explores organic concepts in the classical, to criticize the irresponsible use of precedent in current architecture; Rahul Kadri and Shimul Javeri make a statement on the very inorganic, restrained role of the architect today.
Another major objective for this magazine is to provide a medium for the exposure of research work being done in the Doctoral Program, some of which we are including here as a separate "Research" section. We hope though, to expand this section as we go on.

We hope there's plenty to disagree with, and some things to agree with, but this issue strives to be, above all, a tribute to growth - organic or otherwise - of ourselves as people, students, architects and planners in our willingness to communicate through the age-old wisdom of the written word.

We're looking for suggestions as to how to keep this going year after year. We're also looking for feedback on the nature of this magazine, the articles published, the name of the magazine, or anything else that appears relevant to the growth of this publication!

As a final comment, we'd like to refer to a study on architectural school journals done by Laura Lee and Jay Waronker as part of a studio assignment. One of the conclusions discussed at the ensuing seminar was that the College of Architecture and Urban Planning has not produced a serious student-run journal in a long time because of the lack of theoretical emphasis in the curriculum. This may reflect, perhaps, in some of the shortcomings of this issue, but we see this time and moment as an ideal setting for new opportunities. In the wake of the recent "Teach-in" as well as the instatement of the new Dean and Associate Dean, fresh new possibilities are certainly opening up.

We must thank Dean Beckley for his time, support, and encouragement in this venture. We genuinely appreciated the non-conservatism of his approach - in staking value to a remote and risky undertaking. These words are also tributes to our two faculty advisors for this issue, Colin Clipson and Mitch Rycus, all of the students and faculty who contributed to this issue, as well as the people who appreciated and believed in the need for this magazine.

Michael W. Hall
Shimul Javeri
Rahul Kadri
Pedro R. Mier
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cover design by MICHAEL W. HALL, year 4 student in the architecture program at the CA&UP
ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY: AN INITIAL INVESTIGATION.

By MICHAEL A. MITTERHUBER

It seems wasteful to attempt communication without initially clarifying the 'tools' of communication. How can one advance in thinking while gazing through the window of false definition? We must return to the basics, strive to understand the true essence of these pressing issues in order to attain any sort of significant 'growth'.

In order to investigate this subject, or any subject, we must first begin by addressing its definition. Although definition may vary from person to person the important issue is not the definition itself, but the 'act' of defining. For when we 'search' for definition, 'true' definition, we 'challenge' ourselves (and others) and it is this 'challenge' that produces a healthy thought process. So, what is 'Organic Architecture'? What is 'Technology'? What is their relationship? and What is their future?

One could begin the discussion by suggesting that organic forms are forms from nature. It has been said that "there are no straight lines in nature" therefore one may associate curvilinear forms with the definition of 'organic'. Does this then suggest that rectilinear forms, the forms made by man, are not organic?

We should also address the idea that organic form is a form growing out of inherent factors rather than convention. The obvious inherent factors, when speaking of architecture, that come to mind are function and site. But can or should we investigate these factors further? and if so, will this somehow more honestly define the word 'organic'?

One may believe that an 'organic form' is one that suggests natural growth as opposed to one that is calculated or contrived, but what is natural growth? and to what extent is it necessary to represent it in order to be considered 'organic'? Form is an end, a product, a reaction, and a solution. What about the individual units that when combined, produce the form? If the form is considered to represent the organic does this then mean that the components that comprise the whole are organic as well? If not does this then begin to suggest varying levels of purity?

Mr. Wright defines 'Organic Architecture' as the architecture of nature, the architecture based upon principle and not precedent.

Must architecture always be based on principle? Will it always be appropriate? Can we not somehow combine principle and precedent in order to appreciate the full potential of an idea?

Challenge, challenge is the key, if we don't challenge ourselves and others we shall never advance.
From this initial discussion we are able to appreciate this point of view. One cannot simply except a definition, one must explore, experiment and indulge before accepting any proposed ideology.

How then does 'Technology' fit into this discussion? Technology is the application of scientific knowledge to practical purposes. In today's world we are virtually engulfed by technology. Many professions are advancing very rapidly due to technology but architecture, on the most part, seems to be ignoring it, why?

All types of architecture, organic included, are expressed in built form and therefore must address technology directly. How can one be at peace with oneself without challenging existing technologies, how will we advance?

Architects work from two palettes of building materials. The first palette is the 'proven' palette, the safe palette, the second palette is the 'experimental' palette. It is this experimental palette that challenges the proven palette. It is the language between these palettes, or lack thereof, that produces very interesting or very dull architecture. We are surrounded by technology and yet our experimental palette does not seem to grow, why?

The answer may lie in the understanding of materials, for we must understand materials in order to truly realize their full potential. Have we lost the 'craft' and concern of our art that we call architecture? or have we just lost interest in order to challenge ourselves with larger more pressing issues? whatever the reason, technology and materials are far to important an issue to simply cast aside.

Architecture is an expression of our intentions, we have the palettes of building materials to work from and it is essential that we fully understand our medium in order to successfully execute the solution. How will we ever be able to realize our visions if technology and materials are not constantly 'challenged'? We must reevaluate, reassess and redefine, for if we do not architecture will never advance.

The beauty of architecture lies in its execution. We must not lose the ability to solve complex problems in a poetic manner. We must strive to pursue and maintain the excellence we are all in search of.
ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE: THE STEADY CORE OF THE MODERN MOVEMENT

By GUNNAR BIRKERTS

Looking at the modern movement in architecture, one will find the organic component right in the center of it. Even the first building attributed to the Modern Movement - Webb's Red House in 1859 - had departed from the formal, symmetrical architectural tradition, not only in the building form but in the landscape as well, thus admitting the need for a less formal and more organic approach to design.

Frank Lloyd Wright: "I now realize that organic architecture is life and life itself is organic architecture or both are in vain." Yes, he was the great proponent of organic architecture in America. Even before Frank Lloyd Wright could express himself with buildings built in the manner of organic architecture, his mentor, Sullivan, der Lieber Meister, built the first truly American modern building in St. Louis - the Wainright. The first skyscraper built anywhere in the world, as a truly organic building. Its steel skeleton structure, non-bearing skin wall, and the introduction of the new "intestinal" component - the elevator, superseded the up-to-then bearing wall, tall buildings.

nature. Organic architecture is not covered by ornaments suggesting plant life. It is also absolutely wrong to take a building that is perceived as "weird" and identify it with organic architecture. And again, quoting Frank Lloyd Wright: "The ideal of an organic architecture for America is no mere license for doing the thing that you please to do as you please to do it in order to hold up the strange thing when done with the 'see what I have made' of childish pride." He also stated another interesting observation - a truism: "Eclecticism may take place overnight,... (because we are working with borrowed form - Gunnar Birkerts) ... organic must come from the ground up into the light by gradual growth." It is inevitable that organic architecture has to grow from the inside space out. It is the synthesis of building requirements, its site, its geographic location, the available technology and it is concerned with conveying a meaning through metaphor or symbolism, if appropriate. It is context oriented in the physical and emotional sense and it has to be remembered that the Zeitgeist is also part of the methodology. And the result of this methodology is organic architecture.

To paraphrase:
Organic architecture does not mean that there are forms that can be likened to organic growth, plant or animal. They don't look like snails or mushrooms. Organic architecture is growing out of inner functioning, the inner meaning, the inner necessity and if it becomes expressed in the building form - that is organic architecture. It expresses its purpose. To me, appropriate architecture is expressionistic. It expresses the purpose, the inner workings and that particular characteristic - the "soul" of the building. The building
skin is the face that carries the indication of what is really happening on the inside. I would like to call it **appropriate** expression. If the personal, idiosyncratic form giving becomes overbearing, it can create frivolous, even shocking results and they should never be sheltered by calling them organic.

Following are the notes describing the decision generating thoughts for "Villa Ginny," the Ferguson Residence:

The concept was born and the design unfolded. It was clearly evident that the house wanted to be an organic expression. In its relationship to the site, it was interfacing with nature on all six sides, so to say. There was a certain romanticism implicit in everything around. The initial conceptual sketches were highly organic but organized on the interior. The metamorphosis of the concept continued and two distinct characteristics developed. The core of the house, by necessity and functional reasons, became orthogonal to accommodate the functions that would depend on the order of the right angle. This core was kept from connecting to the exterior wall directly and is always separated by a panel that slides back into the projecting wall end. It is expected that every piece of land that has
been touched by construction will heal again and be joined back into the undisturbed land forms. This house, like a huge growth, penetrates through the ravine, harmoniously interacting with nature.
I FREED MYSELF FROM THE CARTESIAN
I FREED MYSELF FROM THE ORTHOGONAL
THIS HAS TO BE LIKE A GROWTH -
ORGANIC
IN HARMONY WITH NATURE
COLOR AND ALL
NESTLED TIGHTLY BETWEEN THE TREES
LIKE A GROWTH OF PLANTS REACHING
THROUGH
THE MOSSY RAVINE
THE EMBRYONIC CONCEPTUAL SKETCH

CARRIES THE GENETICS OF THE FULL-GROWN
HAS TO METAMORPHOSIZE -
TOUCHES OF ORTHOGONALITY
THE CENTER HOLDS THE SERVICE AND THE
PRIVATE
CORE DOES NOT PROJECT TO THE PERIMETER
WALL
OUTSIDE IS COPPER AND TEAK
DESTINED TO AGE AND BLEND - ORGANIC
INSIDE IS WHITE AND CRISP - CURRENT
CAREFULLY ARRANGED AND POLISHED -
CONTRAST
THE AMBIGUOUS AND THE ARBITRARY:
two dangers of organic form

by D. E. LARSON

Occasional design personalities have called for a self-conscious organic approach to form: that is form which does not lend itself to facile Cartesian description or rectilinear manipulation. It was held that such an approach would counteract meaningless artifice and promote uninhibited communication. Such arguments have largely gone unimplemented for two reasons. If we examine the processes of the human mind, explicit structuring emerges as a necessity; and if we recognize the nature of unstructured experience, information content becomes an impossibility. Free forms can be impedimentary to perceptual orientation and inhibitory to meaningful communication. Self-consciously created organic form, then, runs the risk of being both ambiguous and arbitrary.

Perception is of probable and definite things.
-William James

The mind owes its existence to an ability to operate on an abstract plane wholly separate from its organic reality. It is not even intuitively aware of itself as a biochemical phenomenon. The route from perception to cognition involves abstraction and generalization. The mental process, while being a product of nature, is in a way in opposition to nature itself. The cumulative effect of this kind of inquiry has slowly rendered the apparent chaos of creation understandable in terms of the mathematical; witness chemistry, fluid and thermo dynamics, quantum mechanics, etcetera. Thus man's nature is simply to operate in the abstract and his highest achievements have been artificial constructs.

No emotion, however strong or however complex, can be transposed into an unstructured medium.
-E.H. Gombrich

There remain, however, experiences which are not easily graspable and subsequently understandable - many of the forces of nature among them. As the quantity of perceptual clues decreases, the reaction of the human organism becomes random and unpredictable. Occurances such as these obtain their significance from their novelty, their breach of decorum. They "short circuit" the cognitive process, passing by both the Imagination and the Understanding. Chaos may provide inspiration for the creative process but it is rarely the outcome of it and certainly cannot become the norm. Ultimately, free form fails to partake of the accumulated constructs of human endeavor and thus can carry no calculated meaning or intentional expression.

Let this be a lesson to artists. . . . Originality is the product of knowledge, not guesswork.
-Joseph Schillinger

Architecture as a practical art, then, must foster both perceptual understanding in its organization and meaningful communication in its execution. Man's cognitive nature is best served through the exploitation of underlying geometric order. Similarly, man's search for significance is best satisfied with a freedom born of constraint. Avoiding the ambiguous and the arbitrary is the key to a truly humane and successful architecture. Acceptance of the mental process and its constructs will place the architect back in the realm of an otherwise thriving social and cultural environment and re-establish him as an arbiter of taste.
A few summers back, I took a job at the Frank Lloyd Wright Studio in my home town of Oak Park, Illinois. It was just light carpentry, mostly manual labor, but I liked the thought of being involved in the restoration of such an historic landmark.

Throughout that summer, I learned a lot about the man who had dreamed this place, and even more about the dream itself. I came to see the essence of the vision that Wright had called organic design. Its roots lay not in some concrete, logical formula, but rather in a spiritual interpretation of life established more than a thousand years ago.

My knowledge of Frank Lloyd Wright prior to this summer was sketchy at best. I knew that he was an architect and that I liked his buildings; that was about it. I knew nothing of his worldwide recognition, and if I had, I would not have known why he was so respected. The Studio was just an interesting twist on the summer job, a step above the Burger King circuit. My experiences here, however, opened my eyes to the fact that something extraordinary was achieved in this weathered complex of brick and wood and glass. Something here resembled something I had lost or perhaps just forgotten, and I chose to pursue it.

I began my search by consulting the director of the renovation, a man named Donald Kalec. His discussion of Wright took me through the Studio, showing me the intentional space in the plans and the series of rubber gaskets that allowed a small tree to grow undisturbed through the middle of the house. I saw the somewhat asymmetric geometry of the structure and the way in which the general design fit cleanly into the landscape, and I began to realize that this man Wright was something of a naturalist. Here he had taken a lot of raw materials and had created a building which looked like it belonged where it stood (most buildings, I had always noted, looked like they were designed for anywhere and had been plopped down wherever there was a vacant lot). The harmony struck between this little house and nature amazed me, and I soon became engrossed in the study of his particular style of architecture. For several years, I worked to learn what it is in Wright's style which fuses the man-made with the natural, and which brings to the passerby a heightened sense of both.

Today, after a multitude of books, articles, discussions and seminars on the man and his work, I feel I have gained some sense of the essence of Wright. His style, the concept of organic architecture, takes its cues from nature; it makes the architect's works an extension of nature itself.

The first exposition of this idea of nature as mentor came in the sixth century B.C. from a man named Lao Tse, the major contributor to the philosophy, known as Taoism, provides the key to organic design. Lao Tse's book, called the Tao Te
Ching, serves as a poetically minimalistic conveyance of the truth of Wright's vision; it alone can truly express his principle, and should be the handbook of anyone who is the student of organic architecture. It explains a beautifully simple philosophy which advocates an appreciation of and respect for the way of nature. Although Wright developed his style long before he had ever heard of Taoism, he became a devotee of Lao Tse in his later years, and the striking similarity of these two men's outlooks gives testimony to the truth therein.

The universal appeal of Wright's style of design lies in its adherence to the rules of nature. The beauty and coherence, the sense of wholeness and righteousness that each of us feels when we view something natural is present in his work, and it invokes in the beholder that same sense of oneness. Organic design is not something which can be copied; it is not a series of lines or shapes, nor is it a composition of other, previous architectural styles. Organic design is a way of life, a philosophy approximating religion. It needs to be experienced firsthand and studied for it to be understood and practiced. Wright himself said it best: "Seems to me when you come right down to the whole thing nature, with a capital N, is what we don't understand and what we're afraid of... in the character of that innate interior expression of life lies all we're ever going to know of what's called God. Does that sound heretical? Maybe it is, I hope it is.*

"If its 'Organic,' does that mean that its (W)right?"

by J. CHAFFERS

Much has been written about the timeless building details and "respect-for nature" sitings that characterize the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. There is a large body of material addressing Wright's work in terms of its expression as a unique and advanced "style" of design and building. Others continue to speak of "Wright's flamboyant mannerisms in his dealings with private clients and the public at-large. My choice is to let others pursue those matters of interest, and to focus my attention, instead, on the associations made of Wright's works with the idea that it is supremely "Organic"; organic, both in its conceptual foundations and in the floral intricacies of its practical construction requirements.

As the title of this essay is intended to suggest, I am concerned that the spirit of Wright's organic/wholistic approach to design is now itself emerging as a kind of copyrighted "style." Specifically, my concern is that we may have begun to view the concept of 'Organic' as being synonymous with (ie, limited to) works of Frank Lloyd Wright, rather than more accurately viewing the works of Wright as creations in harmony with powers of the Organic.

To clarify the importance of this necessary distinction, I see value in exploring the fuller meaning and development of an "Organic aesthetic." I speak here of an aesthetic that assuredly flows beyond the polemics of "style". But, more importantly, I speak of an aesthetic that embraces and flows beyond the works of Wright, as well.

In harmony with the essence of an 'Organic' meaning (ie, one having properties associated with living organisms), I seek to develop and set forth a body of conceptual 'Building Blocks' from which fundamental design guides can be constructed.

We start with ORGANIC: simple, basic, close to "Nature"; an animating force of energy and vitality; an intrinsic "quality" of "Life"...LIFE: an evolving material-spiritual energy manifested through processes of growth, change, and transformation; the consummate reality of existence (of Being)...ENVIRONMENT: the encompassing contexts within which "life" (in all of its forms) is sustained or diminished...NATURE: an (interdependent) "community of Life"; an "environment" inherently life-sustaining...LIFE SPACE: form arising from the interaction of "Life" and "Environment"...ARCHITECTURE: Human "life space"...COMMUNITY: an empowering "quality" of Sharing/Caring/Trusting relationships directed toward sustaining life and enlarging our humanity; rooted in concepts of Kin(ship), Friend(ship) and Citizen(ship) STEWARDSHIP: the challenge of taking "responsibility" to extend sharing/caring/trusting relationships beyond ties of "family" Kin, beyond a broadened human network of 'extended-family' Friends and beyond a 'public family' of self-governing Citizens,
into an arena of planetary Stewards; rooted in the idea of 'human family' and a conscious quest for global harmony...

Within the more particular realm and practice of Architecture (the creation of human "life space") these six 'Organic' blocks (Life/Environment/Nature/LifeSpace/Community/Stewardship) are joined with six others (Empowerment/Ethics/Vision/Leadership/Design/Technology) to guide our quests for "life space(s)" of "quality."

We start with EMPOWERMENT: our inherent human capacity to make "power," specifically, our capacity to create new choices (creating new relationships between ourselves, Others and Nature); the wellspring of Personal Empowerment- an awareness of our individual capacity for "power-making"; the wellspring of Social Empowerment- an awareness of our capacity to 'make' power, drawing upon resources beyond the limits of our own; the wellspring of Opportunity- the reality of being able to exercise our capacities of "empowerment”; Power- the act of exercising "opportunity”... ETHICS: a collective quality of human understandings from which we draw for personal decision-making; the fountainhead for all that legitimately guides and directs our individual lives - our dreams, our aspirations, our ideals/ our myths, our central beliefs, our fears - toward common human purposes; the deeper root that sustains our moral fibre and our capacity to make distinctions of 'right' and 'wrong' conduct; concerned ultimately with advancing the Whole- ie, with our obligations toward Others, within relationships of Nature... VISION: (beyond the act of sensing with the eye) the translating of our empowering capacities into ideas designed to give practical direction to our ideals - ie, 'principled ideas' which serve to make our 'ideals,' real; specifically, the setting forth of a new "unity" of ideas and relationships for fulfilling (unfulfilled) human aspiration; a pre-requisite for challenging "status quo”; a precondition for the exercise of "leadership"... LEADERSHIP: caring enough to act; specifically, the act of seeking to make our "vision(s)” real; an inspiring exercise of "responsibility”... DESIGN: (rooted in the empowering qualities of fresh imagination) a guide for directing "change”; an instrumental and conceptual medium for creating new "technology”... TECHNOLOGY: a "unity" of idea, process and implement directed toward a practical human end; the creative application of human "design"(ing) powers...
Within a paradigm of Environmental Stewardship, "Design" is only one of several primary developmental activities that we are challenged to better understand and contribute to.

With an understanding of CULTURE as...evolving reservoirs of human capacity (cumulative Knowledge, intuitive Wisdom, Technology, etc.) from which we draw to sustain, to change, and/or to transform a prevailing "Life Quality," we move one step closer toward achieving our stated goal. Further, if QUALITY can be seen as...the richest expression of "unity" existing between the reality of an 'idea' (drawn from human culture) and its deeper symmetry within Nature and the Cosmos, we move closer, still. With these wholistic understandings in mind, we are now prepared, in fact, to set forth a working perspective of an "ORGANIC AESTHETIC" as a unique, multi-dimensional expression of "quality"; specifically, a design framework for addressing our intuitive, as well as our intellectual capacities and perceptions- ie, one that serves our maturing quest to achieve highest visual, functional, and ethical harmony within our lives...

Reflecting upon Wright's works, it is clear that he fully understood the value of organic "building blocks." It is equally clear that he organized and applied them with considerable grace and genius. Through his creative applications of technology, his respecting dialogue with People and his unique working partnership with Nature, Wright reminds us that building takes place in human communities, within evolving cultural norms and within fluid spiritual boundaries. He reminds us further, that, if architecture is to dwell in harmony with the community of resources inherently sustaining of "Life" and "Life Space(s)" of quality, we are challenged to develop and exercise a genuine environmental leadership for our time- one both, grand and humble enough for the task at hand.

Reminded that a work of architecture must have style, but not be about style, the only question remaining, it seems to me, is who among us will accept the deeper legacy of this challenge. Specifically, who among us will continually seek to apply his/her budding Design/Planning talents in ways that are not only appropriately stylish and economic, but organically (W)right, as well?
"I Go Where My Explorations Take Me - I Never Go Back": Frank O. Gehry

by STEVE E. GHANNAM

Frank O. Gehry currently practices in Los Angeles, California. Back in 1976, Gehry was part of the "Los Angeles 12," which was a coalition of architects who had nothing in common except that they practiced in Los Angeles and had decided to document the good architecture being done in the city. The result of their work was an impressive exhibition, which opened in Los Angeles and then traveled throughout the United States and to London. What was Frank Gehry saying back then?

Why is our work missing here? What are we passing by, what aren't we doing? What aren't we listening to? The things that stand out in Los Angeles are the individual's expression. At the turn of the century, architects were artists and were considered individuals, and they practiced as individuals, and they did individual buildings. I would like to see us return to the art in architecture. We had it, and we ought to get it back.¹

Frank Gehry has not changed much since then, and neither has his sense of intense curiosity and experimentation that is implied in his questions.

In his first major project, the Steeves House designed in 1959, Gehry and associate Greg Walsh cite a heavy influence from Frank Lloyd Wright, Harwell Harris, and Japanese architecture, (see fig. 1). These influences can be seen particularly in the wood detailing and in an emphasis on the horizontal. Twenty years after the house was completed, Gehry was asked to design an addition known as the Smith House, (fig. 2). This addition illuminates an evolution from what Gehry describes as the 'preoccupation with hierarchical spaces and formal planning organization' of the Steeves House.² Because this evolution is vividly symbolic of Gehry's evolution, a more thorough analysis by Germano Celant follows,

...one sees him pass from a uniform to a multi-form architecture. The Steeves House is a compact bundle of spaces embedded in a single mold, with its exterior defined by homogeneous walls and facades. It acquires an identity by suppressing the individual characteristics of living room, bedroom, kitchen, (etc.), utilizing and arranging them instead according only to their interior values. The Smith House, by contrast, is a chain of architectural units - units that accept the plastic and visual disorder of their architectural units - units that accept the plastic and visual disorder of their surroundings. Each organism lets itself be 'seduced' by topographical relativism, neither aligning with a compositional whole nor becoming subsumed by it; each, therefore, seems to exult in its individuality.³
What Gehry is continuing here is the preoccupation of space that the Modernists emphasized in their work. But the manner in which it is created and experienced has evolved itself in Gehry’s work.

In another project done in 1964, the Danziger Studio and Residence, (fig. 3), we see more of Gehry’s early formal organization of space and mass. In this case, Gehry accentuates the attributes of the building type by using simple geometric volumes with unadorned surfaces. It is definitely a Modernist approach, but not quite. The surfaces are rough and textured, not smooth with a white, pristine finish which would have emphasized the light, shade and shadow effect; the exterior material is machine-applied stucco and left exposed.

In the Ron Davis House designed of 1972, (fig. 4 & 5), we begin to see more of the kind of work he is doing today. The house was designed for the painter, Ron Davis, who is interested in manipulating perceptions of perspective as seen in his paintings. This prompted Gehry to design accordingly. Working together on Davis’s site, they staked out vanishing points for perspective illusions, which established the rhomboidal perimeter of the house. Thus the architectural object abandons visual and structural orthodoxy, and sets out to create a multidirectional space, offering infinite variety and complexity by the simultaneous use of multiple points of perspective. The traditional mechanics of movement, containment, seeing and lighting are ignored. As Gehry himself comments, "because nothing was parallel, you couldn’t predict where the shadows and sunlight and reflections would fall. If you’ve got a straight rectangular box, with rectangular windows, you sense where these things come from. But if things aren’t all straight then you get a different take." This has become an important part of his later work.

This bring us to Gehry’s masterpiece, the Gehry House of 1979 (fig. 5), when it comes to clearly understanding Gehry’s work and theories. The house is actually an addition of eight hundred square feet to his existing house. As Duchamp transformed objects of everyday use into "readymades" by "making a new thought for the object," so Gehry took a small pink
asbestos-shingled bungalow and "tried to make it more important." A shell - an addition to the first floor - wraps the "dumb little house" on three sides. The effect is to make the old house seem an object within a house, a monument on display.⁶

There are several themes that are present in this house: the expression of structure, the expression of materials, and the expression of space. In dealing with the expression of structure, we find no orthodox means of analysis. There is nothing "correct" enough to study with pre-existing means, (fig. 5). Walls are uprooted and transplanted like flowers and plants, stairs and terraces dangle as if suspended from the sky, facades sprout and crawl up the sides of other houses, entryways spread out their roots in different terrains. The kitchen has been sewn with asphalt, the cupboards are trees with chicken-wire foliage, and the rooms are trunks and branches from which the bark and cork have been hacked away with a hatchet.⁷ The pre-occupation here is with structure and new ways to express it. "The structure is always so much more poetic than the finished thing," comments Gehry. Thus, we are able to see the connection with his use of materials.

I guess I was interested in the unfinished - or the quality that you find in paintings by Jackson Pollock, for instance, or de Kooning, or Cezanne, that looks like the paint was just applied. The very finished, polished, every-detail-perfect kind of architecture seemed to me not to have that quality. I wanted to try that out in a building.... We all like buildings in construction better than we do finished - I think most of us agree on that.⁸

Even though Gehry breaks with the Modernist approach to structural expression and use of materials, nevertheless, he is clear in his search for new structural expression, and his use and experimentation with materials is a further indication of the "happy science" of architecture.

From these two experiments a new expression of space is achieved. In it space advances and recedes, is transfigured, and even causes bizarre mechanisms and
apparitions to appear that are typical of a haunted house. With light coming in from strange angles and directions, this expression of space is even further emphasized. For example, as Gehry points out,

*that slight angle allows the window to be perpendicular to a streetlight that's across the road. In the evening one looks out that window and all the interior lights in the house are reflected in that window and point toward that streetlight. The illusion is that the house is tilted toward the streetlight and it is one of the reflections I did plan. Most of the others are either intuitive or accidental, but they work equally well.*

The use of natural light is thus central in Gehry's designs and in his interiors. And so it was with the Modernists. By using these abstract elements of architecture, Gehry has offered a new experience unlike what the traditional modernists offered.

In concluding, it is hoped that the example that Gehry leaves us with challenges our own thoughts and ideas about architecture and the legacy that the Modern Movement has left us. Where the Modern Movement sort of detached itself from a more direct relationship with the observer, Gehry fills this gap and lunge at the observer, teasing him, surprising him, intriguing him while not offering anything too comprehensible, thus allowing the observer as much speculation as possible. In terms of design, this is not to suggest that Gehry simply abandons the historical and structural methods. For him these methods are inadequate because they prohibit the study of facts and objects that go against the grain of history. Gehry operates in this direction because he is attracted by objects extraneous to history. New directions generated throughout architectural history, from Borromini to Wright, have been based on this 'extraneity,' precisely because they do not rehash existing geneologies, but move in the opposite direction from the main roads of architecture. Similarly, Gehry rejects post-modern quotationism. For him a quotation taken out of context or distorted
by personal interpretation has a suprahistorical and transcendent connotation: a sign disconnected from the present. Thus when references to forms such as columns and trabeations, porticoes and cloisters seem to appear in Gehry's designs, one cannot read them has historical or narrative in context; they can be taken only as what they are - primary, elementary forms and volumes. Thus, Gehry can say without being misinterpreted, "I go where my explorations take me - I never go back."

Footnotes
3 Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.
4 Ibid., pp. 58.
5 Ibid., pp. xvi - xvii.
6 Ibid., pp. 134.
7 Ibid., pp. 8.
8 Ibid., pp. 6.
9 Ibid., pp. 9.
10 Ibid., pp. 134.
11 Ibid., pp. 11.
ORGANIC PARALLELS IN ANCIENT GREECE and the danger of postmodern irresponsibility

By PEDRO R. MIER

One could hardly call ancient Greek architecture organic. The temples they dedicated to their gods, as well as their agoras, theaters and dwellings were all conceived with simple geometries and basic Platonic forms. Constantinos Doxiadis suggests in his dissertation that the Greeks had devised geometrical schemes that would reflect the natural laws of mathematics for determining the angles of vision and position of their temples. Thus, the Greeks incorporated absolute notions in the generation of architectural form as well as in the relationships between forms.

Yet there is more substance underlying these absolute creations of the purist Greek mind: Doxiadis proposes that the Greeks were conscious of preserving the drama of the landscape in concocting these schemes. Now recall the concept that "'organic' implies an exemplary coordination of parts, integration being derived from or forming an element of the whole..." and that "we cannot understand how (organic design) really function(s) without analyzing (it) in situ." And further, recall Frank Lloyd Wright's thoughts on organic architecture:

Organic architecture sees shelter not only as quality of space but of spirit, and the prime factor in any concept of building man into his environment as a legitimate feature of it. Wright applied these ideas to generate his organic forms, as he describes:

An organic form grows its own structure out of conditions as a plant grows out of the soil: both unfold similarly from within.

The ancient Greeks certainly did not design their temples to "grow out of the soil," not in Wright's sense; they did not have the technology, nor did they have the desire to discard their absolute responsibilities. But like the organicists, they were part of "those whose feelings for the natural beauty of nature are profound (and) can only seek the greatest possible congruities between themselves and the outside world."

So profound were their feelings that the fundamentals for their naturalistic mythology had roots in the land by the Aegean. It explained the marvelous complexity of nature: the violent earthquakes that shook the Aegean, one of which was responsible for the eventual disintegration of the Minoan culture of Crete; and it attributed this and all natural events to a series of interrelated gods who were popularly conceived of as "immortal humans," as Homer's writings express.

The hierarchy of gods starts with Uranus and Gaea. Uranus was the god of the heavenly bodies, he was the
sun and the stars; Gaea was the earth; and Cronus, their son, was the god of time. But none of these gods were worshipped by the Greeks since these "high and mighty (gods) stay in their own regions never descending to earth... Therefore, as they show no concern for men, men need show none for them." It was the descendants of these gods who gained the respect of the Greeks, among the most venerated ones were Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, and Athena. And thus, these gods dwelled among the humans in the souls of the statues molded after them, and in the heart of the temples dedicated to them.

The landscape of Greece and the Aegean offered an exceptional opportunity for these temples to arise in "sacred places." Unlike the high relief valleys of the Alps, where as Scully describes, "men are sunk under the shoulders of complicated peaks," or the barren steppes of Asia where one is "cast adrift in an undifferentiated world without fixed points of reference," the Greek landscape is a harmonious juxtaposition of valleys, plateaus, and peaked and flat-topped mounds surrounded by a blue Aegean. Nothing could serve as a better inspiration to dedicate not only a temple, an abstraction of the purist Greek mind, but to integrate it with and glorify the landscape, which after all was of divine creation. Thus, special settings were sought all across the land to accommodate the personalities of each of the gods, in order to make them an appropriate dwelling. Some of the most famous "dwelling sites" is the one on the Acropolis towering above Attica.

**Athens**

Before the Parthenon came into existence, there were other temples on the Acropolis; clearly, this was a sacred site long before any temple was built. The legend depicts Athena and Poseidon struggling for the patronage of Attica. During their battle, which took place on the Acropolis, Poseidon threw his trident at Athena, but she avoided it, and instead it struck the ground bringing "a salty spring gushing from the rock." Athena flung her spear, only to sprout an olive tree out of the ground. The dispute was then settled by a vote from the higher gods which gave Athena the right to become the goddess of Attica. What an appropriate site the Acropolis was for Athena's temple: a high, rocky, dramatic plateau that clearly dominated the low valley could not have been more compatible with her image as a patroness of wisdom and skill, and of the proud Athenians whom she made part of the most powerful polis in Greece.

Thus, once the Parthenon was completed, the Athenians celebrated their goddess annually in the great festival of the Panathenaia. The procession probably started outside the walls of Athens. In the distance, the Acropolis crowned the houses spreading on its skirts. As one approached the east cliff of the Acropolis, the temples would be obstructed by the Propylaea and the walls around it. Only after passing through the Propylaea would the temples appear into view in an oblique fashion. The Greek architect, says Stillwell, did not think in terms of elevations, but thought "of things as they would appear, rather than as a formal pattern on
the drafting board;” thereby he created a more
dramatic and "divinely inspired" architectural landscape,
of which the extreme example is the Erechtheum: that
unorthodox amalgam which consisted of the enclosure
of competing holy spaces. But the sensitivity of temple
placement is not unique to the Acropolis; the temenos
at Olympia portrays similar relationships.

**Olympia**

The valley of Olympia, one of the most fertile and
vegetated areas in the rather dry terrain of Greece, offers
a second example of underlying organic concerns. It is
watered mainly by two rivers: "the Alpheus and the
Claudeus, the confluence of which is at Olympia where
they are venerated." It is only natural that the
peasants that populated this valley would dedicate the
site at Olympia to Zeus, the weather-god, who so
generously had gathered his clouds and provided rain for
the lushness of the valley and the fertility of the soil.
Time bestowed this site with the honor of being the
official sanctuary of Zeus, to which every Greek
pilgrimage every four years at the Olympic games.

But Zeus was not the only god worshipped at this
site. It was probably the landscape of the valley with its
gently rolling hills which inspired the ancient Greeks to
dedicate several temples to other deities. The site of
this Greek "pantheon" was on the flatlands next to the
river beds, surrounded by the hill of Cronos and the
Drouba mountains. The siting of the temples
themselves is very similar to that of the Acropolis: the
temple of Zeus is seen obliquely upon entering the site
and is placed "so as to not cover the view of the
Heraeum and the other temples." The site is
experienced as a whole with dramatic placement of
independent temples in an oblique manner once again.
Not all temple sites conformed to these prescriptions;
one such example is the temple of Apollo on the valley
cliff at Delphi.

**Delphi**

The reason for this exception might be the difficult
topography that the Greeks faced at Delphi. But in this
case, the verbatim rule seems to be superseded by a
higher priority, the sanctity of the site:

> Wherever (the earth's) symbols were
> so remote, tortuously approached, and
> largest in scale, and where they seemed to
> open up the interior secrets of the earth most
> violently or most dominated a thunderous
> view, there the temple of the young (Apollo)
> was placed. 17

It seems appropriate to have this symbolism represented
at the dwelling of this heroic god, who was conceived of
as the god of medicine, patron of poetry and music. A
very humane god who not only struggled against the
chtonic forces that worked to destroy humans, but also
sponsored two of the fine arts recognized in Greek
culture. Thus, this spectacular site soon became,
along with Olympia, one of the most popular temple
domains. Around it, each polis would dedicate a treasury
to Apollo symbolizing at the same time their own
might.
Despite the site difficulties, Delphi has much in common with Olympia and the Acropolis. Although the precise angles and relationships used at the flatter temple sites are not used here, the trademark ideas of a carefully sited temenos, with obliquely approached main temples reappear. Indirect procession again guides the pilgrim at this site, and again exalts the heroic role of the gods in their role of controlling nature.

Some Afterthoughts Concerning The Danger of Classical Precedent Out of Context

What the Greeks accomplished here and in all their temples was a tie with the earth; thus breaking away from their barbarious past and establishing a civilization. The worship of their nature-controlling gods was a way to feel secure in a world where nature was man's greatest foe. It was nature what man battled when crossing the Aegean, and nature that victimized him with earthquakes and storms. Thus, nature was what the Greeks wanted to appease. And they achieved this by letting the land dictate the placement and coordination of their architecture, and letting their natural analytical genius adapt absolute forms into the landscape.

The above examples provide a brief overview representative of the innermost spirit of the ancient Greeks, one of a seemingly paradoxical unity between organic and absolute concerns: a marriage between their respect for the land and their god-given analytical powers. One might then ask what the spirit of our current postmodern architecture is.

It would seem that we have swept one hundred eighty degrees from the ancient Greeks. Whereas they "were neither able to nor eager to detach the aesthetic quality of these works of art (and architecture) from their intellectual, moral, religious, and practical function or content," 19 many postmodern architects have divorced this aesthetic quality of their work from any philosophy, morality, or religion. They have opened Pandora's box of historical manipulations, and use the mere images for aesthetic effects without realizing that out of context they become meaningless. Classical Greek architecture should not be interpreted as a catalog of columns, capitals, and pediments from which to draw indiscriminately. Rather, it should be recognized as the embodiment of the metaphysical concerns of the Greeks, which are parallel and equivalent across time of what we know as the organic theory of design.

That is why the references to the classical tradition in contemporary architecture are so often ironic, displaying an intention to evade the responsibility of being taken seriously. 20

NOTES
2. Lesnikowski, Wojciech G.; RATIONALISM AND ROMANTICISM IN ARCHITECTURE; New York, 1982; p.213.
4. Lesnikowski, p.220.
5. Lesnikowski, p.218.
7. Ferguson, John; GREEK AND ROMAN RELIGION; Park Ridge, NJ, 1980; p.91.
17. Scully, p.100.
20. Ackerman, James; "Why Classicism?" in the Harvard Architecture Review; vol. 5, 1986; p.79.
"Organic" is a process-a process of growth that describes life. Architecture, to be organic, must be the outcome of a process-a social method of production that embodies natural growth.

Architecture as we practice it today, is far removed from the "organic". Architects are one part of a social system that produces a building. Ideally, we are free to choose our role within this system though realistically, we operate within the framework of societal decisions. Today, as architects we are hired to "design" in abstraction, a product called a building. We are part of a profit-motivated system, focusing on the sale of buildings. We operate within the market demands of a highly specialized industry - as hired labour, working within the confines of one notch of the industrial process of building. Yet, our perception of ourselves as part of a system is too often trivialized. Our creativity is, in reality, limited to creating "pretty pictures"(recall post-modernism!). Ours is the language of lines on paper - the specialists of the drawing board. We are too specialized to create "wholes"- to generate the process of organic growth.

It is often difficult to recognize this as we pursue, in our educational process, the glorified vision of the "architect creator". We are romantics at heart-too much so to acknowledge the reality of our presently limited professional role.

Within the building industry, the process of building is broadly divided into two domains. The "conceptual creator" and the "mechanical implementor"; i.e. the architect and the construction worker. This division of labour seems natural to us now, but it's distinct division is a recent development in history.

This is akin to the disintegration of the craftsman into the conceptualizer and the executioner. The traditional craftsman was the prime target of the effects of the division of labour.

Historically, this division begins with the birth of capitalism. Out of a system where the productivity of the labour force was the means to profit, the institution of mechanical labour was born and formalised. (Since mechanical manual labour is cheaper to employ than skilled craftsmen.) It is the development of this division that has led to the abstraction of architecture. This is not a phenomenon affecting architecture alone. It has affected several of the arts as well as crafts. It is a fact that within the structure and goals of our society this division of labour is extremely efficient for increased production and profits. It is also alienating to the extent that the end product this system creates is remote from the individual experience. Organic implies intrinsic, wholistic, inclusive. It seems to imply an
architecture that is not fragmented by one set of people conceptualizing and another set mechanically implementing.

There exists an organic architecture, far more widespread than the "design" of the drawing board. The architecture without architects or the whole world of "informal architecture" or user built environments. Presently it is hard to imagine a role for an "architect" as we define ourselves today, in those situations. We are probably far too elitist and/or specialized to contribute to or create shelter for living people. We are better trained to "contribute to the assembly-line".

The truth is that the architect today, is divorced from organic architecture and thus from the way a large part of the human race still builds. We seem to react to this exclusion by speaking of organic architecture as a movement in the architectural world, though we know it is far removed from our reality as professional architects. We, as specialists will have to expand our scope and skill to design and build with the numerous PEOPLE of the world that still reside in and create shelter for themselves, if we are to associate ourselves with "organic architecture".

"Organic" describes and prescribes "wholes". Architecture that integrates concepts with process- an architecture that is a process, not a concept of a process abstracted, as architecture is practiced today. The concept is in fact created by the process. The human experience encounters the land, the materials, the wind, the sun, the individual human needs and conceptualizes simultaneously, use and form. It is an essential inter-relatedness which characterizes "organic" architecture.
Complex of four Wright-designed houses at "The Acres," in Galesburg, Michigan (near Kalamazoo).  
Photographer: Hema Dandekar.
TYPICALITY VERSUS ATYPICALITY

by GEORGE W. INTSIFUL

"I had lived in a typical African compound house with...so many rooms surrounding the open courtyard.....". So I had started a presentation in the graduate seminar Arch. 700.

"What is a typical African compound house?" The question came from one of my colleagues from North Africa. Others in the class nodded to give their approval. The setting was in the rather narrow space of Room 2151 in the Architecture and Art Building. I started thinking.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines typical as "serving as a type; symbolic; having or showing the characteristics, qualities, etc. of a kind, class, or group so fully as to be a representative example." The same dictionary defines atypical as "not characteristic; abnormal."

I had used the expression "typical African compound house" rather generally, perhaps in a most general context, to refer to a very common house type in Africa. This house type comes in various forms - circular, rectangular, square, oblong, etc., but the common characteristic here is the open courtyard which is invariably surrounded by rooms. These rooms could have various uses and so does the courtyard itself. Whether the house is located in North, South, East, or West Africa, this house type - open courtyard surrounded by rooms - is very common to almost all the tribes on the continent. It is not limited only to the traditional architecture of the tribes but is also extensively utilized in many urban housing forms. Evidence of this can be found in several books and publications on housing in Africa.

The question from my colleague in Room 2151 set me thinking deeply. What is typical? What is atypical? Typical or atypical what? I thought I know the answers to all such questions. I started answering the questions from my colleagues. "This business of the pursuit of knowledge....." I started saying to myself. Then one word crossed my mind...SEMANTICS! "What have all these got to do with architecture....after all this is a class of the doctoral programme in architecture, not in education or literature. You 'unscientific"student, who told you that it is only students in education or literature who have to explain issues in class?" Semantics again. Who is to decide what is scientific and what is not by the way? This, really, had been at the heart of all the numerous arguments and debates in the graduate seminars. After all, we had read Kuhn, Popper, Lakatos and Feyerabend and we were supposed to indicate that in our arguments. Certainly, it did not look like answers could easily be found for the questions posed above.

The semester slowly but surely crawled to an end. The issues had not been resolved but had temporarily been buried to be dug up again in the fall of 1986 by the next batch of students in the doctoral programme in architecture. The quest of knowledge continues unabated.
CONTEXTUALISM: 
THE ABSORPTION OF RADICALITY

by Jean La Marche

Two architects, Robert Venturi and Aldo Rossi, have made influential propositions in the recent past concerning the contemporary roles for architects and architecture. Although their work is difficult to correlate formally, there are significant similarities in the issues, theories and intentions that they proffer which represent fundamentals that are either dismissed or overlooked in the popular debate on 'postmodernism'. One of these is the response to the context, although the views of what is context and what is not are quite divergent. The work of both emerges from the revival in the 1960s of an urban theory of contextualism. Rossi, who was a central force in this movement in Italy, adheres to the tenets of the early, formalist stage of contextual revivalism, one that maintains the traditionally materialistic attitude of European urban design theory. Venturi has engaged in a later, revisionist, and critical contextualist theory, a more personal and American approach which includes a colonial concern for culture. Although their formal strategies are quite clearly opposed, it is in their contextual referents that the differences in theoretical concerns and propensities between Rossi and Venturi become apparent.

The neo-rationalist or 'scientific' approach which Rossi introduced in his seminal work, The Architecture of the City, is based on preoccupations with the Gestalt concept of figure-ground relationships in the urban plan; and his method of analysis, which concentrates on studies of building typologies, maintains the neoclassical interest in taxonomies. The method, when applied to the analysis of the structure of the urban environment, produces a typology of relationships between architecture and the city. The source for the rationalist contextual reference, therefore, is the city; and the technique dictates a clear design strategy, almost Hegelian in its dialectic: "the design must fit with, respond to, mediate its surroundings, perhaps completing a pattern implicit in the street layout or introducing a new one." The American revival of contextualism developed a slightly different, more pragmatic, physical approach in that there was an insistence on subtle accommodations at the interface with the existing urban fabric. Venturi's early work manifests this contextualist strategy in the plans of the Vanna Venturi and the Brant Houses, for example, which, as he has indicated, begin in the center as classical plans and disintegrate at the edges. The interstices between edge conditions, therefore, were open to a variety of programs and intentions, and the edges were locations for gradual transformations and accommodations that were determined by and dialectically resolved in the formal differences along the edges—a strategy that implicitly ameliorates the newness of progress and the uniqueness of individual intentions. In Venturi's later work, however, and in his theory, this was abandoned for critical clarity—edges no longer reduced the shock of the new but proclaimed the alienation of architectural dissemblance. The 'decorated shed' is, essentially, an argument against the implicit integrationist concern for wholism that pervades the dominant culture of control. His concern for poche and his argument that 'architecture is the wall' support the interpretation that his work resists integration as an
The most compelling aspect of the work of Rossi and Venturi are their concern with significant questions about society and reality.\textsuperscript{10} The purposes for architecture, however—Venturi’s expression of our complex and contradictory reality, and Rossi’s interest in reviving a civic expression—represent tragic views: reflections of an apparent crisis in a broadly accepted definition of reality,\textsuperscript{11} and expressions of contemporary alienation.

Venturi’s penchant for mannerism—discordance, contradiction, illogicality, and incongruity—is inherently and intentionally alienating;\textsuperscript{12} and his irony, in provoking a tendency to accept and reject simultaneously,\textsuperscript{13} is inherently nihilistic.\textsuperscript{14} Venturi’s intention is to shock us into seeing and achieving new meaning as an aid to the understanding of a complex and contradictory reality.\textsuperscript{15} He employs architecture as critical therapy—a shock treatment that challenges personal values and alienates us from our ameliorated selves.\textsuperscript{16}

As a rationalist in “the tradition of the sublime,”\textsuperscript{17} Rossi’s efforts are focussed on the extraordinary—perhaps in the Burkean tradition of the terrible.\textsuperscript{18} This is evident in the ‘haunting’ images\textsuperscript{19} in his work, such as in the empty shell of a building in the Modena Cemetery, and in the almost Nietzschean extra-temporal implications in his monumentality. Although Rossi has been concerned of late with the use of personal instead of collective memory (a Jungian interpretation of the urban archetypes), his work retains a sense of alienation in its intention to undermine the common experience of reality or, at least, our sense of it. One of Rossi’s characteristics is “his estrangement from the real, understood as everyday occurrence.”\textsuperscript{20}

The attempt to “recover form” through an “autonomous architecture”—a concern that is evident in the modernist predisposition for what I will call “inheritance” (the ‘nature’ of the materials, structure or construction, and program or function)—is another important, and perhaps more centrally modernist, aspect of both Rossi’s and Venturi’s positions. Although the term, autonomy, is largely defensive—defining what is essentially architecture as opposed to sculpture, etc.—it can also be clearly anti-contextualist if used in an urban framework.\textsuperscript{21} The autonomy that Rossi seeks is implicit in his method of analysis—what is urban is not architecture, and vice-versa—and the level of investigation into the nature of autonomy occurs in the interface between these two. In Venturi’s middle work, that which derives from the concept of the decorated shed, his concern for autonomy is manifest in the separation of symbol from program and structure. The level of his investigation occurs wholly within architecture itself. It is in this that we can begin to understand his argument that he continues in the modernist tradition.

The attitudes of concern for ordinary experience in Venturi’s work, whether of support or not (it is often intentionally too ambiguous for us to read with any clarity) and for the sublime in Rossi’s, and the implicit critiques of power in both, are surely evidence for a more meaningful investigation into the ‘art’ of architecture; and this certainly does not exhaust their contributions. The contributions of these two architects express deeper issues than those of the formal battles that are constantly waged in the studio, in the office, and in our most prolific publications. Architecture is much more
than form, or, at least, the professional, instrumental absorption of form. Contemporary aesthetic debates about postmodernism are ideologically locked into the present power structure and remain rather vacuous.

Contextualism, which originated as a radical strategy (not unlike neo-classicism, neo-gothic, and modernism), has been absorbed as another aesthetic program by mainstream practice. The intentions and motivations that constitute the basis for radical action, therefore, are what are lost in this act of absorption. These are what subsequently must be reconstituted. What has to be understood, I think, is the urgency of rebellion, reversal, and renewal that such a cycle of rupture and absorption implies. Ideology and Utopia, in this way, become mutually dependent, and signs become emptied. We must recognize, however, the wide disparity between the employment of a strategy for awakening versus one that espouses continued somnambulance. We must recognize, however, the wide disparity between the employment of a strategy for awakening versus one that espouses continued somnambulance. The professional turn to contextualism can be viewed, for some, as an explicit example of the instrumentalist strategy for placation and concealment: contextualism reduced to mainstream aestheticism.

Whether or not we are drawn to the architecture of Rossi or Venturi, or the many others working on the periphery of professionalized production, however, the question of meaning that they deliberate is what should be of concern to us. Whether or not we can find answers in their work, also, at least we can understand the power of the questions that they raise and investigate. Such questions should not be erased through aesthetic absorption.

2 Ibid., p. 676. See also p. 677.
3 Ibid., p. 678. See also Jean-Louis Sarbib, "Popu-lare Architecture" (or "Complexite et contradiction d'une architecture pluraliste"), L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, June 1978, pp. 76-79.
7 Shane, "Contextualism", p. 676.
8 Ibid., p. 678.
12 Sarbib, "Popu-lare architecture", p. 5.
16 Sarbib, "Popu-lare architecture", p. 5. See also Smith,
Supermannerism, pp. 163 and 170.


19 Filler, "Rossi Secco and Rossi Dolce", pp. 102-4.

