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Modernity's Opiate, or the Crisis of Iconic Architecture *Log* 26

Simone Brott

Theodor Adorno was opposed to cinema because he felt it was too close to reality, and thus an extension of ideological capital.[1] What troubled Adorno was the *iconic* nature of cinema – its ability to mimic the formal visual qualities of its referent.[2] For the postwar, Hollywood-film spectator, Adorno said, "the world outside is an extension of the film he has just left," because realism is a precise instrument for the manipulation of the mass spectator by the culture industry, for which the filmic image is an advertisement for the world *unedited*.[3] Mimesis, or the reproduction of reality, is a "mere reproduction of the economic base."[4] It is precisely film's iconicity, then, its "realist aesthetic . . . [that] makes it inseparable from its commodity character."[5]

Adorno's critique of what is facile in the cinematic image – its false immediacy – glimmers in the ubiquitous yet misunderstood term "iconic architecture" of our own episteme. For iconic architecture is not a formal genre or style so much as it is a rebuke. In the unfolding global financial crisis of the present moment and 11 years after the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in New York, the "iconic" is viewed by many ambivalently, perhaps with a degree of shame and hypocrisy. Iconic architecture is loosely aligned with the cult of the architectural image that, in today's globalized culture industry, accords fame to any number of brave buildings – the CCTV headquarters in Beijing, the Gherkin in London, or the Dancing Towers in Dubai, to name only a few – by the distribution of computer-generated imagery prior to their construction and completion.

To those within the discipline, such buildings are implicitly defined by way of a dead-on iconicity: the uncanny surface resemblance between the built work and its fake – or simulated – reality in the digital model that is both the building's identical twin and its exalted reason for being. The "virtual" twin exists eternally in a four-dimensional computer coordinate system that is the sine qua non of formally complex, dazzling geometries that previously could scarcely have been conceived, let alone constructed. Such architecture now depends on mimetic media, on computer visualization, to *see* what the architects and the "masses" themselves cannot see with their own eyes and to *fabricate* what they cannot build with their own hands.

If cinema is too close to reality, Adorno would have surely said that iconic architecture is too close to virtual reality. Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao induces both amazement and terror precisely because it incarnates and materializes before one's eyes a humanly ungraspable geometry of a surreal order *on the ground.* To the spectator, the building's reality converges on a virtual image that hovers in space, its presence only felt in the infinitude of choice that flickers in the plastic surface (not only the kaleidoscope of "views" or permutations of the digital surface, but also the splintering of the subject itself). The subject faced with an infinity of choice is paralyzed, like any consumer. This mimetic apparatus is irreducible to a semiological or phenomenal relation between the building and its virtual model, even one indexically hitched to a real surface. For the purpose of iconicity is not mere deception but rather the installation of a new subjectivity in the social encounter with the architectural commodity, the magic of which, in Marxian terms, is its simultaneously "sensual" (present) and "hypersensual" (transcendent) quality.[6] Like Adorno's film spectator, our experience of the iconic is a

guilty mix of pleasure and anguish felt in the auratic presence of a technological apparatus that has acquired the peculiar status of an inhuman agency – a subjectivized *machine* – that threatens to subsume our own subjectivity.

Adorno's polemics on cinema were rejected by many, perhaps because audiences are only too willing to be taken by the technical show; it is common, for example, to say that a film is absorbing, or a building hypnotic or compelling. Iconicity thus ensures the mystification of the commodity fetish, calling upon the subject to complete its ideological task. Mimesis is a technique of distraction, even while the spectator appears to be absorbed in the architecture. The term *iconic*, even in its posture as quasi-critique, reproduces this fundamental deception and thus remains uneasy and problematic, even as an object of inquiry here.

Does the term "iconic" today mean something good or something bad? It is no doubt provocative, indeed *too late* to invoke the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, today, in an architectural culture that has been called "postcritical." An examination of the theory of iconic architecture today, however lacking in development, reveals that those on both "sides" of the ideological divide – the "postcritical" camp and their opponents – maintain the exact same account of iconic architecture. They both believe that iconic architects are practicing some sort of vulgar "materialism" or pragmatism, appropriating Marx's terminology toward formalist pursuits of exclusively technical means, a perverse materialism without intellectual engagement or concern for the social relations of digital architectural production. In short, the exact opposite of Marx's concept of materialism, but I will return to this later.

This definition of iconic architecture as a materialist, pragmatic, realist enterprise would not be so remarkable but for the fact that it is inaccurate. While it is thought that iconic architecture derives from a theory of empirical reality – in its adherence to the digital, the virtual, to the transcendence of the mimetic image – it can be situated within the philosophical tradition of German idealism, namely, the work of Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling. If iconic architecture's basic tenet is the digital *Geist* immanent in the material building, it is also a return to Platonism – by way of Hegel's Neoplatonism – where the digital spirit resides in built material and shares in its status of reality. Like geometric bodies in Plato's theory of Forms,[7] the built form is a mere contingent in relation to the higher digital "idea" or "form";[8] the virtual space, in Plato's terms, is "absolute and eternal and immutable,"[9] supremely real, and independent of ordinary objects whose traits and very existence derive from "participation . . . in the ideas by resemblance."[10] It must be emphasized that the question here is not one of epistemic status; rather, it is the veneration of digital reality that gives the iconic project its Hegelian slant. The *original* in this architectural paradigm is the digital abstraction, the highest code and truth that dictates everything the final building can and cannot do and be. Iconic architecture, in its sheer mimetic genius – the conception of architecture as a pure mind capable of performing mathematical operations – succeeds in attaining the absolute limit of human cognition where higher thought of the human mind is taken up by the digital routine, continuing Hegel's idealist project for ahistorical truths (free of subjects, contingency, and history).

The immediate consequence of this Hegelian model is that the closer the plastic surface gets to the digital image, the more it renounces corporeal existence.[11] Even as

iconic architecture appears to master reality, it shuts reality down: it reduces architectural experience to mathematics and digital processualism, to what is immediately apparent and yet held at bay. Like any good commodity, it promises but does not fulfill. The computerization of the design process seeks to dispel any humanistic, mythological, or romantic dimension that might attach to the plastic surface – to ensure that the purity of formal and material plasticity is not compromised by feeling or thought. But it thereby turns realism and pragmatism into myth, enchanted fact. The lesson of Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – the violent operation of enlightenment values in modern culture – jumps to life in the workings of the iconic architecture industry.

The hypostatization of digital space produces a systemic "alienation," transforming social relations in the city into commodities through capital's intervention via the aesthetic image. While the transaction reduces the subject to a commodity relation – the tourist is one example – the building itself becomes a "subject." Adorno's critique of film is all the more relevant to architecture today, because, like the filmgoer, the architectural spectator is complicit in this process of alienation through his or her investment in the iconic object.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The problem of alienation is one that Frank Gehry is entirely conscious of, attuned to the unreal relationship between the building he conceived and the postindustrial city of Bilbao and its residents. Discussing the museum with filmmaker Sydney Pollack, Gehry said, "You know, I went there just before the opening, and looked at it and said, Oh my God, what have I done to these people? I couldn't look at the Guggenheim building at first, I was self-conscious about it. It took me two years to get used to it."[12] Inevitably,

the architect has a morbid desire to look at the building, to enter into an encounter with the digital object that is now too real. Yet Gehry's encounter with Bilbao – the real, situated building – belies his social estrangement, the *Entfremdung* in the iconic work to which he nonetheless remains chained. The Guggenheim Bilbao represents architecture's deepest fantasy realized, made real (which, as Lacan teaches us, is a terrifying experience). A reflective surface is required to produce the gaze, the architect's fantasy that stares back at the spectator and at Gehry himself.

If the gaze is modern architecture itself as ahistorical myth – had history been purified and modernity rendered successful, made a "complete" project – Bilbao is the apotheosis of the iconic project because it materializes the false continuity of modernity in an uninterrupted, Moebius-like strip. (It speaks of the primal fantasy of modernism as a pure, infinitely continuous, and unadulterated present.) Like Faust, however, the city of Bilbao had to make a sacrifice in exchange for Gehry's iconic building: the promise of Bilbao is the "magic" or higher sentience that derives from the insertion of iconic architecture – the "Bilbao effect." But the offering of such an object and its processes of reification invariably create what Marcel Mauss called an object debt that has to be repaid by its recipient, as the failed attempts to create a viable economy for Bilbao and the Basque Country would surely prove, long before Spain's present financial crisis. In order to respond to Adorno's critique and go beyond the discourse of the mimetic image, a proper Marxist, i.e. *dialectical*-materialist, account of buildings such as Bilbao is necessary.

The Guggenheim Bilbao project was part of Spain's larger development efforts for cities that had undergone decades of financial atrophy after deindustrialization began

in the 1970s.[13] With the inauguration of the museum in 1997 and the revenue it generated, the redevelopment of the Abandoibarra district – the city's former port – was widely received as a success of postindustrial capitalism. Yet, as the region's only international draw, the Bilbao development failed its larger ambition to transform the city into a regional node in the European Union based on a restructured economic base. The city eventually forfeited its most significant functions to the more dynamic metropolises of Barcelona and Madrid, and Bilbao became a shell, like the city's former abandoned factories.[14]

The museum did, however, succeed in converting the city into an image; in its own abused syntax it put the city "on the map." Though this image draws tourists to Bilbao every year, the city's own citizens have vanished (the real Bilbao effect that is never discussed). The continuing population exodus exposes the deep rift between capital and social reality created by the industry of iconic architecture, whose real purpose is the reawakening of a vanquished capital. In spite of this, the iconic architecture industry presses on: the stated goal of Bilbao Ría 2000, a nonprofit group devoted to revitalizing former industrial spaces around the city, continues to be the local and international promotion of "Bilbao's new image as a postindustrial city."[15] Bilbao as pure image, as instrumentality, seeks to avoid the pain of modernity, to conceal its crisis or pathology. On this symbolic front the Bilbao project has succeeded – its image retains all the youth and vigour of 1997 – but in real terms, like all images, Bilbao is empty, a mere opiate of modernity.[16]

What then does Bilbao, both the museum and the greater urban redevelopment it belongs to, tell us about capitalism and globalization today? Although the iconic project

remains a principal technique of neoliberal globalization, Bilbao represents the failure of the iconic project to rebuild capital in the postindustrial European city. Developments like Bilbao were designed to structure our experience of the contemporary city through globalized capital. The very term *globalization*, however, no longer refers only to something desirable, to expansion, but also to its the opposite, to contraction, debt contagion, credit collapse, etc. In the face of the global debt crisis, the lessons of Bilbao are beginning to be learned; its premise – the injection of a building to treat an urban-economic malady – has now been widely contested.[17] Iconic architecture today is no longer a failed project on the side of global capital, but an emptying out of the architectural commodity. Having been made redundant by global capital, the architectural image no longer reifies capital but refers only to its empty self. It is in this sense that iconic architecture is in crisis.

Iconicity is the first cause of architecture's ideological complicity, because, like film, it enables the architectural image to operate as an advertisement for reality, seen through capitalism's eyes. For architecture to become *art* – that is, deinstrumentalized, autonomous, and *real* – it must escape its bondage to mimetic formalism, to digital mimesis, and relinquish its ideological project of the architectural image as instrument for rebuilding capital – thereby renouncing false immediacy and intelligibility. Architecture becomes a willing participant in this exchange with capital, not because of its lack of integrity or "selling out," as per the familiar rebuke – architecture is neither a passive agent nor "icon" of capitalism – but because the symbolic contract with capital directly serves the discipline's unconscious project to return to modernity, to *recapitalize* modernism – the house of capitalism. To apply the dialectical-materialist critique of

capitalism to modernist history, the Modern Movement expanded, like capitalism, to a certain stage and then developed internal contradictions until it collapsed. Architecture's complexity lies in the refusal to confront its history, to lose this battle. But, for Adorno, art is precisely a witness to history, and for this reason the critique of iconic architecture needs to move beyond the orbit of the mimetic image. It must move from facile judgments about a building's entertainment value to the historical meaning of iconic architecture, vis-à-vis its relationship with modernism, and to the subject's encounter with modernity via the architectural object on the ground.

The Negative Value of the Architectural Image

Adorno's work on the filmic image and negative dialectics had a profound influence on the course of architectural debate, particularly in Manfredo Tafuri's polemics on the architectural image. In *Theories and History of Architecture*, Tafuri explores Bruno Zevi's thesis on the "critical value" of the architectural image that negates the dominant aesthetic, a procedure that ultimately articulates the code that constitutes architectural history.[18] Tafuri writes, "Every new architectural work is born in relation to a symbolic context created by preceding works . . . every architecture has its own critical nucleus."[19] The deviation from the center, what Tafuri calls "infringement," is not merely an empty stylistic battle but a "*critical de-mythicization of the image.*" Tafuri in fact suggests that the image is the correct instrument for critical historiography and that all critique functions at the level of the image. The critic in other words must construct an image in order to conduct critique. Arguably, the problem with this methodology is that as image it always opens itself up to remythicization. While an image can articulate the existing code

through a "brutal contestation," Tafuri argues that it cannot point out the reasons that have historically determined that code and *its unconscious ideological content*.[20] For Adorno, on the other hand, the aesthetic image precisely reveals what is unconscious in society, the ideology of capital.

If the Guggenheim Bilbao is the critical nucleus of recent iconic architecture, it illustrates the codification of the dominant aesthetic, a building that was defined as a self-replicating image in the concatenating, titanium-clad objects seen to be duplicating Bilbao in various parts of the world. This demonstrates the sheer power of Bilbao, as commodity and image, to conjure a chain readable by a public and to carry out the iconic project's political ends. Bilbao established for the iconic project its *code*, and on this purely mythic and highly effective level, it situated the architect of iconicity in a peculiar ethical position, as if having openly surrendered aesthetic agency and integrity to the seriality of a particular type.

What, then, has become of the iconic project since Bilbao? Does iconic architecture today propose a new history in relation to Bilbao, and if so, what does it teach us about architecture's relationship with modernity now? Capitalism today looks nothing like it did in 1997, even if virtual reality is unadulterated by the new experiences of architecture and the city. We have only to look at the negative reception of some of Gehry's recent works – works seen to have openly transgressed the code established by Bilbao – to gain insight into the late iconic project.[21] Bad reviews are nothing new in architectural culture, but for Gehry, whose work has received so much adulation, an interesting question about authorship and critique arises.

Perhaps because Gehry is not loquacious, having left all theoretical considerations of his work to others, he is often represented as a fugitive from the academy, infatuated with his own genius for producing dazzling forms and formalisms at the expense of theoretical substance (if there is such a thing). Yet Gehry did not become well-known and in demand because he is a mere inventor of populist forms. Rather, his work succeeds by inducing the spectator's encounter with an architectural unconscious – that which cannot be spoken – and it is precisely in this passive or accidental mode, at the level of symptomatology and pure image, that Gehry's work gains critical substance.

Gehry's design for a new business school at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), presented in 2010,[22] is the celebrity architect's first building in Australia, and is no doubt just cause for celebration. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the proposed 11-story tan-brick building, composed of five crinkly, yellow boxes, has been pejoratively named a "crushed brown-paper bag." The east facade, to be made of a buff-colored brick, refers to Sydney's yellow-stone heritage, and produces an image entirely unlike the metallic building envelopes associated with Gehry and encoded in the iconic project since Bilbao. Gehry's new proposal, caught between the twisted alleys and streets laid out in the postindustrial locale of Sydney's Ultimo suburb, reaches for something else: its anguished folds are anti-spectacle and anti-aesthetic. The curvilinear use of masonry evokes a modern architecture, like the folded brickwork of the Amsterdam-School, the postwar projects of Alvar Aalto – an architect Gehry openly identifies with and admires[23] – or Thomas Jefferson's serpentine brick walls. An apparently un-iconic building, it has nothing of the mimetic quality of Bilbao; it neither *looks* like a digital model nor does it exude the auratic gaze of Bilbao or any iconic titanium-clad object. By

refusing mimesis, Gehry's building envelope in Sydney reveals the precise conundrum about the tyranny and ubiquity of iconic architecture, just as it permits the facade to host the return of modernism in the digital age.[24]

Australia is finally getting a Gehry, but not the Gehry it imagined. The problem is not one of parochialism, but one that is historically peculiar to the 21st century and a testament to the victory of the global iconic project at war with itself: namely, that Australia expected a *more* iconic and less contextual building. The design quite simply lacks what Max Weber called "charismatic authority," or the *jouissance* of digital mimesis in the new millennium. But is this not pure poetic justice, a perversion of the Bilbao effect that reveals the Faustian nature of such an exchange?[25]

Gehry has said that the distortion of the building envelope and the use of curved masonry in his work are ways of "humanizing modernism."[26] His quixotic refrain about the Sydney scheme, that "the building is crinkly because the hardest thing to do with modern architecture is to make it humane, so this is a modernism humanized,"[27] suggests that he sees himself as a modern architect. As Gehry jerkily glanced the model's surface with a green laser pointer while talking to a Sydney television reporter about modern architecture, it struck me that the east facade recalls the familiar film stills of the 1972 demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project. The facade reads as two low-rise residential slabs stacked one atop the other – its square punched windows similar to those used in Minoru Yamasaki's 1950s building – imploding in slow motion. At the same time, the static image of the new building envelope reveals that the historicized failure of modernism in the St. Louis footage is not as stable as it first appeared in the days of 1960s sit-ins and protest movements. Rather, it speaks of a second plateau or demise of

modernism. Yet any return is not to modernism as an avant-garde but to the fall of

modernism as *polemic*, incarnated and cryogenically preserved in the Pruitt-Igoe image

and its historical aftereffects. For there can be no real "end" to iconic architecture or to

modernism (to which such images paradoxically both attest and deny); rather, what this

reveals is the critical operation of the image in constructing architectural history. Here, in

effect, is not a humanized modernism (which would reinstate the ego at the center of the

system) but a historicized modernism that reveals something *inhuman*, the barbarous as

an enduring modality of modernity.

The demolition of Pruitt-Igoe was not the end of the Modern Movement, as

Charles Jencks famously argued, but the moment that the critique of modernism as a

destructive agent in the postwar city was flattened into an image**.** The power of the image

is that it makes visible co-present and *real* arguments that are otherwise elusive and take

place at various points in time. The image of a falling Pruitt-Igoe succeeded in converting

modernism as ideological mirage into the fantasized collapse of a regime represented by

the demolition of a housing estate – the house of modernism. The Pruitt-Igoe footage

revealed the naked irreality of modern architecture's favorite tropes – functionalism,

liberation, progress, purity – just as it concretized and visualized the hijacking of

subjectivity, inhabitation, and life itself under modern architecture.

In the architectural image Gehry has made for Sydney, the processes of

historicizing modernism become the object of critique. The successive folds evoke the

contorted relationship with the Modern Movement as history and the obsessive mourning

of its loss. Gehry's facade responds to the ahistorical myth of modernity that endures in

today's iconic project, shifting the gaze back to what is teleological and historical in the

present moment. If we extend this reading to its limit, Bilbao and UTS propose two

historiographic accounts. The collapsing UTS facade suggests a dialectical materialist

approach to history, in which modernism in architecture grew to a state of maximum

efficiency, then developed internal conflicts that led to its systematic decay. This is an

essentially diachronic reading of history. The tragic image of self-destruction – a

"termite's nest," as one critic called it – recalls the corruption of modernity as a project in

class conflict. Bilbao, on the other hand, is a synchronic reading, its method of Hegelian

idealism considers contemporary architecture an isolated product of the zeitgeist, of an

ahistorical pure present. Its Neoplatonist formula of modernity – as the infinite plasticity

of the metallic surface subjectivized by the digital *Geist* – promises the spectator a

liberation from negative thought, from history itself.[28]

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that the UTS building is a Marxian

transformation of Bilbao or of the iconic project into materialist dialectics, because the

new proposal remains within the orbit of an image that reproduces the original myth, a

magical idea separated from the social struggle that was its first cause – which leads to

the misrecognition of the facade. We cannot accept the critique of history in the hands of

iconic architecture, however, as the UTS design betrays a nostalgia for the collapse of

modernity, even while it remains disenchanted. So close then is iconic architecture in

Adorno's account to the "primeval myth of modernity from whose embrace it has

wrested itself that its own lived past becomes a mythical prehistory."[29] Iconic architecture

seeks to neutralize this mythical prehistory in buildings such as Bilbao, but it never

relinquishes the fantasy of a return to the battlefield. (Paradoxically, the very desire to

reinstate polemical modernism is to elude "modernism" in its purest, most essential, conceptual form.)

What sets the contemporary version of this paradox apart is the troubling sense of retroaction in architectural culture today, the sense of an urgent need to rebuild ex nihilo, not only in projects such as the World Trade Center, but also in the global project to rebuild capital itself (to recapitalize modernity). Yet the UTS building does not seek any such catharsis; its very ugliness reflects what is grotesque about the return to the beginning of modernism, to the Garden of Eden prior to expulsion. This is the debt of contemporary architecture today. Like the Athenian play, the Sydney facade is "tragic" in the true sense of the dramatic form which was based on the protagonist's reversal of fortune through a fatal error. To have invested so profoundly in a movement associated with barbarism and the decline of civilization, as the international modern movement did, creates a trauma, which Freud defined as an injury that does not fade but intensifies over time. In this sense there can be no catharsis in iconic architecture, because the problems of social existence cannot be solved through the transaction of myth and objecthood. Gehry does not provide an answer to the post-1968 lamentation, but what his late architecture accomplishes is the demythologization of the iconic project, if only for a fading moment. With this folded envelope, Gehry thus makes historical the experiences of contemporary architecture.

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[1] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[2] The icon is a category in semiotics invented by Charles Sanders Peirce where the signifier (sign) does not merely signify in some arbitrary capacity, but mimics the formal-visual qualities of its referent. In Peirce's typology of the sign from 1867, three terms describe the ways in which the sign refers to its object: icon, index, symbol. See Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: 1857–1866*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ Press, 1982), 52–56.

[3] Miriam Hansen, "Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer," *New German Critique* 56 (Spring/Summer 1992), 43–73. Hansen, whose semiotic method also refers to the kind of *Bildkritik* that was common among Kracauer, Benjamin, and Adorno, first identified the problem of iconicity in Adorno's film theory.

[4] Theodor Adorno, "Cultural Industry Reconsidered," *New German Critique,* 6 (Fall 1975): 12–19.

[5] Theodor Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," *New German Critique,* 24/25 (Fall/Winter 1981): 202.

[6] See Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: International, 1975), 74–75.

[7] Plato's theory of Forms appears in fragments across several texts, first *Phaedo*, then *Phaedrus*, and *Republic*. These books were written as scripted dialogues between Socrates and various fictionalized historical interlocutors (such as Parmenides and Zeno). The theory of Forms is never given in its entirety or in any conclusive fashion.

[8] Plato *Republic*, bk. 5.

[9] Ibid., bk. 6.

[10] Plato *Parmenides* 132d. Parmenides is arguing with Socrates here.

[11] "This renunciation places the pure image in opposition to corporeal existence, the elements of which the image sublates within itself." Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 14.

[12] Matt Tyrnauer, "Architecture in the Age of Gehry," *Vanity Fair* (August 2010).

[13] For an analysis of the Guggenheim project contextualized within Bilbao's industrial history, see Jörg Plöger, *Bilbao City Report*, CASEreport 43 (London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, 2007).

[14] Ibid., 35.

[15] Ibid., 16.

[16] See Beatriz Plaza, "The Return on Investment of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no. 2 (2006).

[17] For an explanation of the failure of the Guggenheim Bilbao to attract expected international capital investments and a critique of the notion the Bilbao effect, which contests its ability to stimulate urban regeneration through global capital, see Arantxa Rodríguez, Elena Martínez, and Galder Guenaga, "Uneven Redevelopment: New Urban Policies and Socio-Spatial Fragmentation in Metropolitan Bilbao," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8 (2001): 174–175.

[18] Manfredo Tafuri, see chapter "Architecture as Metalanguage: The Critical Value of the Image," *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. Giorgio Verrecchi (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). He writes: "Once the fact that the aesthetical product belongs to a sphere of rational and controllable values is ascertained, the way is clearly open to the possibility of an architectural production as consciously elaborated criticism." However, he also writes: "A criticism realised through images is not equivalent to a critical analysis

that employs the instruments of language. . . . the artistic language can explore all the limits it can reach – even though the initial arbitrary choice of a code is taken for granted through a cruel and systematic opposition, but it cannot point out the reasons that have historically determined that initial choice" (ibid., 107). The other option, for Tafuri, is a more "radical opposition": "The possibility of a critical study conducted through images and through architecture is still there: but it will have to climb back into real architectural structures" (ibid., 106).

[19] Ibid., 109.

[20] Ibid., 107.

[21] Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Gehry's New York Debut: Subdued Tower of Light," *New York Times,* March 22, 2007. Like the Dr. Chau Chak Wing project, the IAC Building in New York contains two horizontal massings, which in the latter conceals a ten-story structure and in the former, 11-stories.

[22] The $150 million, 16,000-square-meter building, to be named the Dr. Chau Chak Wing building after the Chinese-Australian philanthropist and businessman who donated $25 million for the project, is due to be completed in 2014.

[23] "My work is closer to Alvar Aalto than any of the other generations." Sydney Pollack, *Sketches of Frank Gehry* (2005).

[24] There are important formal differences between the two schemata. Unlike Bilbao, the UTS building deviates from the continuous surface, has several distinct facades, and in its way engages its modernist allegory of decay or destruction. Nonetheless, this building does not represent a departure for Gehry but a return to the European housing-block formal-type with cartoonish window detail, first observable in Gehry's "Fred and Ginger"

building in Prague (1995) and repeated in the Neuer Zollhof development in Düsseldorf

(1999) and the Ray and Maria Stata Center, MIT (2004). This latter impelled UTS to

approach Gehry, and upon it his schematic design was based. Yet, of the three buildings,

the Sydney proposal is the only one that evokes collapse of building fabric. It crumples

downwards like Pruitt Igoe, unlike the MIT building's lateral crumpling; and the New

Zollhof is not crumpled at all, it represents modernity in tact.

[25] Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, 106. For Tafuri, "infringement" uncovers

the mythical meaning of the original code given by the avant garde, but it does not

necessarily mean the code is in crisis; rather, criticism itself is in crisis since under the

operation of the critical image the historian, *the sole arbiter of critique*, is in danger of

becoming redundant. And if the architectural image is decoded by the spectator in the

mode of complicity with ideology, then this becomes the locus for criticism.

[26] Frank Gehry quoted in Tina Perinotto, "Frank Gehry on Inspiration and Sustainability

for the UTS in Sydney," *The Fifth Estate,* December 18, 2010. "The hardest thing to do

with modern architecture is to make it humane." And Gehry quoted in Tyrnauer,

"Architecture in the Age of Gehry," "I was looking for a way to deal with the humanizing

qualities of decoration without doing [postmodernism]. . . . How do you humanize

[modernism]?"

[27] Frank Gehry quoted in "Sydney to have 'wrinkly, crinkly, landmark," *The Sydney*

Morning Herald Online, December 16, 2010.

[28] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 113.

[29] Ibid., 25.