PURE VISUALITY: NOTES ON INTELLECTION & FORM IN ART & ARCHITECTURE

"It is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness." / "Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine [...]" Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), Book X, VII, 7-8 (p. 617) ...

"So the most beautiful aesthetics – the most desperate, too, since they are generally doomed to stalemate or madness – will be those aesthetics that, in order to open themselves completely to the dimension of the visual, want us to close our eyes before the image, so as no longer see it but only to look at it, and no longer forget what Blanchot called 'the *other* night,' the night of Orpheus. Such aesthetics are always singular, strip themselves bare in not-knowledge, and never hesitate to call *vision* that which no waking person can see." Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), p. 157 ...
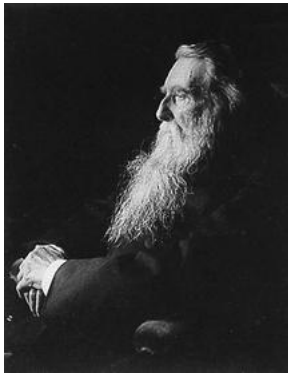
I. John Ruskin - "Dissertion before disconfirmation" … / NYU (IFA)

John Ruskin, *The Poetry of Architecture* (1837) …

"The Science of Architecture, followed out to its full extent, is one of the noblest of those which have reference only to the creations of human minds. It is not merely a science of the rule and compass, it does not consist only in the observation of just rule, or of fair proportion: it is, or ought to be, a science of feeling more than of rule, a ministry to the mind, more than to the eye. If we consider how much less the beauty and majesty of a building depend upon its pleasing certain prejudices of the eye, than upon its rousing certain trains of meditation in the mind, it will show in a moment how many intricate questions of feeling are involved in the raising of an edifice; it will convince us of the truth of a proposition, which might at first have appeared startling, that no man can be an architect, who is not a metaphysician." (p. 1) …

Image (above) - Portrait of John Ruskin by Frederick Hollyer (1894) …

John Ruskin, *The Poetry of Architecture* (London: George Allen, 1893) …

"The Mountain Villa - Lago di Como" …

"The frequent occurrence of the arch is always delightful in distant effect, partly on account of its graceful line, partly because the shade it casts is varied in depth, becoming deeper and deeper as the grotto retires, and partly because it gives great apparent elevation to the walls which it supports. The grottoes themselves are agreeable objects seen near, because they give an impression of coolness to the eye; and they echo all sounds with great melody; small streams are often conducted through them, occasioning slight breezes by their motion. Then the statue and the urn are graceful in their meaning, and correct in their position, for where could they be more appropriate than here; the one ministering to memory, and the other to mourning." (p. 105) …

Terraces … "Beautiful designs of exterior descent" … "Certain regularity" modulated by graceful lines, splashes of foliage and shadow (stone and shadow alternating), mathematical form plus "changeful and varied" forms of nature - the "beauty of regularity" and "freedom" …

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 1 (New York: John W. Lovell Co., 1885) - "Of Ideas of Truth" (pp. 110-115) …

"Art […] is not an appeal to constant animal feelings, but an expression and awakening of individual thought […] one coruscation of a perpetually active mind." (p. 112) …

"Representation of thoughts" is impossible without the "representation of facts" …

"A false thought is worse than the want of thought, and therefore is not art." (p. 113) …

"The noblest edifices of art are built of such pure and fine crystal that the foundation may be seen through them […] (p. 113) … Thus, "We want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth" of the work (p. 114) …

"Artists who are really great in imaginative power, will be found to have based their boldness of conception on a mass of knowledge far exceeding that possessed by those who pride themselves on its accumulation without regarding its use […] True vigor and brilliancy are not signs of audacity, but of knowledge." (p. 114) …

"Of Imagination Associative", Vol. II (pp. 339-356) …

"Its" presence: "All the landscape of Nicolo Poussin is imaginative, but the development of the power of Tintoret and Titian is so unapproachably intense that the mind unwillingly rests elsewhere." …

Conception - Composition - Association (Imagination and Fancy, and degrees thereof) …

All of this (the foregoing) shows Ruskin approaching the profound cross(ing) of Art (into morality) - the moral Art (Moral Law). "Of Truth" follows directly on his excursion into the Sublime. His evocation of Tintoretto and Titian, in turn, invokes Turner. In the description of Italian villas at Lake Como, the villa as "apex" of the composition rising from or falling to the lake confounds normative readings of formality (the antithesis of picturesque English gardens) while applauding the nuance, of shade, foliage, statuary, urn, and water. Despite critical remarks of Italian languor in *The Poetry of Architecture* (published under a pseudonym as *Modern Painters* was published anonymously), Ruskin tugs at the tresses of art and architecture, gently, to make "her" confess her love of associative magic (Love's rule and law) - in his words, the passage from "conception" to "composition" to "association". The so-called "science of architecture" is, then, not unlike Hegel's "science of Spirit" - it is not an analytical model, but instead a type of inquest, or something more than meets the eye (and this despite his dismissal of German Idealism as idle speculation) …

 04/10/09

[…]

II. Caravaggio, Victorian Aesthetes, G.K. Chesterton, and Tacita Dean … / Passim

Caravaggio, "The Denial of St. Peter" (c.1624) ... Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) ... Surprise, curiosity, love, anger ... The eyes of the young woman betray everything ... Three slashes of light illuminate the painting from within, the entirety of the picture plane collapsing into that bewildered, accusatory gaze ...

04/12/09 (Easter)

[…]

John Ruskin and Walter Pater, a difference of tonality, but a similar sensibility insofar as they avoid two extremes - pure ideality and rote sensuality (one sensibility indicative of the angelic aspect of man, the other of the demonic) - hovering, then, in the "naturalistic", or the preference for things (Greek and otherwise) rather than mere vapors. Ruskin, perhaps more so than Pater (charged with neo-Cyrenaicism), sees and seizes the shattered mirror of pure visuality (a primordial, internal thing reflecting the divine), knowing too that redemption is in

the revelation of seeing not mere things but their reflective distance, noting their paradoxical, indexical true nature - his "true ideal" of the "imagination associative" …

Image (left) - John Ruskin, engraving (circa 1849) …

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 3 - "Of the True Ideal: Thirdly, Grotesque" (pp. 112-128) … / NYU (IFA)

"The imagination, when at play is curiously like bad children, and likes to play with fire; in its entirely serious moods it dwells by preference on beautiful and sacred images, but in its mocking or playful moods it is apt to jest, sometimes waywardly, sometimes slightly and wickedly, with death and sin; hence an enormous mass of grotesque art, some most noble and useful [...]" (pp. 112-113) ... "Grotesque idealism" (p. 115) ...

The most "appalling" and "eventful" truths - "No element of imagination has a wider range, a more magnificent use, or so colossal a grasp of sacred truth [...]" (p. 115) …

Of the true ideal: Purist - Naturalist - Grotesque vs. Of the false ideal: Religious - Profane …

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 5 - Part IX: Of Ideas of Relation: - II. Of Invention Spiritual - Chapter I: "The Dark Mirror" (pp. 213-221) …

"If by words, - how do you know their meanings? Here is a short piece of precious word revelation, for instance. 'God is love.' [...] All the words and sounds ever uttered, all the revelations of cloud, or flame, or crystal, are utterly powerless. They cannot tell you, in the smallest point, what love means. Only the broken mirror can." (p. 220) ...

Thus the grotesque (as it also appears in *The Stones of Venice*), and an appalled Ruskin - though thrilled at the same time by "appalling" and "eventful" truths. This "colossal grasp" of the sacred leads toward Chapter I, Part IX (Vol. 5), the concluding volume of *Modern Painters*; that is, toward "the dark mirror" …

What is this "dark mirror", despite its biblical allusion? Is it not pure visuality, the same that haunts the quest for non-ideological utopian projects, arguably the purpose of art itself? "A mirror dark, distorted, broken" ... Here, one finds shades of the self-same radical orthodoxy embraced by G. K. Chesterton, and, its antidote, an eschatological something (non-diachronic, non-teleological), or the proverbial "redemptive whatever" Ruskin assigns to Art and consigns Art to (as seeing). Regarding Chesterton, see Michael Wood, "A Preference for Torquemada", *The London Review of Books*, Vol. 31, No. 7 (April 9, 2009), pp. 8-10. For Chesterton, "It's not that the world could be better or worse. It is better *and* worse, fully fallen and perfectly redeemable. We are to go at it with 'a fiercer delight and a fiercer discontent', and rather than deny optimism and pessimism, which is where his logic seemed to be leading us, we are to seek both of them in their extreme, irrational forms. One needs to be 'a fanatical pessimist and a fanatical optimist.'" (p. 8) …

Tacita Dean's 28-minute, 16 mm. color anamorphic film *Michael Hamburger* (2007), as film and photography, assembles a serial version of visuality, tracks the translator/poet through his orchard/garden and study in Suffolk, focusing on his adoration of apples, "fruit to outlast our days" - Hamburger (notable translator of Hölderlin) speaking of the varieties of apples he cultivates in his garden (one variety, the reddest, grown from a pip given to him by Ted Hughes). Instead of Hamburger's oeuvre as subject, Dean allows him to speak through things (and this commission originated with an invitation for the artist to contribute to an exhibition on W. G. Sebald). Elliptically, then, Tacita Dean's 28-minute film moves elegiacally, as did Godard's "Autoportrait de décembre", *JLG/JLG* (1994), through a Ruskinian territory of "representation of thoughts" by way of "the representation of facts" (apples) … Hamburger, "British poet", not "German" (*The Guardian*'s mistake) …

See "Tacita Dean", Marian Goodman Gallery, April 2 through 29, 2009 ... The exhibition includes *Fernweh* ("a longing to travel"), "large scale overpainted photographs" (a technique long exploited by

Gerhard Richter, but here "gravure") - e.g., *Urdolmen* and *Hünengrab* (2008), and *Riesenbett* (2009) - boulders floating in a "sea" of black paint ... "Unlike the large photographs of ancient trees, which Dean has worked with before, the images of the stones are isolated by dark matte backgrounds making them otherworldly - detached from and of history [at once] - and imposing in their solemnity." (Press Release) …

The "imagination at play" produces both the macabre (grotesque) and the literary (the deliberate obstruction of ideality) to counter the still-born ideality of thought without images (an impossibility anyway). Pure visuality, art without recourse to pure reason (abstract rationality), brings with it representation by facts, but facts fully imbued with that extreme ideality (beauty) that is its origin. This paradox is embodied in Ruskin's "broken mirror" …

04/16/09

[…]

J. G. Ballard, "Time and Tacita Dean", in *Tacita Dean* (London: Tate Gallery, 2001); Exhibition catalogue, February 15 through May 6, 2001, Tate Britain (London) …

"Tacita Dean's films are surveillance footage taken in some of the strangest spaces of the mind […] The spectator's imagination flows into these cryptic and eventless spaces, trying to decode and make sense of them." (p. 33) …

In *Michael Hamburger*, the principal cinematic moments are when the camera lingers in the orchard - a small, enclosed ramshackle space. In the scenes featuring the study, everything is carried out by trace, as when at first the camera remains outside the closed door and only slight strains of music can be heard and Hamburger is seen as a hand moving in the shadows, behind a wall, or as a curlicue of cigarette smoke …

See Jean-Christophe Royoux, Marina Warner, Germaine Greer, *Tacita Dean* (London: Phaidon, 2006) …

See Jay Fellows, *Ruskin's Maze: Mastery and Madness in His Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) …

"If Ruskin is eventually alone (and *desertion before disconfirmation* informs much of his performance), he is not, in any case, unified in his loneliness. Rather, solipsistically antiphonal, with only himself as company [accompaniment], he is, as if severed by a double axe, either halved or doubled, with his consciousness, like a double tiered labyrinth that is his penultimate Theatre of Blindness, in attempted dialogic discourse with itself, which is, perhaps, Ruskin's ultimate point of failure/success." Preface (pp. xv-xvi); *emphasis* added …

See Jay Fellows, *The Failing Distance: The Autobiographical Impulse in John Ruskin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) …

04/18/09

[…]

III. Aries (in late-April), Žižek and Architectural Parallax, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Chris Marker's *La Jetée,* The Self-closing Window …

"Among properties of form, the most striking one is its aptitude to confer being upon the matter that receives it." Étienne Gilson, *Painting and Reality* (New York; Pantheon, 1957), A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1955, p. 126 …

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Luke 24:30-31 …

ARIES (IN LATE-APRIL)

Consciousness is cinematic,
Every "swooping orgasm",
Every "laughing tear",
Every work of Art
Is a new body -
The lie, the truth
Of every event
Is its necessary
Absolute character
(Such as *leaving*) …

To backtrack,
One must admit
That every act of passion,
Every act of Art
Is hardly sacrosanct -
That the very truth
Of Passion and Art
Is not verified or exhausted
In "swooping orgasms"
And "laughing tears";
Or what is caught
And nailed in Art
Is mere sensate being.

But the love that
Moves Art is also
The Art of Love,
The game, the soiled
Bed sheets and
The moments when
Swooping turns
To swooning and
When laughing is
The same as crying:
For, what passes
Into works of Art -
To bodies of work
As Art, as passion -
Is the cinematic soul,
The passing image
And images of what
Is lie and truth,
Or paradox.

When life turns
To Art (and Art
Turns to life),
There is no other word
Than "Yes" to sanctify
The sacrosanct -
To spring the trap
That brings all things
Toward fruition.

04/22/09

[…]

Slavoj Žižek at Jack Tilton Gallery, New York - April 23, 2009 - "Architectural Parallax: Spandrels and Other Phenomena of Class Struggle" …

Žižek's grasp of architecture, much like his grasp of film, is thoroughly distorted by Lacanian concepts that structure things as spectral emanations of ideological superstructures - that is, in most situations Id and Superego collide, while the resultant Ego (the middle ground and nominal subject) flails, as Žižek flails, to find a purchase, a point of balance, in this case between architectural parallax (here a synchronic time machine) and possible utopian opportunities (the leftover bits or "exapted" forms and functions freed of purpose) in the evolutionary expansion of architecture to its postmodern formlessness (pointlessness), the latter a collapse of legibility illustrated by the bland, folded/cut facades of Libeskind or the knotted, pornographic fusions of Gehry. (Žižek mentions the Sydney Opera House of Utzon as resembling copulating turtles and Gehry's Fisher Center/Museum at Bard as resembling a cockroach.) It is for such specular and spectacular reasons that Žižek focuses on arts complexes, as symptomatic of the postmodern condition, and especially the role they play in obscuring capitalist reifications of ongoing exploitative practices. An easy mark, it is no less funny when he suggests that if the rich need an opera house to parade about and ogle one another in, let's just dispense with the theatre and give them a building that is nothing more than a gigantic staircase (e.g., the Guggenheim). Here the monstrous nature of the Lacanian Symbolic (location of the Names of the Father) is exposed as perennial obscene (grotesque) joke …

The leftover bits that might or might not save utopian "free" space from neo-liberal capitalism end up being, for Žižek, halls, stairs, closets, and all manner of interstitial, psychologized nothings that service the privileged halls of architecture (its rooms and functions) - and it is the stuffing of services into unseen places (between floors, behind walls) that prompts Žižek to reveal that, as a good Lacanian, the irruptive often pleases him most (as when a stopped-up toilet threatens to overflow and "return" things expelled, versus swallow them and rid us of their unwantedness and/or wantonness). Thus, Žižek can point to the signature divorce of the Real by remarking that architecture "frames", and that this in fact is an aspect of silencing the proverbial Other (nature, the outside, the unwanted, the undead, etc.). No surprise, this framing is merely done today in only apparently "liberated" ways. If OMA's Bibliothèque Nationale de France is a set of "organs without a body" (Žižek quoting/paraphrasing Hal Foster), any number of new museums are forms without functions - "exapted" types for one reason alone, and that reason is that art museums are no longer galleries but discothèques, shopping malls, night clubs, restaurants, or banqueting venues of multiple vanities and appropriations - a return to origins, then. Žižek's main confession (by way of Alain Badiou) that there is Great Art, after all, and that "it" is Art that attends to universal principles and conditions, is the primary event of the collision of architecture and its corollaries - architectural events not "exapted", but architectural facts expropriated, both from the production of ideology and hegemony but also from the expedients of its own history. If everything is possible "now" and all forms of architecture are present simultaneously and, therefore, "depleted", it is not form that matters but, oddly, its antithesis. There is no question whatsoever that Great Architecture means (always) a formalization of intelligence - a form of metaphysics allied with extreme and often particularized absolutes (universal truths). Yet Žižek demotes architecture to its role of servicing ideology, to essentially mock it, while wishing nonetheless that it were not quite true …

04/29/09

[…]

"Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice", Museum of Fine Arts, Boston - March 15 through August 16, 2009 … April 24 / Amtrak, New York-Boston-New York) …

Titian (about 1488-1576)
Tintoretto (about 1518-1594)

Veronese (1528-1588)

Titian, "Christ Carrying the Cross", 1565-70 (Prado) - "The figures, caressed by soft layers of brushwork, emerge from the gloom" …

Circa 1500 - Shift from wooden panels to canvas - "Venetian artists began to explore texture. They laid paint in very thin and translucent layers (or glazes), as well as thick ones (called impasto)." - Titian: "Abbreviated brushwork", c.1543, and "patches of color" …

Tintoretto: "Grandeur, energy, and mastery of brushwork", mature style c.1547 … Self-portrait: "Aggressively free" paint handling …

1540s: Rival(ie)s emerge - Pietro Aretino, "Titian's most enthusiastic publicity agent", embraces Tintoretto, then desists (upon Titian's insistence) - Veronese develops "more rapidly" than Tintoretto - Tintoretto as anti-Titian … Veronese as Titian's protégé (and pawn) …

Altarpieces: Tintoretto … Corporeality, "muscularity", "agitation", "monumentality" … "Temptation of Saint Anthony", c.1577 (Church of San Trovaso, Venice) … - Veronese, "Temptation of Saint Anthony", 1552-53 (Cathedral of Santa Maria Matricolare, Verona) … "Darkness and brutality" … - Tintoretto, "Deposition of Christ", mid-1550s (unknown commission) … "Intense play of light and dark" and "tightly organized composition", "overpowering grief and mourning" … Wheatened braids, chiaroscuroed "flesh", three aureoles …

Supper(s) at Emmaus: Titian, 1533-34 … Classic calm (serenity and repose) - Tintoretto, 1542 … Dynamic turmoil (clamor), against Titian's dynastic banquets, Tintoretto's pastoral études signal, "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." (Luke 24:30-31) …

Titian's mythologies (*poésie*): "Venus with a Mirror", c.1555 … Fur and velvet against bare skin … Something he kept in his studio (as talisman) until his death … Duchamp's "Étant donnés" (origins), ontological crimes of "Art" …

"Late Styles": Titian's "incredible refinement and diligence" give way to "bold strokes, applied broadly, and with blotches of paint" (Vasari) … Circa early 1550s … 1570s and 80s: "both Tintoretto and Veronese responded to Titian's late style by employing their own versions of open brushwork, monochrome palettes, and shadowy and visionary settings." - Tintoretto, "Saint Jerome in the Wilderness", c.1571-72, "knotted, potentially explosive energy" … Titian, "Saint Jerome in the Wilderness", c.1570-75, "loose, vibrating, and shadowy late style", and spiritual self-portrait … - Tintoretto's death in 1594 closes "the golden age of Venetian painting" …

The Semi-Divine Interregnum / Amtrak (Boston-New York)

From painting on canvas to open brushwork, from serenity to agitation, dramatic massing, corporeality and muscularity, from thin glazes to blotches, from mythological "Ut pictura poesis" to Christian dramaturgy - all sweeping before it, and away, the understated ideality, the thin air, for the semi-divine interregnum, painting as auto-portrait of the same …

This interregnum devolves toward "painting" (arguably, "meta-painting") - the riches of painting - toward light and flesh, and the corporeal body of painting is the same whether in sacred or profane terms (a false dichotomy anyway, *pace* Ruskin), whether the Passion or mere passion … Titian gives way to Tintoretto, as Veronese resurrects the conflicting claims of sacred time and the time internal to painting: "And their eyes were opened" …

Far from the dynastic, perhaps bombastic biblical banquets ("Suppers at Emmaus") typical of the Renaissance, Tintoretto's modest études, more about transcendental turmoil and tumult than semi-naturalistic time traveling, model an appetizing archaic positive (near) force in "tightly" wrought organization, play of light, dynamic turmoil, and/or overpowering disbelief and pain (existential/

metaphysical "wounds" that never heal) - the plasma (blood) of painting is not its hues but its rapid disintegration before internal forces (flames) - e.g., Veronese's "darkness and brutality" (mixing the angelic and the demonic/daemonic), Tintoretto's impassioned/impastoed play of form and light (and shadow); and Titian's "loose, vibrating, and shadowy late style," giving up and flaunting it - as did Turner …

04/24/09

[…]

La Jetée: Time Images / Amtrak (Boston-New York)

Janet Harbord, *Chris Marker: La Jetée* (London: Afterall Books, 2009) …

"A woman on the screen opens her eyes, looks at us and blinks, when the film skips from still images to a brief sequence of movement. It is a gasp close to an experience of the erotic or the religious or possibly both." (p. 3) … See Georges Bataille's *Erotism* and *The Tears of Eros* …

"The archive is a time capsule sent into the future, addressed to a yet-to-be viewer, a correspondence from the present to the future via the past." (p. 10) …

"The affective imprint of cinema is not from its enchantment through moving images, but in its presentation of time […] time as duration […] where time can be stretched like elastic, contracted or even still." (p. 33) … See Henri Bergson (and Bergsonisme) …

Hence the unnameable impress of the woman blinking: "stillness" where we least expect it, "at the heart of a moving image sequence" (Marker's montage) and movement (blinking) within the still frames of photography - a return to repose (p. 33) …

"*La Jetée* opens out the possible times of the image and shows us how this is hinged to looking." (p. 35) …

It is the absence of image (black leader between frames or Agamben's "stops") that mediates seeing … And as Marker says, it is "this nocturnal portion that stays with us." (p. 41) … The same is true of painting (Caravaggio to Velázquez) …

"'She welcomes him in a simple way. She calls him her ghost.'" (p. 86) … "'He knew there was no way out of time.'" (p. 100) … See the conflict of narrator (voice over) and narrated (the images) (pp. 86-93) … "There is always something of the fable in the narrator's address" (p. 86) …

Image (left) - Chris Marker, *La Jetée* (Paris after the unspecified "disaster") …

Accordingly, as the past is recuperated in the present (in the internal time of the artwork), the present is sent into the past to restructure but also retrieve it (e.g., Derrida's "archive"), while both (as new body) are sent into the future to face newer bodies still (the "immortality of art") - that is, to face new subjects, who arguably are already prefigured in the paradigmatic sense of the universal signifier (the all-seeing eye) - and this is the excess, "exapted", a historical moment and event that returns eternally, the secret content of all bodies and all great works of Art. - See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) … The archive is nominally "Freud's" (London) …

There is a secret here, that if told, if understood, would destroy everything all at once. (It is that which eludes all archival practices.) It is the secret excess of Art and bodies - it is, as Agamben writes, "a means without end" (a timeless apparatus), and it is, as Nietzsche and Richter "saw", buried in the combinatory mystery of the mountains and lake at Sils Maria - the eternal return of "nothing" (pure knowing/seeing), a

nothing/everything that might destroy the world, and, as such, something the world destroys everyday to save itself. (This is the dark mystery mediated by shadow.) …

See "Return and Repetition", in Harbord, pp. 4-11, and "Endgames", pp 93-101 …
See Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, ed. Helmut Friedel (Köln: Walter König; New York: DAP, 2006) - "Sils Maria", pp. 684-696 … Sils Maria was first "archived" by Richter in the 1980s … See original edition of *Atlas* … See also Gerhard *Richter*, Peter André Bloch, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Gerhard Richter: Sils Maria* (New York: DAP, 2003) – "This small format artist's book was originally published for an exhibition in Nietzsche House in 1992 and is now available in a new edition with some minor changes. Richter's series of painted-over photographs of mountain peaks and valleys in all the seasons, with titles such as Val Fex, Piz Tremoggia, and Rosatsch was created during his holidays in the region over many years. An unassuming book, free from clichés and empty rhetoric." (Walther König) - Republication of the catalogue for the exhibition "Gerhard Richter" (Nietzsche Haus, Sils Maria, 1992, and Hôtel Carlton Palace, Paris, 1993) …

Such things are "swooping" time bombs, then, or little death wishes unto Everlasting Life, if you wish … And, in Richter's case, such things include (and enclose) an attempt to destroy the last vestiges of how the world reestablishes its relations with things - how it reabsorbs them (over-painted photographs illustrate this paradox). The biographical vanishes as dust (or in Turner's instance, patina), and (in vanishing) returns as the ineffable trace of remnants of this other time (pure visuality/the "Christic"). Agamben's notation of gesture as "means without end" is related to montage (what all Art accomplishes). This pure potentiality (the phenomenality of form/image) is the depth charge in all such maneuvers - its notable "endgame" (and source of Art's often apocalyptic assault on the world). In *La Jetée*, as the woman awakes and blinks, two gazes become one - the icon closes its window but another opens. It is called "corporeality" - incarnation (the collapse of all distance, for a moment) …

See Markus Heinzelmann (ed.), *Gerhard Richter: Overpainted Photographs* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008); exhibition catalogue, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, October 17, 2008 through January 18, 2009 …

04/24/09

[…]

Hence, *La Jetée* and works of Art cannot be parsed chronologically, diachronically, biographically, or historically without destroying them in the process. Thus Žižek's recourse to parallax (via its inversion), for architecture, and synchronicity (even if he resorts to the postmodern critique of "organs without bodies", the full optimization of the indeterminate signifier, a cause/casualty of capitalist reification and displacement/dissociation). But, no less can such be parsed dialectically (and modernist montage was this very truth written visually). As such, the attempt to make words as potent and mysterious (as dark) as things is not to let things "speak" for themselves - an utter impossibility. Instead, language (the Word) is the first image. Hence Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986) opens with "In the beginning was the Word", and Marker and Tarkovsky share one thing, if anything - the recourse to the dark mystery of memory (the archive). *The Sacrifice* (1986) closes with a dissolve to black (as the camera disappears, pulls back, into a haunted wood, trees closing onto trees) - See Chris Marker, *La Jetée/Sans Soleil*, Nouveaux Pictures/Argos Films, 2003 (DVD) … See Marker's documentary on Tarkovsky, *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich*, made when the Russian filmmaker was finishing *The Sacrifice* and, later, when Tarkovsky was dying of brain cancer in a Paris hospital …

04/25/09

[…]

THE SELF-CLOSING WINDOW

I.

The possible-impossible
Is the heart of
All mysteries -
All love affairs -
The wild ride
Between affirmation
And negation,
The double bind,
The blind trust -
That dark secret
That holds at bay
All resolution;
The path of strife
And concord;
The latter in agreeing
To forego closure,
The former the
Very source
Of Passion;
For Passion is
Paradox doubled
And its negation,
Its distance,
Difference preserved
And facts annulled.

[…]

II.

The paradox
Of passion doubled
Raises passion
To the slow
Deliberation
(In and out of time)
And delivers time
To the altar
Of Passion -
To say but not
To answer;
To linger
But never place
Upon that altar
Promise or rose,
To never disclose;
To wait, to see,
Without ever
Leaving time's
Most precious gift -
One's heart,
One's soul,
One's life.

04/31/09

[…]

IV. Tintoretto / NYU (IFA) & NYPL (Room 300)

Carlo Ridolfi, *The Life of Tintoretto* (1642), trans. Catherine Enggass and Robert Enggass (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1984) - Introduction: "Michelangelo's design (*disegno*) and Titian's color (*colorito*)" - Motto reputedly hung on Tintoretto's studio door (p. 1); See Roberto Longhi on Titian's *colorito* - Tintoretto's studio: Small-scale copies (models) of Michelangelo's "Night", "Day", "Dawn", and "Dusk" from the Medici Tomb; miniature architectural models that could be viewed from any angle; wax or clay (terracotta) models and miniature lamps (oil) to produce dramatic lighting effects (p. 2) - Tintoretto and the (auto)hagiographical myth: "This excellent man was so isolated in his thoughts that he lived far removed from all gaiety, thanks to his unceasing work and the weariness that study and diligence in art brings. Those who are immersed in speculation about painting and engaged in continual labor give up pleasure and have no experience of those things which are soft and sweet." (p. 71) …

Image (above) - Tintoretto, "Miracle of the Slave", detail (1548) …

Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion, 1999) - "Radical lack of finish (*non-finito*)", Vasari's criticism (p. 14); "Radicalism in artistic method and orthodoxy in artistic persona" (p. 14) - "Tintoretto's paintings in the period 1540-60" suggest he "employed the formal vocabulary of central Italian Mannerism [...] as a form of visual polemic" contra Titian - See "Tintoretto and Michelangelo", pp. 48-67; "Dynamism of Michelangelo's figure-style" or "powerful muscular forms" of Sansovino (sculptor and architect); Sansovino's "Romanizing" tendencies in architecture and "the mediated Michelangelism of his sculptural style" lead directly to Tintoretto's 1548 painting "Miracle of the Slave" (p. 49), "the most famous painting from the early period" and coincident with Arentino's moment of acclaim (p. 58), before being censored by Titian, and to "form for its own sake" (p. 59); "Heightened formalism" or "the idea of form as an opportunity for the display of pure artistic virtuousity" (p. 59) …

"Form for its own sake", as misleading a statement as any regarding *disegno* or, today, formalism. "Display of pure artistic virtuousity" is hardly the point (though it is *part* of the point, the force of Art). Such signals "pure visuality", while such claims also demote this vigor to an existential, programmatic surplus. This "Michelangelism" is the arrival of agitation in classicizing Renaissance humanist art (and not merely of/confined to the pictorial tradition). Against "Florence", then, and against high Venetian so-called "republican" virtue and diligence (another art-historical myth) …

Miguel Falomir, *Tintoretto* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007) - See Frederick Ilchman and Edward Saywell, "Michelangelo and Tintoretto: *Disegno* and Drawing", pp. 385-393 (catalogue for the same, pp. 394-415) - Regarding the potential "supreme god of painting", see Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura* (1548), "If Titian and Michelangelo were a single body [...]" Hence the myth regarding Tintoretto's adoption of this "possibility" and hence, too, the dual sense of *disegno* (marks on paper and/plus rigorous concept and formal perspicacity) - Pino's book coincides with Tintoretto's "Miracle of the Slave" - "Tintoretto engaged with Michelangelo artistically over a period of at least forty years ..." (1540-1580?) (p. 387) - 1550s-1570s: "A whole group of paintings [...] take as their starting points the Prophets and Sibyls of the Sistine Chapel." (p. 388) …

Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State: The Discipline of Disegno* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) - "Vasari defined *disegno* as a complex activity based on intellection. He described it as a process that combined the acquisition of knowledge with the ability to suggest with the hand the 'universal forms' or 'ideas' of nature [...] The representation of that which one comes to *know* about nature, rather than the representation of that which one actually *perceives* in the enmattered world" (p. 145); that is, a definition opposed to the prevailing "Venetian formulation" of the time, after Ludovico Dolce, *Dialogo della Pittura* (1557), where "painters imitate with lines and colors that which the eye can see" and poets imitate "that which is represented to the intellect." (note 9, p. 329) - Vasari "combined knowledge of universal forms with the ability to render the forms", "forms that are, paradoxically, inaccessible to sight", or "knowledge of unenmattered form"; that is, "intelligible" abstractions based on the phenomenal world but not *of it* (p. 149) - See Giorgio Vasari, *Lives* ..., Introduction to the 1568 edition - See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI - See Benedetto Varchi (who brought Aristotle into play, by way of the *Poetics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, within the Florentine Academy) … Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934); revised edition … *Nicomachean Ethics* is considered a series of *commentarii*, notes for lectures Aristotle would have delivered at the Academy in Athens established by Plato (his mentor) … It's entire trajectory is toward defining Speculative Intellect as the highest form of happiness (the End) … Giorgio Agamben has folded the sections on "Friendship" (Book VIII & IX) into the middle essay of *What Is an Apparatus?*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) … See "The Friend", pp. 25-37 … With Book X, Speculative Intellect arrives as the penultimate "Good" … "It is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness […]", Book X, VII, 7 …

05/01/09

[…]

Vasari's definition of *disegno*, an article of faith in the Florentine Academy, denotes a significant point of contention in the Renaissance definition of the emerging "place" of/for painting (and Fine Art). Varchi's recourse to Aristotle (and not Plato) to situate the same in the phenomenal world while also elevating "drawing" to a form of abstracting from nature is not altogether opposed to the "Venetian", more conservative view espoused by Dolce "where painters imitate" and poets "represent" (construct worlds). As painting was, in Venice, already "constructing worlds", it is obvious that rhetoric was outpaced by practice (by painting), and that Tintoretto - siding with nascent Mannerism - was as much enamored of these "other worlds" as merely provoking the Venetian autocracy (patrimony) …

Vasari's (un)diplomatic valorization of all things Florentine (and as Longhi has shown the astonishing vibrancy of Venetian painting, ignored by Vasari) suggests that "activity based on intellection" also included conformity to dynastic forms of formalism - that "seeing" or "representing worlds" also meant doing so within the constraints of the model acceptable to the prevailing worldview. Tintoretto's own version of "radicality" combined with "orthodoxy" (a radical orthodoxy) delineates a type of decorum that is not so much at odds with autocratic measures in force in any system but, instead, straining against such from within (and the struggle to merge the arts, or liberate painting from "manual labor", a process defined by the apparatus of often competing schools of thought - literary and artistic circles) is the art-historical grain that defines these archetypal processes of contravening one's *habitus* - one's very own location and role in the ruling class …

Hegemony, while a formal order unto itself, spills into the production of works of art via the artist's relation to formal constraints and quotidian values assigned by the times. This turmoil has, in all Romantic senses (instances), produced the earth-shattering and transformational moments in art as a historical subject. But it (the art-historical insurrection) vanishes when one looks to the ulterior/anterior history of formal laws (formal agency) transmuted by the inexplicable arrival of a Michelangelo, a Tintoretto, or - later - a Caravaggio and/or a Velázquez. This inexplicable "whatever" (nonhistorical presence) is what underwrites all Romantic histories of art, those histories that also include within their stories (their narrative) the most profound currents of agonistic agitation and destruction (and, in the late 20th century, Deconstruction)*, an elementary process that discloses that formal laws undergo a necessary dissolution and reformulation out of necessity (out of laws internal to the outer manifestation of what passes as a

formal or universal law historicized). Here, then, Ruskin's necessity of "excommunicating" himself ("dissertation before disconfirmation"), of chopping himself into two Ruskins, in part to produce the dialogic imaginative force of his critique but also to defend what resides in "Art" …

*Deconstruction is perhaps best reduced to a formalization of laws internal to rhetoric but with no way out - meaning, Derrida created a closed loop that intensified the literary and artistic language games, inclusive of "intellection", that are traceable to the linguistic revolution associated with the birth of Structuralism. Thus, Deconstruction is synonymous with Post-Structuralism …

05/02/09

[…]

V. Ruskin, Michelangelo, Tintoretto, ARC 504 (Princeton SOA), *La Présence*, RISD / Passim

John Ruskin, *The Relation Between Michael Angelo and Tintoret: Seventh of the Course of Lectures on Sculpture Delivered at Oxford, 1870-71* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1872) / NYPL (Rare Book Room) …

"Idealization of form" common to sculpture and painting - "Two masters who accomplished or implied the unity of these arts", Tintoret and Michael Angelo - "Tintoret entirely conceives his figures as solid statues: sees them in his mind on every side, detaches each from the other by imagined air and light; and foreshortens, interposes, or involves them, as if they were pieces of clay in his hand." (p. 5) …

1480-1520 - "In that forty years all the new effort, and deadly catastrophe took place." - "Bellini precedes the change, meets, and resists it victoriously to his death. Nothing of flaw or failure is ever to be discerned in him." (p. 12) …

"Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian, together, bring about the deadly change, playing into each other's hands - Michael Angelo being the chief captain in evil; Titian, in natural force." - "Tintoret, himself alone nearly as strong as all the three, stands up for a last fight, for Venice, and the old time. He all but wins at first; but the three together are too strong for him." Michael Angelo strikes him down; and the arts are ended. "Il disegno di Michel Agnolo": That motto was also his death warrant. (p. 13) …

Tintoret's "dramatic strength" (see *The Stones of Venice*) ... "As much beyond Michael Angelo's as Shakspeare's is beyond Milton's." (p. 26) …

Michael Angelo's "dishonest, insolent, and artificial" treatment of the body ... versus the Greek and Venetian "faithful, modest, and natural" treatment is exemplified in the treatment of the face, Tintoret resisting the distortion(s) (p. 32) …

"You are accustomed to think the figures of Michael Angelo sublime - because they are dark, and colossal, and involved, and mysterious - because in a word, they look sometimes like shadows, and sometimes like mountains, and sometimes like spectres, but never like human beings." (p. 37) …

"The waves of hair in a single figure of Tintoret's [...] contain more intellectual design in themselves alone than all the folds of unseemly linen in the Sistine Chapel put together." (p. 36) …

Tintoret "in nearly all his greater pictures [...] is entirely carried away by his sympathy with Michael Angelo, and conquers him in motion, outnumbers him in multitude, outwits him in fancy, and outflames him in rage, - he can be just as gentle as he is strong." - Paradise (in his "Last Judgement") "is the most sublime picture in existence." (p. 38) - The Last Judgement: "What hast thou done?" (pp. 39-40) - "I have no hesitation in asserting this picture to be by far the most precious work of art of any kind whatsoever now existing in the world." (p. 44) - "Our Earth is now encumbered with ruin, our Heaven is clouded by Death. May we not wisely judge ourselves in some things now, instead of amusing ourselves with the painting of judgements to come?" (p. 45) …

Victorian "thunder and lightning" and "judgements to come." Consistent with *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin's mood shifts nonetheless - painting and the plastic arts will never achieve anything if they do not register the present moment (its necessity). The premiation of "the face" seems not peculiar but prescient - as Michelangelo's contortions and Ruskin's denunciation of his essential *in*humanity is a means of measuring Tintoretto, and that means of measurement is the dignity of the human soul. Ruskin draws the proverbial line in the sand - he is not at all sheepish in saying that proto-Mannerist Michelangelism begins the path toward perdition (destruction) …

Greek and Venetian dignity notwithstanding, it is not difficult to detect in Ruskin's principled stance High Victorian moralism (often presented in retrospect as "repression"). Yet what one also might detect is Ruskinian moralism, which is not the same thing. Michelangelo's "dishonest, insolent, and artificial" (and, what is said, *sotto voce*, "arrogant") will to form - for Ruskin - places Tintoretto's work at the apogee of a type of art-historical apocalypse, which is also why Tintoretto's "Last Judgement" (and Paradise, in particular) qualifies as "the most sublime picture in existence." …

The "deadly change" (carnage and carnality) attributed to Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian presents Ruskin's challenge to pictorial tradition (to representation as a moral art). Insofar as Titian is given the role of having perfected "natural[istic] force", Michelangelo is assigned the role of "chief captain in evil" because he in effect defaced and debased (defiled) the human figure. For Ruskin, Michelangelo's sublimity is all darkness (albeit, the wrong kind of darkness, or nihilistic darkness) - that is, "deathly" apostrophes for the human condition (and therefore "evil") …

Thus, "The Last Judgment" is "the most precious work of art of any kind whatsoever" and the magisterial evocation of the closure of Art's ability to render "last judgements." Earth, Heaven, and Death are summoned to effectively pre-judge all consequent art, and the Victorian mantle of agitated moralism collapses. Ruskin's thunder and lightning clears away the already modest trappings of the art-historical moment in which he writes. What "opens" as a result of this "closing" is the moral vista of art: to no longer be "amused" by paintings of "judgements to come", but instead to measure Earth, Heaven, and Death here and now, quitting once and for all the endless deferral built into Art - or the at least vapid presentiment that it is only art after all (art for art's sake) …

05/07/09

[…]

The Politics of the Envelope - Princeton Envelope Group (PEG) - ARC 504 - Princeton School of Architecture - Friday, May 8, 2009, 10 am to 5 pm …

Structure - Monographic research; Project-oriented (manual to come); Multiple projects; Research-oriented (prototypes to come); Group work (studios/seminars); Engagement with the outside (the world at large); Technically informed (general theory of the envelope, plus ...) …

Process - Opportunity, change of conditions of practice (limits, borders); departure from neo-liberal practice (e.g., exiting/leaving flows, datascapes, emergence) toward delimited envelope types (regularity and technical boundaries), performance and optimization (without artificial affect) versus boxes or blobs (formless forms); to surpass the past hegemony of the modernist section or plan; thematic organizational strategy (via seminars) toward classifications (types) related to political positions (political agency) …

Envelopes are not surfaces (but basic volumetric types/bodies): 1/ Flat-horizontal (natural/artificial dichotomy embodied); 2/ Spherical (equi-dimensional isomorphism, uniform facade detached from direct, internal functional and programmatic concerns); 3/ Flat-vertical high-rise (e.g., typical large mid-rise housing blocks); 4/ Vertical high-rise (e.g., typical "freestanding" office or residential tower on plinth or in so-called "landscape") - Friction between iconicity and efficiencies, and strongest technical performance are present in the latter (the vertical high-rise type) …

STUDIO: ARC 504 - Alejandro Zaera-Polo; Stan Allen, Ole Fischer, GK, Jeff Kipnis, Sanford Kwinter, Marc Simmons, Reinhold Martin, et al. …

Four typological investigations - Vertical (high-rise prototype without program); Spherical (American Embassy prototype); Flat-vertical (high-density sustainable residential tower); Flat-horizontal (Walmart tampering) …

1. Vertical Group

Dominant vertical Z axis (left as "?"/undetermined) - Relationship to field universalized via climatic variables (versus historically rejecting the field for insularity) - Localization via universality (universal, semi-abstract forces) - Koppen classification system (climatic global types) or data-induced coefficients - Formal analogs: circle, square, triangle (footprint types as pre-zygotic forms) - Metric to parametric? As progression to 3D type …

Corrugation of the envelope via data sets - Thermal dynamics optimized (constant surface to internal area ratios maintained) - Fenestration analysis (post-zygote formal studies), differential modalities toward localization of type - Symmetricality maintained toward optimization of the zygote …

If the plan is to be superseded, the volumetric is the next step (the parametric). Remaining halfway between technical performance and morphology brings into question how form is generated …

2. Spherical Group

American embassy types and existing and proposed prototypes - Envelope/site relationships and facade considerations - Risk avoidance (of the past) toward risk management - Critical shift in program and size; historically the embassy is growing in size, present forms suggesting a 300% leap in volume (inclusive of "compound"?) - Variety of programs and program types (often floating programs as per the spherical isomorphic condition) plus increase of size leads to environmental performativity, plus all of the usual concerns ...

Dichotomies of "American-ness" remain embodied in the type regardless of above shifts (thickened envelope, complex, multifaceted) - Architectural devices employed in proposed prototype: stripes/landscape (compound), stone wall/massing (building proper) - Site variations, wall variations, entrances, climatic massing, output - Lighting/illumination strategy as atmospheric screening and branding modulated by the "fin system" (vertical, translucent light-transmitting skins stretched on cables forming a star in section and projection to ground of the illumination, "scoring/marking" the perimeter of the building block/mass with "stars"), blast-proof curtain wall doubled with "fin system" covering glass curtain wall (the former vaporizing in hypothetical blast) - Locality as diplomatic strategy (not simply local materials but political tuning of political materiality) - Entry block applied to consular block restores unnecessary (anti-spherical) faciality …

The anomaly proves the exception ... The programmatic concerns push the type back toward the non-spherical (vertical block, sawn-off tower type) due to renascent formal concerns driven by the type plus its conditions on the ground (plus its political agency, especially stratifications required or merely adopted) …

3. Flat-vertical Group

Two high-rise housing types (Singapore and Miami) and their synthesis in a hybrid form - Traditionally (in the energy-consumptive West) internally dominated (sealed/air-conditioned) - Singapore model (open plan/open-air) compared to Miami model (sealed) also includes a dramatic ratio of floor area to person which favors the former as (ironically) "more ethical" - Transformational ratios, airflow/core, expanded outflow versus even distribution via corrugations and hollow core (including branched form/multiple linked towers) drives environmental performance - Different interior conditions in two study types brings focus to the perimeter edge and balconies or permutations within the uniformity of the envelope "as limit" - Core

space (void) and corrugation plus envelope versatility plus performance (more views, more facade, more air) …

Chiasmus: Autocratic regime provides space that seems generous, communal, etc. Democratic-capitalist regime provides spacious, individualized, indulgent space that is inherently and performatively "unethical". Hybrid produces a political-material, ideal model without an economic model to support it - that is, a building type "in search of a client". Therefore, *pure space is political*. Tax codes, subsidies (as in Singapore), policies for implementation remain to be determined …

4. Flat-horizontal Group

"Walmart in the Expanded Field, or Bigness: Literal and Phenomenal" - Ubiquity of the big box as conundrum/opportunity - Prototype: built strategy (branding and logistical mass) - Adaptation versus optimization? (or abandonment?) - Growth: literal and experiential (within the Walmart "brand") - Implied questions: Maxed out? How to do Bigness? - Opportunities to tune the model: massing, roof, facade (the interior is always already "stuff") - Roof area to envelope ratio as primary opportunity - Rebranding: Sloping roof (toward highway/approach), presenting "vast field as object" - Restructuring: As result of roof declination, side elevation subsequently tapered, typical approach road to ground plane sculpted/depressed (at mammoth parking lot), at store entrance, producing "vast field as experience" - Rhomboid footprint allows occlusion of loading docks and service area typically allotted to one of the generic side elevations …

Facade condition: Typical Walmart banality as image (connoting what?) - Shift toward planar variations with introduction of atmospheric effects (affects) via modulation of gigantic entrance facade at parking lot to lure but fascinate - Mirrored modules as unrelenting surface (tessellated planarity), reflective/textured system as mutation of the banal planarity of the typical Walmart Superstore (2D to 3D condition reflecting, "literally and phenomenally") - Linguistic banality of Walmart versus sexed-up banality (what is the iconographic condition of either worth?) - Is it politically-materially neutral? - Facade panel systems (reflective pyramidal and sawn-off pyramidal forms vary amount of flat reflective surface (reflective glass set in metallic, sculptural field) - No signage (per se) …

Strip away the necessity of the hybrid type servicing Walmart's self-image (whether upgraded or retrograde) and a model in search of a client emerges ... Sexed-up banality in service to what? Post-neo-liberal capitalism? ...

Architecture that merely services capitalism is, therefore, a criminal enterprise … The metric cannot possibly offer resistance to that model when it is informed by the very economic-technical data of the model (system) it pretends or presumes to critique … Its true address is elsewhere, a secret address, or Architecture itself …

05/08/09

[…]

Types in Search of a Client: Servicing Anti-Capitalism

Intermundia - All types (typologies) escape the system; the exception proves the rule. A materialist manifesto (Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*) acknowledges as well the space between things (the *intermundia*, or the uninhabited/inhuman place where the gods are found). The gods of form (formal ontology) are the forces within formal logic (thought) that are recognized or abandoned, though they always return anyway. Formal logic also produces the dialectic of type, prototype, and synthesis. What arrives in the synthesis is "the project without address (client)", or the typology without economic model to support it. This shows that instrumentality erased calls for/forth a new instrumentality, and this new instrumentality is the resistance (perhaps) to past and passing types of the same …

Judgement, then, returns with the synthetic type cut loose from the past econometrics (systems) - and judgement resides in a form of "faciality" that is similar to Ruskin's entire point regarding Michelangelo's

and Tintoretto's "regard" (seeing) of the human face; the former disfiguring it (making it agonistic), the latter retaining Venetian *dignitas* (never indulging the anti-humanistic contortions/possibilities of "faciality"). And this "new" faciality (expressive of everything - the totality - in Art, Architecture, and Humanity) is the utopian/redemptive impulse maintained - a timeless gesturalism (means without end) given to all Art. Monumental (sublime) issues arise, and here Architecture begins again to address its secret address (the utopian/redemptive power of constructing worlds). It is the self-same "place" shown in Tintoretto's Paradise, that place where the angels attend/administer "the holy rites" and the birth of "Paradise" …

See Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "The Politics of the Envelope", Part 1, *Log* 13/14 (Fall 2008) and Part 2, *Log* 16 (Spring-Summer 2009) …

05/09/09

[…]

La Présence: The Eternal Return of the Self-same …

The (auto)hagiographical impulse in Art is the stigmata of *La Présence*. The spectacular anti-nature of the Eternal Return is traceable down to the most minute and (in)finite particularity of things - it is "made of (the) Earth". Whether G. K. Chesterton writing "St. Francis" (and writing himself into "St. Francis"), or Tennyson writing himself into "The Lady of Shalott", it hardly matters what the biographical plane represents (what the proverbial canvas of the "great painting" - Life - portrays). As with all of Poussin's paintings, Giorgione's or Tintoretto's, in (in)different but structurally consistent ways *La Présence* is in both the putative distance (as formal agency) of the painting and in the captive subject or non-subject of the work (its nominal surface and/or face/faciality). If this is also true of Architecture, it is true for the same reasons - that is, the embodied intelligence is the (auto)hagiographic presence, and that presence writes itself, paints itself, or *presents* itself as that presence (the Eternal Return of the Self-same.) And yet "here" is not the primordial "noise" repressed by all things to merely exist, but the Silence (the darkness, or the black leader/spaces of Marker's films) that supports presence. "It" is the Night of Art, and "it" is what is not said (the Silence) but embodied before "it" ever might speak. Every body (every thing) knows the self-same without knowing "it", empirically (self-consciously). "It", per se, does *not* exist …

So, regarding the experiment with "types" in Architecture, or forms in Art, why shouldn't these syntheses (models, hybrids, insurrections) go in search of a "client", and an econometric model (a metric) that registers the "here and now", a "future"? The utopian impulse in Art, Architecture, and Philosophy (a politics and an ethics, at once) is also the future-anterior faciality of *La Présence* - the very mark of intelligence, its honesty (to speak for Truth as a moral subject), and a putative arrogance at the same time. This "time" is not, then, two-fold - its futural anti-nature is not against nature (exclusive) but truly synthetic or one thing (which is the very act of embodiment) - that is, singularity itself. This faciality is not two-faced when it does speak the truth, facing as it were the future and the past, but as embodiment of the futural (the future anterior) it recovers the dialogic nature of that which is called "Nature" (things, but also their formal agency or formal laws). Formal ontology invokes all of this and the exceptional, and the exceptional not only proves the rule, but it is the rule. *The form escapes the rule* …

See Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* …

(Let's then call this provisional analytical model "bio-structuralism", after Structuralism and after Post-Structuralism, and break for tea in the garden with Lucretius, Petrarch, Byron, and Nietzsche. May small birds alight on all shoulders present and absent ... For, "may we not wisely judge ourselves in some things now ...") …

05/10/09

[…]

Therapeutic categories (re-constructions), then, away from systems toward life: *What's the difference? you'll ask, and I don't know. All I know is that my whole life has led me to you [...] Is it something to do with how we are made?* John Berger, *From A to X: A Story in Letters* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 93 … Life leads toward/back to "It" - "You"/"It"/"Paradise" … Upstream …

05/12/09

[…]

RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) - Degree Project Reviews - Division of Architecture & Design - May 16, 2009 (Woods Gerry Gallery) - Maria Guest, Elizabeth Dean Hermann; Tulay Atak, David Gersten, GK, André Schmidt, Mohamed Sharif, et al. …

"More Projects Without Addresses" …

1. Louise Girling - "Borders as Passages, Not Walls" …

Political boundaries: Natural boundaries; tensions enhanced as visual physical standoff; virtual theatre amidst floodplain …
Architectural insertion; two halves mirroring each other; US/Mexico w/ intervening river/floodplain …
"Mont-Saint-Michel" - Arriving and disappearing (see Michael Kenna photographs)
Solidity/*firmitas*; sludge/water …
Possible autonomous/sovereign "zone" straddling border, but NOT a crossing but a "crossing out"; tensions maintained but more meaningless (emptied of explicit political-cultural content, loaded with implicit phenomenal effects/affects) …

2. Brian Rubenstein - "Virtual Dematerialization"

South Station, Boston: Networks, diffusion, expansion (loss?) …
Gateway space; roads, ramps, subway intersecting (gain?) …
Transparent frame structure (providing visual/visceral exposure of physical network) …
Framing pedestrian traffic; lifted, transparent ramps, platforms …
Programmatic spaces; concentration in "spider" form (elevated subway "net"); glass boxes; Why not BELOW ground?; Why not a garden/conservatory at grade? …
Civil/civic dichotomy exposed … See Mark Cousins, "Civil Architecture", in Pamela Johnston (ed.), *Architecture, Experience, Thought* (London: Architectural Association, 1998), pp. 51-55 …
Viscous self? form? silt?; embodied knowledge/material imagination (social contract) …
"Cathedral" for silence (looking) w/ option to stream media/data as visual strata versus spectacle; thickened transparent walls shutting out sound/noise (digital and otherwise) but NOT sight/site …

3. Roselle Curwen - "A New Empathic Landscape" …

California: Net grain and interruptions; street patterns, typologies, topography, and hydrology; shifts …
Wind turbines; overlay of structure, secondary infrastructure, water (systems); peak or valley (intersections); turbines and solar collectors (tubes not panels) commingled; armature that follows sun; finer grain expressed within condensed, performative armature …
Mapping formal apparatuses (aesthetic-formal analog); optimal performance and banality; massing value and aesthetic payoff (missing value = "beauty"); "because" is yet to come; de-optimize for aesthetic value …
De-re-optimize, re-re-de-optimize, de-de-re-optimize (till optimization no longer means maximize the maximal, or maximize the minimal, and "optimization" no longer makes sense/is the point) …

4. Liz McCormick - "Of a City in Motion" …

Interchange (Houston); infamous lax zoning laws; loop highway system (cloverleaf/knot) …

Site: two highways intersect (inner city/CBD); polo club (forest), Memorial Park, commercial office buildings, transit center (bus depot) …
Moving within the edges; "break edges/move them around"; lines of housing extended to site (scripted/inscribed); artists' center; 23 acres (leftover space) …
Glorifying the "montage"; collision and kinetic urbanism; pull edge/suspensions; enhance reverb/amplify acoustics; amphitheatre/suspended ramps (gondolas); adaptive urbanism/anywhere (generic space, generic subjects, generic velocities); threads/"threadings"; de-acceleration from high velocity "to ground" …
Idiosyncratic; kind of generic = paradox; shifting platforms (non-site, non-program); web-like, cabled structures (semi-archaic); superhighway as modernity amplified (high rationality/engineered oblivion); edge condition/velocities as glorification (art-spectacle); no need for public art …
Anaestheticizing of time in the totalitarian system (see Vaclav Havel); the story once we step out of the car = other (repressed) stories; individualization/atomization and the collective; two kinds of time (two subjects); "to ground", perhaps water (or watery something other than high-modernist structuralization of speed, transport, and engineered precision - i.e., the world gone awry) …

5. Ariel Ortiz - "Subverting Surveillance" …

Panopticon/prison (San Juan, Puerto Rico); conversion to monolithic/monstrous cultural site (such as Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center, Harvard University) …
Seeing and being seen; lines cut through the panopticon/building (citadel), looking back at the city; open gallery space at center (courtyard) with residencies within envelope (squatter-like, moveable partitions) …
Center stage; transparent structure (theatrical fly tower); depressed amphitheatre cut out of "rock-like" volume inserted/thrown into courtyard (eye of panopticon), stepping up to second floor, third floor as series of classrooms; restructuring a social order through a spatial order; Liberal (romantic) gesture versus pragmatic (imaginative) gesture …
Political trajectory (missing); double inversion to take the eye out (blind the panopticon) and replace it; literary versus political-material path …
Needs the "subterranean" to save it; we can see best with our eyes closed (in "darkness" is true knowledge); possible scintillating sections (rock thrown meets rock below mount) …
One last prisoner (the subject, the student, the architect, the "I") …

6. Anastasia Laurenzi - "Constructive Slippages" …

Crossing thresholds; memory blurs perspective; flattening of past and future; to search for the other …
The corridor and the stair "where I just was and where I was headed"; camera obscura; self as blind spot (through superimposition of past and future, forward and backward); blind spot as "where I stand"; past shifts to new location (new plan/new elevation); subject splits in two (see Ruskin); ontological crime scene; vertical and horizontal register; a plano-metric scene for a "new way of seeing", but still the blind spot; flatness returns (toward 3D model); drawings collapse back into the surface of the paper (the picture plane and perspectival space as "trap"); the third dimension (volumetric form) finds its own ground/constructing itself; corridor to a stair …
Crime scenario: One self (trapped) immolates itself in syntactical web escaping via production of "whatever" (silence, putative autonomy, *raum* plan, dissociation) …
Formal ontology/dichotomy; living between two walls and living *inside* two walls (AND the difference); opaque and transparent opposition as red herring (false dialectical moment); operational stratagem (splitting); material culture/process (forms of formalism); formal ontology as abstraction (ritual exit), rising toward analogical thought (via oppositions, synthesis, splitting/doubling); the last ladder is anagogical thought; projecting future(s); See Hans-Georg Gadamer (but see also Emmanuel Levinas's *On Escape*, 1935); formal laws speaking to/amongst themselves …
La Présence: The "whatever" of formal ontology that erases itself to produce itself as other; See Alenka Zupančič's *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two* (2003), especially the passage on the "blind spot"; vast mysteries, but a "too much" for words and hence "Silence"; See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921); forms emerge from life (darkness), quietly on dove's feet; See Jacques Lacan's "The Freudian Thing" (1955) …

La Promesse: Sublimity. What is it? One might like to call it "embedded intelligence", but it has as much to do with surface as anything "within" or "beyond" that surface. Is it the promise of sublimity that marks "embodiment"? Is embodiment also entombment? Is it not also the distrust of the image that causes artists to dis-inhabit the same - e.g., Marker, Candida Höfer, Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth, Richter - via the implosion *within* surface tension, its viscosity but also its texture, and the effacing (pixelization, over-painting, erasure, blurring) of all of *that*? And, "Why?" …

"Art is the highest form of hope." Gerhard Richter, *Panorama* (Gent: Mer/Paper Kunsthalle, 2008) …

05/17/09

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VI. Intermezzo

SILENT VOICES

When the mannequins
And advertisements
Speak of things,
When the still voices
And silent images
Say more than any
Living person,
There is something
Profoundly amiss.
When the shop windows
Express "desire for desire",
When the leggy lasses
Silently scream,
When the smiling faces
Portend no guilt,
The time of the time
That ends time arrives.

And if actual smiles
And legs are missing,
That catatonic moment
In fact speaks
Its catatonic secret.
There are mysteries
Embedded in silence(s),
The "whatever" that is
Its secret price,
The living collude
With the dead,
The undead want
What we all want -
The mannequins,
The disembodied ones -
The slow and silent
Stream that washes
Everything clean.

Astonishing truths
Emerge from lies,

Bury themselves
In graves that glisten -
The image(s) of love
Or lost times,
The future of things
Almost spent.
What we know
We know without words,
Yet words matter
Nonetheless -
And to make all
Silent things speak
We belabor the labor
Of love's impasse.

05/24/09

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VII. *La Présence*: The Eternal Return of the Self-same …

Image (above) - Gerhard Richter, Sils Maria, 2006, *Atlas*, Sheet 769 …

07/18/09

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For Ana