

*Alexandra Brown, Complexities, Discrepancies and Ambiguities: assessing the disciplinarity of Herzog & de Meuron's architecture through Judd's generic art*

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## **Complexities, Discrepancies and Ambiguities: assessing the disciplinarity of Herzog & de Meuron's architecture through Judd's generic art**

### **ABSTRACT**

Focusing on the 2002 architecture exhibition 'Herzog & de Meuron: Archaeology of the Mind', the paper examines the disciplinary issues at stake for Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron when engaging with art praxis, using the work of Donald Judd as a theoretical framework for the discussion. The trans-disciplinary practices of both Herzog & de Meuron and Judd had and continue to have the ability to question the disciplinary limits of architecture and the arts, and indeed, the presence of the modernist arrangement of disciplines as a whole. The paper argues that, through assessing Judd's theoretical and practical position on disciplinary distinctions within the arts after the minimal art debates of the 1960s, it might be possible to more clearly understand what sort of conditions may have been inherited in some way by the twenty-first century and Herzog & de Meuron's claim to conducting trans-disciplinary practices.

In 2002, Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron exhibited its work at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), as part of an architecture exhibition entitled, 'Herzog & de Meuron: Archaeology of the Mind.' Curated by Philip Ursprung (who also edited the accompanying catalogue *Herzog and de Meuron: A Natural History*) and Kurt Forster, the exhibition saw literally hundreds of working models and studies by the firm displayed alongside various natural history museum objects and works by twentieth century artists.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the process models were woven around pieces by Joseph Beuys, Donald Judd, Alberto Giacometti and Yves Klein, and seen alongside objects such as Chinese scholar rocks, ammonite fossils and even souvenir salt and pepper shakers showing Boston buildings and monuments ([Fig. 1](#)). The firm was established in 1978 by founding partners Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron and has received international recognition through its work on significant commissions such as the alterations and additions at the Tate Modern gallery in London and, more recently, the Beijing National Stadium constructed for the 2008 Olympic Games. However, this impressive body of built work was not the focus of the exhibition.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the firm used the opportunity to present evidence of its idiosyncratic position regarding the relationship between its work and art.

Typically when architects and their work find their way into a gallery setting, it is usual to find a direct link between the works on show and the architects completed works (actualised or otherwise) that they relate to – as if every observer is a potential client to be wooed by slick models and mounted project photographs. Unlike this 'traditional' exhibition of architecture (if such a thing can exist), within 'Archaeology of the Mind' there were no drawings, photographs or even models of the firm's completed designs that could explain relationships between the fragments and the built projects they were a part of. Instead, the premise of the exhibition was, as Deyan Sudjic explains in a review for London's *Observer*, that the items displayed were to

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<sup>1</sup> Ursprung, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Herzog & de Meuron's built work is surveyed in Wang, 1998. The firm's more recent work is featured in El Croquis, 2002 and Cecilia et al, 2006.



Fig. 2. Herzog and de Meuron, *Study for Project No. 184*, Prada le Cure, Production Centre and Warehouse, Terranuova, Arezzo, Italy, 2000 – 2001. Source: Philip Ursprung (ed.), *Herzog & De Meuron: Natural History*, Montréal and Baden: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Lars Müller Publishers, 2002, p. 266. (© Herzog & de Meuron.)

form an archive of Herzog & de Meuron's work, compiled sometime in the future, after all other aspects of the firm's work have been destroyed.

All of Herzog & de Meuron's actual buildings have vanished, worn down by the passing of time and the casual finality of the wrecker's ball. So too have the elaborate models that architects make when trying to seduce clients in the early stages of a project. Even the drawings have gone. We are left with a random sample of the archives salvaged from the ruins of the architect's studio. The working models, the prototypes, the scraps which have somehow survived, like fossils in a peat bog.<sup>3</sup>

In line with such a concept, the firm left the selection and ordering of work to curators Ursprung and Forster, most likely as a way of creating enough detachment from the pieces to allow for their exhibition as 'artifacts' (Fig. 2.). Herzog & de Meuron, for its part, was responsible for the design and positioning of the display cases that housed the firm's objects and the accompanying cabinet of curiosity-type objects. What would Herzog & de Meuron have us believe it is doing here? If, simply put, the curators collected and arranged studies, models and samples by the firm for presentation in an exhibition alongside sculptures by a series of influential artists and pieces from natural history museums, what can viewers say they are looking at in an architectural exhibition such as this? Is the Herzog & de Meuron work still architecture in this setting? Do the architects, during their involvement in their architectural exhibition, still consider themselves to be working as architects? These questions are undoubtedly linked to a line of questioning that involves the disciplinary limits of architecture and the validity of this 'trans-disciplinary' work.<sup>4</sup> It seems pertinent to note here that issues related to the trans-disciplinary are by no means part of a new discussion. In fact, since the eighteenth century there has been tension between art as such and the range of practices claiming to be called arts, the disciplines have been staking out boundaries within and around the system as a whole – architecture no less so than the other arts.

With this in mind, and in order to understand what might be happening here with the Herzog & de Meuron exhibition, we can follow a loose thread of sorts from 'Archaeology of the Mind' back to the 1960s where Mark Linder, in his publication *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism*, suggests we might find a 'knot'.<sup>5</sup> Although this is a particularly complex angle of thread, there is part of the knot that is particularly relevant to this discussion. It involves the debates over minimalism or modernism that occurred in the 1960s. Within the broad set of arguments that can be loosely grouped into these two critical categories, of specific concern are those debates concerning autonomous art disciplines versus a concept of art as a whole. A key figure in these debates was artist/critic Donald Judd (1928-1994). Herzog & de Meuron appears to directly invoke Judd through its own trans-disciplinary work. However, Jacques Herzog himself takes great care to distance his firm's theories about the arrangement of the arts from Judd's notion of a generic art, despite his appreciation of the artist's work. Statements from both Ursprung and Herzog address this in the exhibition catalogue:

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<sup>3</sup> Sudjic, 2002, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Linder, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Linder, 2004, p. 1.

[T]hey [Herzog & de Meuron] certainly do not share Judd's formalist view of architecture as part of one all-embracing aesthetic system: 'Judd created a homogeneous universe – an old, totalitarian notion: he thought his sculptures had a broad validity and that art could offer universal solutions. A naïve thought.'<sup>6</sup>

In spite of such comments, within 'Archaeology of the Mind', the firm directly engages with art practice and presents the kind of trans-disciplinary practices that Judd himself argued in favour of. Moreover, Judd's work and his well-known polemic with modernist critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) and later Michael Fried (1939-) remains relevant to this discussion because it had considerable implications for the location and, indeed, entire presence of disciplinary boundaries across the arts, including architecture.<sup>7</sup>

### **Judd: Between Specific Objects and Generic Art**

A key to finding out what is possible and what is at stake in contemporary art-architecture relationships may well lie in Judd's body of work from the 1970s up until his death in 1994. This is because the issue here is not so much whether Judd's work is legitimate or not, but rather, what happened after his work had been widely recognised as art. Assessing Judd's theoretical and practical position on disciplinary distinctions within the arts following the 1960s can provide an understanding of the set of conditions that have been inherited by contemporary art praxis and thereby Herzog and de Meuron as well. These conditions therefore inform their current claim to conducting trans-disciplinary practices.

As an artist with a critical output, it is useful to compare examples of Judd's papers from the 1960s and later in his career. In terms of this discussion, the relevance of Judd's seminal essay 'Specific Objects' (1965)<sup>8</sup> becomes apparent when examined in conjunction with the later paper, 'Some Aspects of Colour in General and Red and Black in Particular' (1994).<sup>9</sup> Judd's argument in 'Specific Objects' explicitly and systematically opposed Greenberg and his version of modernism that was laid out in 'Modernist Painting' (1960).<sup>10</sup> Judd declared minimal art to be everything that Greenberg's theories were not. To this end, Judd developed an entirely new set of terms to accurately describe the new style of minimalism and set it apart from Greenberg's formal modernism. For example, in needing to maintain the idea of his art's existence outside recognised media-bound disciplines, use of terms such as 'sculpture' and 'painting' in the way that Greenberg's modernism would require becomes impossible. Thus, throughout his earlier essay, Judd consistently refers to his pieces and those of his contemporaries simply as 'new three-dimensional work' or even 'specific objects', avoiding, for the most part, any association with existing art disciplines.<sup>11</sup> Importantly, however, Judd does refer to his work in a disciplinary

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<sup>6</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 20, quoting Jacques Herzog in Zaugg, 1996, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> This point is supported by Linder throughout *Nothing Less Than Literal*, as he discusses the architectural themes within the disciplinary and transdisciplinary arguments of Greenberg and Fried specifically, but also Judd.

<sup>8</sup> Judd, 1975, pp. 181-89.

<sup>9</sup> Judd et al., 1994, pp. 70-79 & pp. 110-14.

<sup>10</sup> Greenberg, 1973, pp. 66-77.

<sup>11</sup> Further to this point, it is interesting to note that De Duve (De Duve, 1996, p. 233) draws attention to the various names critics and artists in general invented for minimal art as a revealing part of this

context when he describes his pieces as being derived more closely from painting than sculpture.<sup>12</sup> This description again specifically opposes Greenberg's notions of modernism and painting's convention of 'flatness'.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Judd also makes a special point of refusing the term 'movement' for this new style of work, arguing that,

The new three-dimensional work doesn't constitute a movement, school or style. The common aspects are too general and too little common to define a movement. The differences are greater than the similarities. The similarities are selected from the work; they aren't a movement's first principles or delimiting rules.<sup>14</sup>

This idea that the entire language of the modernist system of the arts could not be used to describe minimal art demonstrates just how far Judd needed to take his opposition of Greenberg's modernism in order to be able to call his work art. It is clearly not art as Greenberg and Fried would have it; it refuses to look like art, it refuses to call itself sculpture and it claims to derive from painting, despite being three-dimensional.

By the time that 'Some Aspects of Colour' was published in 1994, the need to 'secure legitimation ... for an art that deliberately oversteps the limit' had passed, in that Judd's work had been widely accepted as art for some time.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, this acceptance had opened the door to a wide number of new possibilities in art media, and had undoubtedly contributed to changing the nature of art as a whole. Therefore, unlike in 'Specific Objects' thirty years earlier, Judd's attention in 'Some Aspects of Colour' is able to freely turn to discussing the principles of his work as part of wider issues concerning the nature of art and its relationship with architecture. Judd's position on these issues fundamentally follows on from his line of argument in 'Specific Objects', but there are a number of interesting shifts in the language of his writing, which serve to reveal the evolution of his theoretical position and the extent to which the climate of art had changed since the 1960s.

Recognised as one of Judd's last formal statements before his death, 'Some Aspects of Colour In General and Red and Black in Particular' is essentially a discussion of the use of colour and space in art and architecture. The essay also provided Judd with an opportunity to reflect on his work during the early part of his career, serving to highlight the consistency of the strategies with which his work had approached space and colour. However, in contrast to 'Specific Objects', Judd uses a very different set of terms when discussing art and architecture in 'Some Aspects of Colour.' In the earlier essay, references to the disciplines of painting and sculpture are avoided, except where arguing against them, but this later essay sees Judd re-engage to a certain extent with the language of art disciplines. For the most part, Judd's language

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'cutting away' of minimal art from the traditional terms of painting and sculpture. He states in *Art after Duchamp* that this naming process (e.g. Minimal Art, ABC Art, Literal Art, et al) 'brought it [minimal art] under the generic name 'art' as a brand new art devoid of tradition, but as an art in its own right.'

<sup>12</sup> Judd, 1975, p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> Greenberg, 1973, p. 69. Greenberg's defence of painting in 'Modernist Painting' involves the notion that the purity and autonomy he so valued in a discipline had been most preserved in painting. Furthermore, that this was specifically due to painting's unchallenged convention of 'flatness' that had consistently been able to set clear boundaries between painting and other disciplines throughout its history.

<sup>14</sup> Judd, 1975, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> De Duve, 1996, p. 231.

is still clearly anti-modernist in the Greenbergian sense, in that he repeatedly uses the generic term 'art' when discussing the visual arts. On the other hand, unlike in 'Specific Objects', he does explicitly discuss 'architecture' and uses this disciplinary term alongside the generic 'art' throughout the paper. It is possible that Judd himself would have also differentiated between art and architecture during the 1960s, but equally that his rejection of Greenberg's modernism bound his early arguments fairly tightly to a notion of generic art over disciplines. As a result and despite its widely acknowledged architectural themes, Judd makes no mention of the disciplinary term 'architecture' in 'Specific Objects' and perhaps therefore avoids undermining the essay's anti-Greenbergian agenda.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, by the 1990s, Judd had been working at Marfa for over a decade and his considerable involvement with interventions to existing buildings within the town during this time may have played some part in his more explicit consideration for architecture in relation to the arts later in his career.



Fig. 3. Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1963. Light cadmium red oil on wood and purple lacquer on aluminium, 12.2 x 21 x 122 cm. Photo by Todd Eberle. (© Donald Judd/VAGA. Licensed by VISCOPY 2009.)

Judd's artworks maintained a constant set of fundamentally anti-disciplinary principles from the 1960s through to the 1990s, not unlike his theoretical output. Again, though, his later work moved away from a focused opposition to Greenberg, dealing with the architectural more specifically and explicitly following his move to Marfa. An early floor piece, the untitled 1963 work (Fig. 3.), is representative of the

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<sup>16</sup> Linder, 2004, p. 123. Linder's text, for example, specifically explores the architectural content of 'Specific Objects' in his chapter on Michael Fried's treatment of architecture.

type of work Judd executed early in his career, in that a strong relationship to the key principles of 'Specific Objects' is clearly evident. The work successfully avoids resembling an art object and remains non-representational, mainly through Judd's use of industrial materials. The cadmium red colour scheme, typical of his earlier work, unifies the piece, but the faces of the object remain differentiated through open and closed space. While he retained a similar attitude towards ideas about unity and the use of industrial materials in his work, many of the pieces Judd executed after his move to Marfa are much larger than his early floor and wall units and, wherever possible, they are permanently installed on site.

The permanent concrete installations that Judd sited in the Marfa landscape (Fig. 4) illustrate the extent to which the focus of Judd's later work had shifted away from opposing Greenberg and towards an exploration of more architectural qualities of scale, landscape and permanence. There are parallels between these works and his earlier work in the rectangular shapes and the play between openness and enclosure, but the connection with 'Specific Objects' is much less rigid. Judd's exploration of typically architectural qualities makes for interesting relationships between his architecture and art at Marfa. Arguably, the opportunity to create objects on various levels allowed his work to explore the nature of, and possibilities for, art and architecture to a much fuller extent than he had ever previously been able to.



Fig. 4. Donald Judd, *15 untitled works in concrete* (detail), 1980-1984. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.  
(© The Chinati Foundation, photograph by Florian Holzherr, 2002.)

An important example of Judd's interventions in the built fabric of Marfa is the North Artillery shed, which houses a permanent installation of one hundred aluminium works by the artist (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6). It is a long, rectangular building and the interaction between the repetition of the floor boxes and that of the artillery shed windows along the length of the structure is striking. An honesty of materials has

been applied to both the works and the building, yet the integrity apparent within the systems clearly differentiates the agendas of each. Like his choice of language in 'Some Aspects of Colour' this particular interaction between Judd's works at Marfa is quite telling of his attitude towards relationships between art and architecture at this point in his career. For Judd at Marfa, there is a generic term 'art', but architecture is still differentiated as a discipline within it. As Linder points out, to facilitate trans-disciplinary activity, both disciplines and the possibility to transgress their limits must exist.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 5. Donald Judd, Exterior view of artillery shed housing permanent installation of Donald Judd's *100 untitled works in mill aluminium*, 1982-1986. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.  
(© The Chinati Foundation, photograph by Florian Holzherr, 2001.)

Generic art is the notion that facilitates this transgression, but equally the existence of art disciplines and media are required in order to describe both the work that adheres to them and that which sits between them. Judd's later work and Linder's definition of the trans-disciplinary, suggest that this situation provides favourable conditions for the cultivation of meaningful art-architecture relationships.<sup>18</sup> In short, these meaningful relationships are ones that can only occur when the disciplinary

<sup>17</sup> Linder, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Here, I am also drawing on concepts discussed with John Macarthur in 2006, specifically his explanation of the need for disciplinary differentiation in order to facilitate edge conditions. The useful analogy he used was one of coloured play-dough and the separation that would be needed to stop separate colours becoming one 'murky' brown.



differentiation of architecture defines an edge on which to meet with art.

While Judd's works and writings from the 1960s are important in any discussion of his theories pertaining to the arrangement of the arts, his later work suggests that his output at that time was overly determined by the particular brand of modernism it was forced to rebel against in a way that his later body of work was not. After the debates over minimal art had subsided somewhat, Judd was able to discuss a concept of art as a whole that included art disciplines and distinctions. We can now look past the extremity of the initial arguments used by Judd to help validate his new work and realise that the concepts of both generic art and art disciplines must be present in order to facilitate trans-disciplinary work and specifically art-architecture relationships. It is now possible to return to the Herzog & de Meuron architecture exhibition and test whether a similar set of conditions might be present.

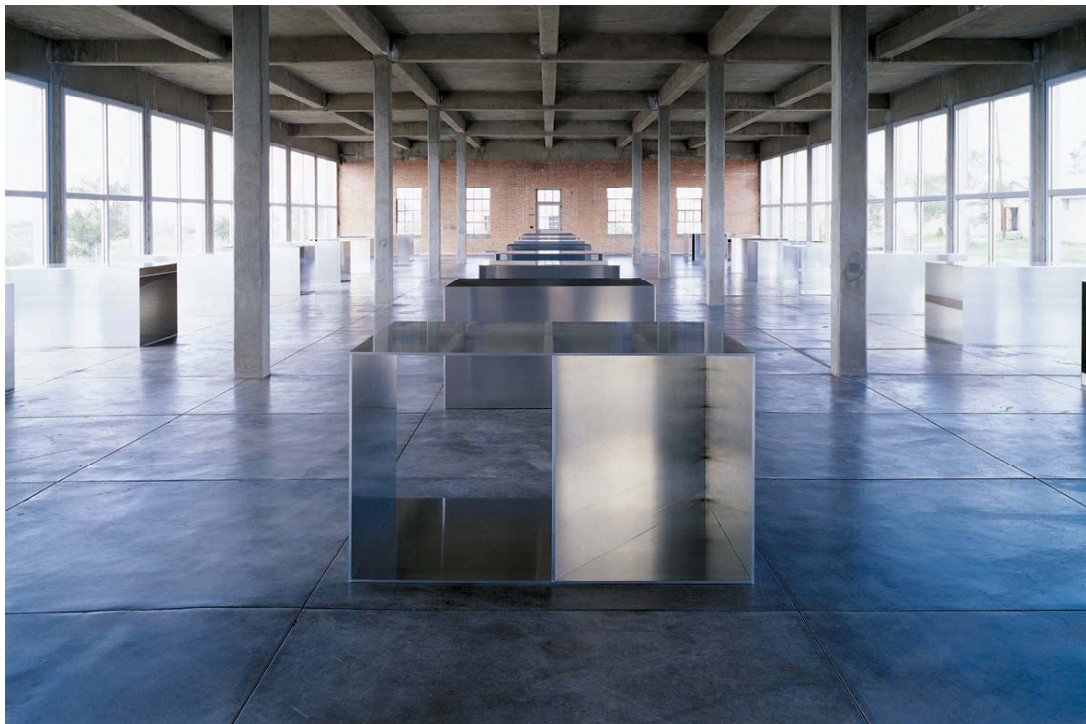


Fig. 6. Donald Judd, *100 untitled works in mill aluminum*, 1982-1986, detail. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.  
(© The Chinati Foundation, photograph by Florian Holzherr, 2002.)

### **Herzog & de Meuron: Fragments as 'Architectural Gatecrashers'**

Herzog & de Meuron's work is often explored at length in contemporary discussions about the relationship between art and architecture; however, the position the firm and its work occupy within this discussion is by no means clearly defined. It could be that this is in part due to a mismatch of sorts between the types of statements the Herzog & de Meuron architects make and the actual work they produce. There are, of course, the well-worn facts about the firm, trotted out in the event of a passing discussion about art-architecture relationships and Herzog & de Meuron. These include their work on a large number of major gallery and museum projects, their collaborations with artists, architecture exhibitions, a numbering system for their work that follows Richter and Klee and the fact that Jacques Herzog himself practiced as an artist prior

to pursuing architecture full-time.<sup>19</sup> However, these art-architecture relationships rather than providing any definite answers to the question of how Herzog & de Meuron actually engages with art praxis, are more likely the manifestations of a quite specific attitude towards architecture and art on the firm's part. It is fair to say that the reason Herzog & de Meuron is so often linked to the art world is not simply the result of the firm's involvement in a number of museum projects or the architects' background in art, it is more carefully orchestrated.

The architecture exhibition proves the most revealing of the firm's practices in terms of examining art-architecture relationships. The significance of 'Archaeology of the Mind' in particular is not only its location at the CCA, but also that the unusually detailed exhibition catalogue as well as the various publications involving Herzog & de Meuron surrounding the exhibition provide substantial written material for discussion. As Ursprung notes in the introduction to *Natural History*, the architecture exhibition is, 'an area of architectural praxis that most commentators avoid because of its ambivalence.'<sup>20</sup> It is this 'ambivalence' that makes the architecture exhibition the best example of Herzog & de Meuron being forced to reveal the way the firm's work actually relates to art.

For its part, Herzog & de Meuron is quick to point out that what it does is not art.<sup>21</sup> To this end there are a few key statements made by the firm in publications surrounding the 'Archaeology of the Mind' exhibition. The reasons Herzog himself gives for no longer producing works of art, are that 'it is impossible to do art and architecture at the same time' and (as paraphrased by Ursprung) 'there was no longer any need to express himself other than in architectural terms.'<sup>22</sup> His remarks are undoubtedly intended to distance his current architectural output from his previous work as an artist. Perhaps then, it is safe to say that Herzog & de Meuron would claim they are still very much architects during the execution of an architecture exhibition. This is further reinforced by the way the firm refrains from using any terminology when referring to its work in the exhibition that could lead to confusion with the 'authentic art'. In the case of 'Archaeology of the Mind', the firm is exhibiting the 'waste products'<sup>23</sup> of their architecture, 'experiments'<sup>24</sup> or the evolution of a project.<sup>25</sup>

These statements also show that it is impossible for Herzog & de Meuron to call its work in the exhibition architecture. Herzog himself has said, 'Since architecture itself cannot be exhibited, we are forever compelled to find substitutes for it.'<sup>26</sup> In addition to the obvious attempts by the firm to distinguish its work here from art, the works are also distanced from architecture. Yet there does not appear to be the same need to preserve the identity of the art objects themselves in this way. Within the exhibition catalogue, the architects go as far as to ask the questions,

Are these [works of art] simply more waste products or does the panoply of archived waste seek to enhance its status by basking in the radiance of a familiar

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<sup>19</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> This point is reinforced throughout their documented conversations with Jeff Wall in Bechtler, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 14 quoting Jacques Herzog in Zaugg, 1996, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron as quoted in Ursprung, 2002, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Latimer, 2002, p. 3

<sup>26</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 75.

brand-name aesthetic? Or conversely, are the works of art, as victims of name-recognition, trying for once to escape the tyranny of the White Cube, so that they may be seen and appreciated in the new light cast on them by the unusual context?<sup>27</sup>

While this passage undoubtedly raises a number of interesting questions, for the purposes of this discussion it is pertinent to note that, in each of these scenarios, the 'archived waste' remains as such, and it is the artwork that takes on differing roles in relation to it. The artworks may be seen as 'simply' more waste, but the waste cannot be seen as 'simply' more art. It is interesting that so much effort would be made to preserve the identity of the waste objects. In accepting that Herzog & de Meuron is here actively distancing its objects in the exhibition from the so-called 'art', one ultimately feels compelled to understand why. Specifically, why is the firm's work in *Archaeology of the Mind* neither art nor architecture? Also, if architecture and art are as incompatible as Herzog would have us believe, why engage in a process like this exhibition that confronts art in such a direct way?

Some potential answers may be found in Judd. If, as argued earlier, there is a case for thinking of Judd's generic art as a product of the conditions of the 60s - that after the debates over minimal art had subsided somewhat, he was able to discuss a concept of art as a whole that still included art disciplines and distinctions - perhaps there is a case for arguing that Herzog & de Meuron is reliant on a similar system. Although Herzog & de Meuron does not paint this kind of picture when speaking about its trans-disciplinary work, their statements imply a distance between the firm's exhibited work and art that their output does not reflect. This discrepancy stems from the need for Herzog & de Meuron to retain the firm's status as architects and their work, in turn, to retain its status as architecture. The result is a series of statements by Herzog & de Meuron about the firm's work as architects that creates an (artificial) distance between its practices and art, despite (or because of) the fact that a large number of these projects directly engage with art at least on some level. The real distance, for the moment, exists between what the firm says and what it actually does. This is by no means to suggest that Herzog & de Meuron is being deliberately deceptive or untruthful about the nature of its work, but rather that there is, at present, a need for the firm to protect its disciplinary identity as a firm of architects in order to continue to engage in trans-disciplinary practices without undermining its built work as it stands, accountable to the disciplinary standards of architecture as built form.

Intrinsic to this notion of remaining accountable to architecture is also remaining unaccountable to the art world. As architects exhibiting the firm's work is *other* to art. They remain curious, daring and creative geniuses, affording them the right to remain outside 'art' as such; 'Archaeology of the Mind' is an *architecture* exhibit, with *architectural by-products* on display, after all. Consider, for example, the reviews the exhibition received in the 'Arts and Life' section of Toronto's *National Post*. Reacting to the premise of the exhibition as a future archive of the firm's work with no explanatory documentation to position the models and studies within the process of designing buildings, Joanne Latimer cautions that:

This is anything but a typical show-and-tell exhibit with wall text. There are no floor plans of Herzog & de Meuron's buildings, no documentary photography and

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<sup>27</sup> Ursprung, 2002, pp. 74-5.

no client models. It can cause dismay for anyone unfamiliar with their finished commissions. Homework is recommended.<sup>28</sup>

So, despite the fact that Herzog & de Meuron has exhibited hundreds of objects within specially designed display cabinets alongside twentieth-century works of art, making no real reference to the completed or imagined buildings these objects might be a part of, the pieces are still accepted as architectural and treated very differently by the reviewer than the works of art. Further to this, the exhibition also seems to receive the benefit of the doubt when it comes to considering Herzog & de Meuron's work as architectural. Exhibitions of an architectural firm's study models presented as an archive of fragments from the future are by no means a regular occurrence. The work is not part of a traditional architectural practice and so has very little in the way of conventions it needs to adhere to. Even the less favourable press for the exhibition still appears to make allowances for the architects. Deyan Sudjic's review for *The Observer* literally portrays the Herzog & de Meuron work as childlike, out of place in the adult world of art:

There are times walking through the carefully installed galleries when you see Richter's rich oil-on-canvas, catch the eye of Warhol's photographic self-portrait and Giacometti's walking man engaging Donald Judd's floor piece as if they were adults at a cocktail party, talking above the heads of a rowdy crowd of adolescent architectural gatecrashers.<sup>29</sup>

As far as analogies go, this is not altogether unhelpful. Without the negative connotations intended by Sudjic, Herzog & de Meuron's objects are like 'adolescents' and, as such, their behaviour is responded to and tolerated in an entirely different way to that of the adults (the works of art). It would appear that Herzog & de Meuron's insistence on its work as architecture is integral to the success of an exhibition like 'Archaeology of the Mind'. Whether the distance the firm puts between their professional work and art is artificial or not, it serves to allow the architects to work outside the traditional boundaries of architecture without forfeiting their right to remain architects.

Like Judd earlier, Herzog & de Meuron has made an action on the disciplinary categories, just less explicitly so. As with Judd's clear and aggressive reaction against Greenberg's autonomous art disciplines and that of painting in particular (Greenberg's 'purest' discipline), Herzog and de Meuron's action equally sits outside Greenberg's art disciplines, but yet appears to take its cues from a much broader notion about the flexibility of disciplinary boundaries and limitations. Further, by projecting into the future as such, and 'looking back' at the work, Herzog & de Meuron is affording itself this opportunity to re-examine art disciplines. More specifically, the term 'archaeology' for the exhibition is a temporal device, which acts to prevent categorisation of the contents of the exhibition in current terms by assuming enough time has passed to render the fragments 'artifacts' as opposed to historical objects. Resisting history in this way allows the reconstruction and systemisation of the fragments to be as the firm and curators would have it, rather than requiring conformation to the exact reality of disciplinary distinctions at present.

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<sup>28</sup> Latimer, 2002, p. 3

<sup>29</sup> Sudjic, 2002, p. 15

This situation for the trans-disciplinary in architecture also arises partially out of the 'newness' of the work. Without having any way to articulate exactly what Herzog & de Meuron is doing in an exhibition like 'Archaeology of the Mind', there is a temptation to describe it in art terms or file it randomly under 'art – general'. Ursprung is able to sum up this situation within the firm's work in the introduction to *A Natural History*,

We could repeat the story of how they [Herzog & de Meuron] met Beuys again and again, like a creation myth that derives its authority from constant repetition. Or we could repeat again and again the list of artists – whistling in the dark to keep up our spirits. But this will not get us any further. It seems that we try to say out loud what certain terms mean in order not to have to see something else, for which there is, as yet, no language.<sup>30</sup>

There is no doubt that this lack of articulation for the sorts of practices in which they engage, in a way, pushes architects like Herzog & de Meuron to make as many arguments as possible for seeing their work as architectural as opposed surrendering it to art. It clearly refuses to fit neatly into either art or architecture praxis and there is at present no real 'language' for the architecture exhibition.

In requiring a new set of terms to adequately describe it, is the Herzog & de Meuron architecture exhibition again approaching the theoretical condition of Judd's 'Specific Objects'? Perhaps Herzog & de Meuron finds itself bound to a certain argument in order to legitimate the firm's work – though this time, interestingly, in favour of disciplinary distinctions rather than generic art. The reason that a more extreme view of working completely outside of the system of the arts or reinforcing its disciplinary boundaries is used as a 'cover' argument of sorts for trans-disciplinary work could be explained through examining the limitations of the prevailing modernist arrangement of the arts. Under this system, work that steps outside of the recognised media-bound disciplines must ultimately be *other* to art in order to protect the relevance of the system itself. In order to have work recognised one must either be seen to be working completely outside of the system's media-bound disciplines, or completely within them. A 'half in, half out' argument seems likely to undermine the validity of the work.

An examination of Judd's work following the 1960s suggests the types of arguments that may be required to legitimise working outside the perceived limits of a recognised discipline. This seems especially critical for architecture, as it remains uncertain of its place within the current arrangement of the arts. It is the status of the architect and their work as architecture that is perhaps most at stake for those in the profession who choose to engage with art through trans-disciplinary practice. It seems, at least in the case of Herzog & de Meuron, to require a carefully orchestrated set of moves in order to negotiate the terrain at the edges of recognised architectural practice. Like Judd's work, these practices may be less about making a choice between generic art and art disciplines, and more about reinforcing the existence of both.

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<sup>30</sup> Ursprung, 2002, p. 20.

*Alexandra Brown, Complexities, Discrepancies and Ambiguities: assessing the disciplinarity of Herzog & de Meuron's architecture through Judd's generic art*

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Fig. 1. Images from *Herzog and de Meuron: Archaeology of the Mind* exhibition, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 23 October 2002 – 6 April 2003, Main Galleries.

<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/19-herzog-de-meuron-archaeology-of-the-mind>

Fig. 2. Herzog and de Meuron, Study for Project No. 184, Prada le Cure, Production Centre and Warehouse, Terranuova, Arrezzo, Italy, 2000 – 2001.

Source: Philip Ursprung (ed.), *Herzog & De Meuron: Natural History*, Montréal and Baden: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Lars Müller Publishers, 2002, p. 266.

(© Herzog & de Meuron.)

Fig. 3. Donald Judd, Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1963. Light cadmium red oil on wood and purple lacquer on aluminium, 12.2 x 21 x 122 cm

(© Donald Judd/VAGA. Licensed by VISCOPY 2009.)

Fig. 4. Donald Judd, *15 untitled works in concrete*, 1980-1984, detail. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.

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Fig. 5. Donald Judd, Exterior view of artillery shed housing permanent installation of Donald Judd's *100 untitled works in mill aluminium*, 1982-1986. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.

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Fig. 6. Donald Judd, *100 untitled works in mill aluminum* (detail), 1982-1986. Permanent collection, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.

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