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# Tit-for-Tat: (Re)Productions in Sculpture and Architecture

(Spine Title: Tit-for-Tat: (Re)Productions in Sculpture and Architecture)

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

By

Michelle McGeean

Graduate Program in Visual Art

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
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**Tit-for-Tat: (Re)Productions in Sculpture and Architecture**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## Abstract

Sculpture and architecture are systems of thought that manifest themselves physically. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the ways in which sculpture and architecture have performed in parallel ways to address the implications of their site; whether as objects or the representation of objects on the page. The seriality of printed media makes it both accessible and difficult to erase. This is placed in opposition to the volatility of sculpture or architectural objects, and can be summed up for the purpose of this paper with Victor Hugo's admonition, "This will kill that. The book will kill the building." This investigation comes from the standpoint as an artist and researcher, where architecture is used as a guide in the constructing and construing of art objects.

## Keywords

Sculpture, Architecture, Rosalind Krauss, Peter Eisenman, Surface, Image, Structure, the volatility of objects vs. the persistence of the page, vertical, horizontal, Monika Sosnowska.

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## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Certificate of Examination.....	ii
Abstract and Keywords.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Situating (...).	7
Chapter Two: (...)Site.....	19
Chapter Three: Surface, Image, Structure.....	29
Chapter Four: Case Study Monika Sosnowska.....	41
Conclusion: Tit-for-Tat.....	53
Bibliography.....	56
Curriculum Vitae.....	60

## List of Figures

1. Rodney Graham, *The Gifted Amateur*, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1962. 2007. 3 part light-box photograph. <http://art.newcity.com/2009/12/14/eye-exam-open-studio/>, accessed July 30, 2011. 11

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2. Le Corbusier's sketch of the confrontation of the horizontal and vertical window and "Roneo" from the archives of *L'Espirit nouveau*. From Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996. 15

---

3. Douglas Huebler. Artists' book as exhibition / catalogue for "show" by Seth Siegelaub in November 1968, and Seth Price's *Dispersion* from 2002. <http://www.specificobject.com/>, accessed on July 30, 2011. 24

---

4. Isa Genzken. Installation view, Museum Abteiberg, Monchengladbach, 2002. Scanned from the book, *Isa Genzken: Exhibitions, Works, Catalogue Raisonne* Koln: Verlag der Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2003. No page numbers. 33

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5. Thomas Demand, *Bathroom (Badezimmer)* 1997. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/04/arts/design/04KIMM.html> accessed on July 30, 2011 36

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6. Tom Burr, Installation view *Complete Breakdown*, Galarie Neu, Berlin, 2005. Scanned from the book, *The New Décor*. London: Hayward Publishing, 2010. No page numbers. 40

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7. *Untitled*, Monika Sosnowska, exhibition design for Promises of the Past, 2009. <http://www.themoderninstitute.com/exhibitions/3700/images>, accessed July 30, 2011. 43

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8. *Loop* installation view at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, by Monika Sosnowska, 2007. <http://www.themoderninstitute.com/exhibitions/1439/images> accessed July 30, 2011. 45

---

9. *Untitled*, Monika Sosnowska. Installation View, "Promises of the Past" 2009. Views of Sosnowska's model for her architectural project in "Promises of the Past" 2009. <http://www.themoderninstitute.com/exhibitions/3700/images#4997> accessed on July 30, 2011. 51

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## INTRODUCTION

In March of 2010 I encountered the construction site for the new Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal concert hall, the L'Adresse Symphonique at the Place des Arts in Montreal. Situated on the corner of Maissonneuve Boulevard and St. Urbain Street, the building is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2011. Around the site was a timber hoarding that adapted to the physical attributes of the environment: angling up stairs, skirting across courtyards, and, if you were to follow it the whole way round, provided a vantage point into the construction site itself. What struck me the most about this hoarding was that there was no doubt that it was an object in space—its very physical presence blocked my view and changed the way I negotiated the space—yet in contrast with the buildings surrounding it, the planar qualities of the yellow-painted plywood gave the impression of a flat surface: like a piece of paper; or a canvas on a stretcher. The hoarding seemed to hover between that of a three dimensional object and a two dimensional surface *acting* as a three dimensional object. At the same time, something about this physical encounter seemed both sculptural and architectural. The function and materials of the hoarding spoke mostly of the construction process, but it also acted as a signifier which gestured towards the surrounding architecture. Built primarily with function in mind—a wall to separate—the hoarding was a manifestation of one of the most rudimentary of architectural forms. So what was it about this encounter—like Tony Smith's oft-quoted experience on the New Jersey Turnpike of a landscape that for him was "artificial" and yet could not be "called art"—that made it so difficult to define?



This lack of definition resonates in Anthony Vidler's question regarding how we can distinguish between a spatial and recreational "use" of a public square and that same square occupied by an artwork such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*? *Tilted Arc* was simultaneously architectural and sculptural, both it and the public square "fulfill a combination of experiential aesthetic and functional 'use'": whether haptically or visually, they both impose and respond to the body.<sup>1</sup> Is it possible to define the two disciplines when there is little "division between the spatial and the textual" and, more importantly within the context of this thesis, "in the case of sculpture and architecture, between the aesthetically constructed spatial and the functionally constructed spatial?"<sup>2</sup> What can this ambiguity—between sculpture and architecture, the spatial and the textual—provide in both the production and interpretation of artworks?

Along with my studio work, this thesis is an attempt to come to terms with such questions. It is important to note here that my position is an artist and researcher who approaches art as a site of critical production. The negotiation of architectural discourse is positioned relative to this standpoint. My material and theoretical practice appropriates architecture both as a physical and ontological entity. Architecture here is used as a measure, a guide, and a device to relate to the constructing and construing of art objects. My studio practice uses sculpture and printmaking as modes of production where the resulting works are intended to acknowledge their architectural context. Yet, the pieces themselves maintain architectural tropes, either in their materials, their referent, or in their presentation. They may be considered as a representation of architecture, *but they are not architecture*. Just as this thesis is not architectural. Like

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Vidler, "Architecture's Expanded Field" from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use*. Anthony Vidler, Ed. New Haven: Sterling and Francis Clark Art Institute, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the hoarding mentioned above—a structure which literally stands outside of architecture—my work is situated *outside* of architecture at the same time as implicating it. Perhaps my situation can be likened to what Beatriz Colomina, who in the book *Architectureproduction*, considers Ariadne as achieving the first work of architecture since she gave Theseus the ball of thread by which he found his way out of the labyrinth after having killed the Minotaur:

Thus, while Ariadne did not build the labyrinth, she was the one who interpreted it; and this is architecture in the modern sense of the term. She achieved this feat through representation, that is to say, with the help of a conceptual device, the ball of thread. We can look at this as the “first” transmission of architecture by means other than itself, as architecture’s first *reproduction*. The thread of Ariadne is not merely a representation of the labyrinth. It is a project, a veritable production, a device that has the result of throwing reality into crisis.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis along with my studio practice, then, can be considered not as architecture, nor architectural—but as an architectural reproduction; a “transmission of architecture by means other than itself.”<sup>4</sup> The act of transmission, however, is not one-sided, just as “architecture seeps into critical thinking unnoticed,”<sup>5</sup> architecture too may be invaded—“thrown into crisis”—by ideas from other discourses. My interest in using architecture as a generative point materially and theoretically is a result of this “transmission.” It is a means to understanding not only artworks, but the spaces we interact with on an ongoing basis. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to define certain parallels between the disciplines of art and architecture. More specifically, it seeks to address how sculpture and architecture have performed in parallel ways to

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<sup>3</sup> Beatriz Colomina “Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction” from *Architectureproduction*. Beatriz Colomina, Ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis, “Introduction” from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

address the implications of their site, whether as objects or as representations of objects on the printed page. This will be taken up by constructing an interdisciplinary juncture between the disciplines of art and architecture, as well as identifying a group of terms that may then be used as a way of approaching a reading of the material consequences of artworks.

Chapter One takes up as its prerogative the outlining of a parallel between art and architectural discourse, concentrating on architecture as a scene of transgression in the production and interpretation of artworks. It begins with architect Peter Eisenman's critique of Rosalind Krauss's assumptions of architectural space in her book, *The Optical Unconscious*. According to architectural critic Jeffrey Kipnis, Eisenman's main motive here is not to indict Krauss for her seeming indifference to architecture, but to point out how architecture seeps into critical thinking unnoticed. Kipnis uses Eisenman's critique as a generative point in noting the similarity between the move from representation to abstraction in painting to that of the vertical window and the horizontal window found in architecture at the same time. The ideas brought up by Kipnis are then extended to the artwork of minimalist artists in the 1960s and 70s.

Having considered some critical parallels between art and architecture in the first chapter, Chapter Two will address the issue of site. Site will be addressed not only as a physical locale, an architectural or environmental setting, but will also consider the printed page as a site. The writings of Miwon Kwon and James Meyer will be taken up as a basis for understanding the concept of site; highlighting the ways in which the term has been dealt with in artworks from the 1970s to the present day.

The focus will then shift to the problematics of considering the printed page as site. Due to its accessibility, my interaction with installations throughout the course of writing this thesis has depended on the page as a site of interaction as opposed to the artworks themselves. This presents an interesting standpoint with regards to the interpretation of both art and architectural objects, especially in light of my studio practice which takes up sculpture and printmaking as modes of production. How has the page transformed the production and reception of sculpture and architecture? This question is taken up by considering the role of the page in both art and architectural discourse, and includes the perspectives of Beatriz Colomina, Seth Seigelaub, and Seth Price.

In Chapter Three, the ideas outlined in the previous chapters provide the basis for identifying the terms, surface, image, and structure. Simply put, these terms mark a distinction between a mode of display (structure), the surface of that display, and that which is being displayed (image). These terms will be elaborated by using examples from both art and architectural discourse and will be discussed as they apply to the reading of two and three dimensional artworks. The practices of Isa Genzken, Thomas Demand, and Tom Burr respectively, will be discussed in relation to surface, image and structure.

Chapter Four examines the work of Monika Sosnowska as a supplement to the specific engagement of the art and architectural terrain explored in the first three chapters. Sosnowska's site specific installations refer to the architecture which houses it, but they also act as an architecture in and of themselves. These works are presented as a means to implicate the broader social, political, and economic situations found in

post-communist Poland. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be concentrating on the ways in which Sosnowska's works relate to surface, image, and structure.

What is presented here remains only a sketch of an artist's ongoing interest with architecture's production and reproduction. In light of practices that—as stated by Vidler above—have little divide between the spatial and the textual, this thesis is the textual component of my material practice. It runs parallel to my studio production, supporting and enriching it, but never dictating the final result.

## CHAPTER ONE: SITUATING...

Mel Bochner's 1969-70 *Theory of Painting (Disperse Cohere)* consisted of four approximately 10'x16' spreads of newspaper arranged on the floor; two scattered and two neatly arranged edge-to-edge. Photo documentation shows what seems to be randomly spray-painted newspapers sitting unassumingly in the corners of a room. The title of the piece directly references painting, but why place a painting on the floor? Bochner would continue to use the methods employed in *Theory of Painting* with his 1976 piece *Axiom of Exhaustion*. There, according to critic Brenda Richardson, the masking tape on the floor which makes up this piece is made sculptural because "by virtue of its placement on the floor it demarcates a volume in space."<sup>6</sup> So if we are to accept Richardson's notion, as Rosalind Krauss seems to in her 1995 reading of *Theory of Painting*, why would Bochner use *sculpture* to critique *painting*? Krauss begins to build her argument by stating that for artists in the 1960s and 70s, painting and sculpture were understood as being defined by a single axis: the vertical (painting) and horizontal (sculpture). We can ignore such challenges that painting can take other orientations—such as on a ceiling or in a book, she argues—because viewing's natural axis results from our upright position in space. So "insofar as that image organizes itself for its perceiver in relation to an imaginary axis that is vertical, the conventions of painting reflect the verticality of the image-field and relate the pictorial surface to the upright plane."<sup>7</sup> As an artist practicing at the time, Bochner would certainly have been aware of these ideas. Thus, Krauss concludes that in

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<sup>6</sup> Rosalind Krauss "Theory of Painting" from *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible 1966-1973*. New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

working within conceptualism's idiom of dismissing the visual properties of art, Bochner uses the work's placement on the floor to critique traditional views of painting's figure-ground, edge-frame relationships.

The ideas brought up by Bochner's *Theory of Painting* provide an entry point into the themes addressed throughout this thesis. Within my broader topic which examines how sculpture and architecture have performed in parallel ways to address the implications of their site, this chapter will concentrate on architecture as a scene of transgression in the production and interpretation of artworks. It begins with architect Peter Eisenman's critique of Rosalind Krauss's reduction of architectural spaces. This critique is used to construct a specific genealogy which highlights how architecture seeps into art criticism and vice versa.

Operating in a parallel fashion to Krauss's discussion of Bochner's *Theory of Painting* is her book, *The Optical Unconscious*. The book is an attempt to reclaim the heretical nature of artworks appropriated into modernist discourse.<sup>8</sup> Krauss's interest lies in the unconscious, the material trace, the violent, sexual, and uncouth side of the works discussed. More specifically, she concentrates on the physical attributes of the work: the manipulation of materials and the effects of the site of production. In order to achieve this, she uses the vertical and the horizontal as tropes to secure her argument. If verticality is the spatial axis associated with painting, and horizontality with sculpture, then in the context of painting, Krauss concludes that the vertical is that which is upheld as traditional and conventional. On the other hand, she argues, the horizontal is seen as base, animalistic, and savage. Modernist painting's production

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<sup>8</sup> These ideas are also included in Krauss's contribution to the exhibition and publication *Formless: A User's Guide* with Yves-Alan Bois from 1997.

has always been carried out with its final placement in mind; the wall. Within this tradition, the material or physical properties of a work had been overlooked in the stead of the optical ones. However, Krauss argues that in the act of dripping paint on a canvas placed on the floor, Jackson Pollock's paintings act as an acknowledgement of the physical properties of paint afforded by the horizontal plane of the canvas. Seen in this way, Pollock's methods mark a break from tradition. Despite this, critic Clement Greenberg tied Pollock within the lineage of painting as the logical conclusion of a historical progression of sorts.

All this however, hinged upon the work's location on the wall, for, as Krauss says; "it was in that location and at that angle to gravity that they became 'painting.'"<sup>9</sup> Before the wall, Pollock's paintings were "a child's contour map," "dribblings", "droolings", a "mass of tangled hair" but once positioned on the wall they took on order and the sophistication of tradition—the wall signaled flatness, and for Greenberg, it was a guarantee of the work's condition as painting.<sup>10</sup> However, as Krauss points out, verticality is a dimension that is not without values. For Freud, man's upright stature is not only biological, but part of our cultural evolution. The reinorientation from the "animal senses" where vision is predicated on the horizontal, to the vertical, brought with it distance between the viewer and viewed, allowing for contemplation or even domination.<sup>11</sup> In Krauss's opinion, Pollock's paintings may be associated less with pure opticality than as an index of its making; the physical—violent even—manipulation of paint on a surface.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Despite the importance Krauss places on the vertical and horizontal in securing her argument, there is a scarcity of art discourse around the issue of horizontality. Art critic Dan Smith's article "Horizontality" from *Art Monthly*, 2008 acknowledges this lack of discourse—especially when the horizontal is seen as an attack on verticality.<sup>12</sup> Smith sees Krauss's argument as depending on a "mythic origin" beginning with Pollock. In relation to the work of Paul Chan, Smith draws ties to the graphic arts, highlighting Krauss's albeit brief use of Walter Benjamin's essay "Painting and the Graphic Arts" of 1917. There, in an attempt to distinguish painting and drawing, Benjamin argues that painting is a longitudinal cut through the world's substance, whereas the graphic may be aligned to the transversal cut. Here the longitudinal is associated with representation and its ability to enclose, while the transversal is symbolic and encloses only signs and is thus related to writing. For Smith, Krauss fails to make use of Benjamin's distinction and relies too much on Pollock as a source for a critical understanding of the term. Smith sees Rodney Graham's piece *The Gifted Amateur*, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1962 from 2007 as working with horizontality as a subversive presence contemporaneously. Graham's three-part light box photograph parodies the floor as a space of production, the paintings produced in the photograph—themselves painted in the style of Frankenthaler and Noland—are hung upside down, so that the drips run upwards. It is these drips—a distinctive element of postwar American abstraction—that is missing from Krauss's version of horizontality. It is the lack of

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<sup>12</sup> The article is presented by the author as a revision of Krauss's version of horizontality in art discourse. Smith draws a genealogy of horizontality in works of artists from Robert Morris and Carl Andre to Tomoko Takahashi, Jim Lambie, Paul Chan and Rodney Graham.

run-off in Pollock's paintings that for Smith is that defines the work's horizontality.<sup>13</sup> By indexing the place of its making, Pollock's paintings—and parodied by Graham—signify the horizontal axis. For Krauss, the removal from a horizontal position to their ultimate vertical placement on the wall marks the painting's heretical position against traditional notions in painting.



Rodney Graham, *The Gifted Amateur*, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1962. 2007. Curiously enough, the canvas that Graham's persona is in the act of making is neither horizontal nor vertical. The canvas is propped up and held in an angled position. Instead, it is the newspaper on the floor that takes up the position of horizontality.

This is where architect Peter Eisenman raises a point of contention with Krauss's argument.<sup>14</sup> Although Krauss uses the context of architecture in order to formulate her argument, Eisenman tells us she fails to question how or why architecture changes our perception of a painting. She does not, Eisenman continues, take into account the

<sup>13</sup> Curiously enough, the canvas of which Graham's persona is in the act of making is neither horizontal nor vertical. The canvas is propped up and held in an angled position. Instead, it is the newspaper on the floor that takes up the position of horizontality.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis describes Eisenman as "architecture's consummate heretic" who is bent on challenging "one dogma after another, but never so far as to deny the faith." As part of this, Rosalind Krauss is a recurring figure in his essays. Eisenman's belief that orthodoxy in architecture cannot help but serve entrenched power mirrors Krauss's insistence that the visual arts mount a vanguard resistance to the effects of late-capitalism's forces of commodification. As such, Eisenman identifies his project as akin to Krauss's in the visual arts. Jeffrey Kipnis, "Introduction" from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

effect of the floor and the wall on this change of perception. For Krauss, architecture is abstracted to the vertical and horizontal axis, and actions such as lifting things off, or setting things down, are taken into account without considering why the relation between wall and floor, or between the floor, wall, and a painting could cause this to happen.<sup>15</sup> Despite Krauss's "uncharacteristic naiveté"<sup>16</sup> as to the particularities of walls and floors, it is not necessarily a shortcoming on her part. As Eisenman tells us, architecture is prone to such conclusions because of its integral link between its meaning and its objecthood; between its iconicity and instrumentality. He illustrates; "A wall in architecture is not merely holding something up, it also symbolizes that act of holding up...One cannot have the wall without the sign of the wall and vice versa; architecture will always implicate the wall."<sup>17</sup> Neither can Krauss's understanding be pinned down to a "habitual" understanding of space, nor an *a priori* sensibility of the "natural." Jeffrey Kipnis in his introduction to the architect's written works, tells us that for Eisenman, "architecture so insinuates into the horizontal and the vertical framework of our nature that it becomes that framework, standing not just for the natural, but *as* it."<sup>18</sup> Eisenman's motive here is not to indict Krauss for her indifference

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Eisenman. "Presentness and the Being-Only-Once of Architecture" from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis. "Introduction" from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Eisenman. "Presentness and the Being-Only-Once of Architecture" from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>18</sup> These ideas are associated with the "linguistic" school of architects such as Aldo Rossi, Charles Jencks, and Eisenman who view architecture as a form of writing. However, Eisenman would be the first to point out that there is a difference between architecture as language and architecture as writing. Kipnis explains; "All languages, written or not, produce continuity, tradition, and custom, but only the sustained, detailed record specific to writing gives rise to history, scholarship, intellection, speculation, criticism, and debate, the elements of discourse." For Eisenman, a column is not only a structural element, but also a signifying device. The structural concerns of a building are taken as a given when it comes to architectural practice, but in the eyes of Eisenman, one must also "explore the other effects that a structural system produces once its functional problems have been resolved." Jeffrey Kipnis. "Introduction" from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

to architecture, but to point out how architecture seeps into critical thinking unnoticed.”<sup>19</sup>

In Krauss’s attempt to reclaim “heretical” works from the orthodoxy of modernism, Kipnis suggests Eisenman’s rebuke unsettles the core premise of *The Optical Unconscious*. Krauss treats the vertical and the horizontal “uncritically,” as natural attributes of the erect body in *abstract space*, so much so that she seems to take the architectural context of the work she discusses for granted, as “self-evident” and “irrelevant.”<sup>20</sup> What we must remember, Kipnis and Eisenman argue, is that the context that the work Krauss discusses is in an architectural interior—not in nature, nor in an abstract space. Architecture, Kipnis proposes; “could have helped her, had she let it.”<sup>21</sup> For if we are to think about architecture not as a “passive background” but an “influential process in its own right,” Greenberg’s rationale for modernist painting and his conception of autonomy begins to falter.<sup>22</sup> Since the Renaissance, formal perspective dictated that every painting was a “window view” into an illusionary space. With the emergence of modernism, the emphasis of painting moved from the depiction of space on a surface to the surface itself. For Greenberg, flatness is a quality exclusive to painting. According to the tenets of modernism, in order for painting to achieve autonomy it must “divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture” and thus “made itself abstract” as part of the teleological history of painting.<sup>23</sup> Flatness in painting, Kipnis suggests, cannot be separated from its counterpart in the larger,

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis. “Introduction” from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Clement Greenberg. “Modernist Painting” 1951.

more reflective glass panes in the architecture of the same period. Kipnis proposes that we can read *The Optical Unconscious* from the perspective of the co-evolution of painting and the window, “whose motives and ramifications” were as political as they were formal, where “flatness grew out of the dialogue between architecture and painting as but another possibility to explore the relationship between the window and the picture.”<sup>24</sup>

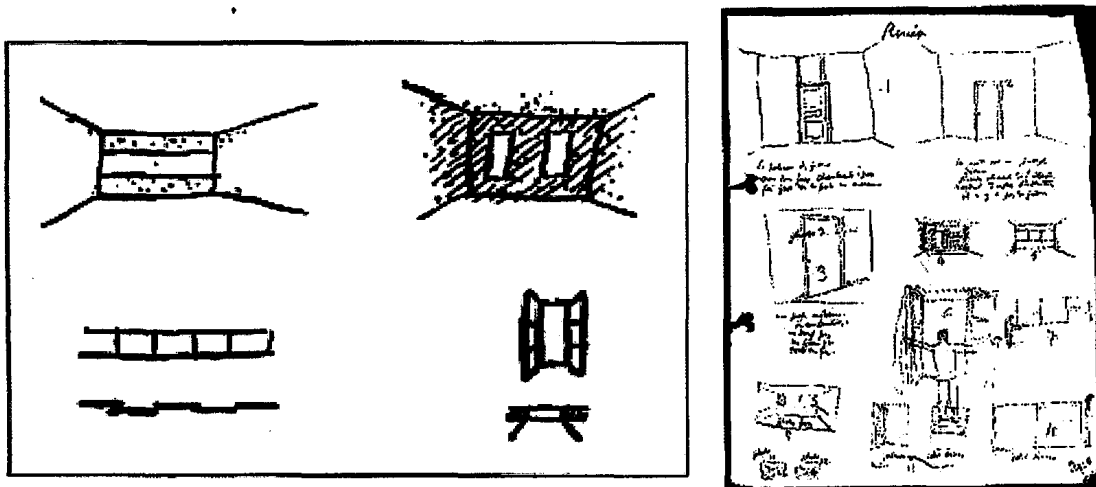
Traditionally, the size and shape of windows were dependent on the constructional factors which produced them. Stone and brick permitted only small openings which required solid walls, resulting in the vertical window. With the advancement of building technologies, walls in modernist architecture were stretched out, elongated, and its windows thinned into large expanses. Reinforced concrete permitted for larger spans and wider openings with less supporting members, and consequently led to the horizontal window. Renowned through its use in the architecture of Le Corbusier, the horizontal window nonetheless met with resistance in a debate which echoes the role of the “window view” in pictorial space. Architect and once mentor to Le Corbusier, Auguste Perret, claimed that in contrast to the horizontal window, the vertical window allowed for what he called “complete space” because it displays a maximum of perspectival depth. “The view from the window is part of the situation of human habitation, and particularly of man as a citizen, a resident in the dwellings of our cities...Thus the window is the scene of mute monologues and dialogues, of reflections on one’s own position between the finite and the infinite.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis. “Introduction” from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Bruno Reichlin, “The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window: The Perret—Le Corbusier Controversy” *Daidalos* 13, 1984. pp. 64-78.

Le Corbusier's horizontal window undermines the traditional concept of representation by diminishing one's perception of depth. As Bruno Reichlin suggests, "the landscape is there, in all its immediacy, as if it were 'sticking' to the window," whether the effect of detachment is eliminated, or because transition from objects closer to further away is concealed, our sense of spatial depth is "significantly diminished."<sup>26</sup> Kipnis suggests that the transparent window arrests time and motion by fixing the gaze, reminiscent of Greenberg's requirement that a work of art must immediately present itself wholly for still contemplation and reflection by the viewer. This is especially intriguing if we are to keep in mind Perret's claim that the vertical window, like the "window view" of representational painting, allows for "reflections on one's own position."<sup>27</sup>



Le Corbusier, sketch of the confrontation of the horizontal and vertical window and "Roneo" from the archives of *L'Esprit nouveau*. For Auguste Perret, "the horizontal window...diminishes 'one's perception and correct appreciation of the landscape.'" As quoted in Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Bruno Reichlin, "The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window: The Perret—Le Corbusier Controversy" *Daidalos* 13, 1984. pp. 64-78.

<sup>27</sup> Emphasis mine. Bruno Reichlin, "The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Window: The Perret—Le Corbusier Controversy" *Daidalos* 13, 1984. pp. 64-78.

Returning to the views found in *The Optical Unconscious*, Kipnis suggests that the “radical heresy” of the works discussed is not to abandon verticality for horizontality, but to abandon the paradigm of the transparent window in favor of the opaque wall or floor. He tells us that the transgression of works such as Pollock’s drip paintings happens when the canvas is not a horizontal, but when it *becomes the floor*. Works such as *Full Fathom Five* where Pollock “dumped” trash such as nails, buttons, coins, cigarettes, and matches “comes into its own as refuse” when the canvas is a floor. Kipnis argues that the ultimate placement of these paintings on the wall is important because “only there do they utterly defeat the window as the existential gestalt of the optical consciousness.”<sup>28</sup>

Simply put, the above examples illustrate a shift from representation to abstraction, that is to say, a shift from image to an emphasis on surface. Kipnis’ suggests in his rereading of *The Optical Unconscious* that the opaque wall or floor sets into motion action in an immediate experience; we are halted at the surface, thrown back into our immediate surroundings and of our own reflections of these surroundings. This emphasis on surface and of a spatial and temporal experience, I would argue, brings to mind the attributes evoked in minimalism.<sup>29</sup> Minimalism not only problematized the distinctions between painting and sculpture, but also the modes of viewing. Critic Robert Pincus-Witten tells us that although the conventions of base and frame were contested in minimalism, “paintings remained functions of canvas

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<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis. “Introduction” from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.

<sup>29</sup> To once more cite Krauss, sculpture in line with modernist tradition emphasized that the inner structure of an object must be relayed by its outer surface. Minimalist sculpture, on the other hand, devalued the object’s inner structure and concentrated solely on the surface. Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York: The Viking Press, 1977.



upon stretcher supports and sculptures were monolithic, yet often hollow.”<sup>30</sup> Donald Judd’s “Specific Objects” essay of 1965 describes Frank Stella’s paintings as engaging in characteristics commonly associated with sculpture. Stella’s “stretcher-supported-generated image”<sup>31</sup> corresponded to not only the shape of the canvas, but also to the painting’s environment. Judd saw the unified surface of Stella’s paintings as emphasizing the parallel plane of the canvas to the wall. What was most important in the development of minimalism was the insistence on the viewer’s spatial and temporal experience of the work. The context—the gallery’s architectural space—was just as important in the viewer’s experience of the artworks displayed. These ideas will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

The purpose of defining this parallel between the disciplines of art and architecture was not so much to highlight similarities or differences between the two, but—to paraphrase Kipnis—how one seeps into the other unnoticed. Krauss’s examples of Bochner and Pollock take up architecture as a scene of transgression, emphasizing the effect of the horizontal and the vertical on art and our reading of it. For Eisenman, architecture is that framework for an understanding of the vertical and the horizontal, not a stand-in for the natural, but as it.<sup>32</sup> Of course, not all art or art criticism bears an obligation to recount its dependence to architecture. However, taking into consideration the context of architectural space provides an entry point into an alternate reading of work—like Pollock or Bochner—which seems to insinuate architecture either in its production or in the production of its meaning. Obviously,

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Pincus-Witten, “Mel Bochner: The Constant as Variable” *Artforum*, December, 1972.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Kipnis. “Introduction” from *Written into the Void: Selected Writings 1990-2004*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007.



Bochner and Pollock are not the only artists whose work may be read this way. As we shall see in the chapters ahead, this thread is extended in contemporary art practices which implicitly or explicitly acknowledge architecture and conceptual or minimalist ideas. But in order to interrogate the aim of this thesis—how sculpture and architecture have performed in parallel ways to address the implications of their site—the issue of site, then, remains to be addressed. The following chapter will touch upon the arguments of Miwon Kwon and James Meyer as they pertain to site, and will then shift its focus on problematizing the page as site. How have printed media and distribution effected architectural or sculptural works? When we are exposed to so many second hand sources—books, television, magazines and the Internet—is there still an obligation to see the work first hand? The writings of Beatriz Colomina and Seth Price will be taken up in relation to these questions.

## CHAPTER TWO: ...SITE

Lara Almarcegui's 1999 project *Wastelands: a guide to the empty sites of Amsterdam* highlighted 26 "wastelands" or unused tracts of land found within Amsterdam. Almarcegui provided participants with a printed guide highlighting each of the selected sites, transforming the wastelands from overlooked to "ready-made installations" that reflected a space "between architecture, demolition and construction, between nothingness and spectacle and between different forms of value—architectural, economic, and cultural."<sup>33</sup> In the absence of architecture, these unused tracts of land called into question the sense of "place." Almarcegui's project not only addressed another space for art, but the social and political associations attributed to the "wastelands" themselves. Architectural critic Kim Dovey suggests that place creation is determined ultimately by those in control of resources; that is to say, architecture is a manifestation of social, economic, cultural, and political factors. A building can stand as a document of culture, but is also a reflection of the interests of a privileged few. Similarly, Miwon Kwon's reading of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* suggests that the site specific work insinuated judgment of the larger social and political context in which it was situated. This implies that a site is as much a social and political construct as it is a physical one.<sup>34</sup> Chapter One has provided an outline of architecture as a scene of transgression. What Eisenman and Kipnis' rebuke of Krauss seems to imply is that the context of the works discussed cannot be ignored. But to stop with architecture seems imprudent, because architecture too has its context. This

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<sup>33</sup> Rugg, Judith. "Contingent Spaces" from *Exploring Site-Specific Art: Issues of Space and Internationalism*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Miwon Kwon. *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

chapter will examine the notion of site with regards to art and architectural discourse, as well as proposing an alternative site; one that is mediated by the page.<sup>35</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea that the context in which an artwork was situated could provide further meaning was first introduced in the minimalist practices of the 1960s and 1970s. According to art historian James Meyer, these artists displaced the “object of reflection” (modernist painting and sculpture) another degree, from the object itself to its ambient space and the perceptual conditions of its display.<sup>36</sup> Here, the site was seen as integral to the production, presentation, and reception of a work of art. The work’s urban, landscape, or architectural context was used as a foil which determined its shape and scale, while at the same time the work restructured conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site.<sup>37</sup> Kwon states that site specificity “challenged” the “innocence” of space and the presupposition of a universal viewing subject in both physical or spatial terms and the cultural framework defined by art institutions. Continuing along these lines was conceptual art and institutional critique. These practices concentrated less on the physical aspects of a site, but rather highlighted the techniques and effects that the social, political, and economical underpinnings of the gallery or museum had on a work of art. Kwon notes the work of Hans Haacke and Daniel Buren as recasting the site as an institutional construct produced by ulterior socioeconomic and political relations. The work of Haacke and Buren asked, if the work is always implicated by

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<sup>35</sup> The “page” here not only refers to printed matter (books and magazines) but also television and digital interfaces; word processing programs, web browsers, etc.

<sup>36</sup> James Meyer. “The Functional Site; Or, the Transformation of Site Specificity” from *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*. Ed. Erika Suderburg. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Miwon Kwon. *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

the gallery or museum, why not implicate the museum or gallery in the work itself?<sup>38</sup> This has resulted in James Meyer's definitions of the "literal site" and that of the "functional site." For Meyer, a literal site results from a work's formal outcome being determined by a physical space. The space itself is unique; so we can infer then, that the work too, is unique. Meyer suggests that this type of site acts like a kind of monument.<sup>39</sup> The functional site on the other hand may or may not necessitate a physical space. Meyer defines it as a process or operation that occurs *between* sites. The functional site "explores the 'expanded site'" it is a site within a network of sites: "an institution among institutions."<sup>40</sup> Kwon builds upon Meyer's argument, stating that the site is now structured (inter)textually, as opposed to spatially: "Its model is not a map, but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces—a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist."<sup>41</sup> Kwon frames site specificity as a mediation of social, economical, and political processes that organize our place in the world. She suggests that the relationship between an artwork and its site is no longer predicated by physical permanence, but on the recognition of *impermanence*; of a unrepeatable, fleeting situation.<sup>42</sup> Site specificity has expanded into culture, and is distinguished by both the work's relationship to a location (as site) and the social conditions of an institutional

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<sup>38</sup> Miwon Kwon. *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> James Meyer. "The Functional Site; Or, the Transformation of Site Specificity" from *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*. Ed. Erika Suderburg. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Miwon Kwon. *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Italics mine. Ibid.

framework (as site) being subordinated by a “discursively determined site as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange and cultural debate.”<sup>43</sup>

Even if the original definition of site has now split and has diffused into other situations—physical, political, social, or cultural—the need for some kind of textual or photographic trace of these sites has remained consistent throughout its history. As many site specific works were situated outside of the gallery space, sometimes in secluded or inaccessible locales, the reliance on documentation was—and remains—integral to the dissemination of these works. The reliance on documentation almost seems ironic in that one of the primary aims of this type of work was the emphasis on the viewer’s one-to-one experience with the piece. We need only think of Robert Morris’s assertion that minimalist art “resisted photography” and his admonition of photography in his 1978 essay “The Present Tense of Space.” Despite this, Morris acknowledges that much of the work being made in the 1960s and 70s relied on photography as a means for dissemination. This conundrum is all too familiar with architecture. Whether it was devalued—as in the writings of Adolf Loos—or valued—as was the case with Le Corbusier—the history of architecture has always been entwined with that of its image, its representation.

Morris was one of the minimalist and conceptual artists of the late 1960s and 70s who in various ways addressed the phenomenology of viewing. Art historian Simon Dell notes that print and other media were marginal within traditional art practices which concentrated on the experience of the viewer and the work. Printed

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

media could “at best offer a substitute for the experience in real space.”<sup>44</sup> However, with the production of art that was placed outside the gallery, printed media became—as Morris has already lamented—perhaps the only means in which a viewer was able to encounter a work. Seth Seigelaub was one of the forerunners of this notion. If conceptualism placed more emphasis on information over aesthetics, then the gallery was redundant and could be replaced by the catalogue as well as other forms of communication: photocopies, the fax machine, and television.<sup>45</sup> This can be illustrated by Seigelaub’s organization of the 1968 exhibition for Douglas Huebler that existed only as a catalogue. Curator and art historian Alexander Alberro stresses that the conceptual artists working at the time invited—even urged—the public to pursue their works. But in order to do so, some kind of trace of the work was needed: documentation, recording, fabricating. Alberro suggests that these artists were aware of history, and that some trace would remain: in many cases in the form of the printed catalogue. Yet, Alberro poses the following questions: “To what extent is a catalogue freestanding, as in some of Seigelaub’s exhibitions, and to what extent is it merely an archival record of something that once took place? Catalogues also record ownership and property rights.”<sup>46</sup> Alberro insists that the record—the catalogue or publication—“not only validate and affirm, but also fix or freeze meaning.”<sup>47</sup> Alberro stresses that whatever form of documentation is used it functions as a sign—acting as “neither the

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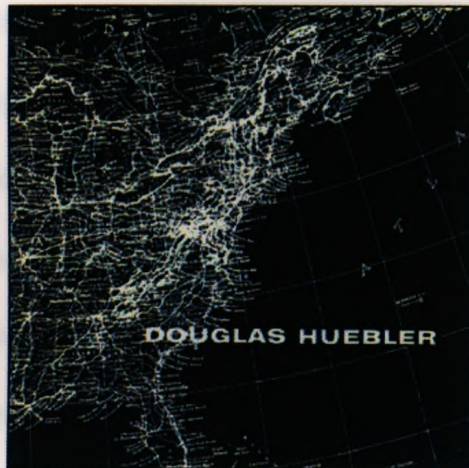
<sup>44</sup>Simon Dell, Ed., *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and his Contemporaries*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander Alberro “Introduction: At the Threshold of Art as Information” from *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Wiener*. Edited by Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

central event nor the referent.”<sup>48</sup> So regardless of the artists’ stance, the exhibition catalogue “memorializes” the artwork, but the gallery’s “limitations cannot be ignored, for they affect the relationship between the artist, work, and exhibition catalogue” which may serve as a marketing tool.<sup>49</sup> Just as literal and functional sites are informed by broader social and economic issues, so too then, is the page.



Douglas Huebler. Artists' book as exhibition / catalogue for "show" by Seth Siegelau in November 1968, and Seth Price's *Dispersion* from 2002. "The existence of each sculpture is documented by its documentation. The documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings and descriptive language. The marker 'material' and the shape described by the location of the markers have no special significance, other than to demark the limits of the piece. The permanence and destiny of the markers have no special significance. The duration pieces exist only in the documentation of the marker's destiny within a selected period of time. The proposed projects do not differ from the other pieces as ideas, but do differ to the extent of their material substance. D.H." <http://www.specificobject.com/>

For architecture, perhaps one of the most striking examples of the relationship between the page and building is *Notre Dame de Paris* hero Claude Frolo's prophetic words: "This will kill that. The book will kill the building."<sup>50</sup> Victor Hugo's 1831 *Notre Dame de Paris* reads not only as a novel, but as a diatribe against the architecture of the industrial age. Hugo saw the history of architecture as a kind of a

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Hugo, Victor. *Notre Dame des Paris*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. This notion is taken up by Anthony Vidler's article "Writing on the Walls" in *Artforum* September 1980, where he critiqued what he saw as a loss of meaning in modern architecture. He suggests that modernism's language of abstraction and concern with its own internal mechanisms resulted in architecture's withdrawal from social participation, citing French author Victor Hugo as the "pathologist" of architecture's modern condition.

script, beginning with upturned stones and funeral mounds as words and sentences, eventually turning into entire “books” of stone, culminating in cathedrals of the 15<sup>th</sup> century before coming to a standstill. For Hugo, Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press marked an end of architecture’s ability to convey cultural signification. Through its ability to be distributed *en masse*, the printed page replaced architecture as the primary mode of expression.<sup>51</sup>

Regardless of Hugo’s admonitions, due to its availability and accessibility, the work of architects is almost always known through photographs and printed media. Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina notes that the artistic avant-gardes in the early twentieth century used publishing as yet another context of production. She cites Le Corbusier as not only understanding the press and printed medium a platform for cultural diffusion, but also as a new context of production, one that existed “parallel with the construction site.”<sup>52</sup> The fact that Mies van der Rohe became a seminal figure in modern architecture through a series of five projects (none of which were built but were actually circulated through exhibitions and publications) is an appropriate example of this. Architecture then, suggests Colomina, is no longer exclusively located on the construction site, but “should be understood in the same terms as drawings, writing, films, and ads.”<sup>53</sup> With the emergence of photography, lithography, illustrated magazines, and tourism, architecture’s audience expanded and its meaning

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<sup>51</sup> Vidler, Anthony. “The Writing on the Walls” from *Artforum*, September 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Beatriz Colomina. “Media as Modern Architecture” from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Beatriz Colomina. *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.



became associated with consumption.<sup>54</sup> The audience was now a tourist, a reader of a journal, a viewer of an exhibition, even the client “who was often all of the above” resulting in a radically different relationship with the object.<sup>55</sup> In her book *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, Colomina identifies herself not as thinking about the relationship between architecture and mass media, but is thinking about *architecture as media*. This implies a need for a site—publications and magazines—that “paradoxically...are supposedly much more ephemeral media than the building, and yet in many ways are much more permanent: they secure a place for an architecture in history, a historical space designed not just by the historians and the critics, but also by the architects themselves who deploy these media.”<sup>56</sup> For Colomina, in the architecture of Alison and Peter Smithson, Le Corbusier, and the designs of Charles and Ray Eames, the production of architectural objects and their representation is so diffused that it is difficult to distinguish between the two.<sup>57</sup> The relationship between building and published book continues with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s *Learning from Las Vegas*. Here, inspired by the new cultural climate stemming from mass consumerism, they introduced the notions of the “duck” and “decorated shed.” “The duck is the special building that *is* a symbol...the decorated shed is the conventional shelter that *applies* symbols.”<sup>58</sup> Hal Foster sees

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<sup>54</sup> Beatriz Colomina, “Introduction” in *Architectureproduction*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. See also Sarah Williams Goldhagen “Monumentality and the Picture Still” from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> As quoted by Hal Foster’s essay “Image Building.” The duck is associated with modernism, whose form is dictated “sometimes with its space, structure and program distorted in the interest of monumental effect” while the decorated shed with “a rhetorical front and conventional behind” where ornament is applied independently of the building’s structure. “Image Building” from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008.

contemporary architect Frank Gehry's buildings such as the Guggenheim Bilbao (1991-1997) as operating as a "decorated duck;" while they stress formal expression, they also break down to "fronts and backs" with little connection between interior and exterior space. For Foster, "one cannot read them at ground level: in fact, one has to see them in media reproduction, which might be the site of neo-Pop architecture of the Internet age."<sup>59</sup> Architecture then—if we are to consider the numerous publications of Frank Gehry alone—takes place as much on the page as it does in a worldly setting.

By way of conclusion, I would like to turn to the 2002 publication *Dispersion* by Seth Price.<sup>60</sup> The article's main thrust deals with reproduction as it pertains to art, but we can extend his notions into architecture as it has been dealt with here. Price notes that the survival of "canonical works" depends upon the documentation and discourse. Their inclusion within these reproductions gives them value.<sup>61</sup> For Price, the problem with "situating the work at a singular point in space and time turns it *a priori*, into a monument."<sup>62</sup> He suggests that our sense of "publicness" has changed: today it has as much to do with sites of production as that of reproduction. He sees today's audience as no longer interested in a direct communal experience, but instead on simultaneous private consumption. Price argues that a popular album can be seen as "a more

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Foster sees the work of Venturi et al as working within a "Pop" sensibility. The fact that he sees Gehry as a continuation of these methods results in the term "Neo-Pop."

<sup>60</sup> Price is a contemporary artist whose work takes up the conceptual art canon as "incomplete" and sees "today's normative conceptualism" as not standing for anything certain, but "instead privilege[es] framing and context" and its renegotiation of its relationship to its audience. The topic of this publication has been severely abbreviated here. Seth Price, *Dispersion*, 2002.

<sup>61</sup> He cites Dan Graham; "If a work of art wasn't written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficult attaining the status of 'art'. It seemed that in order to be defined as having value, that is as 'art,' a work had only to be exhibited in a gallery and then to be written about and reproduced in an art magazine." *Dispersion*, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

successful instance of public art than a monument tucked away in an urban plaza.”<sup>63</sup>

Leaving us with the question, do we have an obligation to view the work first hand? Can secondary sources—books, magazines, the Internet, conversation—provide a meaningful understanding of the work? Price identifies the ground for such questions as stemming from conceptualisms’ dependence on documentation and “the popular archive’s ever-sharpening knack for generating discussion through secondary media.”<sup>64</sup> This idea is far from new, like Mies van der Rohe mentioned above, Price hails Duchamp’s *Fountain*—“never exhibited, and lost or destroyed almost immediately”—as being created precisely through Duchamp’s media manipulations.<sup>65</sup> One need not make the “pilgrimage” to see *Fountain*, as it does not “occupy a single position in space and time” but is “a palimpsest of gestures, presentations, and positions.”<sup>66</sup> The accessibility of the distributed media allows us to see a building—or sculpture, or site specific piece—without actually visiting it, its seriality makes it difficult to erase. Once an exhibition is over, we are left only with images, reflections, and accounts of their experience. These reproductions have proven to be a powerful influence on art and architectural objects alike. By including the positions of Hugo, Seigelaub, Colomina, and Price, my intent is not to position myself for or against the submission of objects to the page, but to identify a point of tension between these two modes. Thinking about the page as site is an entry point into a discussion of the work of Monika Sosnowska. Another generative point into her work will be through the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “The Stieglitz photography (a guarantee, a shortcut to history) the *Blind Man* magazine article—rather than through the creation-myth of his finger selecting it in the showroom, the status-confirming gesture to which the readymades are often reduced.” Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

terms surface, image, and structure. The following chapter will take up these terms as they are derived from the juncture between art and architectural discourse mediated in the previous chapters as well as through the art practices of Isa Genzken, Thomas Demand, and Tom Burr.

### CHAPTER 3: SURFACE, IMAGE, STRUCTURE

As was discussed in chapter one, Kipnis' parallel history between the painting and the window demonstrates a shift from image to surface and provides an entry point into terms taken up in this chapter: surface, image, and structure. I would argue that the "window view" is related to image, and the opaque wall or floor (coinciding with minimalism's emphasis on a spatial and temporal experience) relates to surface. Image draws us in for contemplation, reflection, and a pause from our spatial environment. Surface withholds this illusionistic space: pushing us back into our immediate physical surroundings. Beneath all this remains structure; the visible or invisible support system which may be a physical construct or even an ideological model. Simply put, these terms mark a distinction between a mode of display (*structure*), the *surface* of that display, and that which is being displayed (*image*). However, the distinction between these terms is not so stringent. Each term may permutate into the other, collapsing their differences. These terms will be used as an entry point in the discussion of the material consequences of two and three dimensional artworks. I will elaborate them using both art and architectural discourse, using the art practices of Isa Genzken, Thomas Demand, and Tom Burr as examples.

Surface is perhaps the most difficult of the above terms to define because it is positioned between image and structure. It is the outer face, the outside or exterior boundary of a thing. The uppermost layer or area. It can also refer to an outward appearance, the superficial layer that separates the inner nature of a thing: to look below the surface, to rise to the surface.<sup>67</sup> Most importantly, it resists contemplation. As Kipnis' rereading of *The Optical Unconscious* has shown, surface pushes the

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/surface>

spectator back into real time and space. Rosalind Krauss's book *Passages in Modern Sculpture* describes a schematic history of Twentieth century sculpture that identifies a split between a "sculpture of reason" and a "sculpture of situation." She argues that the sculpture of reason was based around the premise of transparency between the surface of the object and its core structure. The meaning of the underlying structure was communicated on the surface of the object. The work of Duchamp and Brancusi marked a break from this tradition. Their work was not conceived around a core; instead, their surfaces are "opaque": they resist analysis. Krauss sees their sculptures as situated within a temporal condition; as products of the situation in which the work is placed. It is the surface opacity of the object—this refusal of structural logic—that Krauss sees these works as operating in real, experienced time as opposed to analytic time. The same qualities are inherent in minimalist sculpture, as was outlined in the previous two chapters. For Krauss, minimalist work stems from a "mode of composition from which the kind of *inner* necessity has been removed" they are "all surface."<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, Mark Linder in his book *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture After Minimalism* stresses that at the same time that artists extended the boundaries of sculpture<sup>69</sup> architects turned their attention in pictorialist practices, advancing a confused relationship between sculpture and architecture.<sup>70</sup> For Linder, it is appropriate that modernist painting reached its "epitome in an ironic example of *pure*

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> As identified in Rosalind Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" from 1979.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Linder, *Nothing Less than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004.

opacity—a featureless ‘picture.’”<sup>71</sup> Linder suggests that architect Colin Rowe’s analysis of Le Corbusier’s monastery in the essay “La Tourette” parallels Greenberg’s empty canvas “that optimizes and isolates the optical ambivalence between literal flatness and phenomenal image at its degree zero.”<sup>72</sup> Rowe describes the north wall at La Tourette as presenting the viewer first with a blank wall “an element without high intrinsic interest, which while it absorbs the eye, is unable to retain its attention.”<sup>73</sup> The appropriation of pictorialist principles into the discourse of architecture remains a preoccupation contemporaneously. Rather than the blank canvas, architectural critic Andrew Payne describes a “hypersurface” in the construction of “an architecture that aims to pump up the volume” with the “engagement with the architectural object as at once foil to (and mirror of) the urban surround.”<sup>74</sup> Payne’s article “Surfacing the New Sensorium” examines how surface in contemporary architecture operates in relationship to culture more broadly. He describes the emergence of architectural practitioners in the 1980s and 1990s that took the “eidetic and material integrity of the architectural artifact as a given” in order to explore the “enigmatic qualities arising from its installation in the human sensorium.”<sup>75</sup> He cites the firms of Jean Nouvel and Herzog and De Meuron as exemplary of a concern with the optical qualities (as opposed to the geometrical contours) of the object’s surface. He suggests that the manipulation of these qualities leads not to the “disassembly” of the object, but rather a “playful engagement” with ambiguities and paradoxes. Payne identifies Herzog and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> As quoted in Mark Linder, *Nothing Less than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004. Interestingly, Le Corbusier claims in *Vers une architecture* that a “floor...is really a horizontal wall” leading Rowe to conclude that “the most audacious innovation which La Tourette presents is that its ‘floors are horizontal walls’ and presumably, walls are vertical floors.”

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Payne. “Surfacing the New Sensorium” from *Praxis 9*.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

De Meuron's Ricola Storage building as an example of their adoption the mimetic processes in designs that "absorb into the surfaces of their buildings material and semiotic indices of their surround." Payne suggests that this "iconographic camouflage" does not function as an "individuation, but of aesthetic and semiotic assimilation to the surround."<sup>76</sup> The term "hypersurface" is "[l]ess an object than an artificial sensorium" that "immerses its occupant in a milieu" to produce—here Payne cites cultural theorist Mark Goulthorpe—"a negotiation between self and environment—an interactive uncertainty."<sup>77</sup>

Payne's idea of a "hyper surface" is reflected in the work of Iza Genzken whose practice has been described as dealing with "that the reality that *surrounds* and influences us" particularly through architecture, design, advertising, and media.<sup>78</sup> Her exhibition at the Museum Abteiberg consisted of sculptural elements on pedestals and wall works from the 2002-2003 *Social Façades* series. Made of metal, wood, and reflective foil, the work is highly patterned and resembles building facades from the 1930s Art Deco movement. Even the sculptural elements seem to be reduced to façades: grouped with the wall work it is easy to conceive the pieces as being skins that have been wrapped and warped into three dimensional objects. Beatrix Ruff describes the reflective foil as an "outer structure" in which the "observers themselves

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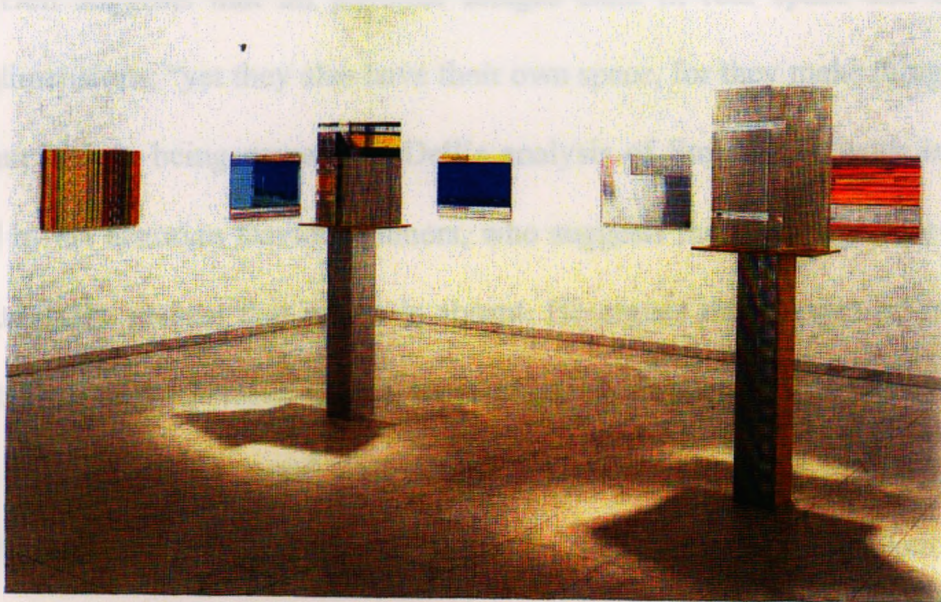
<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Beatrix Ruff describes the central themes of Genzken's work (whether photography, sculpture, film, video, works on paper and canvas, books) as "moments when the individual makes contact with the surfaces of both the material and intellectual realities of our world; the variability, relativity, and fabricated nature of the conventions which serve in constructing our perception of reality; the dialogue of content/structure and outer shell: the interplay between facticity, objects, things, our creation of reality and the associations with which we update it." Beatrix Ruff, "Contact" from *Isa Genzken: Exhibitions, Works, Catalogue Raisonné* Köln: Verlag der Buchnandlung Walther König, 2003.



are mirrored and ultimately integrated into the repertoire of this reality-material.”<sup>79</sup> Because of the mirrored surface, we are literally thrown back at ourselves (and into the work) as well as our own reflections of our spatial and temporal surroundings. Regardless of their position on the wall (think of Krauss’s assertion of the wall signaling painting as discussed in chapter one) Genzken’s *Social Façades* resist being contemplated as images: the repetition and mirror-like quality of the materials read as all surface. It seems as though the most defining characteristic of surface is its differentiation from image. What then, defines image?



Isa Genzken. Installation view, Museum Abteiberg, Monchengladbach, 2002.

In a thesis whose primary concern is the relationship between sculpture and architecture, it seems appropriate to discuss the idea of image starting from the vantage point of sculpture. In his analysis of how images occupy and exploit space in the work of Robert Smithson, Simon Dell presents the reader with a photographic reproduction. The reproduction itself measures 15.5x20.5 cm and depicts Smithson’s

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

*Non-Site (Franklin, New Jersey)* whose overall dimensions are 42x209x261.5 cm. Dell acknowledges that since we are habituated in looking at photographic reproductions, the difference in scale between the object and its reproduction seems inconsequential. Although the point seems moot, Dell uses this example to demonstrate that the viewer and the reproduction exist in the same physical space, "and yet the reproduction, when viewed as an image, establishes a second space, in this case one capable of containing a relatively large work of art."<sup>80</sup> Dell emphasizes that this is not merely a result of a Western tradition of picturing three dimensions in two (photographic or otherwise). Instead, Dell suggests that all physical images exist in real space and thus have specific dimensions; "yet they also have their own space, for they make things present, rather than merely being present."<sup>81</sup> Dell's analysis of Smithson's work is partially informed by art historian David Summers, who suggests that all images are produced in order to make present that which is absent. He argues that images do not merely represent; they make present in that they situate, continue, and preserve. Summers draws a parallel to the word "substitute" which is related to "stand", "status", "stature", and "statue"—the last of which he suggests could be taken to mean something standing in for something who for some reason is absent.<sup>82</sup> This substitution however, is always defined by a real, spatial, context. They make the past present, and in their re-presentation, are always shaped by current circumstances.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Simon Dell, Ed., *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and his Contemporaries*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* New York: Phaidon Press, 2003.

The process or condition which comes as a result of interaction or use can be likened to artist Bill Viola citation of Brunelleschi and Alberti for not only their discovery of the vanishing point, but also the “personification of the image, the creation of a ‘point of view’ and its identification with a place in real space.”<sup>84</sup> Perspective, suggests Viola, elevated the position of the viewer as part of the picture by encoding their presence in reverse—the source of the converging perspectival lines. Viola continues that the interaction between the vanishing point and the viewer “merge into a single physical spot” and thus “the picture plane and the retina become the same surface.”<sup>85</sup> The new identity of the viewer/painter (“come step into my shoes” writes Viola) places them both in relation to a third entity—physical objects within proximity, or the subject of the painting. The emphasis on this performance of viewing, on the act of seeing a picture in a physical place results in the emergence of time in the picture as well (“if its not here, its not there—if its now, its not then.”)<sup>86</sup>

As was touched upon in chapter two, Beatriz Colomina views modern architecture as a form of media—not just as a set of buildings, but it is *built as image* in the pages of magazines and newspapers. Before a building is built, the image of it is a “space that is carefully constructed by the architect.”<sup>87</sup> The “built image” is something that Colomina identifies throughout Mies van der Rohe’s career. His photomontages were carefully constructed in such a way to make it seem as though the building was already built, and they were blown up to such a scale so that the viewer found themselves “on the street when looking at them” they were “drawn into

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Beatriz Colomina. “Media as Modern Architecture” from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008.

the image.”<sup>88</sup> Colomina concludes that the impact of images has been transformative to architecture, so much so that when viewers are presented with the real building, they see it through the lens of the images they already know, and reconstruct their own images in light of these.



Thomas Demand, *Bathroom (Badezimmer)* 1997. Demand's paper-and-cardboard construction was adapted from a 1988 photograph of a German politician, Uwe Barschel, found dead in a hotel bathroom in Geneva.

Colomina then extends these ideas into a discussion of the artwork of Thomas Demand. She notes the similarity between Demand's work and modernist architecture: both are built to look good in photographs. In fact, she sees herself as in a "symmetrical position" to Demand in her argument that architecture is a form of media. For Colomina, Demand's full scale paper-and-cardboard reconstructions of images taken from the media are "built as image." Works such as *Bathroom* from 1997 are sourced from "supercharged and super-exposed" images, constructed with "ephemeral materials like those of media" only to be destroyed after Demand photographs them: "He builds the architecture of the image."<sup>89</sup> Here, the photograph does not come *after* the model, but the model exists only *for* the photograph. Just as

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



Viola's example of "stepping" into the shoes of the painter of a perspectival painting, the camera is already part of the interior being photographed, "it is an extension of the lens that is then replaced with another extension."<sup>90</sup> If we are to think back to Summer's assertion that images make present that which is absent, Demand's photographs are double-indexes of not only the constructed model, but are reconstructions of "a space that existed as an image at one particular point in time:" a re-presentation of the original mass media image.<sup>91</sup> In the works of Demand, image takes precedence over the built structure, and yet the final image could not have been possible without the underlying structure.

Structure is the last of the terms discussed in this chapter. Rosalind Krauss once more provides a starting point, beginning with her interpretation and use of Stanley Cavell's notion of "automatism." For Cavell, the word captured the part of film that relied on the mechanics of the camera, and therefore is automatic.<sup>92</sup> Krauss suggests that similar to medium and genre in traditional contexts of art, an automatism "would involve the relationship between a technical (or material) support and the conventions with which a particular genre operates, articulates or works on that support."<sup>93</sup> She develops the idea of a "recursive structure": a structure whose elements will produce the "rules that generate the structure itself."<sup>94</sup> It is something made, rather than given, it "is what is latent in the traditional connection of 'medium' to matters of technique."<sup>95</sup> Along with the recursive structure is Krauss's idea of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> The term also has Surrealist connotations, as well as the obvious reference to "autonomy."

<sup>93</sup> Rosalind Krauss. *Voyages on the North Sea*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

“technical support.” It is both traditional aesthetic mediums (oil on canvas, cast bronze or welded metal), and “is the ‘support’ of film; the celluloid strip, the screen, the splices of the edited footage, the projector’s beam of light, the circular reels” or that which makes a single identification of a work’s physical support impossible. For Krauss, Ed Ruscha’s publication *Parking Lots* not only refers to the flatness of the page (“in good modernist tradition”) but they also indicate “the serial nature of the car, its existence as a multiple, like the printed book *itself*.”<sup>96</sup> Ruscha’s “medium” is specific, self-reflexive and inventive, thus Krauss concludes; “if the car can become a medium, then anything might be pressed into such service. It only needs a set of rules that will open onto the possibility of artistic practice.”<sup>97</sup>

The above example highlights the ways in which structure acts as a material support in the production of art objects and the spaces of their reception. How can the concept of structure be applied to different institutional and ideological frameworks? Part architectural, part art, Celine Condorelli’s book *Support Structures*, “offers a constructive criticality, articulating the borders and notions of territory, their supplementary position in the taking place of a work, and the product and production of ‘frames.’”<sup>98</sup> Here, structure is emphasized in relation to *support*: the means, relations, forms of display, organization, and the underlying ideologies in the making a representation of space.<sup>99</sup> Support is identified as being located “right against,” next to, in “uncomfortable proximity” to that which is supported. As a result of its proximity, it remains with the work, acknowledging and adding to previous actions. A

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Celine Condorelli, “Introduction” from *Support Structures*. New York: Steinberg Press, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

support is neither inside nor outside, autonomous, or fixed; it remains in constant flux—it is never finished.<sup>100</sup> Scaffolding may seem to be a temporary measure, but they may also exist next to a building for some time. Structures, for Condorelli, “are not the shape of things, but the underlying principles behind how things appear, as if they resided behind a curtain. A structure displays; but properties that are manifested in its appearance can only be understood formally.”<sup>101</sup> She stresses, “The property of a structure is a systematic reason and purpose, but like any pattern, also by definition of the capability to be extended, repeated, or rearranged; it is a tool.”<sup>102</sup> Structures, then, do not merely take the form of a physical object (although these too can be extended, repeated, or rearranged), but can be a set of ideologies that form or organize an entity.

Functioning both materially and ideologically is the artwork of Tom Burr, who brings the “hard-edge aesthetics” found in minimalism “down to earth” by subverting the “neutrality” of the “high-art originals” with “the things that we know: furniture, suburban architecture, and interior design.”<sup>103</sup> Burr is comfortable with inserting narratives of design, leisure or sexual politics within the pieces themselves in order to “simultaneously incorporate a concern with audience and site specificity, with thoughts of subjectivity, sexuality, and autobiography.”<sup>104</sup> Pieces such as *Comfortably Numb* from 2009, a human-scaled hinged folding screen (like the kind of domestic screen behind which one may dress or undress) is painted matt black with all “hyper-masculinity” of minimalism on one side and a fruity “high camp” pink perspex mirror

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. The transitory nature of supports, suggests Condorelli, reveal a “rupture in the autonomy of the object” reminding us of the instability of that object.

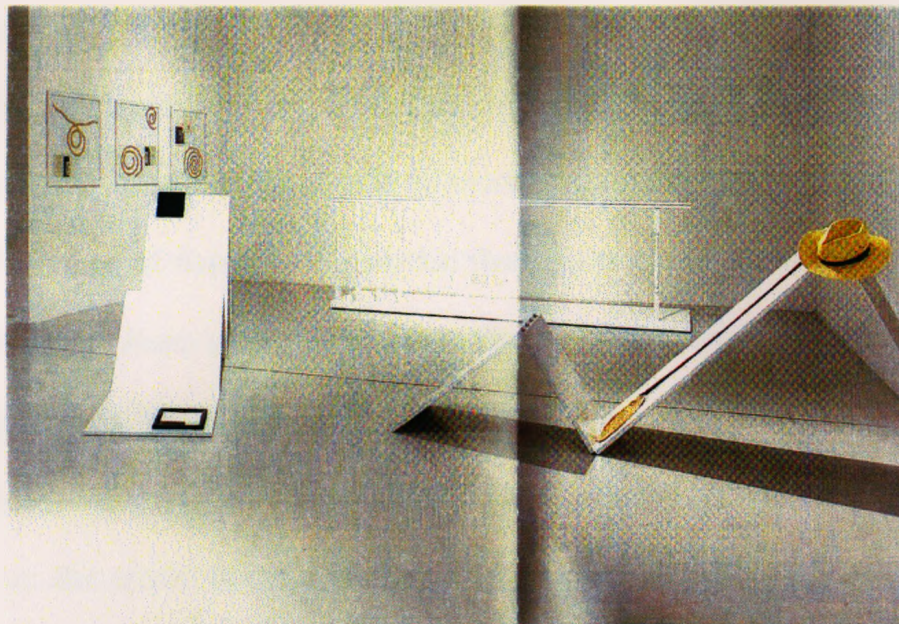
<sup>101</sup> Celine Condorelli, “Directions for Use” from *Support Structures*. New York: Steinberg Press, 2009.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Kate Bell, “Tom Burr” from *The New Décor*. London: Hayward Publishing, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

on the other. The hinged structure also alludes to the performance of mobility: “lending it an instability that privileges temporary experience over inertia.”<sup>105</sup> Working similarly is the installation *Complete Break Down* from 2005. Here the folded screens are narrower and are placed as if they were a scrunched up carpet (one thinks Carl Andre sculpture) or an unfurled book. Placed on the screens are books, framed images, in one case a gentleman’s hat and belt which allude to a more domestic (albeit stylish) scene. Burr’s constructions not only weave throughout the exhibition space, folding on top of themselves, but they also enfold the canon of minimalist works—now an institution—and weave new dialogues into that institution.



Tom Burr, Installation view *Complete Breakdown*, Galerie Neu, Berlin, 2005.

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify and define the terms surface, image, and structure. The following chapter will take up the terms surface, image, and structure in an analysis of two works by Polish artist Monika Sosnowska: her installation *Loop* from 2007 and her contribution to the exhibition, *Promises of the*

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.



*Past* from 2009. These terms, along with the genealogy defined in the previous chapters, will address Sosnowska's work as it engages materially with its physical locale—the gallery space—and my experience of the work as mediated through the page.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY MONIKA SOSNOWSKA

As a result of the vocabulary garnered through the last three chapters, I will now turn to a critical analysis of the work of Polish artist Monika Sosnowska. Her site specific sculptures and installations echo the formal language of constructivism, minimalism, conceptualism and modernist architecture. This is then used as a means to implicate the broader social, political, and economic attributes of a site.<sup>106</sup> Because of the significance of the site and the phenomenological experience of her work, it is important to note that my discussion of Sosnowska's practice comes primarily through written accounts of the authors who have come into contact with the work, as well as my own interpretive analysis of the images and texts surrounding her practice. In many ways, my reading of Sosnowska's art is removed, but this may prove to be an interesting entry into her work which will be touched upon throughout the chapter. I will be looking at two of Sosnowska's works; first, her contribution to the exhibition *The Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of the Art of Former Eastern Europe* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, 2009, and her solo show, *Loop* at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz, of 2007. These exhibitions will be discussed as they pertain to the terms surface, image, and structure. Finally, by way of Jan Verwoert's interpretation of *Loop*, I will touch upon the performance of perception and my encounter with Sosnowska's work as facilitated by the page.

The back cover of the exhibition catalogue for *The Promises of the Past* describes the exhibition as questioning "the classical opposition between Eastern and Western Europe by reinterpreting the history of the former Communist block countries." It

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<sup>106</sup> Adam Budak, "Endless Unfolding of (Spatial) Duree" from *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

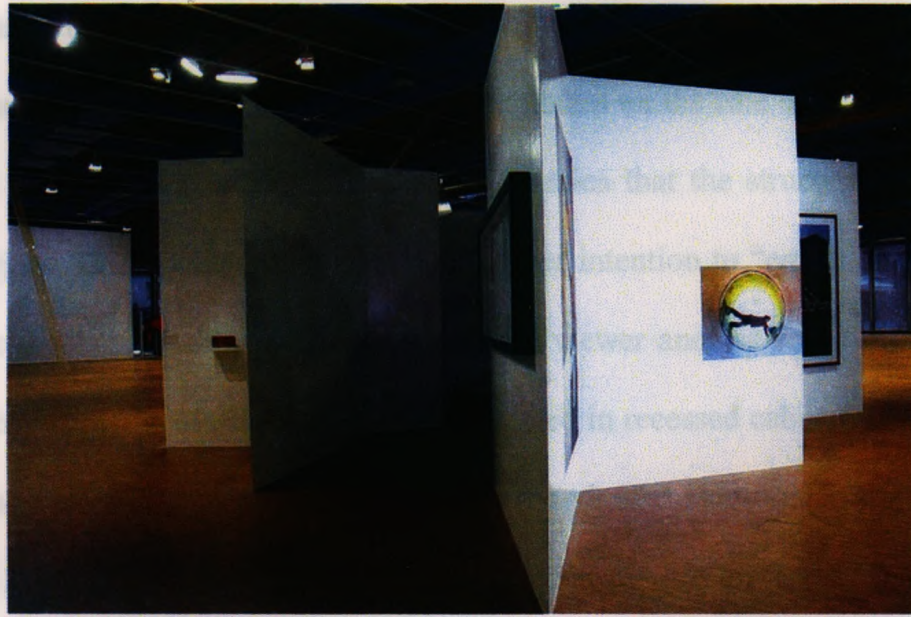
continues with; “this volume is an invaluable survey of the Eastern European art scene of the last decades—a scene which is gradually shifting from the periphery to the centre of current art-historical debates.”<sup>107</sup> It is appropriate then, that Sosnowska—whose work deals with the illusions and aspirations of Communism and subsequent decay in post-Communist Poland—was involved in such a project. Built inside the Pompidou Centre’s Gallery Sud, Sosnowska’s contribution was an untitled “artwork-as-exhibition-design.” For the purpose of this paper, I will not be concentrating on the historical narratives indexed in Sosnowska’s artwork-as-exhibition-design, but instead on the ways in which Sosnowska’s piece functions materially as an object that houses these narratives and histories. Curators Christine Macel and Joanna Mytkowska describe Sosnowska’s addition as a “complex zigzag, a forking structure that, while maintaining a continuum, leads to many niches, nooks, and crannies, narrow passes and offsets. This creates room for both micro-narratives and for longer historical sequences, making it possible to read the exhibition as a whole and as a fragment at the same time.”<sup>108</sup> The experience of such a space is recounted by Michal Wolinski’s 2010 *Artforum* article on the exhibition as “walking through an exhibition in zigzags” because “the space itself dictates a meandering path.” The viewer is forced to “move alongside walls that are at various angles to one another, with recesses and niches here and there...Finally you notice that you are walking in a loop, heading back toward your starting point.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Christine Macel and Natasha Petresin, Eds. *Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of the Art of Former Eastern Europe*. New York: JRP Ringier, 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Christine Macel and Joanna Mytkowska “Promises of the Past” from *Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of the Art of Former Eastern Europe*. Christine Macel and Natasha Petresin, Eds. New York: JRP Ringier, 2010.

<sup>109</sup> Wolinski, Michal. “Monika Sosnowska” from *Artforum*, No. 9, May 2010. pp. 222-227.



*Untitled*, Monika Sosnowska, exhibition design for Promises of the Past, 2009.  
<http://www.themoderninstitute.com/exhibitions/3700/images>, accessed July 30, 2011.

Sosnowska's intention was to provide a linear exhibition, but here "*linear* does not mean *straight*."<sup>110</sup> The purpose of this organization was to allow for the curators to introduce a way to control the viewing experience in order to ensure that visitors would read the narrative as preordained by the curators. The design of the piece was limited by the dimensions of the exhibition space; the walls themselves were constructed in accordance to the artwork they displayed. Sosnowska stresses that this was not a geometry "devised for aesthetics sake": but instead took into account the fact that some works needed to separate from each other, while others could be juxtaposed and could confront each other.<sup>111</sup> The artwork-as-exhibition-design was shaped not only by the works themselves, but also by museum regulations, traffic accommodation, artist requirements, and conservation stipulations. For Sosnowska, the defining feature is the relative autonomy of the structure itself as it stands in the room. The walls of the Centre Pompidou "do not participate at all: they just enclose"

<sup>110</sup> Monika Sosnowska "1000 words" from *Artforum*, May 2010. pp. 222-227.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

so that "if you go to one of the corners of the room, you can take in its entirety and see it precisely *as* a sculpture."<sup>112</sup> So while Sosnowska takes on the role of an architect in the planning and designing of the space, she maintains that the structure itself is a sculptural object. This is emphasized more so by her intention to "embed everything into the structure."<sup>113</sup> Nothing stands between the viewer and the structure. All the objects, sculptures, and television monitors are located in recessed cabinets. Here, you "don't see them as objects," sculptures can only be viewed from the front, as "3-D pictures."<sup>114</sup> Most of the two-dimensional works were treated in a similar fashion, although some paintings and photographs were covered by glass because of conservation stipulations. Sosnowska seems to take pride in the fact that some photographic prints were reproduced, and then stuck directly onto the wall—an image which becomes nearly indistinguishable from the surface.

Sosnowska's construction then would seem to be easily describable with the terms surface, image, and structure. It functions as a mode of display with the surface of that display acting as a mediator between the structure and that which is being displayed. However, I would contend that the distinctions between these terms are at times confused and collapse into each other. Clearly, Sosnowska's construction is a mode of display in the simplest of terms: it is a visible material support, but also one that functions as an ideological support, as described by Condorelli in the previous chapter. This is implicit with the curators' intention that the structure itself allow for a linear exhibition that included and confused multiple narratives, geographic regions, and time periods. While Sosnowska stresses that the piece itself is an autonomous

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



sculpture, “an island,”<sup>115</sup> it cannot however, be separated from its context. At this point, the structure seems to collapse into Andrew Payne’s notion of a hypersurface; a surface that acts at once a foil and mirror to its surround to the gallery space. However, the surface is also at once opaque—the blank wall—and a window: a “window view” into the recessed display cabinets. The shift between surface and image is practically seamless—the wall’s shift from blank opacity to the windows of the recessed cabinets operates first in terms of a “window view” into another space, and as a result—at Sosnowska’s suggestion—turns the objects inside into images. If we are to consider images that which make something absent, present, but are always contextualized by present circumstances, the paintings, photographs, videos, and projections here act as reproductions. They have been removed from their original context and recontextualised, re-presented into a historical narrative—albeit fragmented and discontinuous—by the curators, and implicitly, through her design, by Sosnowska herself.



*Loop* installation view at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, by Monika Sosnowska, 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

The construction built for *Promises of the Past* has been described by Sosnowska as the “negative” to the 2007 installation, *Loop*. There are certainly parallels between these two works. Whereas the viewer could step back from the work and feel its limits in the construction at the Centre Pompidou, *Loop* immersed the viewer within the work itself. The installation consisted of an elliptical hallway which had been constructed throughout the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, intervening with the museum’s main corridors. The interior of the construction was emblematic of the “white cube”<sup>116</sup>—only one that had been squished, stretched, and elongated into a two-way channel. Jan Verwoert describes this space as seemingly infinite: the white walls on either side and the repetition of neon lights on the ceiling gave the impression that the corridor could go on forever. The exterior constituted of exposed steel studs and the back of MDF boards which seemed to cut through a painting exhibition from the museum’s collection. The paintings on display were actually selected by Sosnowska as a foil to her architectural intervention.

*Loop* is a direct response and critique of the architecture that houses it. The Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein was designed by the Swiss architects Christian Kerez, Meinrad Morder, and Heinrich Deglo and officially opened in November 2000. The premise of the building was to house the “white cube” within a “black box.”<sup>117</sup> During the development of *Loop*, Sosnowska collaborated with Kerez, constructing the installation that reflected the reduced, modern repetitiveness of the architectural design

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<sup>116</sup> The phenomena first described and developed by Brian O’Doherty in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, which were originally two articles in *Artforum* from 1976.

<sup>117</sup> This term has been taken from the description of the building itself as found on the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein’s website. To the extent of my knowledge, this reference seems to be largely based on purely aesthetic means or a clever play on Brian O’Doherty’s notion of the “White Cube.” Another possible point of entry could refer to an object, device or system found in science, engineering or philosophy identified as a “black box” whose inner workings are unknown. The only known characteristics are found in the input, transfer and output of information.

while simultaneously highlighting the communicative and movement corridors of the building. Curator Adam Budak describes *Loop* in the exhibition catalogue as a “cut through, a negative, a radical compression of available space” which “marks an ambitious attempt to confront modernist universalized patterns and escape dimensions.”<sup>118</sup> He suggests that Sosnowska’s architectural intervention “confronts the neutrality of the exhibition space with the newly born neutrality of her own autonomous spatial construct” thus reinterpreting “the ideological framework of the white cube and its paradigm that intimately embraces the entire history of modernism.”<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Will Bradley in the essay “Making the Museum Disappear” from the same catalogue suggests that *Loop* can be read as a counter-argument for the neutral space of the gallery. He argues that Sosnowska’s work offers an investigation into an examination of the “representational power of architecture as much as the immediate sensations it produces.”<sup>120</sup> Her work highlights and reflects upon the modernist ideal that a building’s form should relate to its construction of its interior functions.<sup>121</sup>

Budak’s description can be likened to the attributes of surface—the blank white walls, seemingly endless—make the spectator aware of their position within the space, and the psychological and phenomenal effects that that space may have on

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<sup>118</sup> Adam Budak “Endless Unfolding of (Spatial) Duree” from *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Will Bradley “Making the Museum Disappear” from *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

<sup>121</sup> The white cube and its modernist connotations remain predominant throughout Sosnowska’s practice as a whole. Sosnowska’s work is often referred back to the art of exhibition design, a practice that has significant links to the avant garde artists and architects in Polish history. Avant-garde architects were reduced to implementing their designs for exhibition spaces and pavilions designed for international exhibitions and fairs. Architects such as Jerzy Soltan, Oksar Hansen, and the Exat 51 group thus used pavilion and exhibition design for artistic and architectural experimentation.



them. The photo-documentation of *Loop* furthers this disorientating effect. The space appears as a blank wall or surface, without depth. Only when documentation shows visitors within the space do we get any kind of sense of spatiality. In terms of the photo-documentation then, surface and image appear to be confused with each other. In an interview between herself, Kerez and Wolinski, Sosnowska speaks about the difficulty in documenting her work, pointing out that when looking at an image of the piece, “you are concentrating on what you are looking at.”<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, when inside the *Loop* itself, she notes that “you are not concentrating so much on what you are looking at.”<sup>123</sup> Sosnowska’s description seems to effectively illustrate the difference between surface and image. This distinction is elaborated further in the interview where Wolinski identifies the difference between two kinds of perceptions—illusions—one which is produced by the space itself and the other by the flat surfaces of the paintings which accompanied the architectural intervention. Wolinski continues; “the pictures on the walls are like windows, especially the figurative and traditional ones. You can perceive space through them, but on a different level.”<sup>124</sup> The paintings included in the exhibition were chosen to “supplement [the] project on a conceptual level.”<sup>125</sup> The paintings function as a kind of prop to allude that perhaps “there were two shows occupying the same space, at the same time” as if *Loop* were cutting through a regular exhibition. However, the paintings also stand in contrast to Sosnowska’s piece itself. Sculpture was “too close”

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<sup>122</sup> Michal Wolinski, Christian Kerez, Monika Sosnowska “What Exactly is ‘Artificial Space’?” from *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

to the work as it deals with “space and material.” For Sosnowska, abstract paintings too pose a problem, they are “also related to space, they are simulating the wall on which they hang.” Accordingly, figurative paintings were chosen because they take “you to the inside, creating illusions, but are flat.”<sup>126</sup> Just as the works displayed in *Promises of the Past* are re-presented in a new context, so too are the paintings in *Loop*. They manifest something that is absent, and are recontextualized into the present.

Jan Verwoert in his accompanying essay for *Loop*, “Space. Time. Light. Loop.” begins with Verwoert’s recounting of his experience of *Loop*: “The corridor remains white. Its walls and ceilings resemble each other. They are all white. At regular intervals, neon lights are installed in pairs on the ceiling, one to the left and one to the right, and so on. It looks as if the very same part of the wall might repeat itself endlessly.” For Verwoert, the most striking aspect of the exhibition was the neon lights that lined the corridor. He tells the reader of his experience of standing at the threshold of the piece and thinks (paraphrased here);

1. The lights are already on.
2. They could have been on for days.
3. So: someone must have been there before you.
4. Because the lights are on, no-one is the first visitor, and no-one is the last.
5. Because the lights are on, someone must have been there before you, to turn them on.
6. Because the lights remain on, someone will come in after you.
7. Because the lights are on, walking through the corridor is not just a passage through space, but is like walking through time.

He concludes; “The act you perform, as you enter, is part of a cycle of recurring actions. In this space, you enter a *loop* in time.”<sup>127</sup> Verwoert goes on to say that the act of entering a brightly lit space resembles the most basic experience of art:

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Jan Verwoert, “Space. Time. Light. Loop.” From *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

“to go and stand before a painting is like stepping into a brightly lit space.” He continues: “the painting is always already lit. You don’t have to turn it on yourself. The person who has painted it has done that for you.”<sup>128</sup> The “lights” of the painting cannot be turned off: however, as Verwoert points out, “something happens when the picture meets your eye.”<sup>129</sup> It will confront the viewer in the same way as it always has in the past, and will continue to do so in the future; “when you stand before the picture to look at it, you resume a process that was temporarily suspended when the last viewer turned away from it.”<sup>130</sup> Verwoert reminds us that, unlike movies, the starting and end point of “this process of perception” remains the same, “because no time passes in the painting.”<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, paintings, unlike movies, are not “guided”; we can look away and resume looking at any time; “the light is always on.”<sup>132</sup> It is the act of looking, the performance of viewing—the process of perception—that Verwoert emphasizes here. Interestingly, he notes (and it is important enough to quote at length): “Stepping into a corridor which is brightly lit, but from which it is impossible to tell where it leads, however, is a sensation that does not only correspond to the experience of standing before a picture, but also very much to the experience with which all those will be familiar, who have faced an empty canvas or a blank page, and who are about to begin, that is, to begin again and anew, from the point where they themselves and others before them have begun to make something.”

What Verwoert, Wolinski, and Kerez give us is a means to interpret Sosnowska’s work as it pertains to the experience of it on the page. The design of the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

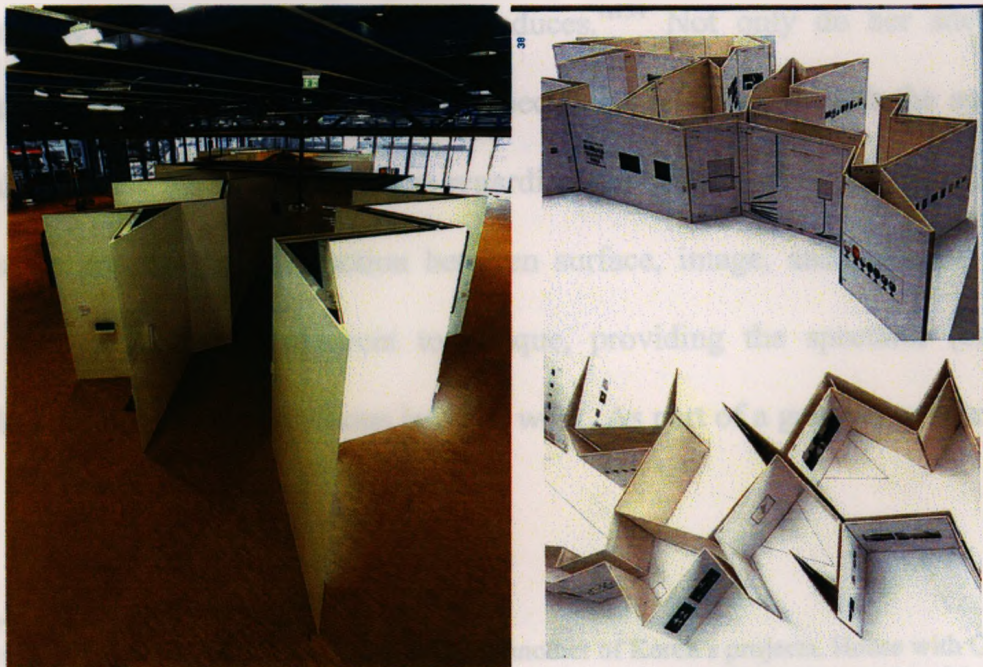
<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

exhibition catalogue for *Loop* seems to be catered to this confusion of space. After the table of contents and the foreword, the next thing the publication confronts us with is a blank grey page. Following this is an image of *Loop*: a door which seems to lead to a staircase, the colour of the walls similar to the grey on the former page. The next four double-page spreads present the viewer with what seem like abstract paintings. These images are in fact installation views of *Loop*, but the indistinguishable neon lights is reflected and refracted onto the walls: it is nearly impossible to distinguish any kind of spatial perception. Finally, we are given a view from outside of *Loop*: the back of MDF boards and steel studs which cut across the gallery space with paintings on the wall. After the previous five images, this gives one a sense of relief: after a frustrating glimpse of *Loop*, we are given a sense of space and a context for what we are looking at.



(Left) *Untitled*, Monika Sosnowska. Installation View, "Promises of the Past" 2009. (Right) Views of Sosnowska's model for her architectural project in "Promises of the Past" 2009.

Sosnowska's scenography for *Promises of the Past* can be re-interpreted in much the same way.<sup>133</sup> Her exhibition design looks like an accordion book which has been unfolded, unfurled, and set up for viewing. The models of the project emphasize this more so: it is difficult to tell whether the object is a model or a book with illustrations. The surface of the model is uniform—presumably how Sosnowska would have preferred the final result. Both *Loop* and *Promises of the Past* seem to work interchangeably between the actual construction, the written accounts, and the photographic documentation. Of course, in the books we are only given an account—a version—of the pieces, but this still functions as part of chain of signifiers which relate to the piece as a whole—where the differences between site (the object) and sight (the page) are confused.

By way of conclusion, I would like to refer back to Will Bradley's assertion that Sosnowska's oeuvre implicates the "representational power of architecture as much as the immediate sensations it produces."<sup>134</sup> Not only do her site specific installations and sculptures highlight the spectator's relationship with the spaces that they inhabit, they also pose questions regarding the social and cultural production of these same spaces. The distinction between surface, image, and structure of these pieces oscillates from transparent to opaque, providing the spectator (or reader) multiple entries and interpretations into her work. As part of a genealogy of exhibition

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<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, Sosnowska's design actually parallels another of Kerez's projects, House with One Wall in Zurich, where the "one wall" of the house is a zigzag that is used to distribute the weight of the construction at the same time as creating niches for the inhabitants' various functions. Wolinski, Michal. "Monika Sosnowska" from *Artforum*, No. 9, May 2010. pp. 222-227.

<sup>134</sup> Will Bradley "Making the Museum Disappear" from *Monika Sosnowska*. Adam Budak and Kristin Schmidt, Eds. Ehrenstr: Verlag de Buchnandlung Walther Konig, 2007.

and architectural design, Sosnowska's work maintains the importance of the impact of the production and perception of the built environment.

## CONCLUSION: TIT-FOR-TAT

Currently, the L'Adresse Symphonique remains under construction. The building is on-schedule for its inaugural performance on September 7, 2011.<sup>135</sup> The L'Adresse Symphonique website reports that the project is over two thirds complete, and includes a link to a live webcam to the construction site itself for those who are interested in a frame-by-frame progress report.<sup>136</sup> As I write this,<sup>137</sup> the construction site is devoid of workers, empty but for the rubbish bins and stacks of material which litter the site. What I'm given is a static image of a building, with the occasional car or pedestrian passing by in the background. This is a much different view than that of my experience of the hoarding mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. From site to sight, then.

Besides the impetus to identify how sculpture and architecture have performed in parallel ways to address their site, there are two central themes that have been introduced in this thesis which have had a profound effect on both my thinking and my material practice. The first is the parallel between art and architectural discourse which began with Peter Eisenman's critique of Rosalind Krauss's understanding of architectural spaces; or how architecture seeps into art criticism and vice versa. This genealogy—whether explicitly or implicitly—has been continued throughout the thesis, from Jeffrey Kipnis' re-reading of *The Optical Unconscious* to the site-specific installations of Monika Sosnowska. The second theme which I would like to emphasize here is Victor Hugo's protagonist Claude Frollo's prophetic words; "This

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<sup>135</sup> And, as it has turned out, on revising this thesis on September 13, 2011, all went well and the building is now open.

<sup>136</sup> Please see <http://www.adressesymphonique.gouv.qc.ca/>

<sup>137</sup> On July 1, 2011.

will kill that. The book will kill the building.” Not only have these themes dictated the course that this thesis has taken, but they also infiltrate into my studio practice, which views sculpture and printmaking as being at odds with each other. In fact, both this thesis and my studio production seem to be working with a series of oppositions: art vs. architecture; horizontality vs. verticality; floor vs. wall; sculpture vs. printmaking; page vs. object. The statement that *this will kill that* is not an argument as to what is considered “right” but is a way of looking at the relation between two things. *This will kill that* is neither *for* this *nor* that, but perhaps more of a kind of *tit-for-tat*. A “like for like” retaliation.<sup>138</sup>

Take, for example the hoarding mentioned previously. In the introduction of this paper, I mentioned that the hoarding struck me as both sculptural and architectural. Accompanying this was Anthony Vidler’s questioning of what qualifies as an “aesthetically constructed spatial” and the “functionally constructed spatial”? It seems to me that the hoarding may be considered as both. It both gestures towards architecture and is an architecture in and of itself. I also mentioned that the hoarding seemed to be both a three-dimensional object and a two-dimensional surface *acting* as a three-dimensional object. If we are to interrogate this issue with the terms surface, image, and structure, in light of Hugo’s *this will kill that* we can suggest that in this case, surface *kills* structure. Frequently hoardings act as vessels for printed signs and advertisements promoting the future building on-site or products which relate to the prospective clientele of an area. The hoarding is reduced to a surface upon which an image is placed. By using the hoarding as a surface for images, the structure of the

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<sup>138</sup> In game theory this has to do with “prisoner’s dilemma” a strategy which has been applied to many “real life situations” and “recommends a like for like retaliation as the most rewarding response to duplicity by one’s opponent.” <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/tit-for-tat.html>



hoarding disappears; collapses under image. Image *kills* surface: the hoarding is like a rock-paper-scissors game that takes place between surface, image, and structure. If images make present that which is absent, then we could infer then, that images may also misrepresent. If structure can embody the underlying principles of an institution, and if surface acts as a cloak or veil to structure—that which hides—what socio-political, economical or cultural frameworks are being hidden? Which of these—or what version of these—are displayed?

To reiterate: this thesis, along with my studio production is not architecture. While I may implicate architecture either in the production or reading of both, they remain, at best, an architecture-reproduction. A “transmission of architecture by means other than itself.”<sup>139</sup> Consider again Vidler’s notion of whether it is possible to define each art as a practice when there is little “division between the spatial and the textual.”<sup>140</sup> My practice works between the spatial and the textual in the construction of a vocabulary in which to approach art making and thinking. This thesis has relied on looking at artworks on the page in a gallery setting. And in light of this, the rock-paper-scissors game or *tit-for-tat* dilemma continues with Hugo’s “The book will kill the building.” If we assume that the printing press has killed the building, or that there is some kind of submission of objects to the page, we are brought to Seth Price’s ideas in *Dispersion*. Perhaps distributed media—books, magazines, television, the Internet, conversation—are in opposition to a sculptural or architectural object. What we get from the tension or *tit-for-tat* between the object and page (site and sight) is something gained, but also something lost. What’s gained is like a second-life for the sculptural

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<sup>139</sup> Beatriz Colomina “Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction” from *Architectureproduction*. Beatriz Colomina, Ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988.

<sup>140</sup> Anthony Vidler, “Architecture’s Expanded Field” from *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use*.

or architectural object. It continues to exist in the world, but as a reproduction: its presence is informed by accounts, images, and texts. What's lost is the physical presence of the object and its relationship with its context. Works such as Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* from 2007 located on Chicago's waterfront are for those who have visited it<sup>141</sup> are seen as a series of experiences (visual, tactile, inter-relational with other audience members) as something that cannot (successfully) be submitted to the page. Could works like these be considered as resisting their submission to the page? Will this kill that? My position to these questions is neither for or against, but uses the paradoxes and confusions as another way to approach sculptural and architectural objects. As a result of the research and studio work completed at my two years at the University of Western Ontario, I have come to the conclusion that perhaps it is enough to work within oppositions, or to paraphrase Andrew Payne, to have a playful engagement with ambiguities and paradoxes.

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<sup>141</sup> As was pointed out to me by John Nicholson, an architect residing and working in London, Ontario.

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