NOT AS LANDSCAPE:

TOWARD A CRITICAL PRACTICE IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

by

RYAN P. JOHNSON

(Under the Direction of Joseph Disponzio)

ABSTRACT

By the 1980s language-based theoretical discourses had achieved significant sway over architecture theory with little regard given to whether such discourses could appropriately address the spatial character of architecture and landscape architecture. Nonetheless, designers interrogated their disciplines from within them and a specific historical idea—critique—intersected with design theory. This juxtaposition of idea and practice holds tremendous potential for thinking about a critical practice of landscape architecture. Critical practice should grow from a spatial practice of critical drawing, not from critical reading or writing. The critical drawing as an architectural image separate from its referent is key to finding the limits of architecture and thus landscape architecture. Examples are found in counter-readings of Peter Eisenman's Cities of Artificial Excavation and Bernard Tschumi's Parc de La Villette. These architects engaged in landscape architectural projects provide a model critical practice that can be remotivated for the disciplinary specificity of landscape architecture.

INDEX WORDS: Critique, Critical Practice, Peter Eisenman, Artificial Excavation, Bernard Tschumi, Parc de La Villette

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DEDICATION

Ingrid, you make my life (and stomach) unspeakably full. [Please accept this Master's

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonplace that contemporary landscape architecture has no body of theory. While this is not true, particularly in that this assessment discounts theory preceding the professionalization of landscape design, there is a widespread sense in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that landscape architecture is an evolving profession. Taken in comparison with architecture, a profession comparatively certain about its purpose and prospects, it is apparent that landscape architecture presently lacks the scale of theoretical reflection of its sister profession. What theory contemporary landscape architecture has is focused in two general areas: design prescriptions and proscriptions, and analyses and reflections on the role or potential role of landscape architects in the built environment. If the body of theory in late twentieth century landscape architecture does not cohere it is largely because landscape design, planning, and management is perceived to be a much more complex and less insular field of enquiry than building design, planning, and management. Landscape architects perceive their profession as encompassing everything from geography and sociology to anthropology and ecology in addition to a combination of landscape gardening and civil engineering. Theory produced by landscape architects currently tends toward a collation and redeployment of outside ideas. Nonetheless, the volume of this theory seems to be the bare minimum. Perhaps the most obvious theoretical inequity between the two professions is the much smaller amount of *critical* theory produced in and for landscape architecture. Critical

architectural theory has become institutionalized over the last forty years, with strong foundations in academia and other fora and a substantial quantity of presses and publications committed to the discourse. Concern for critical theory has also been at the forefront of the innovation and development of architectural design sensibilities. One might argue that this dearth of critical theory in landscape architecture is evident in the state of landscape architectural design. This thesis attempts to appropriate a strain of critical architectural theory for landscape architecture and to show that both landscape architecture and architecture are capable of generating a critique specific to their spatial character. In era in which critical theory is dominated by concepts borrowed from thinking about language and language-derived conceptualizations of life and the world critical practice in landscape architecture and architecture should grow from critical drawing, not critical reading or writing. Critical drawing is key to finding the limits of architecture and thus landscape architecture, and therefore necessary to a discourse-appropriate critique.

While the quantity of critical theory in landscape architecture is smaller, its focus on language-based hermeneutics over the last third of the twentieth century is similar to that of architecture theory. Consider two representative textbooks, Simon Swaffield's 2002 *Theory in Landscape Architecture* (Swaffield) and Kate Nesbitt's 1996 *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture* (Nesbitt). Swaffield's anthology, which contains writings from 1950 to 1999, just over half of which were written in the 1990s, devotes two of its six sections to questions of meaning and interpretation. These two sections account for more than 40% of the articles included and over 42% of the pages of article text, not including notes. Naturally, some of the articles cross the boundaries of the conceptual

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groupings. Nesbitt's anthology, encompassing writing from 1965 to 1995, is more than twice as large and rather differently organized, but similarly skewed. Only its first three chapters are exclusively devoted to language-based theories, but the time period observed guarantees that a significant plurality of the articles and essayists are of the linguistic persuasion.

Not all theory regarding meaning argues that design and meaning are easily accommodated with each other. Swaffield reprints one of landscape architecture's better-known theoretical texts, Marc Treib's 1995 essay "Must Landscapes Mean?" (Treib, 2002). Treib delineates five strains of "constructed meaning" contemporary practitioners believe can be "read" from the designed landscape: neoarchaism, the genius of the place, zeitgeist (Bernard Tschumi's Parc de La Villette is included in this one), vernacular, and didactic, and a sixth, the theme garden, which is more an implied validity than an approach to its creation. He then speculates on whether or not landscapes can indeed convey intended meanings. He concludes by asking why pleasure isn't a goal or criteria for landscape architecture. Jane Gillette responded to Treib's essay ten years later. Her "Can Gardens Mean?" (Gillette) answers forcefully that landscapes cannot mean and that this is a source of the pleasure of gardens.

The emphasis on meaning in landscape architecture theory is not only due to the general rise to prominence of the "linguistic turn" in philosophy and criticism, but it is abetted if not revested by it. In 1966, Ian L. McHarg pointed out in "Ecological Determinism" (McHarg, 1998a) that landscape architecture's identification with its received tradition—garden-making as the simple geometrical arrangement of plants in "a comprehensible metaphysical symbol of a benign and orderly world"—was a mindset

unable to address larger questions. His essay singled out the English eighteenth century as an exception to this rule and argued to develop the profession in the image of those who, like William Kent, Lancelot "Capability" Brown, and Humphry Repton, jumped the garden wall and generated a new landscape and ecology (McHarg, 1998a: 40-43). The theoretical project of the linguistic turn has, however, reduced the landscapes of Kent, Brown, and Repton, in large part, to signifying practices in a mirroring of McHarg's earlier reduction of "the garden."

Neil Leach introduces *Rethinking Architecture*, his 1997 anthology of critical theory, as addressing the need for a critical reappraisal of architecture through an opening of architectural discourse to external critiques (Leach). His collection does just that; of 23 theorists represented only one, Siegfried Kracauer, had any training in architecture. Notably, his anthology is comparatively light on language-based critique.

Most architectural criticism derived from the theorists of the linguistic turn fails to account for the distinctness of space, treating the built environment as a text or a scene of writing, and tends to focus on meaning or the impossibility of it, albeit at many different levels. The result is that Semiology or semiotics and Deconstruction applied to architecture remain exactly that—applied. Semiology imagined a system of signs that do not inhere in space as integral to architecture when such systems could only be present as veneer. Deconstruction's most useful insights are not in the language games that Jacques Derrida often uses to intervene in philosophy, but in the style of the new exploration of concepts they allow him.[1] Together, however, the semiotic and the deconstructive

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[1] Gregory L. Ulmer, in *Applied Grammatology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) argues that certain of Derrida's texts, particularly *Of Grammatology*, *The Truth in Painting*, *The Post Card*, and *Glas* are engaged not so much in deconstruction of philosophy but a parallel creative project. These texts are also among the most aesthetically engaged of Derrida's corpus.

colluded in a totalizing notion of textuality that had permeated not only architecture and landscape architecture theory, but also most academic and professional discourse in the humanities by the end of the century.

Other schools of thought, such as Marxism or phenomenology are surprisingly less totalizing, perhaps because each is philosophy first and critical intervention second. Because of, or perhaps despite phenomenology's potential for sensual sense-making and the meta-narratives of Marxism, both seem content to allow architecture to remain a spatial practice.

But, perhaps it is because of this very textual totalization that the more intensive and exciting critiques and architectural theories from the 1960s through the 1980s came from the language-based discourses while the other philosophemes generated ethical and social prescriptions and proscriptions. Two of the theoretically engaged architects of that era, Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman, worked out some of their most provocative designs and theories while thinking in the terms of the linguistic turn and drawing beyond them. It is the fact that they did this in landscape architectural projects rather than with buildings that concerns us here. It seems unlikely that a landscape architect would ever have conceived landscape as these two architects did—which is to say, *not as landscape*.

Perhaps some insight into this conception and into the state of theory in the two disciplines can be generated from a reading of Georg Simmel's "Bridge and Door" (Simmel), an essay exploring the paradox of the presupposition of unity in separation and separation in unity. Leach includes this essay and Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in his "Modernism" section of the anthology. He also relies on "Bridge and Door"

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in his introduction to make a point about walls, doors, and the necessity of transgression of disciplinary boundaries in any assessment of the state of a discipline (Leach, xvii-xx).

In addition to Leach's purpose, Simmel's essay can go some way toward providing ground from which to explain the difference between the body of critical theory of architecture and that of landscape architecture. While Simmel, of course, had no intention that his writing be used to illustrate this difference, for us it is clear that bridges are the domain of landscape architecture and doors that of architecture. It should come as no surprise that Simmel reads the door as the more complex of the two, the more useful for thought. In reading the essay one is convinced that he is correct.

Leach presents the appropriate sections of Simmel's text in his introduction well and concisely:

> 'The bridge', he observes, 'indicates how humankind unifies the separatedness of merely natural being, and the door how it separates the uniform, continuous unity of natural being.' Of the two, according to Simmel, 'the door has the richer and livelier significance'. Not only does it not dictate direction and movement, but it 'represents in a more decisive manner how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act'. Moreover, the door through its very form, 'transcends the separation of the inner and the outer'. The door becomes emblematic of a more flexible attitude towards the boundary. It allows for a 'permanent interchange between the bounded and the boundaryless'. The door does not deny the concept of boundary. Rather it exposes how that boundary might be treated as potentially more permeable. (Leach, xx)

By this reading, landscape architecture lacks the necessary and thought-provoking mediation that is precisely what architecture *is*. Simmel identifies the bridge as a path, a connection between two things that demonstrates the human "will to connection." We connect the banks—giving them "separation" rather than mere apartness. But the existence of the bridge always accents the unity of the two things, while the door equally presents each, the unity and the separation. The door is part of the act of separating a

portion of space and giving it a *single* meaning which one can pass in and out of—this entrance and exit being distinct while crossing the bridge is a undifferentiated coming and going. The bridge connects two indistinct heres, but the door creates a permeable delineation. Architecture—and the door—are more complex because they are always already anthropic. Architecture and its theories always operate under some variation of the mediation of the door / the wall / the constructed inside and out. This very *compartmentalization* ensures that architecture has much more to think about and that architects and architectural theorists do much more of such thinking than landscape architects and landscape architectural theorists.

On reflection, however, Simmel has under-read the bridge. The bridge connects to the bank at a site that is separate/connected with the bank it projects from and connected to the similar site on the other side. The bridge is neither simply nor first a question of separation and unity, but of site and space. Simmel argues, in short, that we conceive a separation as *of* two things in order to unify them. But Simmel's bridge metaphor is of a mediated bridge—a bridge of architecture—and a category error. Simmel asks after *quality* (unity and separation) by means of the *bridge* as he does with the door, rather than after *space* by means of the *route* of which the bridge is a site. We must conceive of the route as a unity in space between what become anything but "indifferent" points in order to recognize the need for a bridge and thus become aware of the riverbanks as separate. We must particularly do so in order to select a site for the bridge. The selection of the site delineates it from the non-site as the route is delineated from the non-route. Simmel unnecessarily privileges an inside/outside dialectic at the expense of the interplay of time and space.

Even the apparent "naturalness" of the "natural world" allows landscape architecture to think of its work in an uncritical way, as though the project were merely to arrange the site to best match the program. But landscape architecture operates in a less mediated time and space than that of architecture—landscape architecture's time is marked by the transit of the sun across the sky and its space is the distance between an existing here and there—while its time and space may be abstracted, there is nothing necessarily abstract about them. Time is the landscape architectural equivalent of architecture's structure—a given that, while not exclusive to it, is only a *fundamental* consideration for one design discourse and not the other. Tension and compression are crucial to the project of architecture in a way that climate, seasons, and weather are to landscape architecture. Time, however, operates first as a "problem" to be solved while structure (regardless of how complicated it may become) is first a "solution." Architecture is necessarily an importation of a thing that was not there—a complication of the site. This complication is necessarily an instantiation of inside/outside and simultaneously a disassociation from the "nature" of the site—from time, season, weather, and age. These last are very difficult to conceptualize as a set piece of paper architecture, in a Cartesian abstraction of space, or in terms of a *critical* theory. Landscape, because of its unabstracted time, is never reducible to Cartesian coordinate space. Landscape is space before it is form; architecture is form before it is space. Architecture must build the distance between two points. Landscape must select the connection between them. Thus the questions of selection and connection, rather than form and function, are crucial questions for landscape architecture theory. These different foci form an undercurrent of ideas that will be at work in the following

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reassessment of critical architecture practice and theory—tracing two design practices to the intersection of architecture with an unspoken idea—"critique"—obscured by a totalizing outside discourse—and reinterpreting and remotivating this intersection for thinking about landscape architecture.

Questions of time and space as phenomena must remain largely outside the scope of this thesis—phenomena must be contextualized politically to become critique, and this critique is made of different stuff. Chapter 6 addresses these issues to some degree. Nor is a full account of the role of representation in architecture and landscape architecture possible here. The topic is simply too large, and to put together a slapdash rendering of it would do it no justice, particularly given the relatively recent publication of three works by historians and theorists of enormous erudition focused on drawing, the architectural image, and the role of representation: Hubert Damisch's *The Origin of Perspective* (1987, English translation 1994), the late Robin Evans' *The Projective Cast* (1995), and Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier's *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (1997).

The deliberate statement of a position contrary to the broadly accepted notion that architecture is a language must be indulged. This idea, traced from the writings of Quatremère de Quincy by Sylvia Lavin in *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture* (1992) and introduced into contemporary architectural discourse by Anthony Vidler and others in the pages of the journal *Oppositions* (Hays, 1998b) in the 1970s, is a politically accomplished fact. To properly defend the assertion that architecture is not a language is outside the scope of the present text, but the assertion is foundational to the argument herein.

CHAPTER 2

CRITERIA FOR A CRITICAL PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE

It is a gross simplification to state that architectural theory changed in the late 1960s. This sort of epochal thinking denies the fluidity of ideas and the cross-fertilization of modes of thought. Clearly it is not so simple as to say that at a given time linguistic theories overtook architectural discourse. The rise to prominence of architectural Postmodernism, taken to mean the sort of free historicism born from Robert Venturi's 1966 *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* or that manifest in the architecture of the 1980 Venice Biennale (figure 2.1) which Jürgen Habermas denounced in "Modernity—An Incomplete Project" as an abandonment of not only Modern architecture, but of the project of the Enlightenment, was not merely the arrival of another new search for meaning in architecture, but a semantic focus that mirrored trends in other discourses. As literary poststructuralism had grown, not just from structural linguistics, but from a larger structuralism, the new architectural theory had also developed from a prior structuralism. This structuralism's margins with the rationalism and functionalism of Modern architectural theory are too blurred to delineate here. This is not to say that architectural theories were operating free of language-based concerns prior to their encounter with poststructuralism. There existed a strong current of meaning-centered, or communicative,[1] architectural theory and practice well before— both explicit, such as church architecture and *architecture parlant*, and implicit, like the

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[1] This should not be confused with the communicative, as opposed to instrumental, rationality of the Frankfurt School.

Figure 2.1: The *Strada Novissima* of the 1980 Venice Biennale. From Charles Jencks,

The New Paradigm in Architecture (Venice Biennale).

understanding of architectural meaning discussed by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, which was assumed to exist in Europe from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Rather it is to say that the leap from what might be called the syntactics of Modernism to the semantics of Postmodernism is a leap over an ambivalent distance, given the shared structuralist foundation and yet taking into account the ideological divergence.

To leap the gap is not to close it; the ease with which one moves between the two is both abetted and strained by the similarity of the discursive terminology. Here we have architecture and language discussed in the same terms—the "terms" of language-based "discourse." Architectural theory and metaphysical speculation have been bound up in a shared terminology since antiquity. This integration, or near consubstantiality, would be the focus of Deconstruction in its interaction with architecture.[2] There were many attempts in the 1970s and 1980s to apply "deconstructive" ideas to architectural practice, none of which were particularly successful, but none of which were anything like the work of the Postmodernist architects.[3] One could say that while the Postmodernists had followed the semantic side of the divide (fig. 2.2), the architecture of deconstruction followed from the Modernist syntactics (fig. 2.3).

Together, Deconstruction and linguistic Poststructuralism established a textual tyranny of sorts within architectural theory, but must still be seen as but two of the many aspects of the larger theorizing taking place. Nonetheless, it is these aspects that are most

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[2] See particularly Mark Wigley's "The Translation of Architecture: The Production of Babel," (Whiteman, *et. al.*, *Strategies in Architectural Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) but also his *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) and Jeffrey Kipnis' "Forms of Irrationality" (Whiteman, *et. al.*, *Strategies in Architectural Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

[3] The name of the 1988 Museum of Modern Art exhibition of these architects, "Deconstructivist Architecture," was intended to convey not only the debt to Deconstruction, the philosophical intervention, but also to Russian Constructivism, an architecture historical touchstone for the new styles, particularly evident in the work of Bernard Tschumi.

Figure 2.2: Semantic Postmodernism. Charles Moore, Piazza d'Italia. From Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*.

Figure 2.3: Syntactic post-Modernism. Peter Eisenman, House III. From Peter Eisenman, *Houses of Cards*.

important here. The practices this paper explores were born from within the language-based discourses—the arguments separating them and the commonalities shared.

Language-based theories of architecture claim precedence for language by arguing that it configures space—essentially that space is not necessarily perceived by language but is understood through language. However, it may be demonstrated that spatial presence and spatial arrangement are at the root of the difference between written and spoken language, as evident in the *Calligrammes* of Guillaume Apollinaire (Apollinaire). S. I. Lockerbie, in an introduction to the poems, frames the aesthetic climate of the pre-WWI years in which Apollinaire was working within in the commonly accepted narrative of Modernism's sense of accelerated temporality. But clearly Lockerbie is describing the fact of spatial and temporal existence, not a specifically "modern" thing.

> Central among these aesthetic ideas was the notion that the modern work of art must adequately reflect the global nature of contemporary consciousness. In the conditions of modern life man has achieved totality of awareness: through worldwide communications he is as aware of what is happening in New York as in Paris; through newspapers, radio, and the cinema his imagination is stimulated by a constantly changing stream of information and ideas; in the streets and cafés his senses are assailed by a kaleidoscopic multiplicity of sights, sounds, and sensations. To be able to mirror such a multiple form of consciousness the work of art had to abandon linear and discursive structures, in which events are arranged successively, in favor of what Apollinaire called *simultaneity*: a type of structure that would give the impression of a full and instant awareness within one moment of space-time. (Apollinaire, 3)

With the exception of varieties of "worldwide communication" one might describe a third world marketplace, or for that matter any urban area at any point in history in the same way, a simultaneous consciousness. Apollinaire's contribution is not dependent on such a concept of modernity although it may have arisen within one. Apollinaire's "response"

Voyage

TÉLÉGRAPHE

OISEAU
QUI
LAISSE
TOMBER
SES AILES PARTOUT

ADIEU AMOUR NUAGE QUI
PUIS REFAIS LE VOYAGE DE DANTE
ET N'A PAS CHU PLUIE FÉCON

? E L A P

AU LOIN DU TENDRE ÉTÉ SI P
FRAIS

L U N A I R E E T

QUS

C' EST TON VI SA GE
PLU S
V O I S

OÙ VA DONC CE TRAIN QUI MEURT
DANS LES VALS ET LES BEAUX BOIS

D O U CE
N U I T

B T O I L E S

L A P E B I N E M R

JE

Figure 2.4: Guillaume Apollinaire, "*Voyage*". From *Calligrammes*.

to such awareness was a poetry of radical structure (fig. 2.4). Lockerbie describes the understanding of these poems: "in a spatial layout, where the poem is displayed in a multiplicity of patterns on the page rather than being arranged in one linear sequence, the reader is forced to grasp the complex interrelationship of the whole" in an instant. "The fact that some of his understanding comes to him through visual, as well as verbal, communication of ideas further reinforces the direct sensory awareness that is characteristic of modern consciousness." (Apollinaire, 10)

The absence of prior attempts to capture this simultaneous consciousness in poetry does not mean that such consciousness did not exist prior to modernity, only that the presentation of such a consciousness was not valued. Cicero didn't write on rhetoric because the world was orderly, but because rhetoric expressed an orderly world and an orderly world was valuable. Lockerbie has described only the consciousness of the modern *reader* (his own). Like spatial configuration, the linear sequence is also a contrivance, a contrivance meant to give order. These contrivances show that space is the necessary condition for writing to exist, yet the linguistico-architectural theorists continue to privilege writing and communication, fitting their accounts of architectural production neatly into a discourse of textuality. It is almost as if the linguistic paradigm, enamored of architecture's inherently non-linear temporality and spatial presence, would claim these as it's own; the linguistic turn colonizes architecture in an episode of language coming to "terms" with itself.

Consider also the tale of the poet, Simonides of Cheos, by which the development of the art of memory was introduced in Cicero's *De oratore*. Simonides performed a poem to honor the host of a banquet. Having included some lines praising the mythic

twins Castor and Pollux, he was told by the host to ask them for half of the fee agreed for the poem. Later Simonides was called from the hall to speak with two men who had asked to see him. While he was away the roof of the hall collapsed, killing the host and all the guests. The corpses were unidentifiable, but Simonides recalled the position at the table of each banqueter and named the deceased. Realizing that an ordered spatial arrangement was a helpful mnemotechnic he invented the art of memory, a logic of places and images commonly referred to as a memory palace. A building or other remembered structure is organized as a sequence of places along a route. These places, usually architectural features or elements, are then imprinted with images meant to trigger a specific portion of the information to be recalled. The skilled memory artist may then, by imagining his route, recall large quantities of information in an orderly manner (Yates).

Thus rhetorical memory, like writing, is a spatial system.

Still, the textual thinking, taken to its extreme, would posit that everything is language, that all other "discourses" were subsumed beneath it. But this cannot be the case, as architecture is not a language.[4] Despite efforts to have it perform as one, architecture is not a language-based, but a spatial discipline. Architecture operates, not by means of semantics, syntax, or semiotics, but through drawing.

Although the language-based theory has enormous critical force, it is a critique at cross-purposes to architecture. In order to discuss the possibility of a critical practice of

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[4] This point cannot be properly developed at this time. The range of arguments which must be given a hearing in such a discussion range at least from Sylvia Lavin's writings on Quatremère de Quincy to Hans-Georg Gadamer's assertions that all understanding is in the form of language. On the other hand, the idea of architecture as other than language has much viable theoretical support which should also be brought into account, whether that theory support or refute the point that architecture operates by means of drawing.

architecture, critical thought must be situated in its historical specificity and then translated to architecture.[5]

This specificity is in Kant's three *Critiques*. One might trace the notion of critique to skeptics such as David Hume, but critique is best exemplified by the work of Immanuel Kant. His *Critiques* were his attempt to find the limits of human knowledge. As Kant Wrote in his introduction to the first edition of his *Critique of Judgment*, a work that ascertains the outlines of the faculty of judgment as pertains to aesthetics and teleology,

> If philosophy is the system of rational cognition through concepts, it is thereby already sufficiently distinguished from a critique of pure reason, which, although it contains a philosophical investigation of the possibility of such cognition, does not belong to such a system as a part, but rather outlines and examines the very idea of it in the first place (Kant, 2000: 3).

While to do so would no doubt strain the limits of analogy, one might think of architecture in the same way. Rather than a Kantian interrogation of architecture however, consider the Kantian project as a rubric. If we are to outline and examine the very idea of architecture, we must posit something as analogous to Kant's categories, intuitions, and faculties. In our case, the categories—quality, quantity, relation, and modality—would remain the same. Space and time, which for Aristotle were categories, are for Kant a type of *a priori* intuition. Intuitions are of the sensory manifold. Kant, in combining the skeptics' notion of immanence, that real knowledge is that knowledge derived from sense experience, with the rationalism of the Platonic heritage, arrived at a

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[5] Robin Evans points out a distinction in his "Translations from Drawing to Building" (Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays,* London: Architectural Association Publications, 1997) that is valuable here—translation, despite connotation, is not necessarily a linguistic practice. "To translate is to convey. It is to move something without altering it" (p. 154). His related footnote reads "From the Latin *translatio*, to remove or carry from one place to another." (p. 189). It is debatable whether what is about to transpire in this essay is a translation so defined.

revolutionary critique (Bonevac, 44-45). For us the sensory manifold will be the same, whether or not we follow the Kantian program that experience is made possible by the subsumption of the plurality of sensory intuition under the unity of a concept. Finally, consider the faculties, among which for Kant are reason, understanding, and judgment. Architecture, in the position that philosophy was for Kant—the object of critique—must operate through the faculties. In order to have an operative architecture we must specify how architecture works. Architecture operates by means of representation; it represents concepts or space and then builds them.   Consider the Aristotelian poetics— representations, or imitations, are composed of matter, object, and mode. Architecture's matter is drawing, it's object is space, and it mode is the gamut of possible drawing types. For Kant this sort of representation is accomplished by the faculty of judgment. Filling in this blank in the system gives the argument the necessary stability. We now know that architecture is conveyed by drawing. We can the see that what is proper to architecture is those things conveyed by architectural drawing. Tschumi and Eisenman walk the fine line of the distinction between what is proper to architecture and what is not. It is because of this that their most valuable theoretical work is their design drawing rather than their writing.   While most criticism in architecture flows from the language discourse to the spatial, K. Michael Hays notes that Tschumi and Eisenman instigate the reverse flow of ideas from their intensely theoretical design work. He calls it an attempt "to *recode*, to reterritorialize, to reinvent the boundaries and specificities that delimit the discipline" (Hays, 1998a: xii).

But what of meaning? Is it not also drawn into architecture? No, it is drawn over the architecture like a shroud, a *text*ile. It is an added, not a constituent factor. While one

may attempt to treat architecture as a text, one cannot get to the core of the discourse by this route. If architecture and landscape architecture have a language, that "language" is drawing. Critical practice should grow from critical drawing rather than critical reading and writing.

CHAPTER 3

DRAWINGS AND OVERLAY

Clearly drawing is not a language, however. Nor is drawing so simple. It is beyond the current discussion to account for drawing in any fullness, architectural nor otherwise, nor will it catalog types of architectural drawing except to say they may be grouped roughly into *design* drawings, particularly process drawings and presentation drawings, but also investigative drawings; and *production* drawings or construction drawings, which will not be addressed. Tschumi has recently cataloged drawing types as *descriptive* or *prescriptive*, but his assessment seems to apply only to design drawings. Construction drawings could belong to either group by his definition (Tschumi, 2001: 135). This chapter aims to assemble a notion of *critical* drawing.

Drawing conveys content, but this is not the same as being a language. Studies of design language—such as Christopher Alexander's pattern language—reveal their included drawings to operate as a sort of second order image. Assumptions about the psychological effects of space or about social dimensions are beyond the drawing itself, though they may be conveyed in drawing. These drawings are always prescriptive or proscriptive, never creative nor critical.

If the drawing is autonomous from the pattern, however, a new possibility emerges. Francesco Dal Co, in "Criticism and Design" (Dal Co)[1] reads Friedrich Nietzsche's separation of the true world—the world "in-itself" which does not exist—and

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[1] Dal Co's article is an attempt to set up a (leftist) counter to narratives of progress, whether held by Modern architecture or Marxisms, and to write about the architecture of Aldo Rossi and criticism within the new structure.

the apparent world—that world accommodated, developed, and simplified by our practical instincts—to become a model for thinking about images: "For by asserting the 'reality of appearance,' Nietzsche allows us to see that the formal 'images' produced by the act of designing might be separate entities in themselves, autonomous from, yet equally valid as the procedures that engendered them" (Dal Co, 156). Thus Dal Co distinguishes three moments, which might be called the architectural image, the design action, and the architectural object, each of which has a reality of its own. These three engender a new criticism, which, unlike the mutual dependency of criticism and the work of architecture Dal Co finds in the existing situation, will not present images of the history of design practice as a representation of already determined values. Dal Co believes that this new conception of images, criticism, and design has the power to overturn ideologies such as the Modernist relation of form to function.

Anthony Vidler, while not opposed to this sort of adaptation of ideas from outside discourses urges caution in his postscript to Dal Co's argument—specifically referring to linguistic analogies, but also to the implications of fragmentary use of philosophical discourse, he writes that "it is especially important now to distinguish between analytical models applied outside their range to objects which in the end remain unanalyzed, wrapped in an "aura" of dissection, but in fact under the wrapping" (Vidler, 1978: 175). Thus the Nietzschean critique Dal Co begins with should be taken to its full extent; we must recognize that Nietzsche's 'appearances,' and thus all notions of progress or history are merely instances of the will to power.

> Ultimately the discourse of Nietzsche is entire in itself—not autonomous but complete according to its own terms of reference. To transform Nietzsche's statements on criticism and history into armatures for the understanding of something other than criticism and philosophy—to make of them, that is, proper

instruments for the analysis of architectural design—is a task that itself demands an authentic philosophical approach, not to the texts that surround architecture, but to architecture itself" (Vidler 1978, 175).

He presents a worthwhile philosophical caution regarding the sort of instrumentalization the present hesis enacts. But it is an interesting double move—while calling for a full, presumably metaphysical investigation of architecture he preserves architecture as a distinct and unitary thing. However, to return to the Kantian rubric that this essay presses into service, critique is not a philosophy nor a metaphysic, and the presumed unity of architecture and/or landscape architecture and those things deemed constituent to them is one of the ideas investigated by this analysis. Despite its roots, Dal Co's distinction of image from process and object clears the ground for a critical image-making, a critical drawing, in architecture.

Stan Allen, in *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation* (Allen), presents a pragmatic view of architecture than can accommodate such outside interventions. For him, architecture need not be divided into theory and practice, but rather *material* practices and *hermeneutic* practices. These practices replace the merely prescriptive or proscriptive theories with an evolving program, a sort of feedback loop, perhaps akin to that of systems thinking. While hermeneutic practices address the past and are carried out primarily in writing, design work and other transformative acts are the province of material practice. "Conceived as a material practice, architecture achieves a practical (and therefore provisional) unity *inferred* on the basis of its ensemble of procedures, rather than a theoretical unity *conferred* from without by ideology or discourse" (Allen, xviii). Formerly "theoretical" work is not excluded from the design work, but the subsumption of architecture under a master narrative is contested.

Allen's point is challenged by the inclusion within the volume of a commentary by Diana Agrest that develops a Lacanian reading of architecture (Agrest). This commentary does not present psychoanalysis as an intervention or a tool for architecture to take up, but instead attempts to situate architecture within precisely the sort of master narrative Allen would free it from. Nonetheless, Agrest's commentary presents several worthwhile observations before turning briefly into talk of "symbolism," then into a near colonization of Allen's work. Here is the turning point:

> The apparatus of representation constructs a subject by defining the position of the eye and body. The plane of perspective representation, for instance, separates/articulates the two points of the perspective mechanism—the vision point and the vanishing point—while the frame connects two cones of vision: that of the architect as creative subject and that of the observer." (Agrest, 168-169)

After this passage Agrest's commentary becomes fixated on architecture's "gaze" rather than entertaining any idea that architecture might be a material practice. The argument she uses to set up her narrative is flawed, however. Actually, the first cone of vision is no longer connected to the "architect as creative subject." This is not to argue that the representation or its apparatus create a "true" space inside the frame or continue the space of the observing subject, but to say that these three notions are equally wrong. The representation has no creator (though it may allude to one). Its very existence is determined by the fact of its physical or imagined being and the presence of the perceiving and judging subject. It's "meaning," like its creator, is the product of happenstance outside the representation.

Agrest's commentary directly contravenes Allen's concept of architecture and its complimentary hermeneutic and material practices—his idea that architecture "is capable of sustaining dense intellectual argument without recourse to concepts and language

borrowed from other fields" yet open to tools from anywhere. For a colloquial rendition of Allen's point, consider this quote from Viktor Shklovsky that he includes in the volume's introduction: "… in trying to understand a motor one must look at the drive belt as a detail in a machine—from the mechanic's point of view—and not from the point of view of a vegetarian (Allen, ix). For all its talk of the "other" Lacanian psychoanalysis admits of no outside except when remotivated under a different critique, such as Fredric Jameson's Marxism. The architecture Agrest writes of is devoid of agency. Allen's conception of architecture is not.

Hermeneutic practices need not be so aggressive. However, they need to be reconciled to themselves. James Corner's "Representation and Landscape" is an example of what happens when an outside discourse is appealed to in order to confer unity on a discussion of images in practice. Corner's text is a recapitulation and expansion of themes from Robin Evans' "Translations from Drawing to Building." In it he relates the issue of translation from drawing to built work to the specialized problematic of landscape—its phenomenal space and time—but is insistent that drawings be thought as texts. This allows for many insights and elegant passages but leaves his conception of drawing mired in a vaguely Heideggerian/Jungian symbolic. Two points in particular reveal the difficulties of such a conception. First, Corner is forced, in relating the phenomenal to the symbolic, to claim that there are symbols only available to experience, rather than to a reading of images:

> As a medium of symbolic representation, the landscape and its constitutive elements—stones, plants, water, earth, and sky—when artfully composed—have provided humans with some of the most sacred and powerful places of embodied meaning. Nothing, and certainly not a picture, can replace or equal the direct and bodily experience of such places (Corner, 146).

But, how can the symbolic *not* be available in the image of a *landscape-as-symbolic-representation*? How can the body experience a symbol non-visually? The two, symbol and sensation, are necessarily separate. Kant's judgment of the beautiful would separate the two; the symbolic representation may be beautiful, but the bodily experience would necessarily be agreeable—the representation, in fact, could not be beautiful if it's actual existence or the existence of that depicted were necessary. One might argue that the fully attuned bodily experience of *any* place is unequalled by a read symbol. Or, as in Kant's judgment of the sublime, one might argue that a symbol obfuscates the landscape perceived *as it appears* and renders it not sublime. It is possible that Corner's two statements are an intentional non sequitur, but the context says they aren't.

Second, Corner writes the role of drawings in the process of creation into an uncritical presentation of the economic reality of the production of art and architecture. He argues, in effect, for *art for art's sake*. Consider the following two passages on the relation of drawing to the built landscape:

> … [D]o not drawings seem particularly abstract phenomena when compared with the phenomena of landscape? This peculiarity is made all the more apparent when one compares the drawing in landscape architectural production with other modes of artistic endeavor, such as painting or sculpture. It is not insignificant that many painters and sculptors often admit to not knowing where they are going with their work when they first begin. Instead the work "unfolds" as the artist is personally engaged with the medium and the possibilities that emerge from the work. Invariably, the fine artist's most focused attention is on the making, the touching and holding of the same worked artifact that will become the final piece (Corner, 145).

and,

> This problem of distance and indirectness is further complicated by the apparent disparity or incongruity between drawing and landscape. While the preliminary sketch bears an obvious and similar relationship to the work of painting and sculpture, a drawing, any drawing, is radically dissimilar from the medium that constitutes the lived landscape. The disparity between the phenomenon of

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drawing and that of landscape means that there is often a discrepancy between what is represented and what gets built. It is significant—but not necessarily disadvantageous—that the nature and embodied meanings of drawings and landscapes belong to different worlds, as do their modes of experience (Corner, 145).

Corner is right to show that the moments of production of art and architecture do not line up, but he does not notice that the closest equivalents are not the completion of the painting or sculpture and the completion of the construction of the landscape or building, but rather the use of the landscape or building and the use of the work of art. The constructed landscape or building has an economic and social reality that the work of art does not have until it is sold. Also, his notion of artistic production precludes Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and Sol LeWitt (figs. 3.1 and 3.2) from being artists.

Evans is able to differentiate the moments more clearly because his reading has neither a phenomenological nor textual agenda. Evans is pointedly wary of ideas of drawing and representation hermetically sealed from contamination with other discourses, but also of forcing drawing into textuality. He writes,

> Before embarking on the investigation of drawing's role in architecture, a few more words might be spent on language; more particularly, on the common antilogy that would have architecture be like language but also independent of it. All things with conceptual dimension are like language, as all grey things are like elephants. A great deal in architecture may be language-like without being language (Evans, 154).

Also, Evans is engaged in a project that has as a jumping-off point the difference in drawing between architecture and the fine arts, but is not concerned with the phenomenon of the difference but rather the translatability of drawing to built work. Corner's exploration of drawing in the specificity of landscape and landscape architecture are examples of the irreducibility of landscape to timeless abstraction, but his conception of drawing is not critical.

DOING WALL DRAWINGS

The artist conceives and plans the wall drawing. It is realized by draftsmen, (the artist can act as his own draftsman), the plan (written, spoken or a drawing) is interpreted by the draftsman.

There are decisions which the draftsman makes, within the plan, as part of the plan. Each individual being unique, given the same instructions would carry them out differently. He would understand them differently.

The artist must allow various interpretations of his plan. The draftsman perceives the artist's plan, then reorders it to his own experience and understanding.

The draftsman's contributions are unforeseen by the artist, even if he, the artist, is the draftsman. Even if the same draftsman followed the same plan twice, there would be two different works of art. No one can do the same thing twice.

The artist and the draftsman become collaborators in making the art.

Each person draws a line differently and each person understands words differently.

Neither lines nor words are ideas, they are the means by which ideas are conveyed.

The wall drawing is the artist's art, as long as the plan is not violated. If it is, then the draftsman becomes the artist and the drawing would be his work of art, but art that is a parody of the original concept.

The draftsman may make errors in following the plan without compromising the plan. All wall drawings contain errors, they are part of the work.

The plan exists as an idea but needs to be put into its optimum form. Ideas of wall drawings alone are contradictions of the idea of wall drawings.

The explicit plan should accompany the finished wall drawing. They are of equal importance.

Reprinted from *Art Now: New York* 3, no. 2 (June 1971): n.p.

Figure 3.1: Sol LeWitt, "Doing Wall Drawings." From Gary Garrels, ed., S*ol LeWitt: A Retrospective*.

Figure 3.2: Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #146*, 1972. From Garrels, ed., S*ol LeWitt: A Retrospective*.

A material practice that can accommodate and transmit "textuality" is one that generates a text *of* drawings. One such mode of drawing is the diagram. Iain Fraser and Rod Henmi offer an encompassing definition of diagrams as "those drawings which engage in a self-conscious reductive process, attempting to make clear a specific interpretation through the exclusion of that information which the authors deem irrelevant" (Fraser and Henmi, 99). The juxtaposition of such drawings can generate a complex interpretive and operative system with diagrammatic logic.

Much has been written of late regarding the role of diagrams in recent architectural practice and theory, whether tracing the development of the diagram from Colin Rowe and Rudolf Wittkower through Alexander (in *Notes on the Synthesis of Form,* not *A Pattern Language*) to a revisionist account of Eisenman's thirty-some years of theory and practice, or reflecting and speculating on the utopian potential of such drawings.[2] Perhaps the most potent application of diagrammatic logic and the "textuality" of such representations is found in the material practices of landscape architecture: the environmental analysis pioneered by Ian L. McHarg. McHarg developed a critical system of ecological analysis that strongly resembles the common process of overlaying sheets of tracing paper atop one another to selectively and iteratively develop designs. In it the layers drawn over one another create a text of their relationships to each other, which functions similarly to the diagram. McHarg traces the development of "layer-cake" analysis to a regional-scale ecological planning study on the Potomac River Basin generated for the US Department of the Interior between 1965 and 1967. In his method discrete inventories of a site's environmental factors, such as

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[2] See R. E. Somol, "Dummy Text, or The Diagrammatic Basis of Contemporary Architecture" in Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries* (New York: Universe, 1999) and Anthony Vidler, "Utopian Diagrams" in de Zegher and Wigley, eds., *The Activist Drawing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

geology, hydrology, and vegetation, are drawn onto transparent media and arranged chronologically for analysis (figs. 3.3 – 3.5). McHarg tells it as follows:

> If such layers are represented on transparent materials, causality becomes evident. Bedrock geology will be reflected in physiography. Mountains, hills, valleys, escarpments, and faults will then be seen in resultant elevations, slopes, aspects, and characteristic features. The geology will reveal and explain presence, absence, abundance, and quality of groundwater. Given knowledge of geology and climate, the presence or absence of lakes and the abundance of streams become comprehensible. Soils derive from parent material, glaciation, aeolian and fluvial processes, physical characteristics reflect position on a section, high to low. Plants synthesize all the foregoing, and species and ecosystems are responses to environmental variables, notably, the relative abundance of water, as well as elevation, slope, and aspect. Wildlife relates directly to the vegetational structure. Layer after layer contributes meaning. No layer is comprehensible without access to that underlying. (McHarg, 1996: 196)

While the system is now generally conceived as a prescriptive/proscriptive theory in the service of "sustainable development," it should be recognized that McHarg had in mind a critical project. "Ecological determinism" would replace the determination of urban and regional planning and use patterns by development capital and municipal government making decisions on the basis of wholly economic criteria (McHarg, 1998: 39-56). The stated goal of such a system is the limitation and appropriate redirection of human action in order to promote properly functioning ecosystems. But, the analysis not only systematizes a rational decision-making process—it embodies a rational systematic critique in a drawing practice. The practice could be remotivated for critique by interpreting the layer-cake system as the elimination of the human determinant in decision-making and therefore as a parallel to avant-garde practices. It hasn't been. Instead critics and theorists in and around landscape architecture and ecology tend to couch its intervention in the moral terms of environmental ethics.

EXISTING VEGETATION

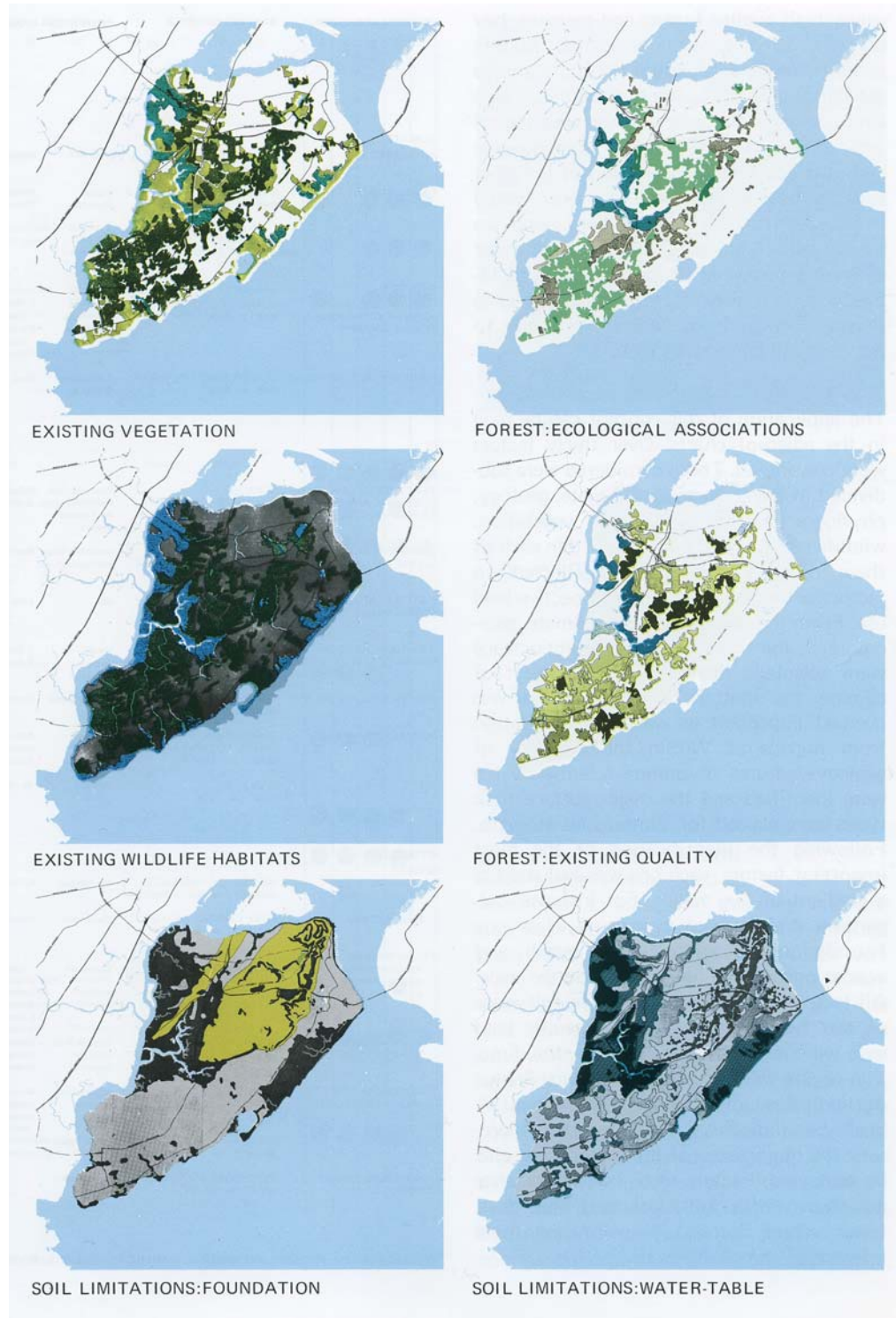FOREST:ECOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS

EXISTING WILDLIFE HABITATS

FOREST:EXISTING QUALITY

SOIL LIMITATIONS:FOUNDATION

SOIL LIMITATIONS:WATER-TABLE

Figure 3.3: A selection of ecological inventories of Staten Island, NY. From Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature*.

INTERTIDAL HABITAT VALUE

SCENIC VALUE (LAND)

GEOLOGIC FEATURES VALUE
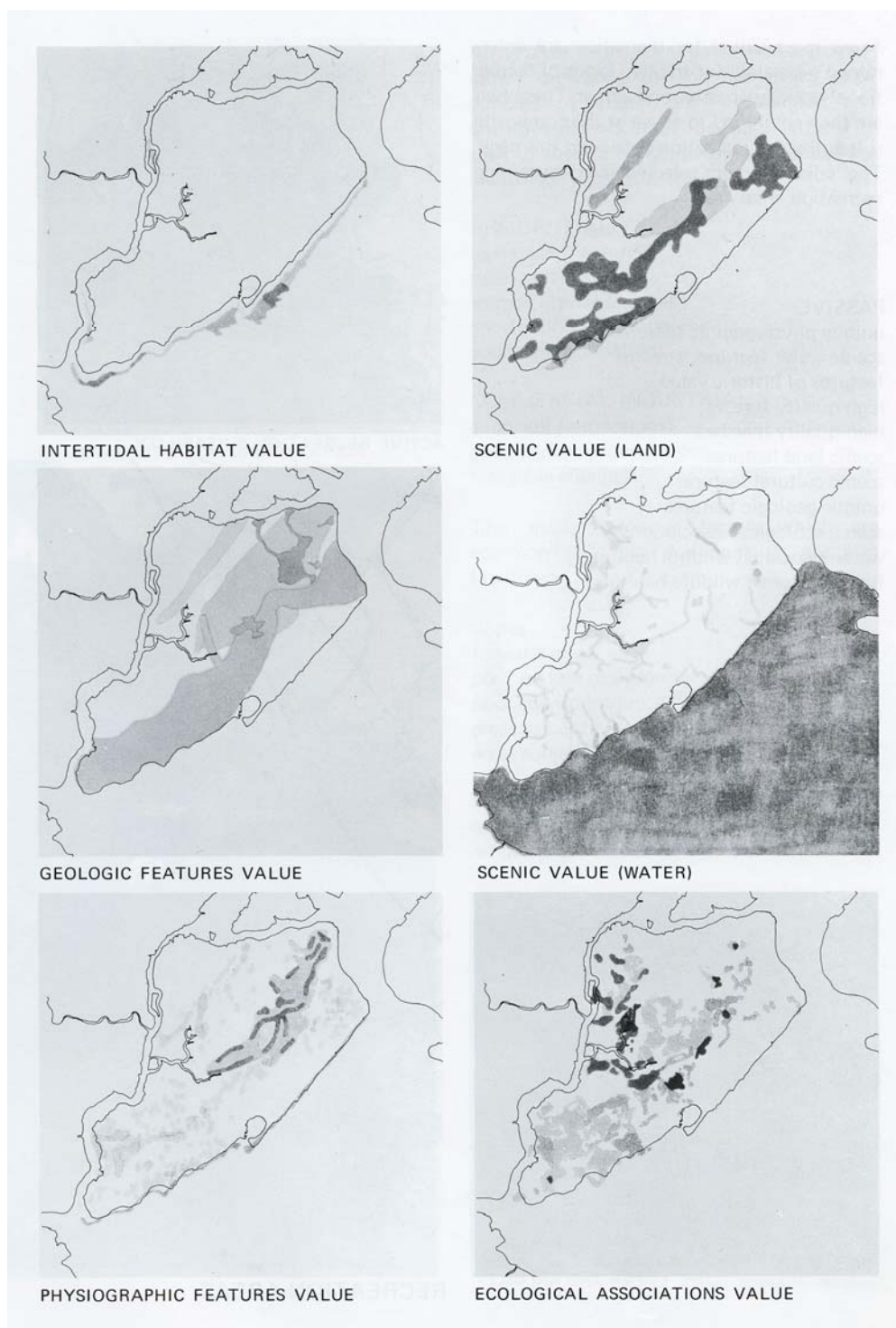
SCENIC VALUE (WATER)

PHYSIOGRAPHIC FEATURES VALUE

ECOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS VALUE

Figure 3.4: A selection of ecological and use value analyses of Staten Island, NY. From McHarg, *Design with Nature*.
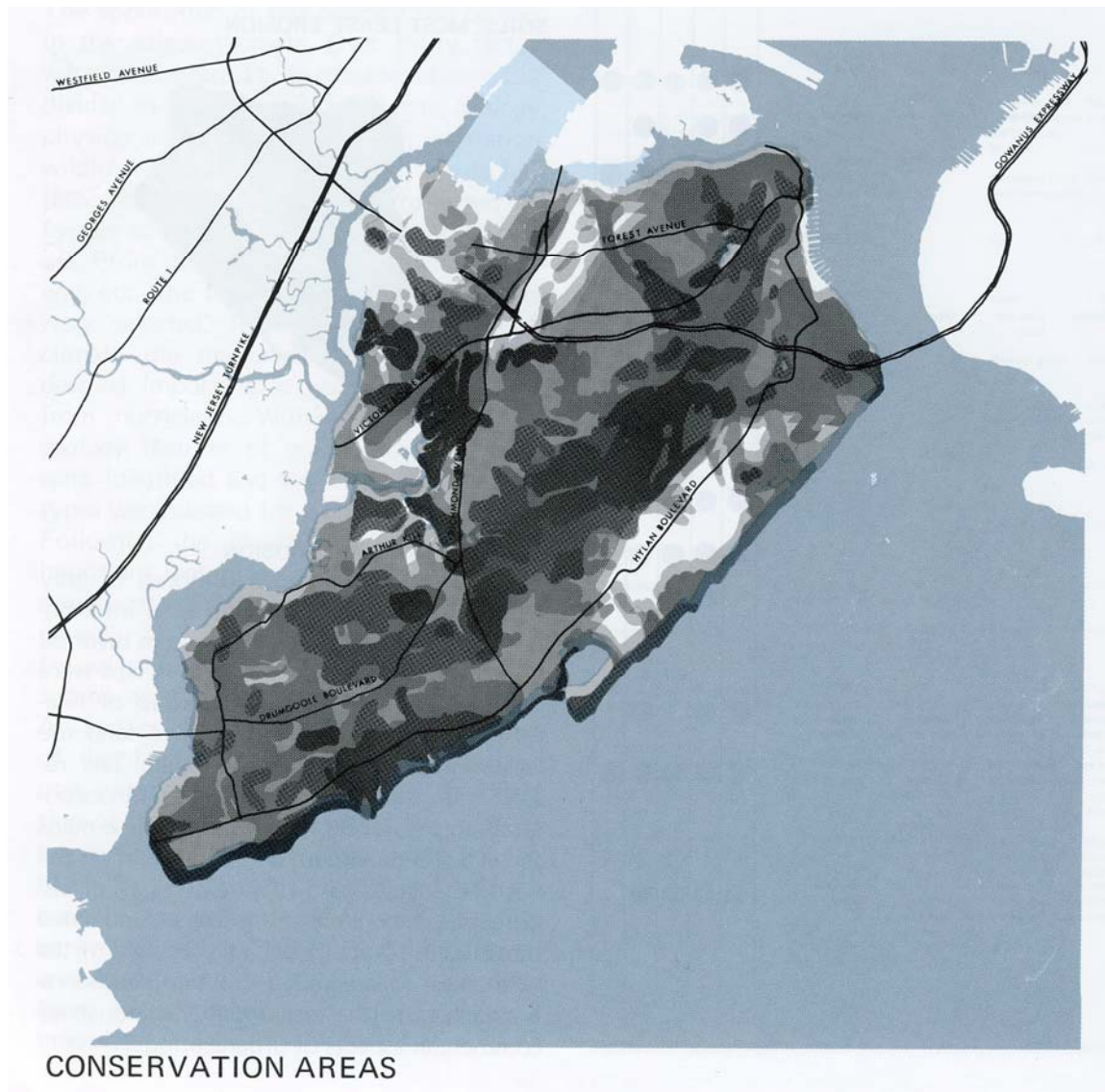
CONSERVATION AREAS

Figure 3.5: A composite analysis of Staten Island, NY showing areas of conservation value. From McHarg, *Design with Nature*.

CHAPTER 4

EISENMAN, INVENTORY, AND ANALYSIS

The "Cities of Artificial Excavation" were a prolonged instance of Peter Eisenman's

investigation of current theory in the humanities by means of architecture. These eleven

projects between 1978 and 1988 "constitute a distinct phase in his architectural practice

during which he tested theoretical reflections on the nature of site, architectural

representation, and program with specific drawing techniques involving tracing,

superposition, and layering" (Bédard, 9). The projects were collected and exhibited at the

Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal in 1994. Detached from the context of

Eisenman's interrogation of specific theories of linguistics, fiction, memory, and the

relation of form to function in architectural history, the "artificial excavations" connect

the critical potential of overlay drawing with the avant-gardes' critique of the artist.

What follows is less an explication than a program for appropriation.

Yve-Alain Bois locates the artificial excavations at a shift in Eisenman's drawing

style from axonometry to plan. The new drawings indicate a new phase in his work—the

axonometric drawings having been part of Eisenman's dialogue with the Modern

architects and allowed him to represent grids, crucial to his formal permutations, in three

dimensions without deformation (fig. 4.1). Bois speculates that the axonometric drawing

was for this "the best possible transcription (inversions of void and mass, or supported

and supporting elements, and so on, made visible through the repeated beat of a module)"
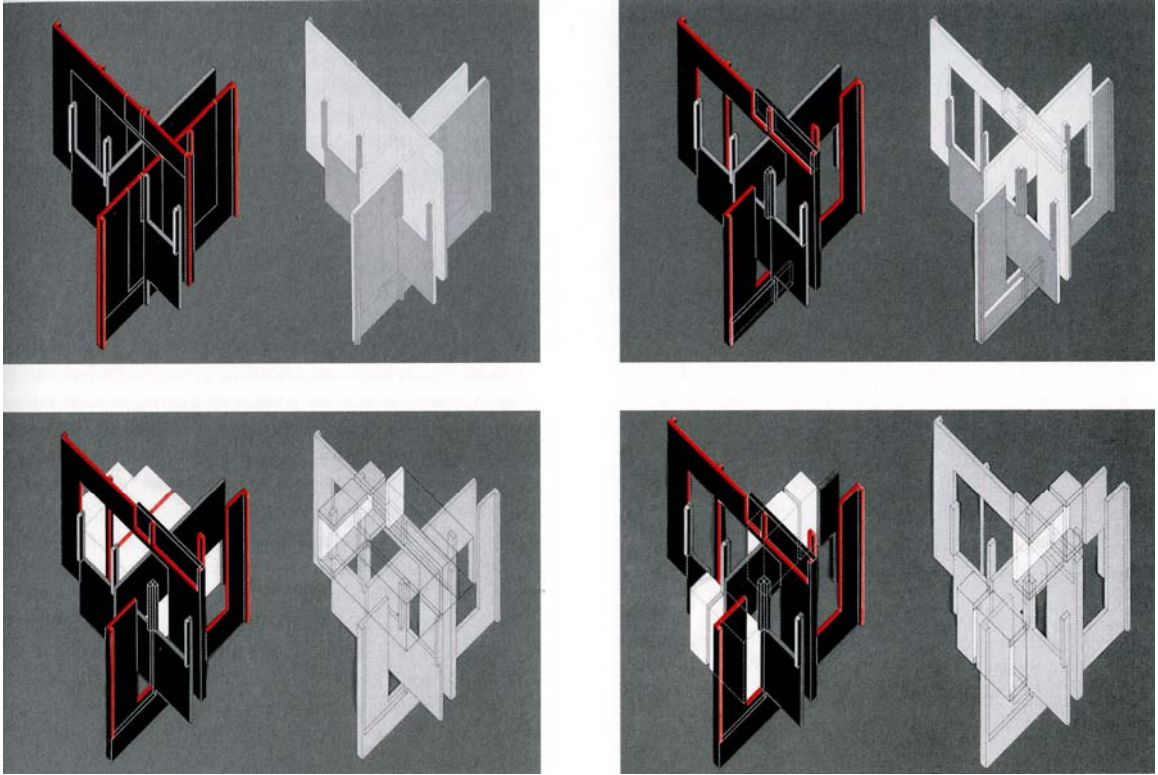
(Bois, 40).

Figure 4.1: Peter Eisenman, Axonometric iterations of House VI. From Peter Noever, ed., *Peter Eisenman: Barefoot on White-Hot Walls*.

Bois reads the new drawings, plan drawings, as appearing at first to be a retreat to the antimodernisms of contextualism and Beaux-Arts plan-derived architecture, but in fact an attempt to destabilize the force and direction of the generative grid which had been at the geometric/conceptual heart of Eisenman's design process in the house projects of 1967-1980 which precede this new phase.

Bois goes on to discount Eisenman's presentation of the theoretical underpinnings of the new work. We will follow his lead—the artificial excavations are far more interesting as a critical drawing practice than they are as illustrated theory. In Bois' rendition:

> Eisenman's discourse on memory and antimemory, decentering, displacement, absence, and reinvented history is shrewd but to my taste much too metaphorical. (It is paradoxical that a philosophy coined as an attack on metaphoricity has become, once "applied" to architecture, a vehicle of metaphor.) Certainly deconstruction is tempting as a strategy to envelop any kind of enemy in a paralyzing cocoon—the enemy in Eisenman's case being humanism and its historicist fantasies—but I do not think it is of much help to the architect who gets hoisted with his own petard for lack of philosophical training. During the last ten years or so we have seen architectural theory reach its level of incompetence. It is simply not the case that architects write such good books or that philosophers have such interesting ideas about architecture, and in a sense Eisenman's recent exchange with Jacques Derrida marks a recognition, on both sides, that perhaps it is now time to put an end to the reciprocal trivialization of their own discourses and the flood of gobbledygook than (*sic*) poured out of their sycophants' word processors. (Bois, 41)

Eisenman had imagined the projects to be a turn from an interrogation of Modernist syntactics in his house projects of 1967-1980 towards a fictional semantics that would reveal that the "progress" of Modern architecture and the search for "origins" which its theory had replaced both presented a notion of the "truth" of architecture. No real meaning was intended; the meaning he generates and the connections he makes are only available to the reader, never the user. Curiously, that he pulled his new fictions

from what might be called the aura of the site both emphasizes the critique of truth as a fiction and valorizes the chosen fictions. (As a critical drawing practice this does not matter.)

The artificial excavations are also perhaps more provocative as a drawing practice than they are as built theory. Only two projects of the eleven were built. The first, a housing block in Berlin at Friedrichstrasse and Kochstrasse, is generated by a false archaeology which "exposes" in layers the Mercator grid, an uncompleted section of the eighteenth century city wall, the neighborhood as the site from which Berlin's late eighteenth and nineteenth century expansions began, the Berlin street grids, the foundations of buildings bombed in 1945, and the Berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie (figs. 4.2 and 4.3). The second, the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio has as its genesis the conflicting grids of the campus, the city, and Jefferson's Northwest Ordinance (fig. 4.4). The drawn works' sometimes larger sites and urban scale make them seem less like set pieces, more like a sculpture gallery than a sculpture. The buildings themselves are a distinct departure from Eisenman's early "cardboard" architecture—they resemble nothing so much as SketchUp architecture, two-dimensional patterns "push/pulled" up to the third dimension.

Eisenman's theoretical concerns have, if not always then nearly so, been within the language paradigm, while his design work has always engaged formal manipulations—regardless of whether he was under the influence of Chomsky or Derrida, "deep structures" and "generative grammar" or "deconstruction." Even when, in 1999, he published a book, *Diagram Diaries*, which recast him as the ultimate diagram architect at a time when intellectual fashions in architecture had pushed diagrams and
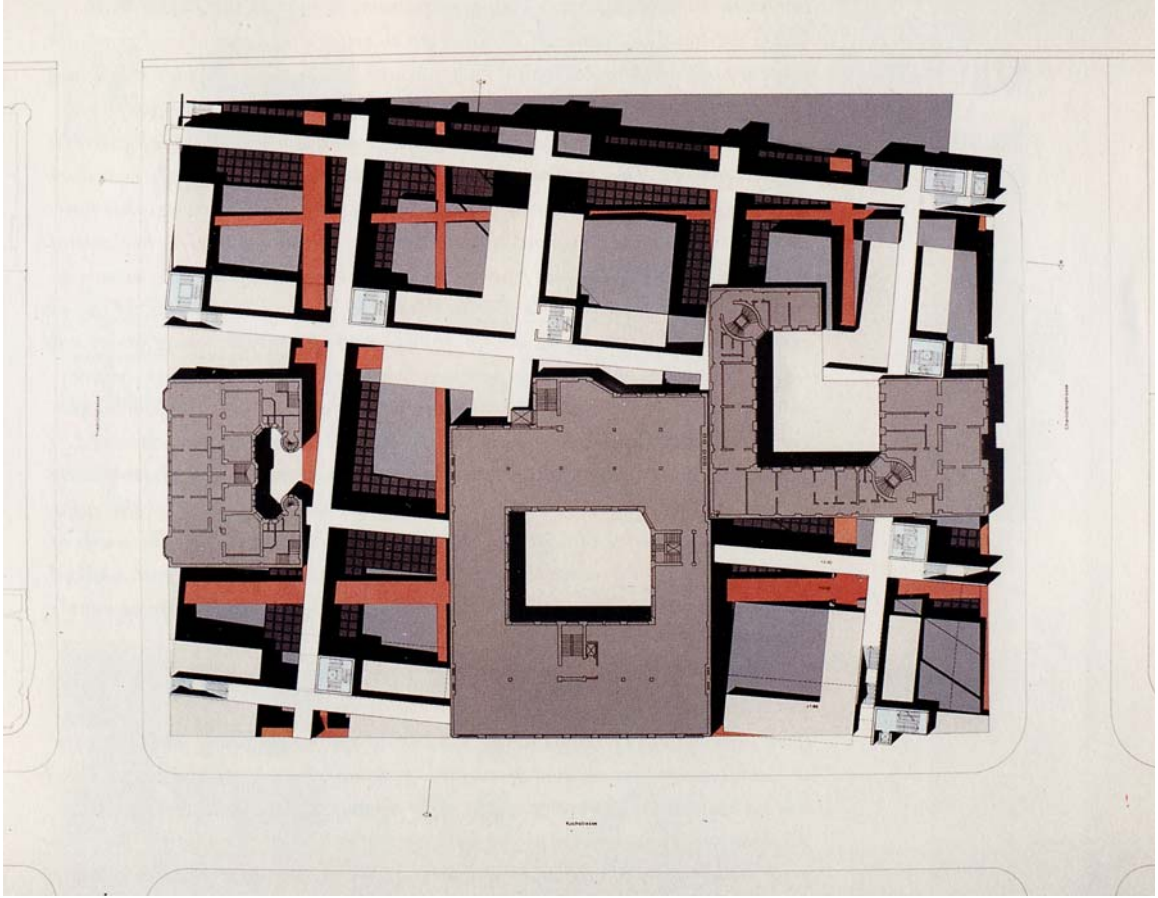
Figure 4.2: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Presentation plan of housing block at Friedrichstrasse and Kochstrasse, Berlin. From Jean-François Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation* (Eisenman Architects).

Figure 4.3: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Housing block at Friedrichstrasse and Kochstrasse, Berlin. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation* (Eisenman Architects).
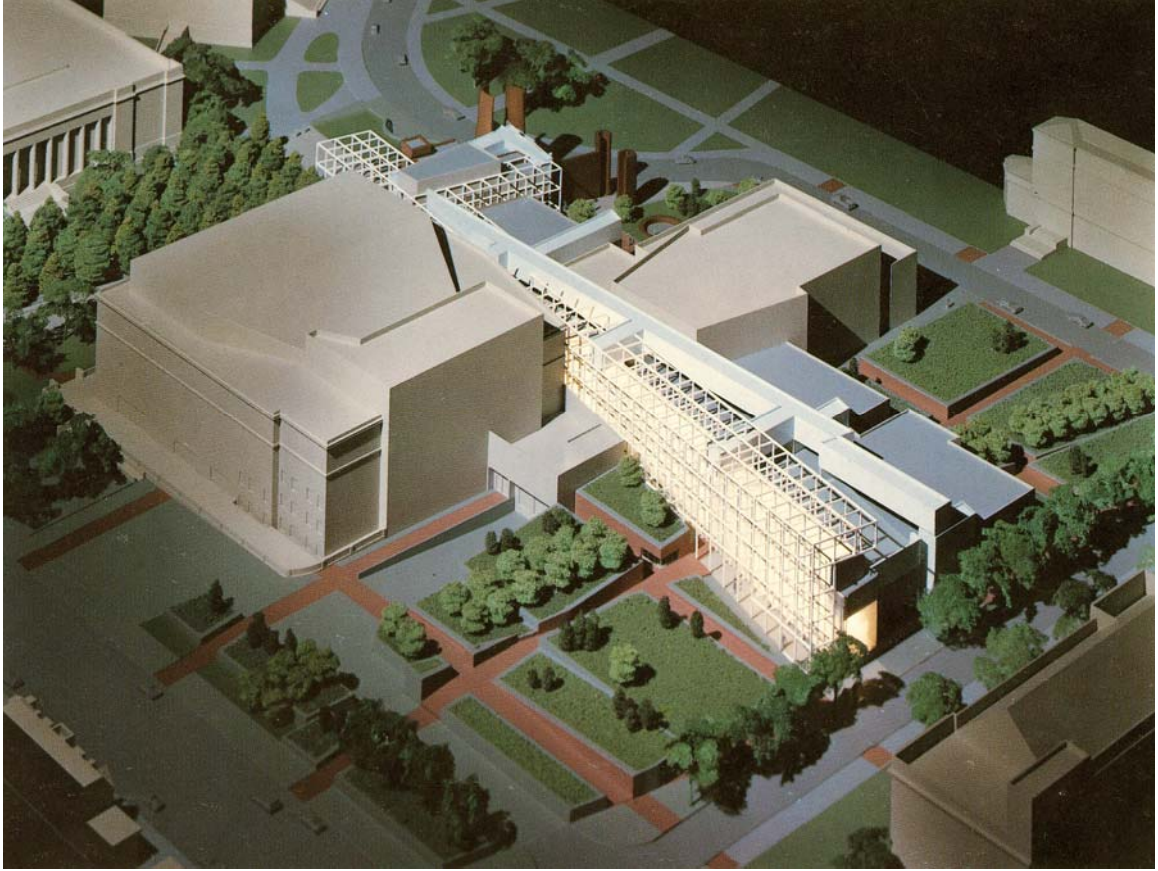
Figure 4.4: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Model of Wexner Center. From Papadakis, Andreas C., ed. *Deconstruction in Architecture* (Wolfgang Hoyt).

Deleuze to the cutting edge, he clung to signs. After being absolved of his past by R. E. Somol's introduction (or perhaps not absolved depending on whether you read Somol's talk of "repetition" as Deleuzian or Kierkegaardian) he displayed a certain linguistic recidivism, bookending a visual catalog of his formal interventions with essays of poststructuralist semiotics, "Diagram: An Original Scene of Writing" and "The Diagram and the Becoming Unmotivated of the Sign."

The first of the artificial excavations was a submission related to a design charrette of sorts held in Venice in July 1978. The project was to address the Cannaregio district, an industrial area at the edge of the city that was to have been redeveloped as a hospital by Le Corbusier in the early 1960s. Eisenman's approach was to use the Le Corbusier plan in conjunction with his own explorations of topology in the later houses. The Cannaregio design (fig. 4.5) was conceived as three texts that critiqued Modern architecture, contextualism, and Postmodern architecture. First he superposed the hospital's grid over the irregularity of the site as excavations marking the grid's intersections as the emptiness of rationality and commenting on Modernism's nostalgia for the future (fig. 4.6). The second text was a mimicking of the existing context with house-like objects and blocks painted to symbolize blood, Venice, memory, or alchemy (fig. 4.7). The third was a topological line of symmetry around which deformations of the grid took place (fig. 4.8). Eisenman's fascination with architecture as language is at its most baroque with Cannaregio.

The most grand of the projects was for the University Art Museum of the California State University at Long Beach (fig. 4.9). Eisenman imagined the to-be-designed building's history at five dates: in 1849 at the time of the gold rush, forty years

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Figure 4.5: Office of Peter Eisenman, Architect, Presentation axonometric of Cannaregio including Le Corbusier's unbuilt hospital. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
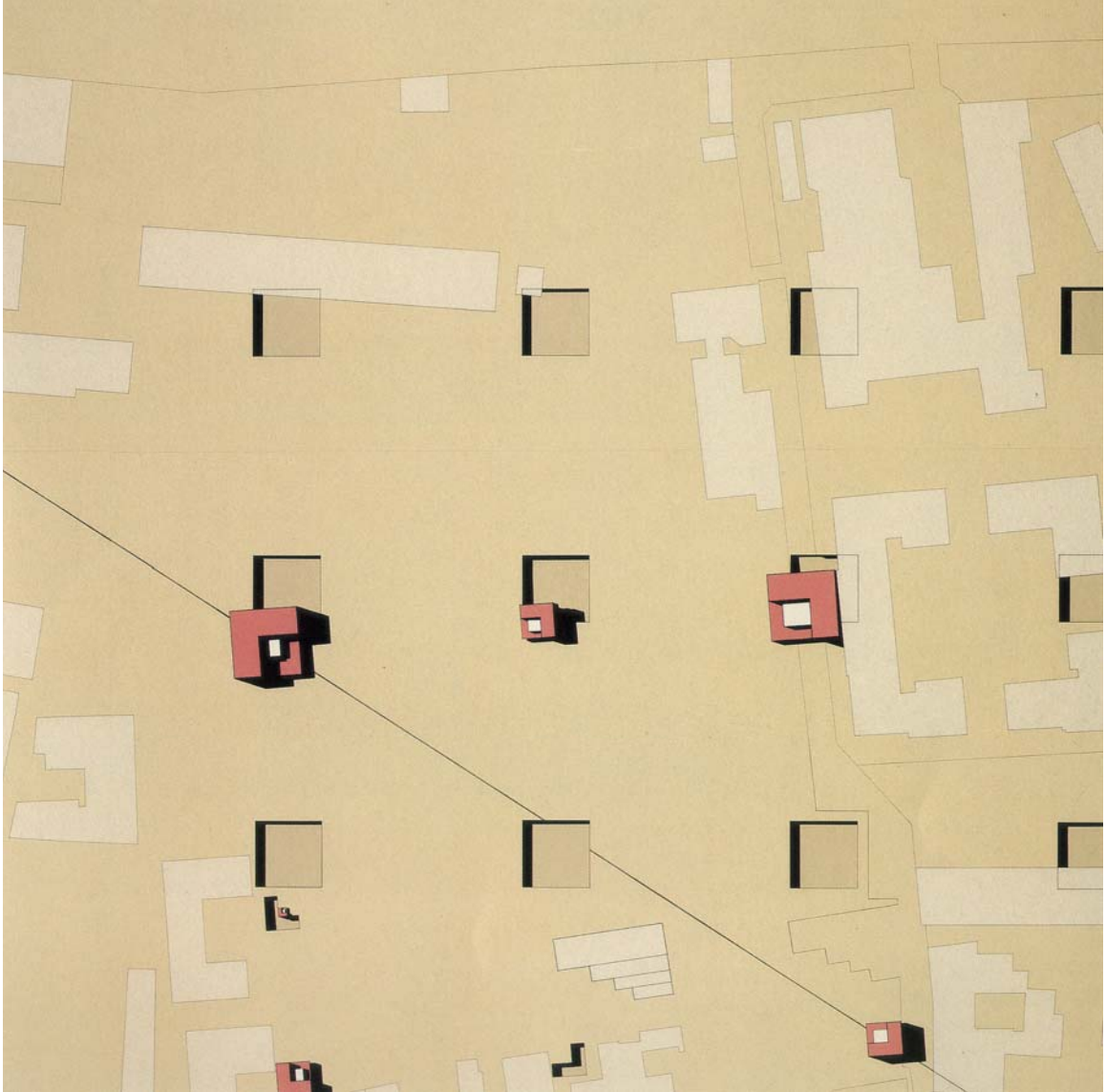
Figure 4.6: Office of Peter Eisenman, Architect, Presentation plan of Cannaregio showing excavated grid points. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
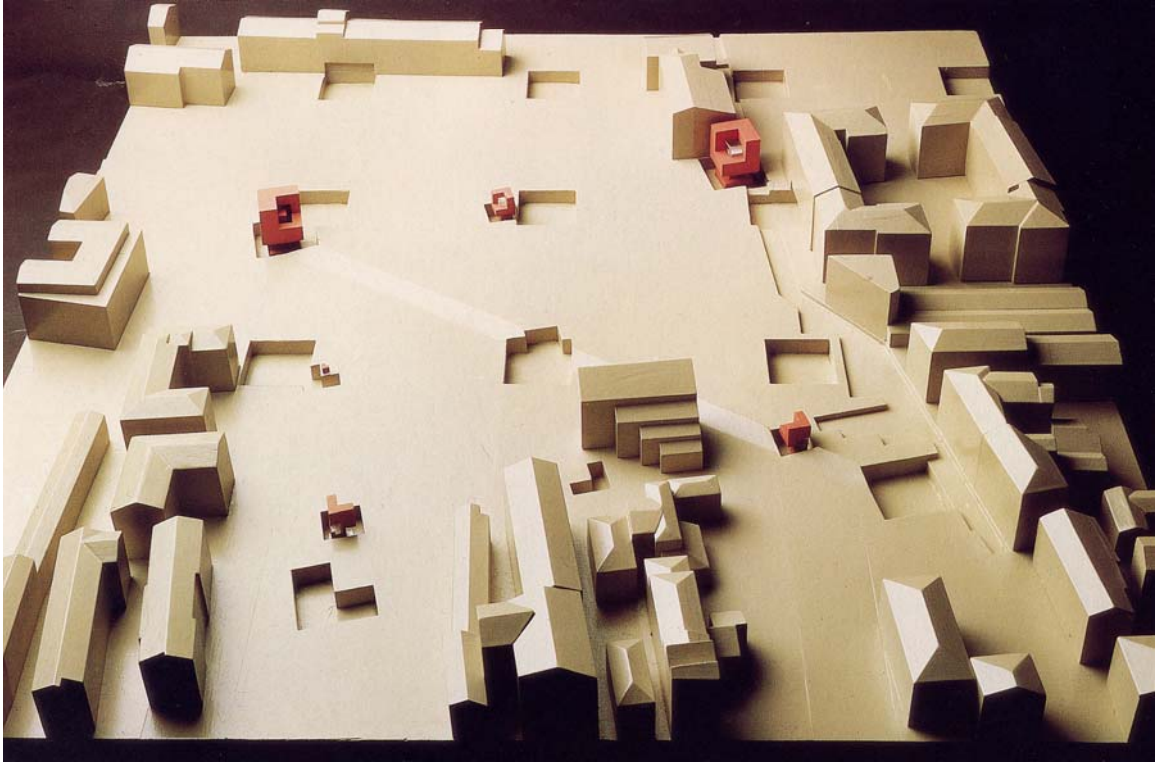
Figure 4.7: Office of Peter Eisenman, Architect, Presentation model of Cannaregio. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.

Figure 4.8: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan of Cannaregio showing Le Corbusier's hospital grid and topological axis of symmetry. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
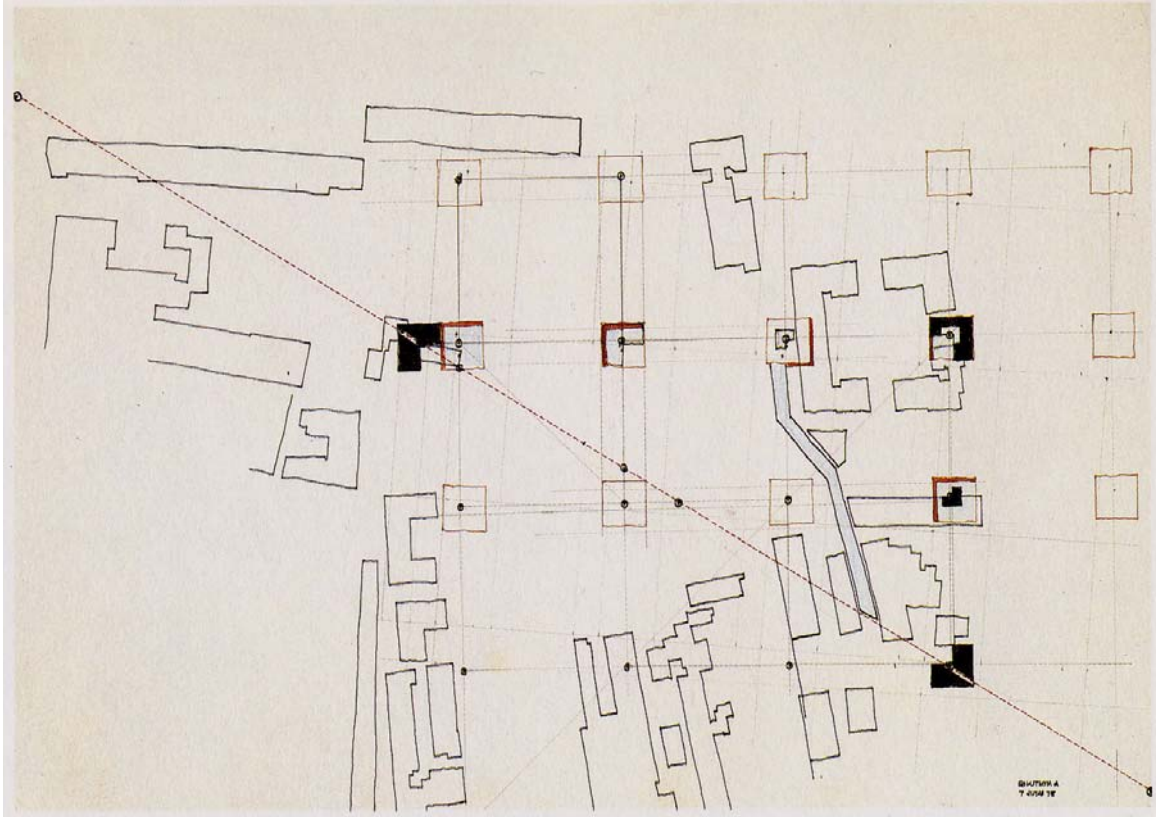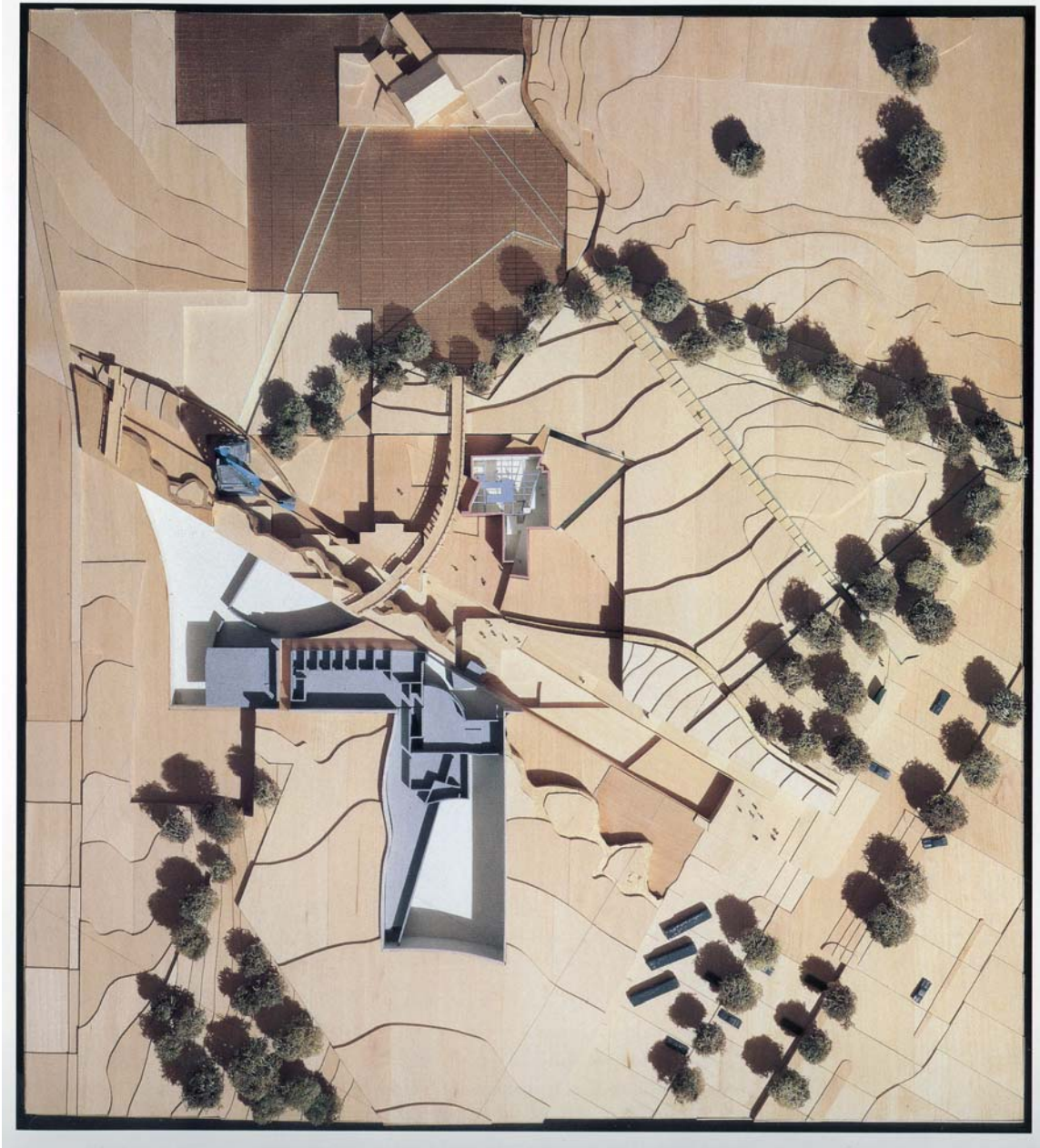
Figure 4.9: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Presentation model of University Art Museum. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation* (Eisenman Architects).

later in 1889, in 1949 at the creation of the university campus, forty years later in 1989, and in 2049 at the rediscovery of the museum by someone who could read the palimpsest of the site. There are six maps related to the history of Long Beach recorded onto the 23-acre site: the ranch on which the city was built, the campus, the site, the coastline and canals, the Jeffersonian grid, and the Newport-Inglewood fault (figs. 4.10 – 4.14).

The best known is the garden project for the Parc de La Villette (figs. 4.15 and 4.16) on which Eisenman collaborated with Jacques Derrida. This project has been exhausticulary treated elsewhere.[1] There is little new that can be said about the excavation projects as they stand. They can only be drawn into new relationships or stripped down to method and remotivated.

Despite the fact that no Eisenman/Derrida garden was built, and the fact that their book is more about the holes drilled through it than the writing in it, the partnership did produce a design and some construction drawings. Or perhaps it would be better said that Eisenman produced these—there is next to nothing new or of Derrida in the project. Thus the project stands as the culmination and recapitulation of the previous decade of Eisenman's architecture. In the design one can find the full arsenal of interventions with which he questioned the "three 'fictions' that [had] deluded architects since the fifteenth century." These fictions were the "fiction of history," a timeless architecture; the "fiction of representation," a meaningful architecture; and the "fiction of reason," a true architecture (Bédard, 13). Eisenman would create an artificial architecture without beginning or end, meaning, or intention. It would show up culture as anything but natural.

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[1] See particularly Jeffrey Kipnis, "/Twisting the Separatrix/" for the fullest story, in Kipnis and Leeser, eds. *Chora L Works* (New York: Monacelli, 1997). Hays, ed. *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), reprints the essay without *Chora L Works* infamous holes.

Figure 4.10: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan iteration of University Art Museum with superposition of campus, site, and canal on coastline. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
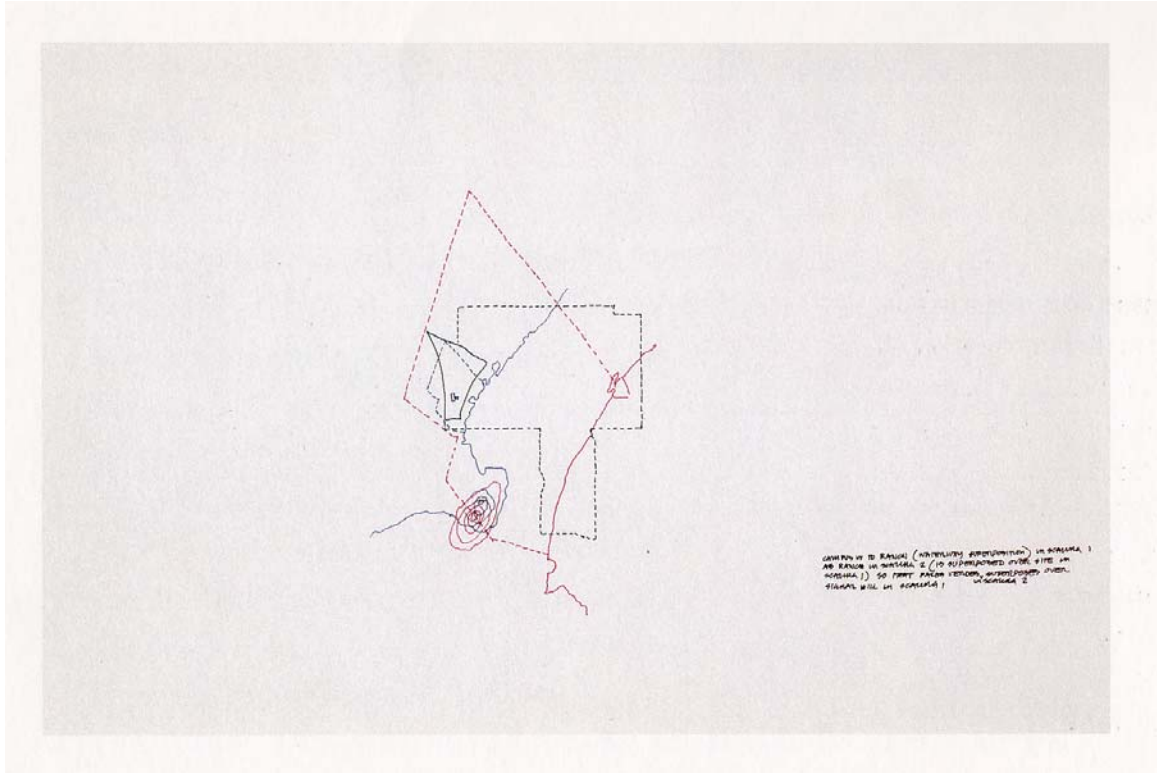
Figure 4.11: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan iteration of University Art Museum with superposition of campus, site, ranch, and coastline. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
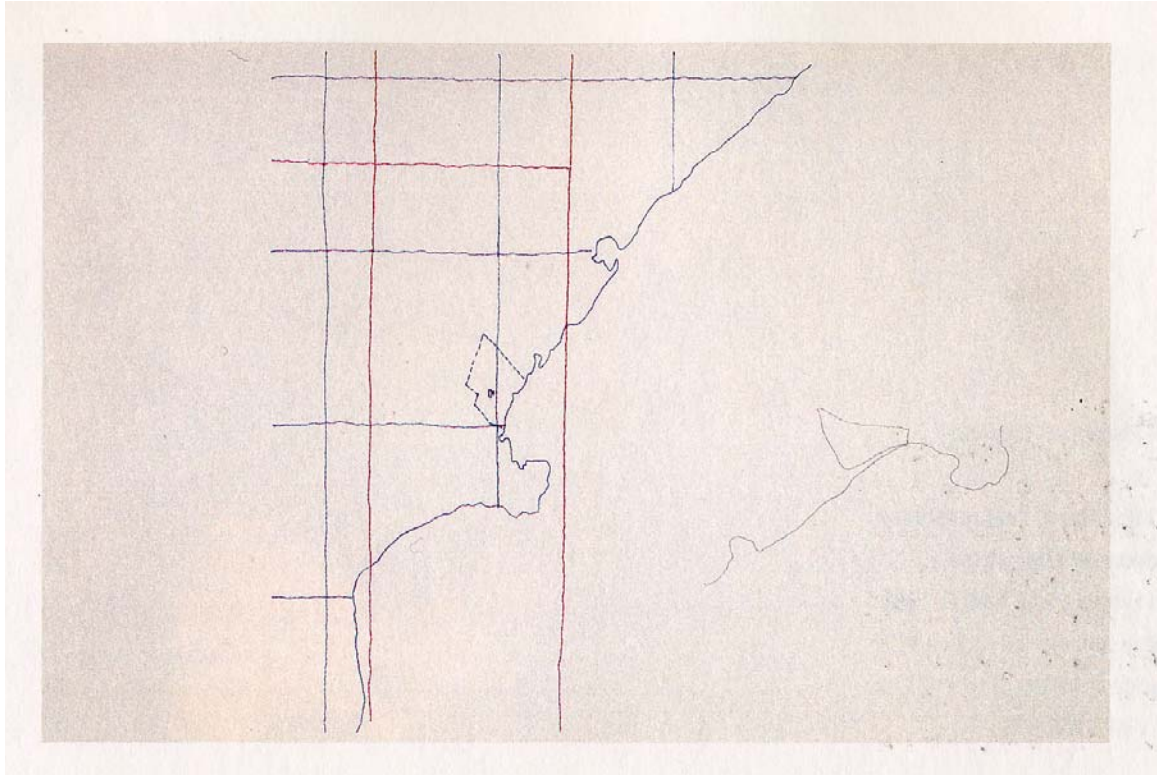
Figure 4.12: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan iteration of University Art Museum with superposition of ranch, coastline, and Jeffersonian grid. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
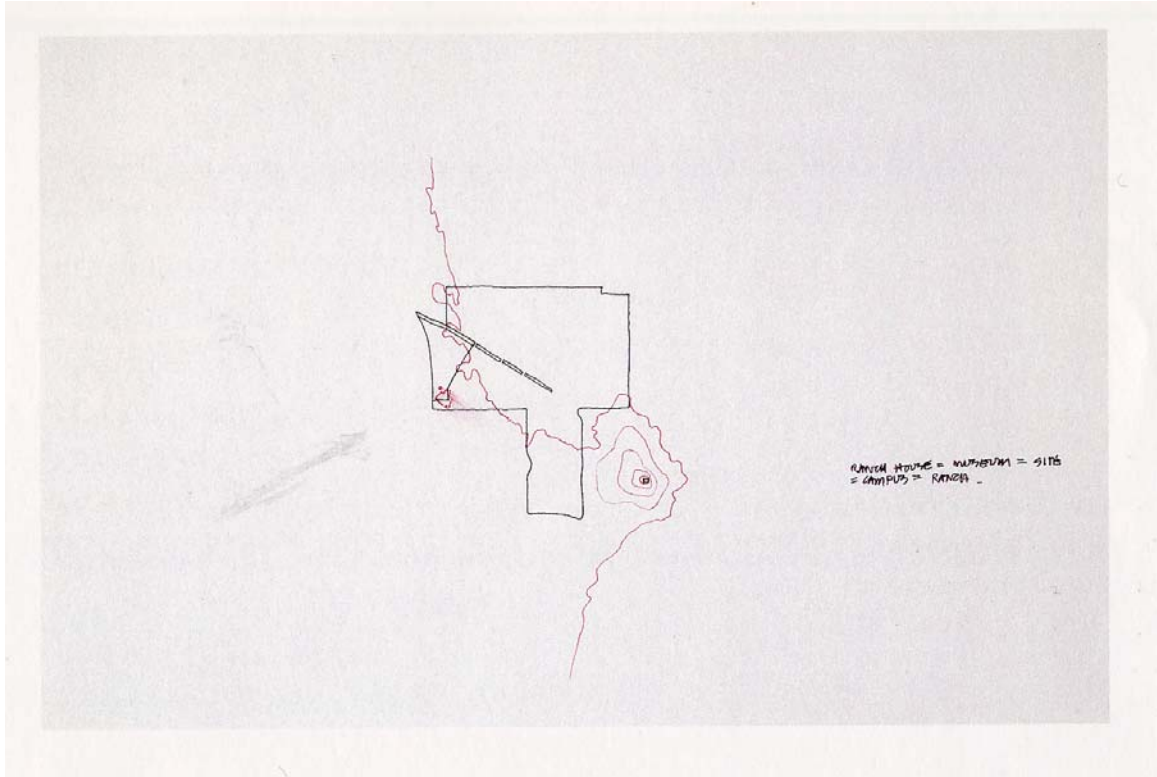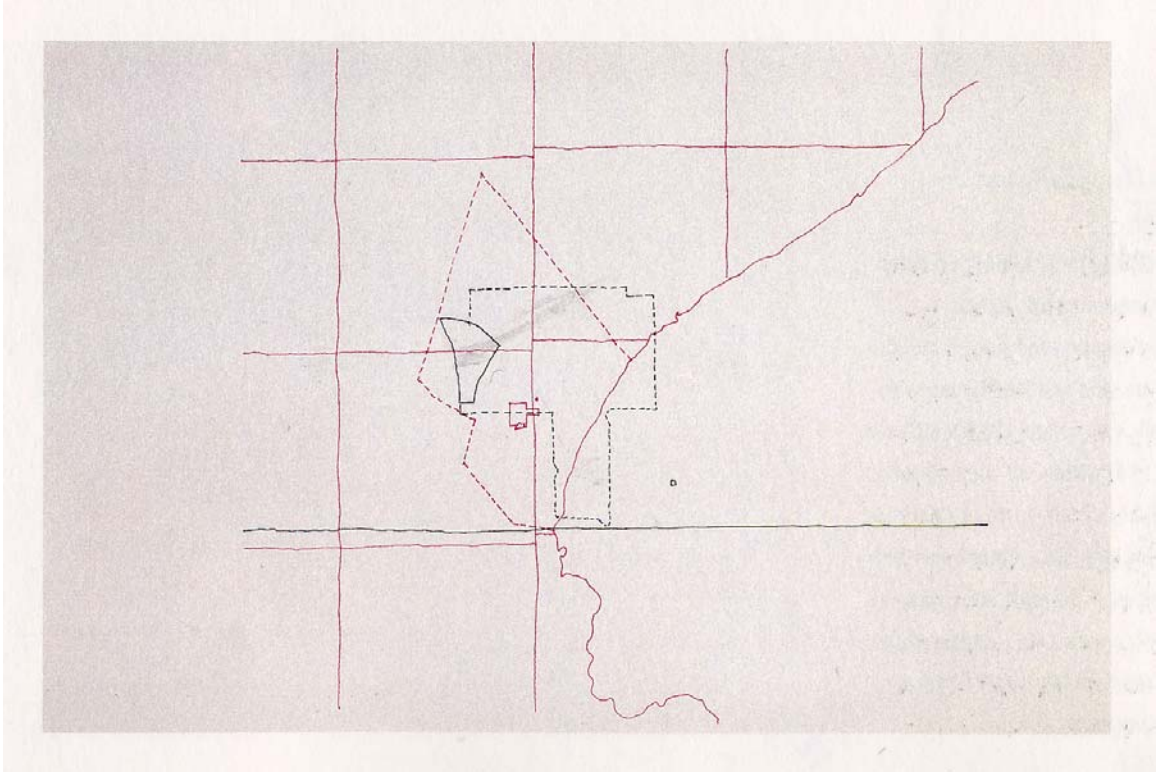
Figure 4.13: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan iteration of University Art Museum showing superposition of campus, site, on coastline with Jeffersonian grid. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation.*
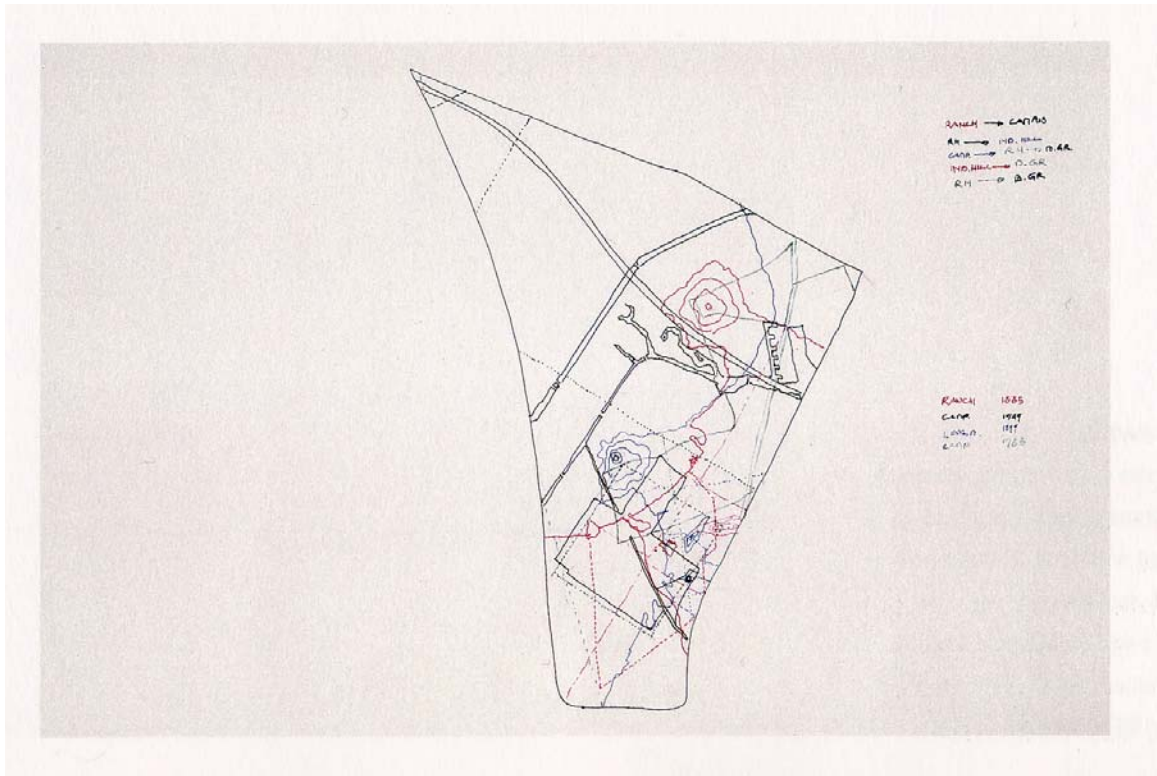
Figure 4.14: Peter Eisenman, Sketch site plan of University Art Museum combining all superpositions within museum site. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
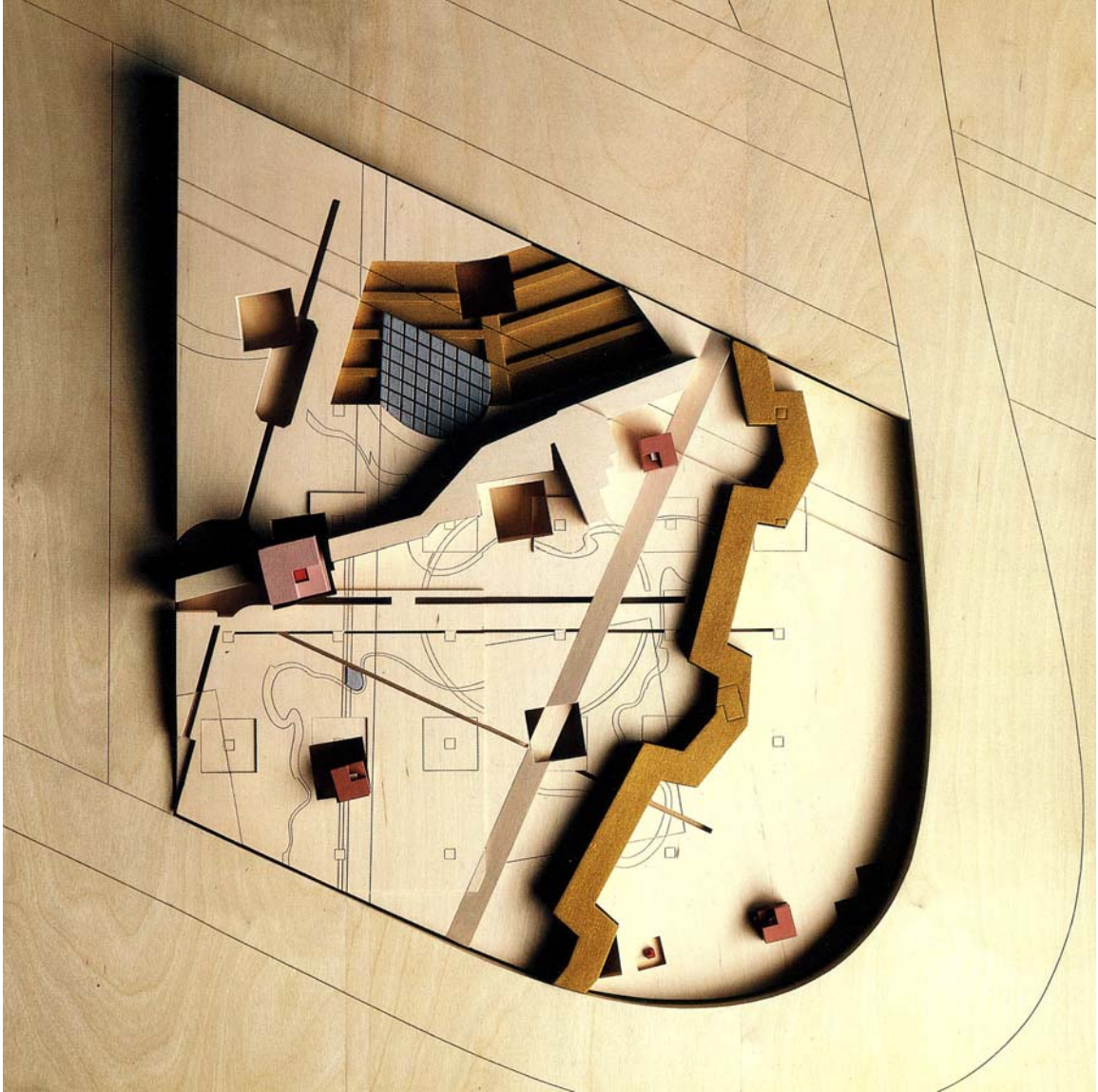
Figure 4.15: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Presentation model of La Villette garden second scheme. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
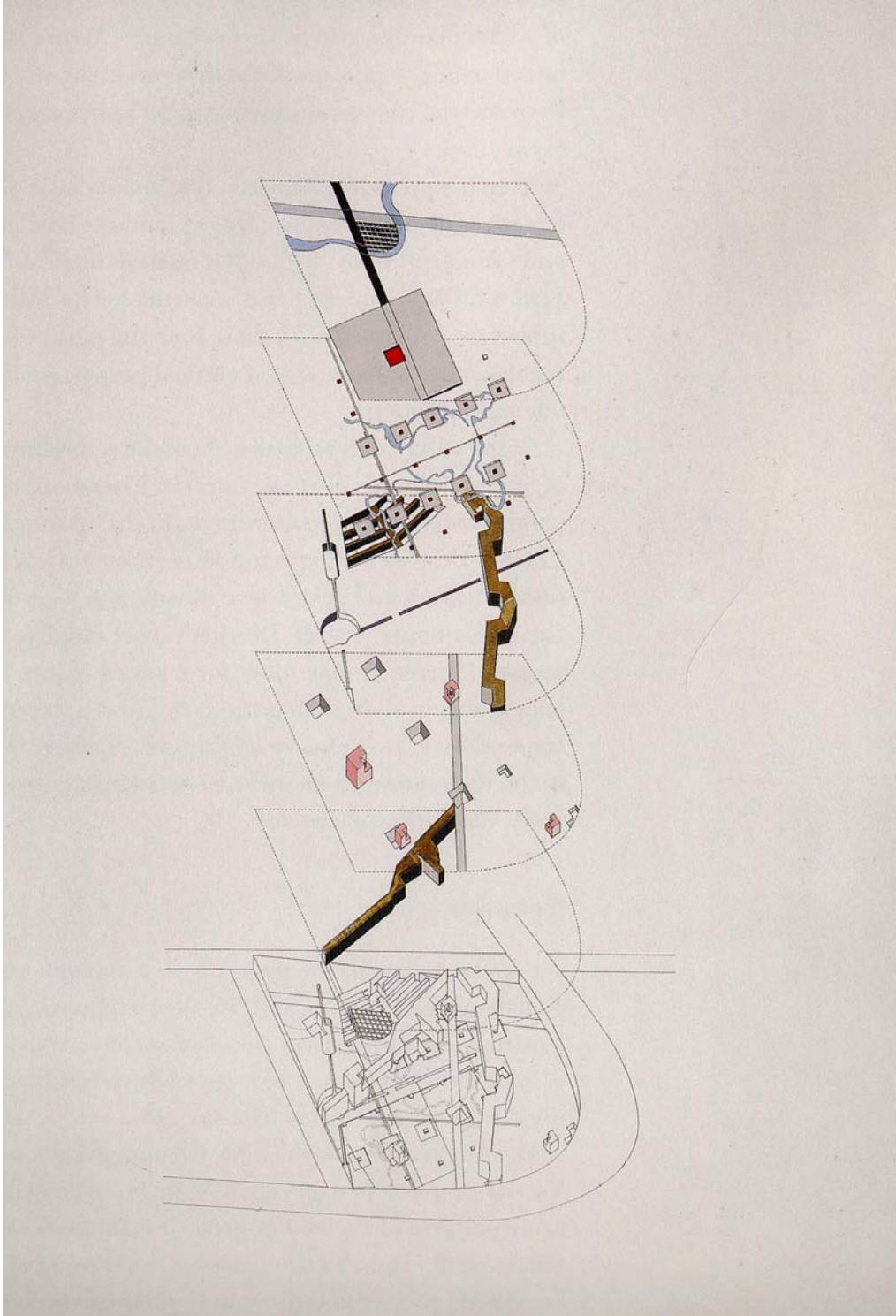
Figure 4.16: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Presentation axonometric of La Villette garden second scheme. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.

Despite the volume of text he and others have produced on the theory behind the process of architecture as *dissimulation*—the production of artificial architecture—Eisenman developed what were, in retrospect, two distinctly *drawn* concepts, the *graft* and the *trace*. The *graft* is intended as a catalyst for the design process. Opposed to collage or montage, which incorporate disparate elements into a unified work, it introduces a new element without external value while remaining incomplete process. By introducing the figure of a foreign site into the site to be designed, the process may avoid the obvious design solutions and the obvious resultant architecture.

Once the scion site is selected, graft works by *scaling*. A shape-based process worked out in plan drawings with overlays of tracing paper, scaling is the process of manipulating grafts. The grafted foreign body—another site or building, for instance (fig. 4.17)—is selectively and iteratively reworked atop the site in question (fig. 4.18). Eisenman further divided scaling into *recursivity*, the subdivision of the grafted shape by that shape (fig. 4.19); *self-similarity*, the insertion of multiple non-identical versions of shapes (fig. 4.20); and *discontinuity*, the explosion of forms into fragments (fig. 4.21) (Bédard, 13, 14). Scaling can be construed as the bringing together of there and here to disrupt the reception of here. In this it can be contrasted with the modernist International Style, which obliterated the specificity of here with the being of function-as-form.

The *trace* alludes to the continuity of the site and of the design process. The design is seen as but one possible iteration, never a final composition. Eisenman believed that the results of scaling were not forms, but moments in process, presenting the pasts and futures of the site as *palimpsest* and *quarry* (fig. 4.22). Palimpsest holds traces of the site's memory, quarry holds the site's potential for future transformations.
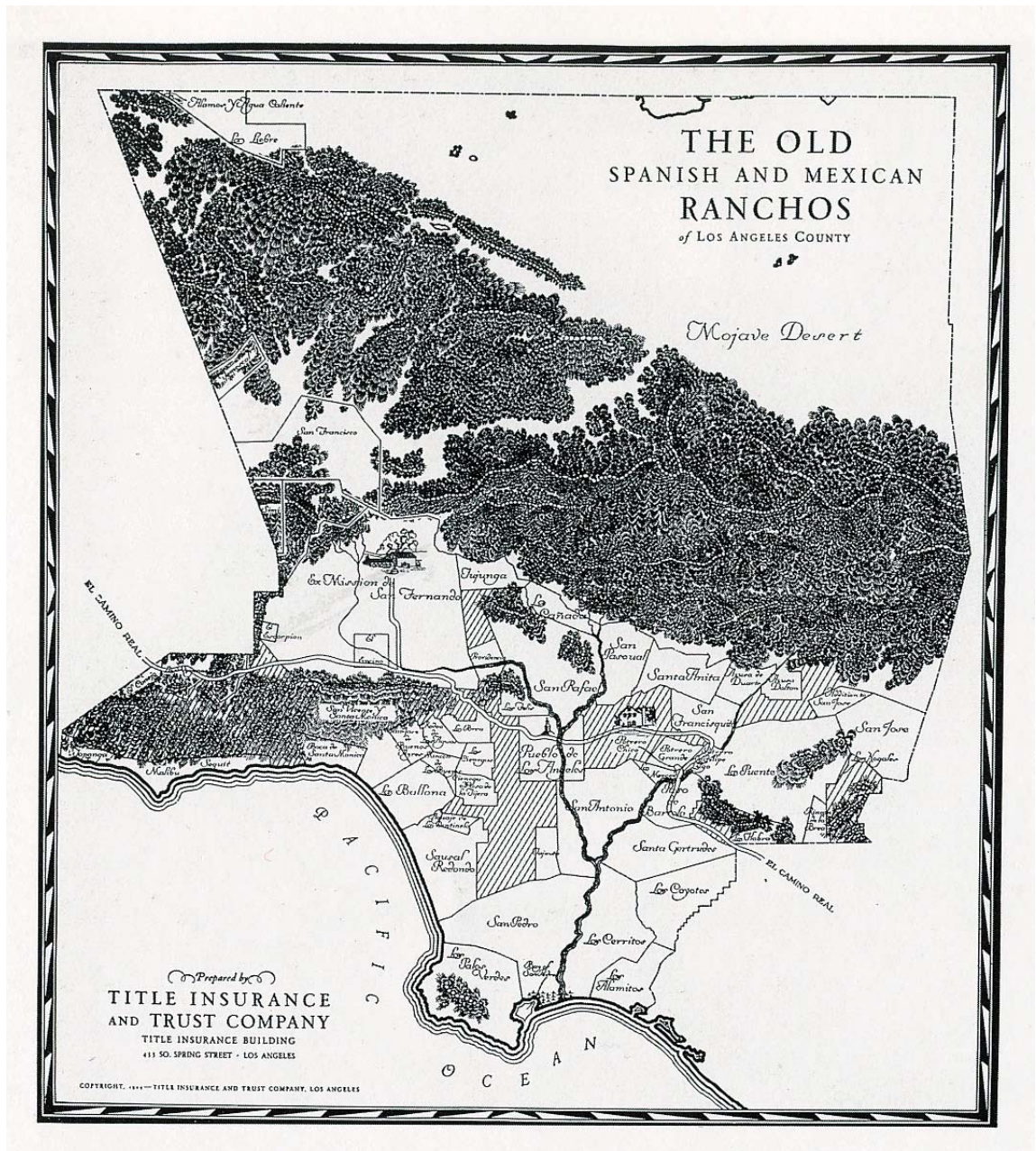
Figure 4.17: Title Insurance and Trust Company, Map of the Spanish and Mexican Ranchos of Los Angeles County. The shape of Los Alamitos Rancho is culled from this map as a graft. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation* (California Historical Society).
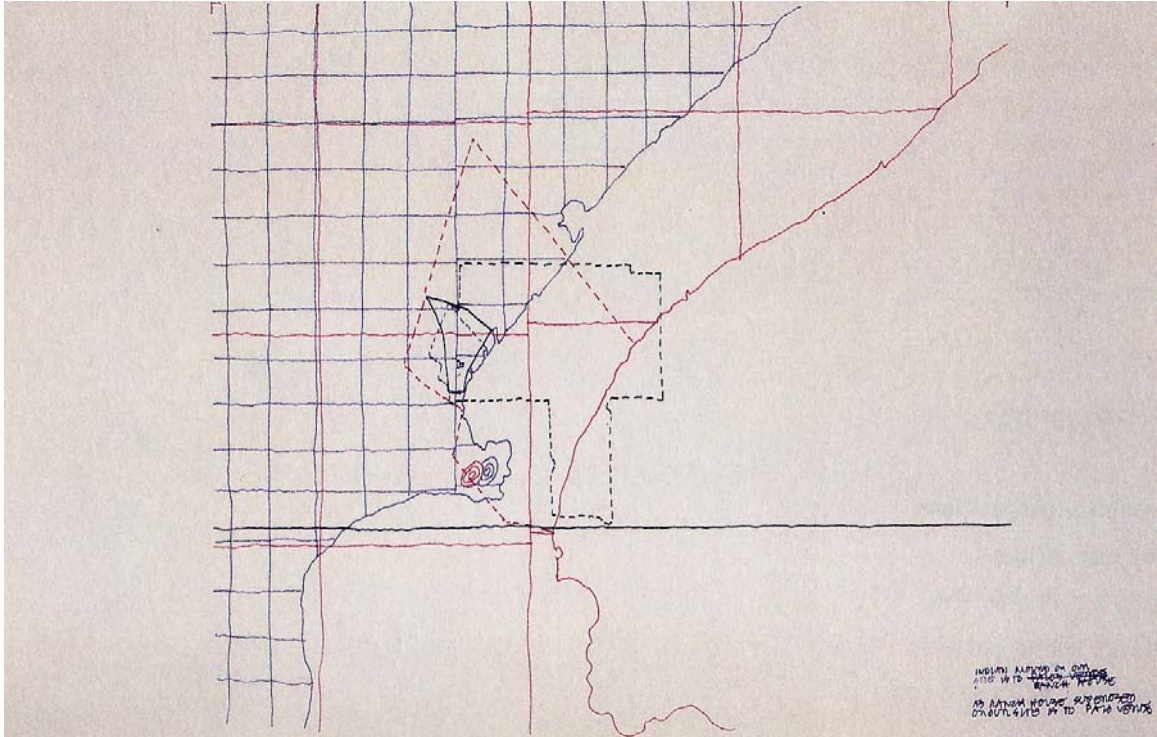
Figure 4.18: Peter Eisenman, Sketch plan iteration of University Art Museum demonstrating graft at two scales: the lozenge shaped ranch site in dashed blue and dashed red registered on blue and red coastlines of matching scale. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.

Figure 4.19: Peter Eisenman, Sketch plan for Cannaregio showing recursivity of structures. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
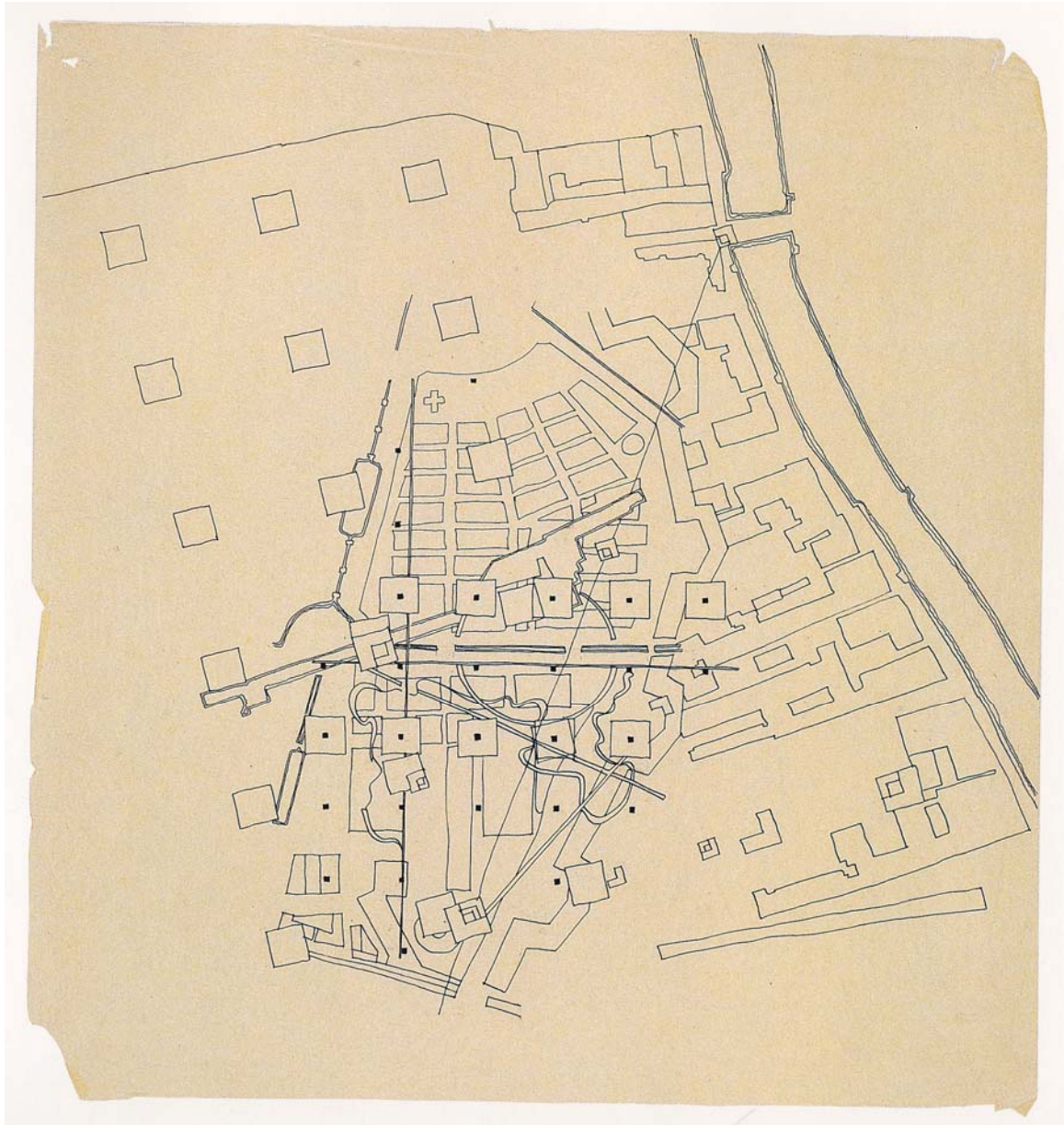
Figure 4.20: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Sketch site plan of La Villette garden showing self-similarity of skewed and scaled grids of La Villette and Cannaregio. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation.*
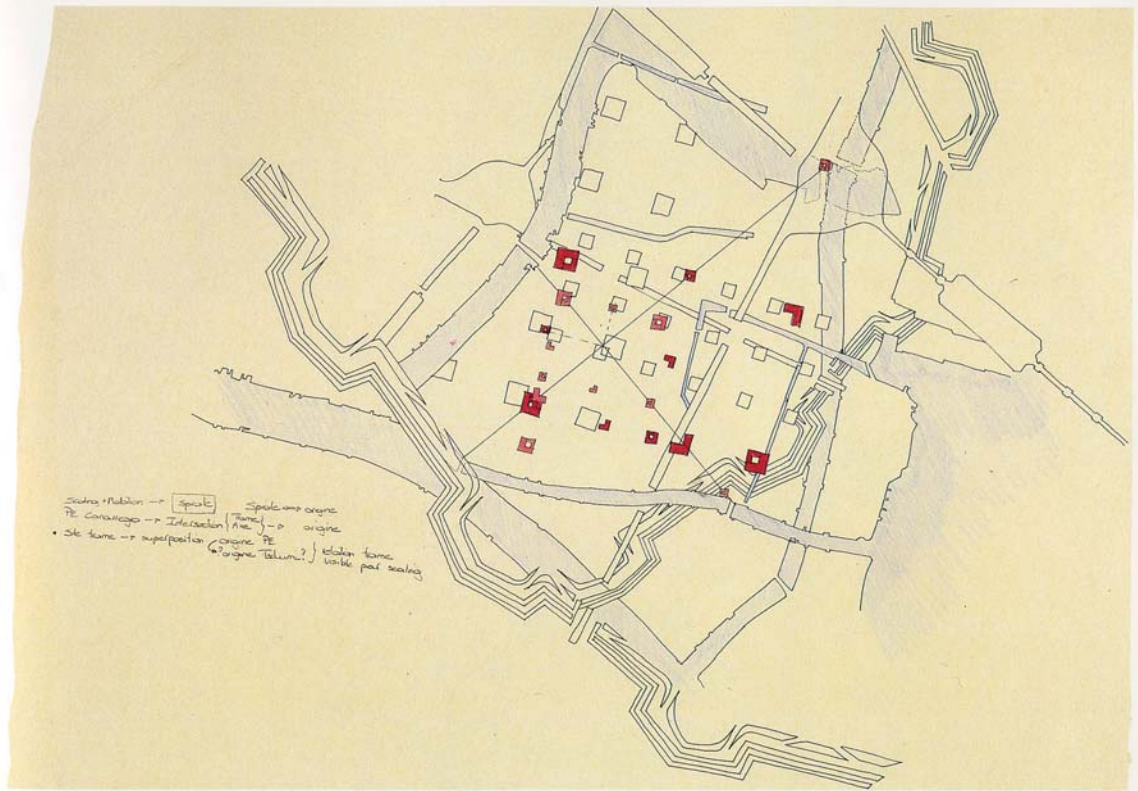
Figure 4.21: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Sketch site plan of La Villette garden showing discontinuity of "el structures" and grids. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.
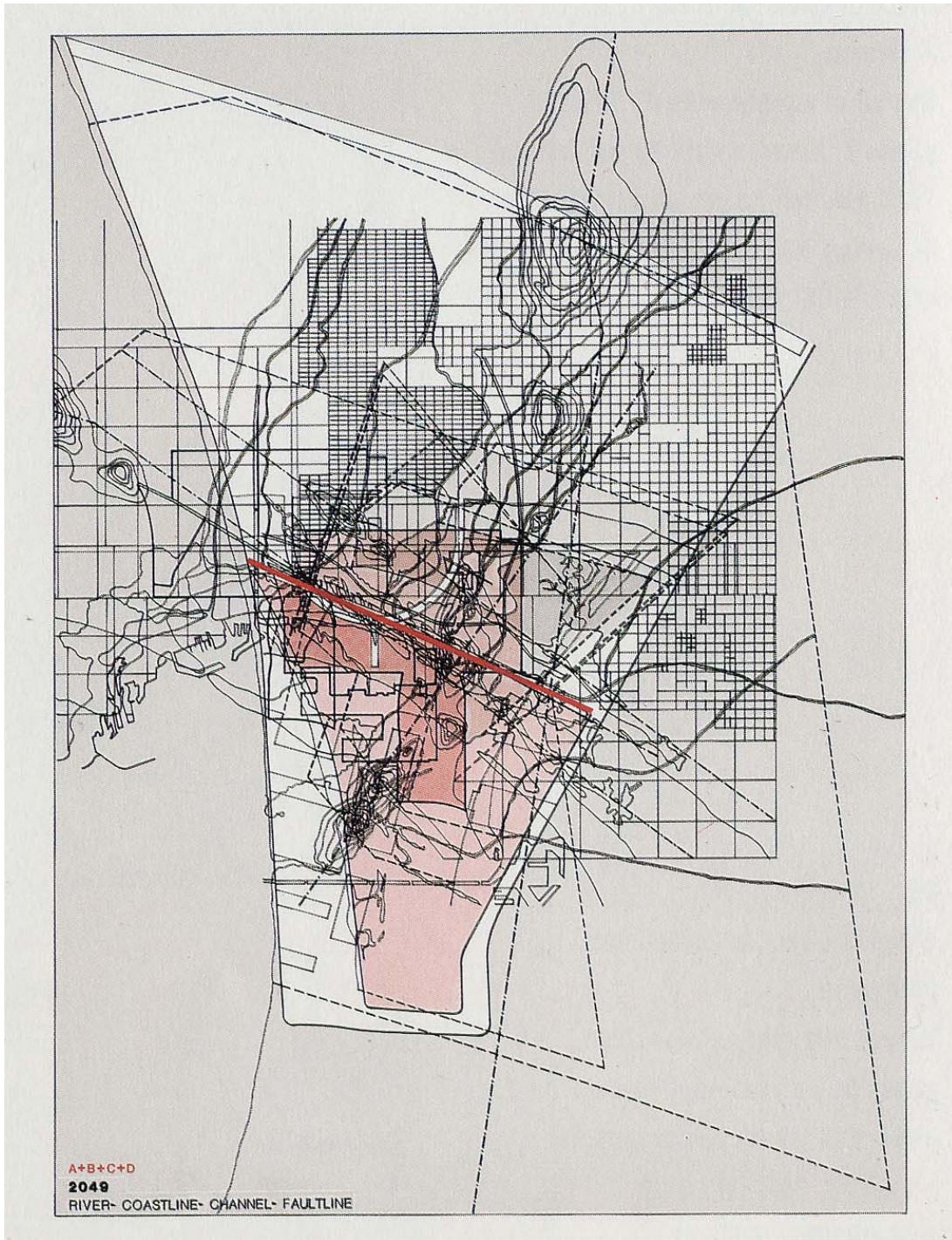
Figure 4.22: Office of Eisenman/Robertson Architects, Presentation diagram of University Art Museum superposition 2049. From Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*.

Jean-François Bédard describes the actual process in his introduction to the exhibit catalog:

> Eisenman typically begins these projects with figures taken from historical maps—river contours, plans of buildings, shapes of territories, settlement patterns—which he then reduces or enlarges according to the directives given by scaling. By using tracing paper (sometimes even the photocopier), these traces are registered on specific coordinates (the summit of a hill, a line separating two territories, or the contour of a building) and superposed. The complex composite drawings which result from these superpositions typically display different colors, each associated with one of the original figures, now duplicated at different sizes and in different locations (Bédard, 16).

It is striking how simple, how handmade, and how *normal* the process seems when divested of its intellectual ground—just some tracing paper and some pens, just crashing out variations on a design concept. But there is more than this even without the captions. The translation to landscape architecture of a process of graft and scaling denuded of Eisenman's interest in critiquing architecture history is the irrational complement to McHarg's layer-cake analysis. Given a site, the designer systematically superposes factors that *do not exist*, manipulates their interactions with a diagrammatic logic, and develops forms and connections that could not be developed through a rational interrogation of that site. The result is a profoundly "man-made" environment without concern to replicate nature or order and yet without the contrived "unnatural" of topiary, or the carpet bed, or the "gardenesque," nor the artifice of a Martha Schwartz or Chaumont-sur-Loire (fig. 4.23). This landscape answers to no precedents—not agriculture, not heaven, not nature, not ecology. The more one contemplates the potential of the critique, the more one sees landscape architecture undermined. By displacing selection from subjective process and generating connections without regard to why, it reveals the site's unmediated space and time. In an unsettling perversion of ecological

Figure 4.23: Stéphane Bertrand and Jasmin Corbeil, *Dés/ordonnance*. 13th Annual International Festival of Gardens at Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2004. The panels are hinged to come to balance when stood upon. From Lake Douglas, "Vive le Chaos!" *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, Volume 94, Number 12.

analysis, the artificial excavation translated to landscape architecture acts upon the site *as if the site were not already there*.

CHAPTER 5

WHERE IS THE PARC DE LA VILLETTE?

One-time surrealist Louis Aragon set his novel *Paris Peasant* (Aragon) against the last of Paris' Haussmanizations, the demolition of the shopping arcades which so fascinated Walter Benjamin. Georgès-Eugene Haussmann had been brought from Bordeaux by Napoleon III in his bid to remake Paris, which had suffered sanitation and population (as well as political) crises due to industrialization. Haussmann instantiated a radical new urban configuration for the city, connecting important sites by means of long straight boulevards akin to those of Sixtus V's Rome and gutting the mazelike warrens of medieval Paris. *Paris Peasant* has two major sections. The first, "The Passage de l'Opéra," recounts the final days of the arcade and bar where Aragon and his friends gathered. He presents it with a sheer excess of materiality in detail, the social upheaval and the human drama of displacement bathed in the "glaucous light" of a "human aquarium."

Surrealists, some rhetoric to the contrary, surrendered the control vested in their rational subjectivities to the materiality of the world. Their attention to dreams was not a devotion to "ideas" rather than "reality," but rather the eradication of the ideated real in favor of unconscious phenomena. As Aragon might have put it, "Lucidity came to me when I at last succumbed to the vertigo of the modern" (Aragon, 114). In the second large section of *Paris Peasant*, "A Feeling for Nature at the Buttes-Chaumont," Aragon, André Breton, and Marcel Noll walk through the phantasmagoria of the Parc des Buttes-

Chaumont at night. They will go in search of "countless surprises and who knows? a great revelation that might transform life and destiny" (Aragon, 133). Is it possible that Aragon did not recognize that the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont was also an urban renewal project?

It is interesting to consider the picturesque landscape of the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in the context of Haussmannization. Here, in the midst of one of history's great urban rationalization schemes, the very men who where busily demolishing Paris' medieval fabric and establishing arrow-straight boulevards, built a park that has been hailed as the ancestor of the twentieth-century theme park. There is no more appropriate park for Aragon and his cohort to visit on a late night outing. Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand was Baron Haussmann's park designer. He designed and built the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont on the site of a disused gypsum mine that had become a haven for lawlessness in the nineteenth *arrondissement*. Buttes-Chaumont takes full advantage of the topography of the quarry to present a series of truly picturesque spectacles, including a belvedere perched atop a rocky peak set in a lake (fig. 5.1). Oddly, both the design of Buttes-Chaumont and the redesign of Paris are, in figurative terms, superpositions of foreign plans onto existing sites. While Buttes-Chaumont became an "English" park in a French mine and railway landscape, Paris became the Rome of Pope Sixtus V—a sequence of monuments connected by boulevards. The oddest switch, however, is the redesign of the Bois de Boulogne. Alphand is responsible for the transformation of the Bois de Boulogne from a radiating system of *allées* cut to and from entrances and *rond-points* through a wood into a naturalistic park of curving paths and lakes in the "English"

Figure 5.1: Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand, Belvedere in lake, Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. From Alphand, *Les promenades de Paris*.

style. Looking at maps of the before and after, one might be tempted to say that Paris and the Bois became one another (fig. 5.2).

One also might notice, if one were to compare the plans of the new Bois de Boulogne and Buttes-Chaumont, as Elizabeth Barlow Rogers (Rogers) has pointed out, something that is less apparent when the flat site of the Bois de Boulogne is considered without the foil of Buttes-Chaumont's varied topography (fig. 5.3): the circulation paths through the park are stiff sweeping curves, rather than the contour-following, naturalistic paths in the near-contemporary Olmsted style (Rogers, 366). This sense of path as drafting table abstraction provides a provocative vantage from which to consider Buttes-Chaumont's close nineteenth *arrondissement* neighbor, the Parc de La Villette.

Perhaps no other work of landscape architecture is so identified with a drawing as is the Parc de La Villette with Bernard Tschumi's exploded axonometric of the park's system of points, lines, and surfaces (fig. 5.4). Perhaps this is because it so well conveys the abstraction of the built park. But this drawing of the park dislodged from space is unusual in its choice of representation. The axonometric projection was usually deployed by Modernist architects uninterested in context. The architecture itself was the thing— and it could be built anywhere. There is a tension between the drawing and the park because the park is very much an exploration of its site.

A head-on interrogation of the park will not reveal the contribution it makes to landscape architecture theory and design. This route leads to the criticisms discussed in the next chapter. To get where we want to go we must travel by way of Rome and Giza.

St. Peter's Basilica and the pyramids of Egypt illustrate, for Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*, the sublime in works of art. These examples also prompt Paul de
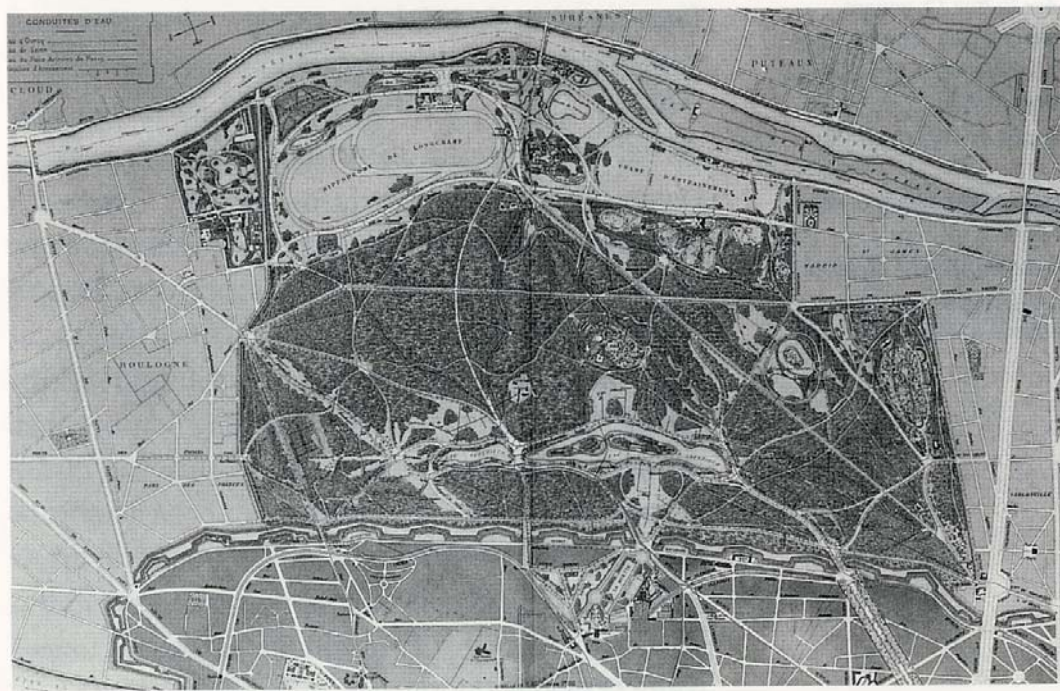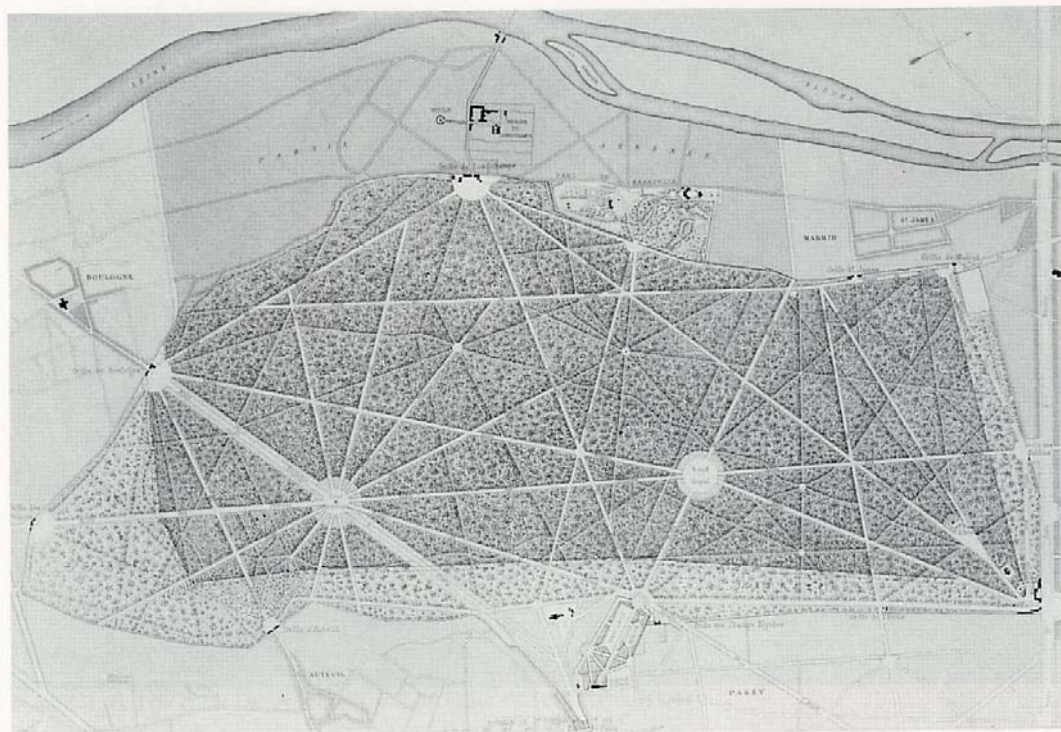
Figure 5.2: Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand, Bois de Boulogne before and after. From Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design*.
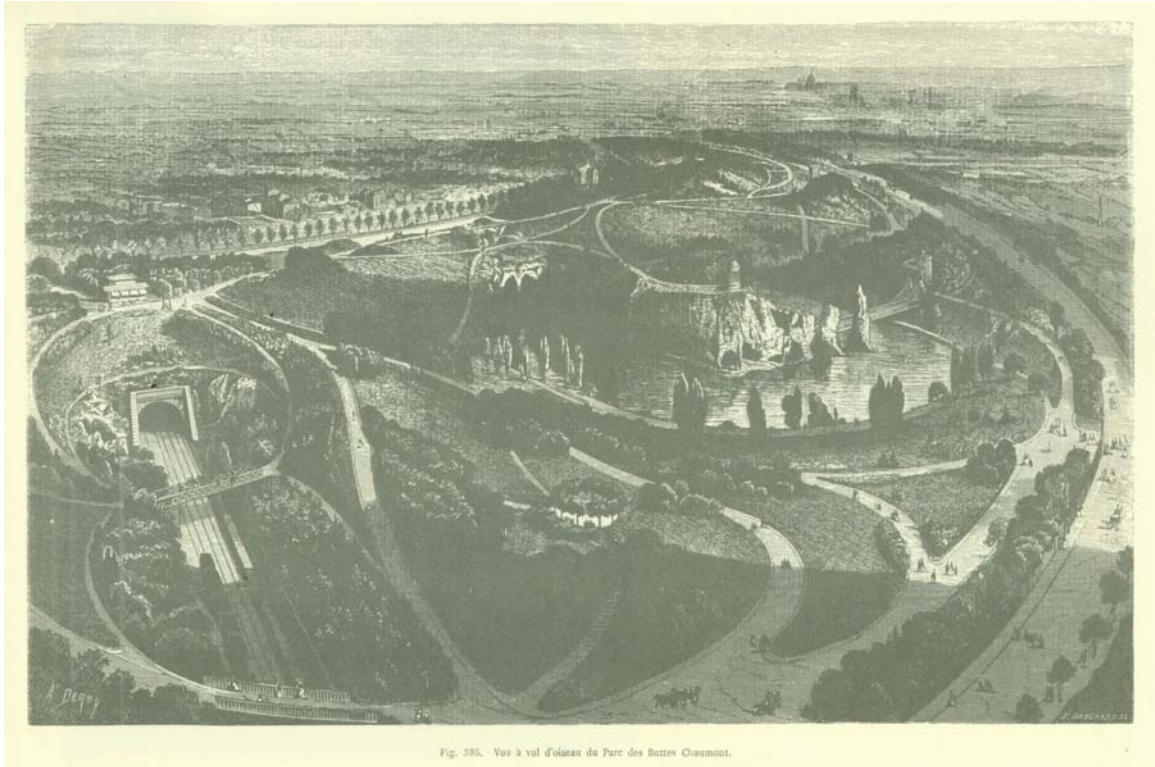
Fig. 395. Vue à vol d'oiseau du Parc des Buttes Chaumont.

Figure 5.3: Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand, Aerial view of Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. From Alphand, *Les promenades de Paris*.

LIGNES/LINES
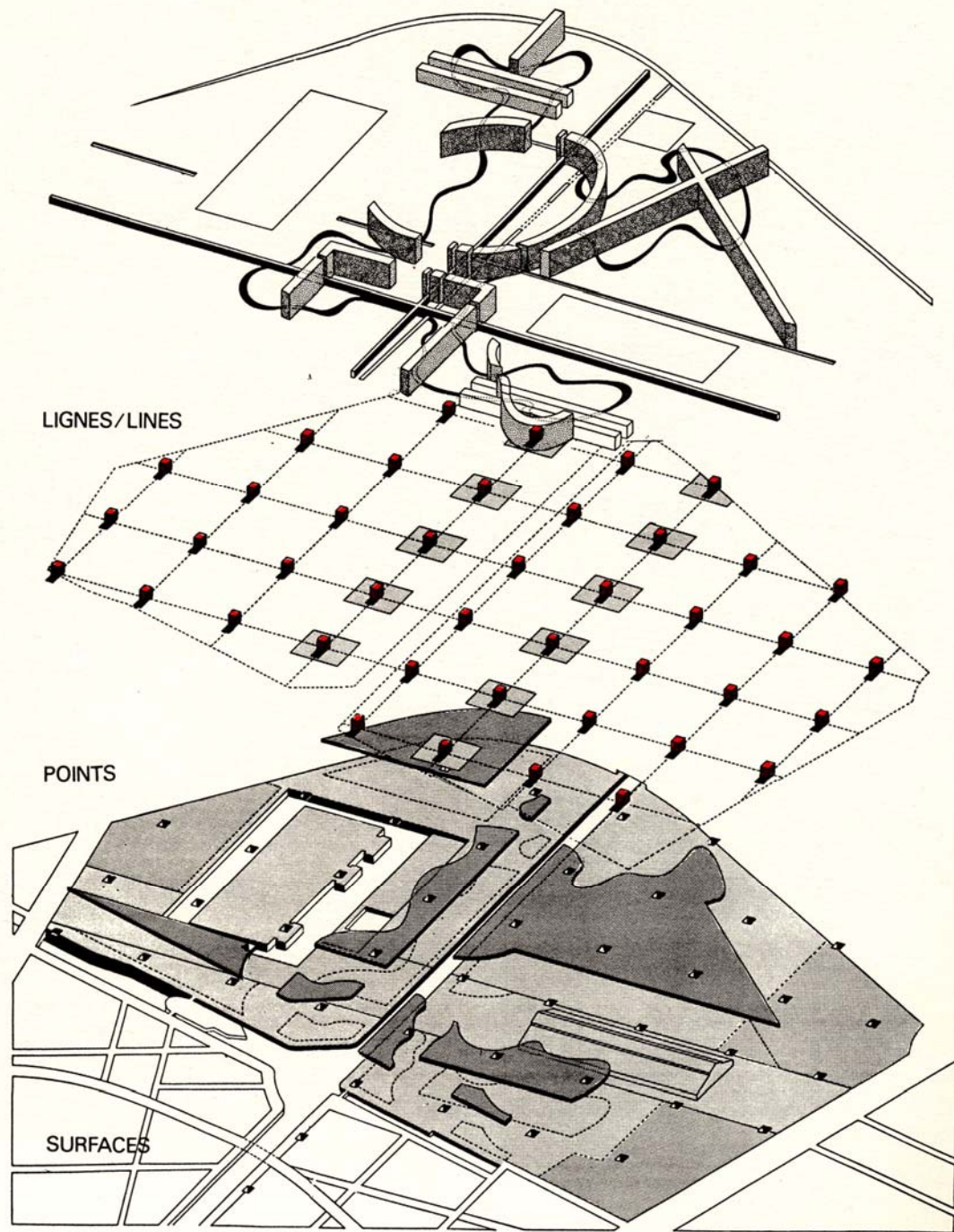
POINTS

SURFACES

LA SUPERPOSITION DES TROIS SYSTEMES DE POINTS, LIGNES ET SURFACES, CONSTITUE LE PARC, EN CREANT UNE SERIE DE TENSIONS SOIGNEU-
SEMENT AGENCEE QUI RENFORCE LE DYNAMISME DU PARC.

Figure 5.4: Bernard Tschumi, Exploded axonometric of Parc de La Villette. From
Isabelle Auricoste and Hubert Tonka, *Parc-Ville Villette: architectures*.

Man, in his essay "Kant's Materialism," to question the nature of the architectonic in Kant's critique (de Man). This architectonic preserves and presents what could be called the thing sublime for aesthetic judgment. If one would make a pure aesthetic judgment of the sky as sublime, then the sky must be considered as it appears—a vault containing everything—the sky is construction not nature, a roof that, with the horizon, encloses the earth where we dwell, a created aesthetic space (de Man, 125, 126). To see it otherwise, through some interpretive lens, is to loose access to the sublimity. For de Man, Kant's aesthetics posit an absolute formalism. "To parody Kant's stylistic procedure of dictionary definition: the radical formalism that animates aesthetic judgment in the dynamics of the sublime is what is called materialism" (de Man, 128).

"Kant's Materialism" points to Jacques Derrida's critique of the Kantian aesthetic in the "Parergon" chapter of *The Truth in Painting* (Derrida, 1987), particularly the fourth and final section, "The Colossal." However, for our purpose, the relevant portions of Derrida's critique are concentrated in the first and second sections of "Parergon:" "Lemmata" and "The Parergon."

In "Lemmata," while building up the question of the frame that will enable the critique in "The Parergon," he reveals the logocentrism inherent in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* and Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art." He indicates the privileging of the "discursive arts" not only in the Hegelian hierarchy, but in the very questions Hegel and Heidegger ask regarding art and aesthetics: "What is art? What is the origin of the work of art? What is the meaning of art or of the history of art?" (Derrida, 1987: 22). Having established that these questions depend upon the notion of a "work of art" which is distinct from its ground, that which is not the work, he continues

developing the question of the frame and the discrete work, reiterating and

problematizing the questions of the title:

> What is the *topos* of the title? Does it take place [and where?] in relation to the
> work? On the edge? Over the edge? On the internal border? In an overboard
> that is re-marked and reapplied, by invagination, within, between the presumed
> center and the circumference? Or between that which is framed and that which is
> framing in the frame? (Derrida, 1987: 24)

These are questions that, transposed, made to ask after the architectonic, could be

construed to address architect Bernard Tschumi's design of the Parc de La Villette. First,

the new iteration of the questions of the *lemmata*: "What are parks? What is the origin of

the park? What is the meaning of parks or of the history of parks?" Then, the questions

of the *parergon*: "What is the *topos* of the park? Does it take place [and where] in

relation to the city?" The role of Derrida's theories and of Deconstruction in the designs

of Bernard Tschumi, and particularly in the Parc de La Villette, is fundamental, but the

questions generated above are not ones Tschumi was working from.[1] Tschumi's design,

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[1] Mark Wigley's book, *The Architecture of Deconstruction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), addresses at length the architectonic in Derrida's writing prior to Derrida's mid-1980s writings on architecture—a project similar to that Paul de Man engages in "Kant's Materialism." In his preface, Wigley problematizes the translation of theory into design, something he says not all writers on design or designers have done, assuming a one-to-one correspondence. He opens with a reference to the Parc de La Villette project, writing that it "already had its own 'design-philosophy' and even presented itself as being no more than this philosophy, a conceptual structure rather than a single material form." He continues, having previously mentioned Tschumi's invitation to Derrida to participate in the design of part of the park, "But clearly the architect thought that something was missing, that there was some kind of gap in the argument that could be filled by a philosopher, an opening that could be exploited, some kind of pocket within which another discourse could be elaborated."(p. xi)

     Wigley is right to note Tschumi's interest in incorporating other discourses. Tschumi's design is founded upon his earlier paper architecture projects, including one which used James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* as a program and a point grid as a mediator between the text and the site—Covent Garden, London— and another, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, which superimposed elements of images culled from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* onto plans of Central Park and the Manhattan street grid. But Wigley is unclear regarding the extent of the already existing "design-philosophy." Tschumi might argue that his design methodology in all three projects was itself deconstructive and was a system that filled gaps, exploited openings, and elaborated other discourses—in the case of La Villette these happen regardless of his invitation to Derrida. This is but one possibility of the difficulties that arise from "applied" Deconstruction. In fact Derrida, paired with Peter Eisenman, designed a garden that was not built—the result of the

rather than attempting to ask these questions, was an attempt to answer a foundational question of architecture—the relation of form to program—by imagining that architecture worked as language. The questions Derrida pursues above, lifted from their context, are not inherently language-based questions.

Derrida's interrogation of the aesthetic reveals that Kant's judgment of the beautiful depends on that which is intrinsic to the object being judged, and this distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic, the proper and the circumstantial, "organizes all philosophical discourses on art, the meaning of art and meaning as such, from Plato to Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger," which presuppose "a discourse on the limit between the inside and outside of the art object" (Derrida, 1987: 45). In discussing that which is proper to the object, Kant explores three examples that blur the boundaries: the frame, the clothing on statues, and a colonnade surrounding a building. Derrida addresses the relation of the columns to the building and the importance of this for Kant, but also proposes the geographic or spatial aspect of the *parergon*:

> With this example of the columns is announced the whole problematic of inscription in a milieu, of the marking out of the work in a field of which it is always difficult to decide if it is natural or artificial and in this latter case, if it is *parergon* or *ergon*. For not every milieu, even if it is contiguous with the work, constitutes a *parergon* in the Kantian sense. The natural site chosen for the erection of a temple is obviously not a *parergon*. Nor is an artificial site: neither the crossroads, nor the church, nor the museum, nor the other works around one or other (Derrida, 1987: 59).

This questioning of site relates to the questions of *topos* elaborated earlier. For Kant then, which is the site of a park? If the park is considered to be separate from the city, the

collaboration was a book they transmitted through Jeffrey Kipnis: *Chora L Works* (New York: Monacelli, 1997).

relation of *parergon* to *ergon* is different from that relation which arises when the park is considered to be indistinct from the city.

Contemplating the implied infinitude of Parc de La Villette's Cartesian grid of red structures, which Tschumi called *folies,*[2] it seems as if Tschumi, having pondered the inside/outside of the Derridean/Kantian *parergon*, had reiterated in his design the questions Derrida might have posed. What is the *topos* of the park? Does it take place [and where] in relation to the city? The historical record of ideas, however, is both clear and extensive. While this thinking was not what Tschumi attributed his design to, his design was part of a particularly distinct intrusion of critical discourse into the landscape architecture of urban parks and a cross-fertilization of ideas between linguistically-oriented critical theory and architecture in general. Proceeding as though these new questions were the generative questions for Tschumi's design allows a necessary question for the evolution of the design of urban parks to be asked and reveals the truth of the Parc de La Villette's innovation. In its historical context, his design addressed itself, in a deconstructive fashion, to the questions of form and function that architecture had pondered for centuries, although it had spent the last decade acting as if form were the signifier and function the signified. In so doing, he served a rebuttal to those answers in which form followed function, which had been maintained by the Modernist hegemony as well as to the answers promulgated by that eclectic and revivalist architectural postmodernism which opposed the Modern style—the aforementioned syntactic and semantic architectures. To the postmodernism of those architects, obsessed with the notion of a meaning "immanent in architectural structures and forms" and whom had

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[2] Tschumi preferred that the French word "*folie*" be used rather than the English "folly." *Folie* retains a sense of "madness" which folly does not.

recuperated "meaning, symbol, coding and 'double coding'," Tschumi opposed the postmodernism of philosophy, which rejected "a well-defined signified that guarantees the authenticity of the work of art" and dismantled meaning, "showing that it is never transparent, but socially produced" (Tschumi, 1987: vii). He lamented the conservativism of this style, the same architecture which Jürgen Habermas had railed against in his essay "Modernity—An Incomplete Project" (Habermas) from the flip side of Habermas' argument, from the notion that his design for the Parc de La Villette "attempts to dislocate and de-regulate meaning, rejecting the 'symbolic' repertory of architecture as a refuge of humanist thought. For today the term 'park' (like 'architecture,' 'science,' or 'literature') has lost its universal meaning…." (Tschumi, 1987: vii). This substitution of critical theory for prescriptive or proscriptive design theories makes the Parc de La Villette a provocative critical (landscape) architecture.

"Hence we oppose the notion of Olmsted, widespread throughout the 19th century, that 'in the park, the city is not supposed to exist'" (Tschumi, 1987: 1). Thus, Tschumi set his design squarely (or perhaps pointedly) against the *rus in urbe* ideal—and its embodied notion, that the experience of a healthy natural setting can ameliorate the ills of the city—that had persisted for over 100 years and has not yet lost currency, despite challenges to it.

La Villette had formerly been a concentration of abattoirs, these having been expelled from the center of Paris by Haussmann, and their attendant markets. Upon the closing of the complex in 1974 authorities decided to redevelop the brownfield site as a conglomeration of cultural attractions and green space. A museum called the *Cité des Sciences* and a concert hall, the *Cité de la Musique*, were designed. The French

government scrapped the original plan for green space, however, and held a new competition. This competition set forth a provocative program for an "urban park" which complemented and connected the buildings in a new way. The "urban park" was opposed to the "country park"—the *rus in urbe* park above—and in place of fresh air and aesthetic contemplation, would provide space for activities appropriate to a city largely populated by workers in a service economy, as opposed to the manufacturing economy that had generated the first public parks. To wit, not only the playgrounds and fields that had been grafted onto the "country parks" in the mid-twentieth century would be included, but also space for exhibitions, workshops, concerts, gymnasiums, and science experiments, in addition to the service facilities—restaurants, restrooms, etc. On top of this, the design would have to allow for shifting usages of facilities and incorporate the work of other designers.

Tschumi enumerated four possible design strategies for meeting such urban programs. Rejecting the first, *composition*, the design of a wholly separate complete entity, for its dependence upon the architectural myths his deconstruction sought to dispel, and avoiding the second, *complement*, the completion of the "text" begun, presumably by the buildings, for its subservience, he considered the third and forth options: *palimpsest* and *mediation*. Palimpsest interfered with the program's call for mutability and ability to include elements designed by others because of its overdetermining reliance on existing layers of history. Tschumi chose the fourth option, mediation, in which an abstract system reconciled the site and an outside discourse, in this case, the point grid and Deconstruction (Tschumi, 1987: vi). In fact, the point grid was one of three autonomous systems the design employs: points, lines, and surfaces.

Tschumi adamantly believed that the new park must contain the jarring disjointedness of the city and not turn away from the realities of Paris' urban form. The point grid allowed him to accomplish three related ideas. First, the grid would be marked at its intersections, every 120m, by *folies*, red structures bearing a stylistic similarity to the works of Russian Constructivists, each derived from a 10m cube, which could house the elements of the program while insuring interchangeability of function (figs. 5.5 and 5.6). This embodied his deconstructive assault on the received relation of program to form—each *folie* was distinctly designed without regard to its planned use, which answered to the fungibility specified in the brief. Second, the point grid allowed him to surrender inherently ego-driven design decisions to the system, effacing authorial intent in the placement of amenities. Third, the grid of *folies* allowed him to simultaneously mark the park as a unique place, avoid creating boundaries between the park and the urban fabric, and imply that the expanse and site of the park could be perceived not only as coterminous with the city and its adjoining suburbs, but, theoretically infinite (fig. 5.7). This last built fact confirms the relevance of the questions of *lemmata* and *parergon* to the evolving concept of park. In addition, the *folies* provided a recognizable brand image for the park.

The system of lines, actually two distinct systems, provides circulation through the park. The Coordinates, long straight covered galleries, one along the north bank of the Canal de l'Ourcq and the other roughly perpendicular to the first, traverse the park East-West and North-South, respectively, serving as the major pedestrian circulation routes, and connecting the park to the city transit infrastructure (fig. 5.8). The most popular park activities are located in the *folies* along the Coordinates. The other system,
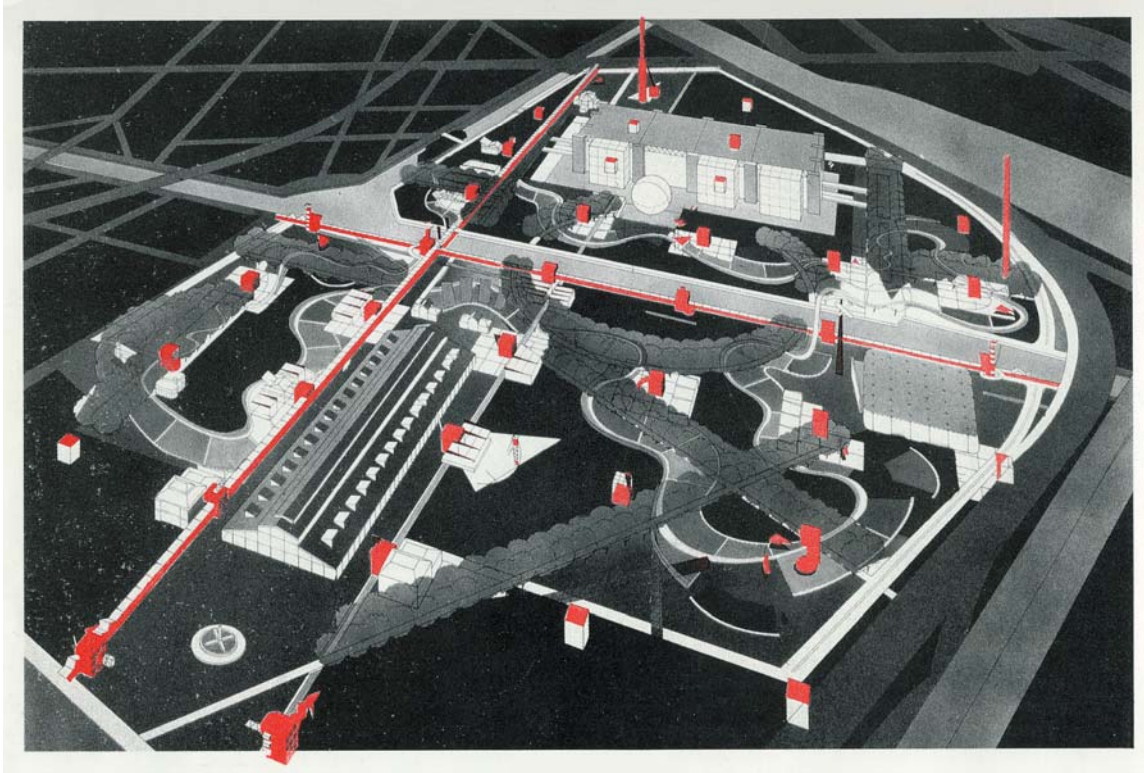
Figure 5.5: Bernard Tschumi, Aerial view of Folie grid, Parc de La Villette. From Papadakis, ed. *Deconstruction in Architecture*.

Figure 5.6: Bernard Tschumi, Folie N5, Parc de La Villette. From Papadakis, ed. *Deconstruction in Architecture* (Jean-Marie Monthiers).
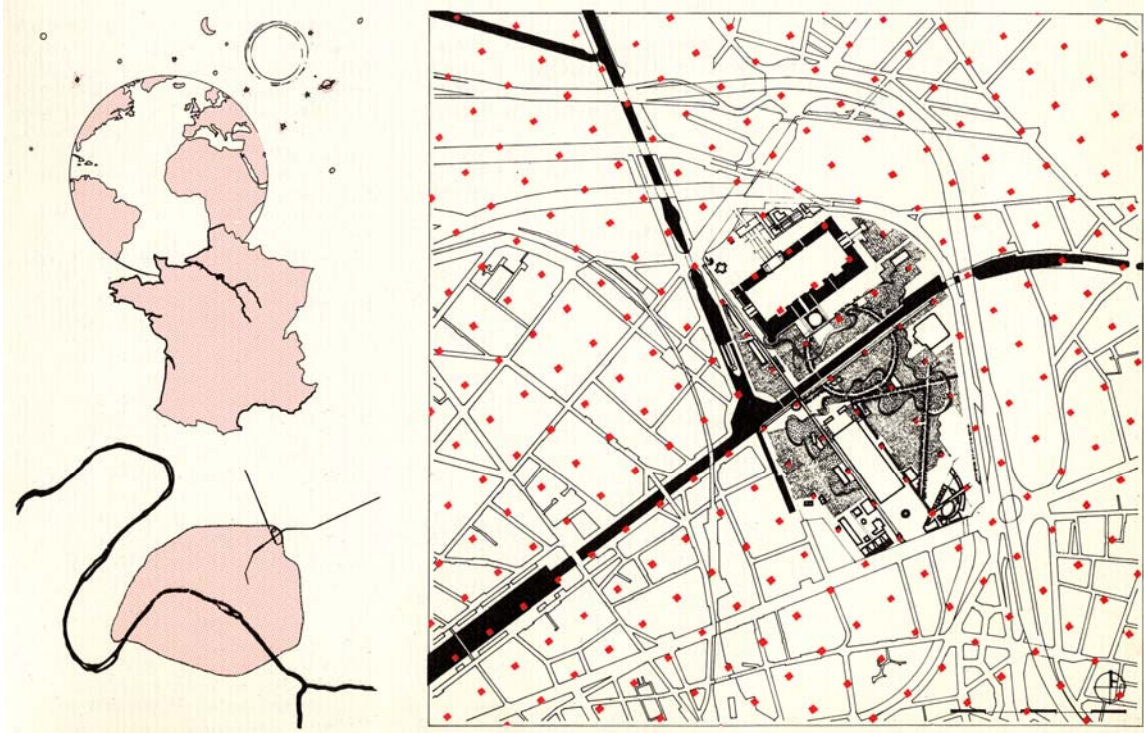
Figure 5.7: The implied infinitude of the grid of Parc de La Villette. From Isabelle Auricoste and Hubert Tonka, *Parc-Ville Villette: architectures*.
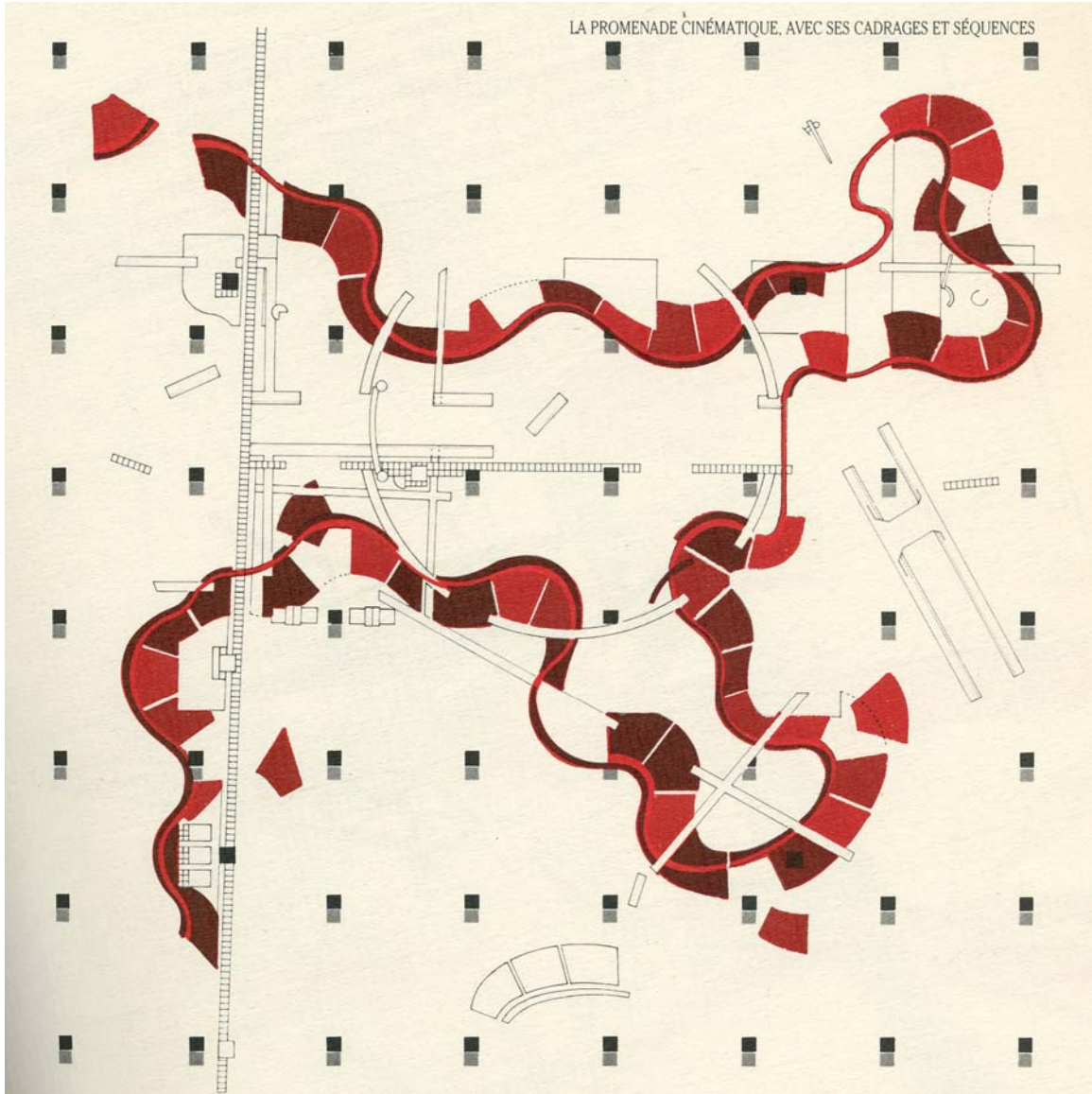
Figure 5.8: Bernard Tschumi, The system of lines—the Cinematic Promenade and the Coordinates, Parc de La Villette. From Auricoste and Tonka, *Parc-Ville Villette: architectures*.

the Cinematic Promenade, winds through the middle region of the park, intersecting the

other system where it may, in a sequence of curves noticeably not dictated by topography

or anything other than fancy and more reminiscent of the parabolic curves of Alphand's

parks than of any other precedent. Along this promenade, Tschumi allotted space for the

contributions of other designers, several distinct gardens, serial by their presence along

the path and not by their relation to one another, their difference enabled in a mimesis of

montage filmmaking, which simultaneously allowed near-complete freedom to the

designers and for the existence of elements unrelated to the park to coexist compatibly

within its theoretical and design structure. Lodewijk Baljon remarked on the humor of

such a system in his analysis of the competition entries: "Tschumi's system of

programmatic deconstruction and recomposition encourages the combination of

apparently incompatible activities; the running track passes through the piano bar inside

the tropical greenhouse for instance" (Baljon, 229). This promenade is very much an

updating of the formula of the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, that of the theme park in which

one follows the path from attraction to attraction.

The third system, surfaces, consists of the ground plane of the open areas. The

majority of these are programmatically determined and the treatment of each surface—

grass, paving, or compacted earth and gravel—reflects that program, but with a built-in

flexibility (fig. 5.9). Although the most conventional aspect of the design, the logic of

the surfaces does not relate to the logic of the points and lines, thus generating irrational

accidents of overlap such as a *folie* in a field or a promenade winding across the seam of
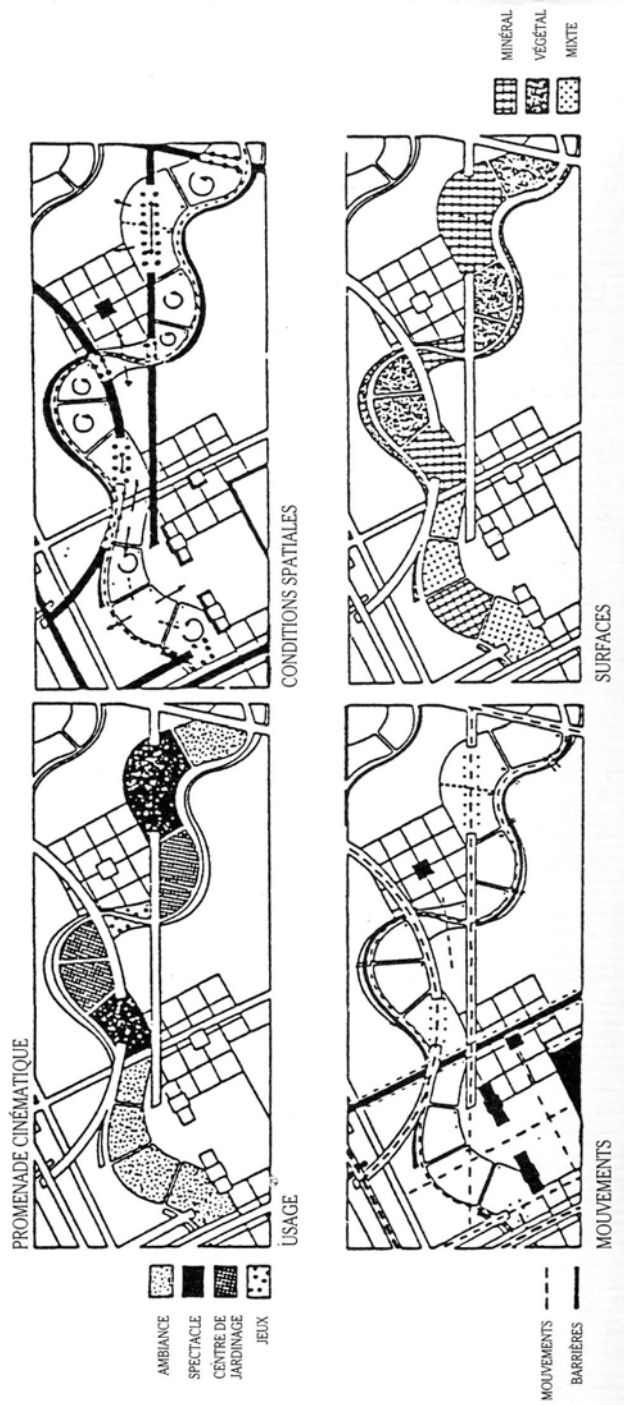
two surfaces with no regard for the difference.

Figure 5.9: Bernard Tschumi, Diagram showing juxtapositions of materials and interface of Cinematic Promenade and system of surfaces of Parc de La Villette. From Auricoste and Tonka, *Parc-Ville Villette: architectures*.

Despite the prevalence of deconstructive and postmodern discourse, the fact of the built park asks and answers questions necessary to the nature and evolution of parks that are unrelated to the questions the designer asked or intended to answer. In this we can see that Tschumi's method was innovative because of its drawings and its drawn logic. Only the questions of the program of the park—what it is to do—in this case nearly as much a product of the brief for the park as of the design, the location of the park *inside/outside* the city, and the division of park and city as *ergon/parergon*, must be integral to any park that would push the evolution of urban park design.[3] Tschumi's design realized a new direction because it incorporated a deconstruction of architectural theory unrelated to the park into a system of drawings. He was, of course, out to overturn the received order, but his enabling rhetoric operated in two distinct realms. He would build the "world's largest discontinuous building" rather than a landscape. His new park would explicitly counter the Olmstedian conception. There is a gap here, between building and park that, because ignored, allows the Parc de La Villette to advance design discourse in two distinct realms. A park is not a building—it is a landscape. So, for that matter is a city.[4] For a park, buildings are structures that contain things and functions and can be pressed into service to define space. As mentioned at the outset, form and function is not a landscape-architectural question. Tschumi's solution to that problem is of less consequence than his re-evaluation of the question of site.

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[3] Examples of this would be the 2003 James Corner/Field Operations design for the High Line park to be built in Manhattan on a disused elevated railway (and its conceptual predecessors Freeway Park in Seattle and the Promenade Plantée in Paris) and Peter Latz's Landscape Park Duisburg-Nord, set within a factory and blast furnace, completed in 2000.
[4] Tom Turner, in *City as Landscape* (London: E & F Spon, 1996), advocates for urban design considered in the context of landscape.

CHAPTER 6

CRITICISMS OF A BUILT CRITIQUE

Criticism of the Parc de La Villette rarely addresses either of Tschumi's critical breakthroughs. Perhaps the most salient criticism of the Parc de La Villette derives from an environmental materialism. Following a generally positive review, Tom Turner points out, invoking Alexander Pope's injunction to consult the *genius loci* in all things as equivalent to a Kantian categorical imperative for landscape design, that the stormwater management, plant maintenance regime, and dead ecosystem of the park contribute to the degradation of the environment. This is a particularly pointed criticism as the park was designed in an era when the innovators in the landscape architecture profession were enthralled with environmentalism and learning to incorporate sound environmental practices and ecosystems into designs. He connects this to the park's theoretical pretensions, commenting "Ethically, I believe it is wrong to proclaim: 'There is nothing outside the project'" (Turner, 214). Perhaps an apt analogy would be to the Hippocratic oath: "First, do no harm." The park, in contravention of the spirit from which public parks were born, both pollutes and ignores ecology, thus adversely affecting the public health.

However, most of the criticisms leveled at the park come from a phenomenological standpoint and address design issues relevant to that. Tschumi's imperceptible point grid raises many of the criticisms of the park. Much of prescriptive

design theory such as that of Kevin Lynch[1] or Gordon Cullen[2], particularly that regarding large urban areas, stresses the imageability of circulation or the sequential ordering of experiences as key to the difference between what may be called a place and a space. The *folies*, as nodal points on a grid, are only perceptible from above—for the user at ground level, there is no way to know experientially that they follow a regular pattern (fig. 6.1). The abstraction of the infinite grid is similarly unavailable to those who do not already know it is there and who experience the park in the temporal flow of their consciousness.

The Cinematic Promenade also catches criticism. The path is, in places, hard to pick out from the surrounding space, and rather than spatially refining or strengthening the sequence of spectacles, the Cinematic Promenade offers theory in place of design— the sequence is a "movie" not a place.

The surfaces, particularly the large, flat expanses of grass are uniformly criticized as boring (fig. 6.2).

It is evident from his drawings of the park that Tschumi designed from outside and above the park, rather than from the ground plane and moving through space. Therefore his design does not cater to the temporality of consciousness and (of) the perception of space. Curiously, his drawings of the *folies* are often in perspective and attuned towards perceptual space (fig. 6.3).

Similar phenomenological criticisms are drawn upon in Fredric Jameson's theorized postmodern hyperspace—"something like a mutation in built space itself" which we lack the "perceptual equipment" to match—in order to posit a space beyond

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[1] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).
[2] Gordon Cullen, *Townscape* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1961).

Figure 6.1: The grid of folies is imperceptible at ground level in the Parc de La Villette. From George Hazelrigg, "Living With Deconstruction" *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, Volume 95, Number 6.

Figure 6.2: One of the lawns of Parc de La Villette. From Rogers, *Landscape Design*.
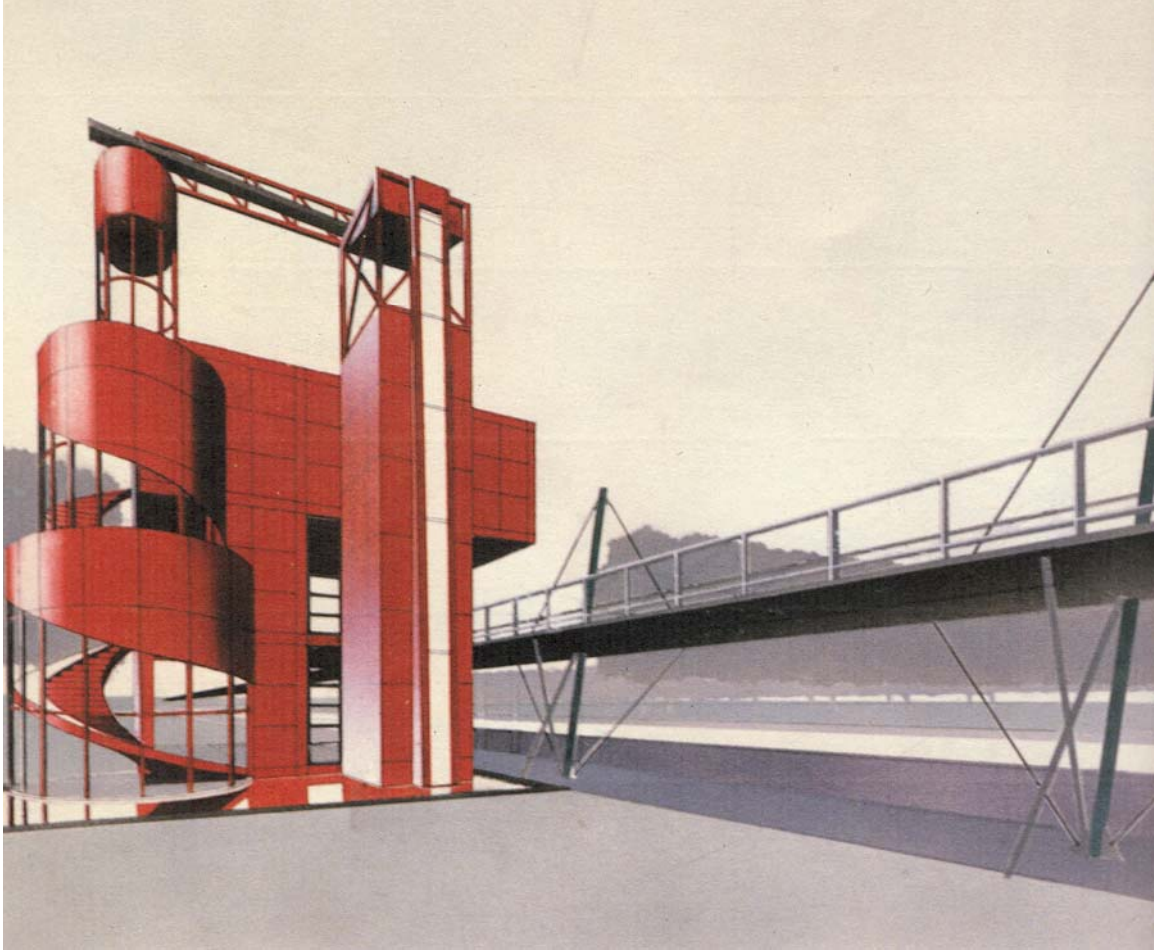
Figure 6.3: Bernard Tschumi, Perspective rendering of Folie N5, Parc de La Villette. From Bernard Tschumi, *Cinégramme folie: le Parc de La Villette, Paris, dix-neuvième arrondissement*.

phenomenology (Jameson, 38). Jameson claims that his example, John Portman's Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, operates on a new spatial logic; the closure of its inner space from the city by small awkward entrances and a reflective glass skin signals its replacement of the city in a complex *inside/outside* dialectic. (It is worth noting that this is separate from the interiority/exteriorty that the Deleuze-inspired architects and theorists would be after shortly). The remainder of his critique and his notion of the difficulty of conveying the thing in itself is a straight phenomenological criticism. The Bonaventure is, like the Parc de La Villette, design without regard for perception. This imperceptible space becomes a figure for the abolition of "critical distance," the spatial relation upon which aesthetic judgment, in the Kantian sense, depends. Jameson then proposes an "aesthetic of cognitive mapping," the aesthetic of a new cultural form that operates in the space where "critical distance" is no longer available. This postmodern aesthetic reclaims the pedagogical and didactic functions of art (Jameson, 48-50).

The work of Kevin Lynch, particularly his book *The Image of the City* (1960), lays the foundations of this aesthetic of cognitive mapping. Lynch argued that a city should be "imageable"—a well-designed city could be perceived as a totality by its inhabitants. A city that could not be thus perceived alienated its inhabitants. Lynch theorized five factors of this city image: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Consider the difference between two cities set up on a street grid system, New York City (Manhattan) and Jersey City, New Jersey. Jersey City, which lacks the five elements, alienates inhabitants because, amongst other things, the grid is referenced to no edge and the intersections that form the grid are indistinct from one another. New York City, almost universally acknowledged as an immanently comprehensible city, has a grid

aligned longitudinally to the island, distinct neighborhood architectures, a surfeit of landmarks, and the diagonal of Broadway producing a series of nodal intersections. His research exposed phenomenological requirements to positioning oneself in the abstraction of the city and allowed him to develop concrete prescriptive and proscriptive design interventions.

Jameson points out that Lynch's imageability is not quite mapmaking, but rather itinerary-making. When cognitive mapping takes into account the abstraction of geographic totality alongside the local and the existential, which is the product of the phenomenal reality of a biologically monadic subjectivity, it comes closer to Jameson's deployment. The addition of a third figure, the awareness of cultural particularities of representation, completes the system; the Althusserian/Lacanian formulation of the Symbolic representation of the subject's Imaginary relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence, is refashioned into praxis.

To consider the interaction of hyperspace and cognitive mapping, substitute the Parc de La Villette for the Bonaventure in Jameson's not wholly convincing reading. One further consideration needs to be drawn into the account. Portman's building, unless the escalator and elevator as are intensively read into as depriving users of agency, does not accomplish quite enough to be any more than alienating. Oddly, Jameson mentions this one more thing in the midst of a discussion of a Modernist preponderance of thinking about time and the postmodern counter-emphasis on space. Jameson writes, apropos of no built or other space "But why should the landscape be any less dramatic than the 'Event'?" (Jameson, 364). In light of the "timelessness" of the Parc de La Villette, it is interesting that Tschumi's later writings (particularly *Event Cities,* 1994, and *Event-Cities*

2, 2000) often touch on the *event*. To understand the event, it is useful to consider a historical question of the park—whether the park is stage set or object—a Versailles, an elaborate backdrop for the enactment of the court and cult of Louis XIV, or Central Park, a thing to be contemplated and in which to contemplate. Tschumi's design, viewed through the questions of the *parergon*, privileges not the event, but the (material) function of the park. While this, like any dialectic, is never that cut and dry (consider the promenading, the see-and-be-seen of Central Park in the nineteenth century), Tschumi, focused on the scenographic conception, seems to conflate function and event. This is a deterministic and totalizing viewpoint. It makes of everything that happens to happen in the park (and through the park's theoretical infinitude, outside the park as well)—whether fireworks display or stroll—an *event* that stymies counter-readings and unintended park uses through its implied imprimatur. Thus the Parc de La Villette is perhaps the best argument for the existence of the hyperspace Jameson theorizes. A real space (the Parc de La Villette), designed without regard for perception and its incumbent temporality, births, in a return of the repressed, an endless flow of events that cannot be qualitatively separated (a spatial operation) from one another and inspected. The flow eliminates the possibility of reflection—the space of critical distance is lost in a temporality so excessive as to be incomprehensible.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The preceding was born from a concern with design methodology rather than an interpretive impulse. It was an attempt, at times more instrumentalizing than design logic needs be and at others more reductive than analysis ought be, to locate and theorize a possible counter-reading of the late 1960s through 1980s theory which has become a part of the ideology of contemporary landscape architecture and architecture. By this ideology I refer not only to the work of the critical avant-gardes, but also to the foundational assumptions of many current practitioners, and therefore much of the recently built environment. This thesis assumes a position analogous to that of those architects who, in the late 1950s and 1960s, began to sound the death knell of architectural modernism, which had become a stale, normative style. Where they questioned the primacy of the relation of function to form, this thesis questioned the subsumption of architecture and landscape architecture under concepts of language in what has become the normative mode of critical theory.

The lament for the state of theory in landscape architecture is now well worn enough to be something of a trope. This is hardly reason to disavow its pursuit. The relative lack of theory in landscape architecture is not symptomatic but systemic. Thus, a redefinition of theory and practice as material practice or critical material practice must be coupled with a diagnosis, not of the cause of the problem, but of the functioning whole. Critique, old-fashioned as it may be, is the only way to achieve this. The limits

of the discourse must be found before any sort of metaphysical assessment is undertaken, despite the fuzziness of its limits and the near conflation of limit with truth.

The research for this thesis focused on Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, and various avant-gardes architectural or otherwise. The investigation gradually brought drawing to the fore and found the notion of drawing as the means of architecture located at the cusp of a profound technological advance—the architectures studied were among the last to be generated without a computer. After this period, the limits of the architect were no longer theorized, but instead a *fait accompli*, accomplished by a tool. Following these architectures, the form-exploratory computer-enabled architectures of Frank Gehry, Greg Lynn, UN Studio, and others met with an interest in different theorists, notably Gilles Deleuze, and theory and practice at the cutting edge assumed a different course—a technologically-aided, at times post-human, path. The new architectures were the product of a new way to draw.

The focus on design interventions and the constraints of a focused thesis argument precluded a thorough assessment or refutation of the concept of architecture as a language and a full engagement with representation in design. Perhaps as a result of millennialism combined with the replacement of the human-drawn or human-iterated architectural representation by digitized process there are now available exhibit catalogues and books on drawing such as *The Activist Drawing: Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond* (2001), edited by Catherine de Zegher and Mark Wigley, *Perfect Acts of Architecture* (2001), edited by Jeffrey Kipnis, and *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* (2002), edited by Terence Riley, all of which treat the

architectural/art drawing and the indistinction of these from the architectural drawing. Certainly these are a challenge to one who looks for the discourse's limit.

The existence of these texts, and those of Damisch, Evans, and Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier are a partial confirmation the thesis—that the intersection with architectural drawing of the properly critical thought at play as an undercurrent in the late 1970s and 1980s was, in fact, there. And that something more than language, different from it, and irreducible to it is at work in landscape architecture and architecture theory.

Perhaps more important are the questions raised by the research and writing of the thesis. Among these are the question of what it would be to reexamine the contemporary conception of architecture as language, and also what the consequences might be for humanism of a built environment derived by a critical practice based upon potentially, if not explicitly, anti-humanist and anti-rational philosophies—what is a landscape architecture whose central metaphor is neither the *garden* not the *ecosystem*, but rather the *monument*?

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