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CONSTRUCTING A NEW AGENDA CONSTRUCTING A NEW AGENDA ARCHITECTURAL THEORY 1993–2009 A. KRISTA SYKES, EDITOR Princeton Architectural Press · New York Published by Princeton Architectural Press 37 East 7th Street, New York, NY 10003 For a free catalog of books call: 1-800-722-6657 Visit our website at www.papress.com

 A long time ago…people used simply to drop things from time to time. But nowadays we have physicists to inform us of the laws of gravity by which objects fall; philosophers to doubt whether there are really any discrete objects to be dropped at all; sociologists to explain how all this dropping is really the consequence of urban pressures, psychologists to suggest that we are really all trying to drop our parents; poets to write about how all this dropping is symbolic of death; and critics to argue that it is a sign of the poet's castration anxiety. Now dropping can never be the same again. We can never return to the happy garden where we simply walked around dropping things all day without a care in the world. What has happened, rather, is that the practice has now been forced to take itself as its own object of enquiry. Theory is just human activity bending back upon itself, constrained into a new kind of self-reflexivity. And in absorbing this self-reflexivity, the activity itself will be transformed. —Terry Eagleton, The Significance of Theory ACKNOWLEDGMENTS Numerous individuals had a hand in this book. I thank Nancy Eklund Later for initiating this project and guiding it forward; Jennifer Thompson and Carolyn Deuschle for bringing the book to fruition; Lee Gray for his never-failing guidance and advice; Michael Hays, John McMorrough, and Mark Morris for their thoughts and suggestions on content; Michael Hays for generously contributing the afterword; Arie Graafland, Jeff Kipnis, John McMorrough, Roemer van Toorn, and Sarah Whiting for the extra efforts regarding their essays; and all of the authors for their permission to be included in this collection. Above all I am grateful to Joshua and Sophia for their patience, support, and enthusiasm. This work is dedicated to them. PREFACE This collection builds on the foundation established by Kate Nesbitt in Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965–1995. Like its parent compilation, the present work contains a variety of texts—in this case essays, book chapters, interviews, manifestos, and questionnaires—written by architects, theorists, historians, critics, and interdisciplinary scholars. Together they offer an overview of the myriad tendencies that have characterized architectural theory in the years since the publication of Nesbitt's book. While the two volumes share a similar intent—to gather in one place recent significant writings on architectural theory—their modes of organization differ. As opposed to the thematic divisions offered by Nesbitt, here the twenty-eight texts, each preceded by a short introduction, appear in chronological order. This reflects the lack of a single theoretical discourse during the period in question. Furthermore, the chronological organization avoids a priori classifications, which can inadvertently limit the reader's textual interpretations and forestall new thematic groupings; this can be particularly helpful for instructors eager to trace motifs tailored for specific courses. In addition to instructors and students, this collection is directed toward architectural professionals and those attentive to the ways in which contemporary architectural thought influences and is influenced by society in general. As Nesbitt noted in her preface, the issues raised [here] are fundamental to understanding the course of architecture in the recent past, and should be of interest to all scholars involved in the analysis and critique of cultural production. We are still in the midst of a transitional period in architecture that began in the 1990s. This makes the exploration of the contemporary architectural situation—as well as any attempt to intellectually frame it—a rather difficult proposition, as there is no obvious vantage point from which to view the landscape of the recent past. Nevertheless, for this anthology I sought to select material that addresses architecture as a whole. Due to space constraints, I have largely excluded writings focused specifically on urbanism and urban planning, even though architecture and urbanism necessarily and inevitably share territory. The texts that do appear in this collection are mixed—a combination of writings that have already impacted architectural discourse and others that may prove, in retrospect, to be prescient of or decisive for our contemporary situation. In conjunction, I believe these readings will provide valuable insight into the present moment and offer a basis for future architectural theory. Notes 1 Kate Nesbitt, Preface, in Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965–1995 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 13. INTRODUCTION The end of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of two anthologies dedicated to architectural theory: in 1996, Kate Nesbitt's Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965–1995; and two years later, K. Michael Hays's Architecture Theory Since 1968. Theory as a code or framework for architectural thought has existed for centuries, often cited as originating with Vitruvius in the first century BCE. Yet the theory referred to by Nesbitt and Hays relates to a specific movement that began in the 1960s and strives to reconstitute the architectural discipline through mediatory concepts—derived from fields such as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and anthropology—that simultaneously connect architecture to other social realms and (attempt to) claim for architecture its own unique territory. Architectural theory as such encompasses many overlapping and often conflicting tendencies (for example semiotics, structuralism, and phenomenology), which in turn have given rise to the more recent historicist and deconstructivist camps. In the introduction to her volume, Nesbitt notes that a survey of architectural theory from the last thirty years finds a multiplicity of issues vying for attention. She continues, "The lack of dominance of a single issue or viewpoint is characteristic of the pluralist period imprecisely referred to as postmodern."[1] Hays, however, feels that in the midst of this pluralism one particular strain of architectural theory, which he describes as the coupling of Marxian critical theory and post-structuralism with readings of architectural modernism, did tend to dominate the others.[2] This brand of architectural theory—frequently referred to by the term critical and derived from the thought of Frankfurt School intellectuals and French philosophers—typically involves cultural critique and the desired resistance of the status quo, exposing social structures perceived as repressive and controlling. Nesbitt characterizes critical theory as a speculative, questioning, and sometimes utopian form of thought that evaluates the built world and its relationships to the society it serves…, often has an expressed political or ethical orientation and intends to stimulate change.[3] At the current moment in time, mid-2009, a coupling of Hays's assertion of dominance with Nesbitt's definition of critical theory appears most helpful. This presents a notion of critical theory as an overarching and ideologically grounded practice that strives to interrogate, elucidate, and thus enhance the world in which we live. This is a lofty goal for architecture, one that stems from and attempts to improve upon the utopian modernist quest to rescue society from its ills. Architects, historians, and critics during the so-called postmodern era recognized that to request of architecture such a wide-ranging and unattainable task put the discipline in an impossible position, poised for failure. Furthermore, figures such as Manfredo Tafuri felt that architecture was not only failing to improve society but was actually, albeit unwittingly, making things worse. As a result, architects sought ways to proceed in more limited terms that would hopefully allow architecture to be a positive force in the world at large—hence the pluralist tendencies noted by Nesbitt. Thus, during the period spanning the mid-1960s through mid-1990s, there did exist a prevailing discourse that, despite varying methods of approach, sought to reformulate the discipline and carve out a niche for architecture. What is different about the current moment is that there appears to be no overarching concept dedicated to this task, and the notion previously charged with this responsibility—critical architectural theory—is now itself in transition, if not in crisis. In the past decade, a pointed critique has been leveled against critical theory, which some see as irrelevant to architectural practice, or, at the very least, disassociated from it. In his 2005 article 'Criticality' and Its Discontents, George Baird discusses the assault on critical architecture, singling out two approaches—that of Michael Speaks in his 2002 essay, Design Intelligence, and that of Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting in their text of the same year, Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism.[4] While the attitudes of their authors differ, both of these writings characterize the critical project as exhausted and posit new alternatives for practice that the authors feel to be more in accordance with the uncertainty of everyday life. Yet another text, Reinhold Martin's Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism of 2005, critiques the propositions of Speaks and Somol/Whiting, calling for a reconsideration of critical architecture's socio-political significance. Likewise, Arie Graafland's On Criticality of 2006 investigates the recent disavowal of critical theory, incorporating the ideas of cultural theorists to demonstrate that theory understood as critical thinking still occupies a crucial role in architectural discourse and design. So why all this talk about critical theory? Why now? Indeed, the often-cited theory-versus-practice divide has long existed, strengthened by the intellectual density of theory itself. What is new is the urgency of what can be described as a pro-practice movement as it appears in the late 1990s; in most cases, this is not a total disavowal of theory (thus the term anti-theory is not quite right), but rather a mandate to focus on the realities of architecture and building (hence pro-practice). This pro-practice stance coalesced in 2000 with a two-part event funded by the Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Foundation, ending with a conference at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in association with Columbia University. The conference, entitled Things in the Making: Contemporary Architecture and the Pragmatist Imagination, functioned as the public face of a workshop held the previous spring at Columbia's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture. Incorporating architectural and interdisciplinary scholars—including philosopher John Rajchman and cultural theorist Cornel West—both proceedings focused on possible intersections of architecture and pragmatism, in all of its iterations, to potentially serve as a lever to pry open some hardened formations in architecture,[5] to offer alternatives to what, by that point, had become the norm of critical architectural theory. Of course, pragmatism is itself another theory (as is the call for no theory at all). But despite its philosophical origins, pragmatism, with its various emphases on experimentation and experience, holds the promise of practical application, of action, of tangible product.[6] This no doubt appealed to those frustrated with and disappointed by the more abstract conceptual processes tied to architectural theory as it has existed since the 1960s. Another signal event, interpreted by some as a death knell for architectural theory, occurred in the year 2000. In April, the architectural periodical Assemblage ceased publication with its forty-first issue. Founded fourteen years earlier by editors K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy, Assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture provided a venue for the exploration and expansion of architectural theory. Often identified as the successor of Oppositions—the journal, founded by editors Peter Eisenman, Mario Gandelsonas, and Anthony Vidler, associated with the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York—Assemblage continued the theoretical exchanges fostered by Oppositions during the latter's eleven-year run, from 1973 through 1984. As Hays and Kennedy stated in their solicitation for contributions to the last issue, Assemblage provided a registration plane for a discourse in the process of finding its legs, developing its skills, suffering its growing pains.[7] For many, the dissolution of this registration plane signaled a shift away from theory that had been building in the previous years. Perhaps this is best reflected in the text Hays and Kennedy published in the final Assemblage issue: One point needs to be emphatically made one last time. The end of Assemblage has nothing to do with the end of theory, neither as an editorial intention nor, in our minds, as a historical symptom. Rather, the transitional moment means that theoretical activity achieves a new excitement and urgency. We hear the antitheoretical rants to be sure, and, oddly enough, coming from deep within the theoretical camp…the larger abstract ambitions and sweaty efforts of an older theory are being taken to task. But all this, too, is a problem for theory. A peculiar characteristic of theory is that it must constantly historicize itself. And the various lines of flight out of theory (the technomanagerial, the postcritical, the neopragmatist) are still products of theory's success (and perhaps, excess). They represent the sorts of revisions theory must pass through from time to time: theory taking inventory, adjusting to new demands, going through a bit of necessary retooling rather than closing down the shop altogether.[8] The language used by Hays and Kennedy conveys the seriousness of theory's state of affairs, even if they portray the situation as well within the scope of theory's domain—as a discipline that, due to its very nature, must continually be interrogated, evaluated, and revised. Cries against theory have appeared from various corners, most notably the technomanagerial (Michael Speaks, Alejandro Zaero-Polo), the postcritical (Somol and Whiting), and the neopragmatist (those affiliated with the Columbia/MoMA events, as well as Dutch architecture firms that embrace what Roemer van Toorn refers to as an extreme realism[9]). The primary charge against theory concerns its lack of correspondence to practice. Yet Hays and Kennedy render this disconnect as another intrinsic part of theory itself. Practice, no matter how alternative or forward thinking, is ultimately limited by the realities—economic, social, disciplinary, political—of getting something built. Indeed, even if a building is inherently projective in the sense that it materially and conceptually changes the situation into which it is placed, it cannot ordinarily push beyond the standards of cultural acceptance and professional practice. However, as a thing apart, [theory] uncovers aspects of architecture practice that, while not useful or even correct for building now, may become a resource for future architectures. The theoretical text seeks out for us what we cannot otherwise imagine (this is its properly utopian vocation), but it does so not by presenting us with a concrete representation, or even a guide to one, but rather by exposing the gaps and holes in our discipline and our discourse that are our own inability to see beyond the present and its ideological closure.[10] Thus, according to Hays and Kennedy, theory and practice should rightly be separate entities, despite the claims of theory's detractors. Nevertheless, the challenge put to theory at the moment of Assemblage's closure—a challenge still ongoing today—is very real, real enough to prompt the editors to ardently defend theory in the final issue of their journal. Along with the end of Assemblage came that of ANY, an architectural journal guided by editor Cynthia Davidson (wife of Peter Eisenman) from the publication's inception in 1993 through its dissolution in 2000. The conclusion of ANY, with its direct link to the Oppositions generation, strengthened the feeling that Assemblage's closure related to critical theory's impending death. This sentiment was perhaps even further compounded by the appearance of multiple new architectural journals—such as Praxis: Journal of Writing + Building (1999), Hunch: The Berlage Institute Report (1999), and 306090 (2001)—that, in their own ways, foreground practice or emphasize a more direct correspondence between practice and discourse. All told, these events in the world of serial architectural publications conveyed a message that indeed a shift was occurring, and theory as understood during the previous decades was, at the very least, undergoing a process of reevaluation. * * * Against this background of theory's interrogation, multiple overlapping themes have emerged within the architectural realm. A variety of issues conditions the present moment—more than can be covered in this brief introduction—but nevertheless, select motifs have risen to the fore since the early 1990s. For example, recent technological advances have presented architecture with a plethora of opportunities and challenges, with implications for all aspects of the architectural discipline. In particular, the expansion of the digital domain has created a wealth of possibilities for architecture, including the rise of new modes of design (employing software and computing applications), fabrication (generating custom-built materials and building components), and representation (creating computer models and animated fly-throughs). To those outside the profession, the most obvious manifestation of digital technologies has been visible in the unprecedented formal qualities of certain contemporary buildings. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997) by Frank Gehry and the Yokohama International Port Terminal (2002) by Foreign Office Architects (FOA) are examples of such projects, yet they represent two very different approaches toward computer-assisted design. While the Guggenheim Bilbao's curves owe their precise appearance to aeronautical software, the forms are determined using conventional design methods: freehand sketches and small-scale models that are later mapped by CATIA (Computer-Aided Three-Dimensional Interactive Application) to render them buildable by guiding material fabrication and construction. Gehry's designs are not computer generated per se, but the software platform permits him to operate within a larger repertoire of forms that could not be constructed without this digital intervention. In opposition, FOA's design for the Yokohama Terminal was, as Charles Jencks puts it, conceived inside the belly of a computer. That the firm's principals, Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaero-Polo, are quite proud about the way they were surprised by the emergent results[11] suggests how different their use of the computer is from Gehry's. The smooth, sinuous, mauve-like Yokohama Terminal has elements in common with so-called blob architecture, which is perhaps most often associated with Greg Lynn.[12] The term blob refers to curving, biomorphic architecture that is typically reliant on computer-aided design and the exploration of complex numerical systems. Gehry's design for the Guggenheim Bilbao does not quite fit the blob designation. While the museum does offer an unconventional, swirling form (which has been compared to a flower, an artichoke, and even the unfurling skirt of Marilyn Monroe[13]), these sweeping portions collide with more traditional, rectilinear surfaces. The juxtaposition of the curved and the straight-edged foregrounds the difference of the former, something no true blob would do; the blob-architect has no need for deliberate Cartesian edges. This in part stems from the blob-architect's desire to depart from the traditional forms of architecture as well as established means of design. Indeed curvilinearity, as described by Lynn, corresponds to software-based design that utilizes flows of information—contextual, biological, mathematical, topological—to generate form.[14] Alongside new possibilities for design, fabrication, and form, the digital era poses many questions for the architectural discipline. For example, what is architecture's role with respect to globalization, internet society, or virtual reality? How else might the architect employ new digital technologies? What might digitization mean for architecture as a discipline? Must architecture be reconceived? These issues and more accompany architecture as it navigates the contemporary digital world, affecting everything from small-scale design decisions and the ways in which structures are occupied to the actual shape and configuration of individual buildings, larger complexes, and urban developments. The digital makes up a crucial part of our present reality, one with which architecture must grapple daily. Another reality confronting architecture concerns the environment and the part architecture can play in arresting, and perhaps even correcting, the ecological damage inflicted by modern society. In the past decade, due to global climate changes, dwindling supplies of natural resources, and pollution in general, the imperative to create sustainable and green architecture has become abundantly clear. Today it is becoming more common than not for architects to incorporate environmentally friendly strategies into their designs, including the use of local, renewable, energy-efficient, and/or salvaged materials; energy harnessing and generating devices (such as systems that capture and utilize rainwater and solar power); and living components (for example grass roofs to both insulate a structure and provide habitable green space for the occupants and wildlife). Of course, the ways in which architects address environmental concerns range widely. While architects such as Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, and Renzo Piano offer advanced technologies to produce green designs, others such as Samuel Mockbee and Glenn Murcutt rely on combinations of local or salvaged materials, attention to geography, and awareness of proven regional solutions to create sustainable and environmentally responsive architecture. Another approach is that taken by William McDonough, who—partnered with chemist Michael Braungart—actively pursues the development of new materials and technologies that abide by a cradle-to-cradle philosophy, hoping to eliminate waste by employing the cast-off materials from a given process as the raw materials for another. Regardless of the methods used by architects, many appear to share a common consciousness, growing increasingly strong in the past decade, that architecture must become an environmentally responsible practice. The rising mandate for ecologically sound architectural practices goes hand in hand with concepts of realism and the everyday. With respect to architecture, neither concept is easy to define, as they both have shifting, somewhat subjective, meanings. Despite this indeterminacy, the two ideas appear to intertwine, in that the everyday can be considered a subset of the larger realm of realism. Realism is often associated with a direct, straightforward assessment of and attitude toward the real (whatever the real may be), that which exists and must be dealt with on practical and/or symbolic levels. The everyday relates in a positive manner to the ordinary, the typical, and the local, as what constitutes the everyday inevitably depends on who one is and what one generally experiences. With their emphases on human experience, realism and the everyday resonate with the conversations surrounding pragmatism and regionalism, but they also exist on planes of their own. Everyday architecture is, in many ways, the antithesis of such projects as Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, quietly building for the desire to be iconic or the specificity of place, created for and by the context and population within which the building exists. While the museum's metallic exterior and billowing forms do reference Bilbao's former life as a steel and shipbuilding center, the Guggenheim bears what has become Gehry's signature—highly reflective, sheared, curving surfaces—which has appeared in numerous locations besides Spain, including Los Angeles (Walt Disney Concert Hall [2003]), Chicago (Millennium Pavilion [2004]), and Cambridge, Massachusetts (Stata Center at MIT [2004]). Despite its relatives across the Atlantic, the Guggenheim Bilbao, perhaps even more than the famous inward-looking spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York, is an iconic building par excellence. The millions of people, architects and others, who have been drawn to Bilbao since the museum's inception attest to this fact; whereas New York boasts many cultural delights to attract visitors, Bilbao was, before Gehry and Guggenheim Foundation director Thomas Krens' intervention, a decaying industrial town, an unlikely venue for a newfound pilgrimage site.[15] While the building-as-icon is not a new phenomenon—think of the Empire State or Chrysler buildings, for example—this trend appears to have reached new heights in the recent past, as the architectural critic Charles Jencks observes in his book of 2005, Iconic Building.[16] Immediately recognizable buildings such as the Guggenheim Bilbao note that the museum is often referred to as Bilbao, as if the town now exists largely because of and for the building itself) and the London Gherkin (originally Foster's Swiss Re Tower [2004]) now known as St. Mary Axe 30) act as logos, advertising the very institutions they house as well as the cities in which they reside. This represents an entirely different level of the commercialization of architecture than that lamented by architectural theorists and critics like Manfredo Tafuri.[17] Such iconic buildings are intentionally complicit with capitalist systems, employing form and visibility as a marketing technique. While the Guggenheim Bilbao functions as an iconic building, it also highlights the related phenomenon of the star architect, or the starchitect. In an issue dedicated to fame and architecture, the editors of Perspecta 37 remark that in today's globalized marketplace of ideas, the so-called starchitect has the means to influence the wider world beyond architecture by guest-editing magazines, appearing on television shows, and collaborating with multinational corporations on everything from bathroom accessories to branding strategies.[18] Hence Rem Koolhaas guest edits an issue of Wired while Gehry appears on The Simpsons and designs jewelry for Tiffany & Co. Indeed, in contemporary society, the cultural capital generated by the starchitect is as valuable as the (often iconic) building he (or, more rarely, she) delivers. In The Bilbao Effect, Witold Rybczynski—architect and professor at the University of Pennsylvania—discusses how, in the wake of the Guggenheim Bilbao's success, museums and municipalities are increasingly turning to renowned architects like Gehry, Steven Holl, Daniel Libeskind, and Santiago Calatrava to create signature buildings. These works frequently arise from select design competitions, complete with eye-catching renderings and media publicity, a charged atmosphere that, in Rybczynski's opinion, promotes flamboyance rather than careful thought, and favors the glib and obvious over the subtle and nuanced. He concludes that while the 'wow factor' may excite the visitor and the journalist, it does not necessarily make for good architecture, which should have more to say to us than 'Look at me.'[19] Now, roughly a decade into the twenty-first century, the trend toward iconic buildings may be winding down. Recent financial crises have left the global economy in a precarious state, halting many building projects and instigating layoffs throughout the architecture and construction industries. Such an atmosphere has prompted the architect and critic Robert Campbell to suggest that we have reached the end of an era, one he terms the Bilbao Decade, book-ended by the opening of the museum in the late 1990s and the current economic downturn that has affected all aspects of contemporary life. Yet, as Campbell notes, there's an upside to recessions. They give people time to step back from the frantic pace of a boom economy and think hard about what it is they want to do.[20] In the past two decades, however, it appears that a recession was not necessary for some to rethink, or indeed expand, the architectural arena. Architecture has never been simply a question of building: a blurred boundary has long existed between architecture and art, engineering, and other disciplines. In recent years architecture appears to have broadened its reach, though, both co-opting and infiltrating different realms. To remain with Gehry as an example, in addition to his work as a designer of (architecture, furniture, sculpture, and jewelry), in 2002 he launched Gehry Technologies, a company that offers software technologies specifically suited for architectural applications. Perhaps the paradigmatic example of architecture's broadened scope is Koolhaas, principal of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) and founder of its research-based subsidiary AMO (Architectuur Metropolitaanse Office), which serves as a consulting firm working on everything from business strategies to marketing and commercialization. While AMO is described as a think tank that operates in areas beyond the boundaries of architecture and urbanism—including sociology, technology, media and politics,[21] one could argue that, under the leadership of Koolhaas and OMA, AMO brings these realms under the purview of architecture, as both a product and a symptom of the present moment we now occupy. A multitude of external forces—historical, cultural, political, and economic—condition the present, and architecture, inextricably tied to such forces, has in no way been exempt from the impacts of current events, such as the sequencing of the human genome and the terrorist attacks in the early part of this decade. While significant world events are too numerous to recount here, suffice it to say that architecture as a discipline has, inevitably, responded to them all in ways that have contributed to our contemporary architectural situation, a time of enthusiasm and potential tempered by anxiety and indeterminacy. From the mid-1960s through mid-1990s, in all its different manifestations, theory led the way. Since then architecture itself has changed, in part due to various transformations in technology, means of production and fabrication, and the realities of the cultural and political landscape. Theory can no longer occupy its previous role, and thus it too has started to shift—in some cases away from utopian ideals, the declarative imperative of the status quo, and heavy-handed cultural critiques toward…what? What is the architectural road that will presently occupy us in time? There is no clear or easy answer; indeed, the texts collected here, dating from 1993 through the present day, situate themselves along different trajectories. Auspiciously, these paths all point forward. Notes 1 Kate Nesbitt, Introduction, in Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965–1995 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 16. 2 K. Michael Hays, Introduction, in Architecture Theory Since 1968 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), xiv n. 1. 3 Nesbitt, Introduction, 18. 4 George Baird, 'Criticality' and Its Discontents, Harvard Design Magazine, no. 21 (Fall 2004/Winter 2005): 16-21. 5 Joan Ockman, The Idea of the Workshop Project, in The Pragmatist Imagination: Thinking about Things in the Making, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 17. 6 For more on the pragmatism workshop and conference, see Ockman, The Pragmatist Imagination. 7 K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy, letter calling for contributions, published in Assemblage 41 (Apr. 2000). 8 K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy, After All, or the End of 'The End of,' Assemblage 41 (Apr. 2000): 6. 9 See Roemer van Toorn, No More Dreams? The Passion for Reality in Recent Dutch Architecture…and Its Limitations, reprinted here. 10 Hays and Kennedy, After All, or the End of 'The End of': 7. 11 Charles Jencks, The New Paradigm in Architecture, Hunch 6/7 (Aug. 2003), . 12 See Greg Lynn, Folds, Bodies & Blobs: Collected Essays (Brussels: La Lettre Volée, 1998). 13 Herbert Muschamp, The Miracle of Bilbao, New York Times, September 1997. 14 See Greg Lynn, Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant and the Supple, reprinted here. 15 See Muschamp, The Miracle of Bilbao. 16 Charles Jencks, Iconic Building (New York: Rizzoli, 2005). 17 See Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development, trans. Barbara Luiga La Penta (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976); originally published as Progetto e Utopia (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1973). 18 Brendan M. Lee, Geoffrey von Oeyen, Justin Kwok, and Robert McClure, Editorial Statement, Perspecta 37, Famous (2005): 4. See this entire issue for comments on issues surrounding architecture and celebrity. 19 Witold Rybczynski, The Bilbao Effect, The Atlantic (Sept. 2002), . 20 Robert Campbell, Marking the End of 'The Bilbao Decade,' Boston Globe, January 11, 2009, . 21 See for this description of AMO. INTRODUCTION Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant and the Supple / Greg Lynn 1993, Greg Lynn guest-edited an issue of Architectural Design devoted to an emerging movement in architecture: folding. Lynn, a Los Angeles-based architect/educator with a background in philosophy and an attraction to computer-aided design, in effect, define the fold in architecture, a concept that generated intense interest during the remainder of the decade. In his contributory essay, Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant and the Supple, Lynn ties together a variety of sources—including the work of Gilles Deleuze, René Thom, cooking theory, and geology—to present an alternative to existing architectural theory and practice. He states that since the mid-1960s architecture has been guided by the notion of contradiction, whether through attempts to formally embody heterogeneity or its opposite; in short, postmodernism and deconstructivism can be understood as two sides of the same coin. Yet, for Lynn, neither the reactionary call for unity nor the avant-garde dismantling of it through the identification of internal contradictions seems adequate as a model for contemporary architecture and urbanism. Rather, he offers a smooth architecture (in both a visual and a mathematic sense) composed of combined yet discrete elements that are shaped by forces outside the architectural discipline, much as diverse ingredients are folded into a smooth mixture by a discerning chef. This new architecture, what Lynn calls a pliant, flexible architecture, exploits connections between elements within a design instead of emphasizing contradictions or attempting to erase them all together. Of equal importance is that this architecture is inextricably entwined with external forces, both cultural and contextual. Architects deploy various strategies —including a reliance on topological geometry and digital software and technologies—in the creation of their designs, but the resulting works tend to be curvilinear in form and infected with the particulars of the project and its environment. In addition to Lynn's essay, Folding in Architecture, as the Architectural Design issue was titled, included other texts by figures such as Deleuze, Jeffrey Kipnis, and John Rajchman, and representative projects by architects like Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, and Philip Johnson. This list of distinguished collaborators lent weight to the publication, intimating that the phenomenon of the fold was already entrenched within architectural design. If indeed it was, Folding in Architecture cemented the shift in architectural thought by identifying and highlighting this new architecture of smoothness. The importance of Lynn's special issue of Architectural Design was underscored by its reprinting in 2004 as a historical document,[1] complete with new introductory essays analyzing and situating the original publication as a guiding force within twenty-first-century architectural discourse.' Notes 1 Helen Castle, Preface, in Folding in Architecture, ed. Greg Lynn (London: Wiley-Academy, 2004), 7. 2 See Greg Lynn, Introduction, in Folding in Architecture, 8–13; and Mario Carpo, Ten Years of Folding, in Folding in Architecture. See also Branko Kolarevic, ed., Architecture in the Digital Age: Design and Manufacturing (New York: Spon Press, 2003), 3-10. GREG LYNN ARCHITECTURAL CURVILINEARITY: THE FOLDED, THE PLIANT AND THE SUPPLE First appeared in Architectural Design 63, no. 3/4 (1993): 8-15. Courtesy of Greg Lynn. For the last two decades, beginning with Robert Venturi's Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,[1] and Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's Collage City,[2] and continuing through Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson's Deconstructivist Architecture, architects have been primarily concerned with the production of heterogeneous, fragmented and conflicting formal systems. These practices have attempted to embody the differences within and between physical, cultural, and social contexts in formal conflicts. When comparing Venturi's Complexity and Contradiction or Learning from Las Vegas with Wigley and Johnson's Deconstructivist Architecture it is necessary to overlook many significant and distinguishing differences in order to identify one theme. Both Venturi and Wigley argue for the deployment of discontinuous, fragmented, heterogeneous, and diagonal formal strategies based on the incongruities, juxtapositions and oppositions within specific sites and programmes. These disjunctions result from a logic which tends to identify the potential contradictions within dissimilar elements. A diagonal dialogue between a building and its context has become an emblem for the contradictions within contemporary culture. From the scale of an urban plan to a building detail, contexts have been mined for conflicting geometries, materials, styles, histories, and programmes which are then represented in architecture as internal contradictions. The most paradigmatic architecture of the last ten years, including Robert Venturi's Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center, Bernard Tschumi's La Villette Park or the Gehry House, invests in the architectural representation of contradictions. Through contradiction, architecture represents difference in violent formal conflicts. Contradiction has also provoked a reactionary response to formal conflict. Such resistances attempt to recover unified architectural languages that can stand against heterogeneity. Unity is constructed through one of two strategies: either by reconstructing a continuous architectural language through historical analyses (Neo-Classicism or Neo-Modernism) or by identifying local constituencies resulting from indigenous climates, materials, traditions or technologies (Regionalism). The internal orders of Neo-Classicism, Neo-Modernism and Regionalism conventionally repress the cultural and contextual discontinuities that are necessary for a logic of contradiction. In architecture, both the reaction to and the representation of heterogeneity have shared an origin in contextual analysis. Both theoretical models begin with a close analysis of contextual conditions from which they proceed to evolve either a homogeneous or heterogeneous architectural fabric. Neither the reactionary call for unity nor the avant-garde dismantling of it through the identification of internal contradictions seems adequate as a model for contemporary architecture and urbanism. In response to architecture's discovery of complex, disparate, differentiated and heterogeneous cultural and formal contexts, two options have been dominant: either conflict and contradiction or unity and reconstruction. Presently, an alternative smoothness is being formulated that may escape these dialectically opposed strategies. Common to the diverse sources of this post-contradictory work—topological geometry, morphology, morphogenesis, Catastrophe Theory or the computer technology of both the defense and Hollywood film industry—are characteristics of smooth transformation involving the intensive integration of differences within a continuous yet heterogeneous system. Smooth mixtures are made up of disparate elements which maintain their integrity while being blended within a continuous field of other free elements. Smoothing does not eradicate differences but incorporates[3] free intensities through fluid tactics of mixing and blending. Smooth mixtures are not homogeneous and therefore cannot be reduced. Deleuze describes smoothness as the continuous variation and the continuous development of form.[4] Wigley's critique of pure form and static geometry is inscribed within geometric conflicts and discontinuities. For Wigley, smoothness is equated with hierarchical organization: the volumes have been purified—they have become smooth, classical—and the wires all converge in a single, hierarchical, vertical movement.[5] Rather than investing in arrested conflicts, Wigley's slipperiness might be better exploited by the alternative smoothness of heterogeneous mixture. For the first time perhaps, complexity might be aligned with neither unity nor contradiction but with smooth, pliant mixture. Both pliancy and smoothness provide an escape from the two camps which would either have architecture break under the stress of difference or stand firm. Pliancy allows architecture to become involved in complexity through flexibility. It may be possible to neither repress the complex relations of differences with fixed points of resolution nor arrest them in contradictions, but sustain them through flexible, unpredicted, local connections. To arrest differences in conflicting forms often precludes many of the more complex possible connections of the forms of architecture to larger cultural fields. A more pliant architectural sensibility values alliances, rather than conflicts, between elements. Pliancy implies first an internal flexibility and second a dependence on external forces for self-definition. If there is a single effect produced in architecture by folding, it will be the ability to integrate unrelated elements within a new continuous mixture. Culinary theory has developed both a practical and precise definition for at least three types of mixtures. The first involves the manipulation of homogeneous elements; beating, whisking and whipping change the volume but not the nature of a liquid through agitation. The second method of incorporation mixes two or more disparate elements; chopping, dicing, grinding, grating, slicing, shredding and mincing eviscerate elements into fragments. The first method agitates a single uniform ingredient, the second eviscerates disparate ingredients. Folding, creaming and blending mix smoothly multiple ingredients through repeated gentle overturnings without stirring or beating in such a way that their individual characteristics are maintained.[6] For instance, an egg and chocolate are folded together so that each is a distinct layer within a continuous mixture. Folding employs neither agitation nor evisceration but a supple layering. Likewise, folding in geology involves the sedimentation of mineral elements or deposits which become slowly bent and compacted into plateaus of strata. These strata are compressed, by external forces, into more or less continuous layers within which heterogeneous deposits are still intact in varying degrees of intensity. A folded mixture is neither homogeneous, like whipped cream, nor fragmented, like chopped nuts, but smooth and heterogeneous. In both cooking and geology, there is no preliminary organisation which becomes folded but rather there are unrelated elements or pure intensities that are intricated through a joint manipulation. Disparate elements can be incorporated into smooth mixtures through various manipulations including folding:

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