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DEVIANT THEORY

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Introduction: lightness and weight, text and legitimacy

> If the French Revolution were to recur eternally, French historians would be less proud of Robespierre. But because they deal with something that will not return, the bloody years of the Revolution have turned into mere words, theories, and discussions, have become lighter than feathers, frightening no one . . .
>
> In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine.[1]

In one short passage, Milan Kundera summarizes how theory, using text as a translational medium, evacuates the violence of action. The scenario outlined by Kundera involves a somewhat antiquated transaction where this theoretical translation occurs at a time sufficiently distant from the real, lived experience. This temporal spacing is important because text, operating as a basis of and for judgment, achieves the clean translation of an experience into an historical event. It is significant that the historical event is a type of formalized or ritualized 'occurrence.' The categorical labeling accompanying the event is essential in transforming a specific experience into a type or *general instance*. It matters little if this rationalization of experience operates retrospectively to assess actions, or prophetically, to explain contemporary circumstances. In both instances, this typology of events creates meaning, and thus judgment, to organize what are often experientially inexplicable incidents. The ultimate purpose of this typological rationalization is to deprive action of its *bloodiness*. This relationship between action and interpretation provides a useful framework to examine the nature of exchange seen in the ideation and production of architectural objects.

One of the many salient observations in Kundera's book is that characters operate in a world where the lightness of text does cannot always be relied on to relieve the weight of lived experience. Using Nietzsche's concept of eternal return, Kundera demonstrates how the relative value of lightness and weight depends on an individuated negotiation of the transaction between these terms.[2] The book is, after all, a study of the diverse ways in which this transaction occurs, illustrating the naivety of representing this exchange as a simple duality. Rather, this exchange describes multiple possible interactions that operate through subtle degrees of difference. The possibility of variation suggests the textual mediation of lived experience depends on two

preconditions. The first precondition is temporal: time creates space between the occurrence of lived experience and its subsequent communication as an event. The second precondition is formal: text is the preferred medium used to translate lived experience. As with the temporal spacing associated with the translation of action into text, the form of text is also mutable. Theory and critique are equally capable of achieving this transaction. Moreover, the variability of both the temporal spacing between action and text and the form of the text means that it is possible to manipulate these preconditions to influence the mediation of experience.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1995) does more than provide a serviceable analogy to evaluate the extent to which theory as text, and design as action, influence the creation, production, and assessment of artifacts. The mutability of time and text regulates the exchange within and between text and action, and lightness and weight. However, unlike the frank exchange Kundera describes between experience and text, architectural design involves a more protracted and elaborate exchange. On one level, the processes of ideation and production introduce more moments of temporal spacing. This circumstance is further complicated because drawings mediate these moments. On another level, design has two distinct experiential consequences: an 'embodied experience' accompanying the making of the object, and the experience associated with its reception. The proliferation of temporal spacings and mediums, together with the experiential differences between making and reception, complicate the mediated exchange between text, action, and objects. The intricate interrelationship between text, action, and objects means that modifying any one of these terms has significant functional and formal consequences.

Architecture's often fraught relationship to legitimacy traces a deep anxiety over the complexities of mediation.[3] Usually, these complexities use text to give a credible account of both ideation and architectural objects. If it is given that the price of legitimacy makes the process and object subservient to the text, it then seems reasonable to consider what type of exchange would occur without the weighty compromises legitimacy brings to the design of objects. Plainly, operating beyond text would be pointless. Not only is it just another medium, but text is also integral in forming disciplinary judgments upon the worth of its objects. Altering this exchange would qualify and modify design by strategically manipulating the temporal spacing and the different textual and graphic mediums. The overarching aim of this manipulation would be to reconceive of text beyond the legitimization of the object—either in the act of ideation and production, or in the performance of objects once in the world. Georges Bataille's term 'l'informe,' or *formless*, addresses the problems of legitimacy by inspiring actions that deliberately disrupt the mechanisms driving the desire for meaning. *Formless* deviates from the expectation that one gives meaning to things by operating without a commitment to convention or the desire to affirm the rhetoric of meaningful production. At the same time, *formless* requires profoundly structured and targeted strategies. For Bataille this type of deviant philosophy demands a type of "discursive reason . . . has the power to undo its [own] work, to hurl down what it has built up. Madness has no effect."[4]

The weightiness of theory's 'lightness'

The act of designing is readily understood as solving the problems posed by the design brief. Irrespective of how expansive the ambitions of the brief are, this problem-solution paradigm focuses action on singular responses to immediate, 'worldly' design issues. However, designers are not always satisfied with such a simple exchange. Individual practices ranging across many design fields appropriate all sorts of theories to establish a wider social or cultural relevance for the artifacts they design. This tendency to exceed the brief testifies to how personal positions

and technical conditions first intercede and mediate decisions in the move from ideation to artifact. Underscored by this desire for relevance, the inevitable mediation of artifacts means design is not as teleological as the problem-solution paradigm would like it to be.

The design-theory paradigm takes this desire for relevance one step further. Theory's primary task is to legitimize design decisions and artifacts even though theory is, initially, peripheral to the design act. By attaching the artifact's legitimacy to theory, text becomes a binding, almost ethical, code. Text, being the basis for legitimacy, constricts the design act to producing artifacts that evidence theory. In this paradigm, legitimacy allows theory to initiate the process and validate the artifact. Unlike the problem-solution paradigm, where design is a sovereign act, the design-theory paradigm uses text to trade this sovereignty for what is often a perceptual gift of legitimacy. The transformation of theory into a basis for critique allows text to discipline design. The ensuing need to substantiate the artifact through the text collapses design and judgment, making the design-theory paradigm introspective and self-referential. By containing exegesis and judgment within the one textual account, theory's mediation of design is absolute. Design, in turn, can deprioritize the immediate issues peculiar to a design problem. The only requirement is that the object gives a good account of theory. It is not just that artifacts must emblematically or performatively embody theory; theory also doubles as the mechanism of critique, becoming design's gatekeeper.

There are a few obvious differences between theory and critique in the design-theory paradigm. Both use text as their preferred representational medium, and the temporal separation between design and the textual account of the artifact operates in the same order. The distinction between the two is that critique can pass judgment without reference to theory. Critique can question the exchange between design and theory by externalizing judgment. This freedom to scrutinize artifacts without obligation to theory shifts the nature of the text to create a potential for different temporal spacings. In the design-theory paradigm theory, the same text brackets the ideation and evaluation of the artifact. Critique has no need to qualify design and artifact through the same text, allowing judgment to be more independent and retroactive. Unlike theory, which internalizes design and judgment, critique externalizes the design act to incorporate more pressing contemporary issues.

In the design-theory paradigm, legitimacy results in theory being used to judge artifacts and processes. This textual mediation of designing duplicates the linear trajectory of the type described by Kundera in the reference opening this chapter. Initially, at least, this theoretically determined critique relieves the act of design of its weightiness. However, this weightiness soon reappears, since the artifact has an obligation to the text. The weight of this obligation differs from that felt by design in the problem-solution paradigm. Significantly, the artifact's obligation to text has nothing to do with the act of design being a lived experience.

Against autonomy: writing, drawing, and legitimacy

The rise of 'post-critical' discourse in architecture during the early 2000s represented another attempt to recalibrate the exchange architecture initiates between theory as text, and design practice as action. Given the movement's affinity with the post-theory debate, the term 'post-critical' is somewhat of a misnomer.[5] Rather, the 'critical' in the post-critical rejects both K. Michael Hays' own 'critical architecture' and those design practices emerging from the late 1960s, that Hays placed under the label of "contemporary architecture theory."[6] The practices of contemporary architecture theory rethought the operational role theory played in the ideation, production, and assessment of architectural processes and objects. Contemporary architecture theory altered this circumstance by extending architecture's theoretical sources to include

everything from "Marxism and semiotics to psychoanalysis and rhizomatics."[7] Irrespective of the discursive 'flavor' of the arguments presented over the subsequent years, the source of complaint typically incriminates the combined legacy of Emil Kaufmann, Rudolf Wittkower, and Colin Rowe.[8] Yet, this attack on architecture as an "abstract formal system" never completely disrupted the logics of this earlier architectural theory.[9] In this respect, both contemporary architecture theory and Hays' critical architecture were deemed deficient for continuing to privilege disciplinary autonomy over current societal conditions.[10]

Historically situated between the early 2000s and the 2008 global financial crisis, the post-critical sat as a brief but significant moment that reconsidered how one should undertake architectural practice. Positioned between digital architecture and the current interest in social advocacy, the post-critical approached practice as a pragmatic response to the socio-economic and political circumstances of the day. For Michael Speaks, the digital age heralded both new technical capacities and conceptual approaches that demanded an innovative, problem-solving design approach.[11] Unlike digital architecture, the new machines and managerial procedures required modes of production that occurred outside the architectural drawing. Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting adopted a less instrumental understanding of digital technology. Unlike Speaks, the altered socio-economic and political conditions themselves produced a new type of experience of being in the world.[12]

The contemporary social advocacy movement presents itself as a very different mode of practice. Compared to digital architecture and post-criticality, advocacy dispenses with a positivist account of the digital transformation. However, it is of some consequence that this movement chooses participatory design methods as the antidote to this change. Like digital architecture and the post-critical movement, advocacy's commitment to addressing the changes brought about by digital technology believes in a contextually specific and situated design practice. Despite differing design methods and formal repertoires, all three movements believe in the capacity of context to reshape the logics of ideation and production. Significantly, this shared faith in a contextually relevant mode of architectural production frees objects from any obligation to theory. The act of foregrounding the weighty importance of the design act allows the digital, post-critical, and social advocacy movements to be recast as a twenty-five-year challenge to theory's lightness.

The privileging of design over the last quarter of a century recalls the sentiment of Foucault's oft-quoted suggestion that theory should act as a "tool-box for users." According to Foucault:

> I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area . . . I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.[13]

Foucault's tool-box analogy resituates theory as something that happens immediately before the design act. In this respect, the analogy reorders the sequence between design and theory as well as collapsing the spacing between thinking through theory and designing. The integration of theory into the space of creative action challenges the nostalgic lightness of Kundera's historian by changing theory's 'job' from legitimacy to production. The reassuring aspect of Foucault's 'theory as tool-box' analogy is that architecture *incites* design processes that epitomize a more equitable and dynamic engagement between design practice and theory. Crucially, this alternative siting of theory reworks the conventional hierarchy in the design-theory paradigm. By making theory operative, Foucault recalibrates the basis for critique and judgment. Unlike

the normal exchange in the design-theory paradigm, judgment refers not to the text but to its capacity to inspire objects that address pragmatic, real-world issues.

The post-critical and advocacy movements have far more similar strategic goals and operational tactics. While these similarities reflect a continuing commitment to worldly conditions, social advocacy prioritizes local, rather than global, conditions. This interest in the local is evidenced in the citations for the 2016 and 2017 Pritzker Prize-winners, Alejandro Aravena and RCR Arquitectes respectively.[14] These accounts are consistent with the type of market-driven innovation espoused by Michael Speaks that exploits "the existent but unknown to discover opportunities for unpredictable design solutions."[15] Speaks' emphasis on the market reappears when Aravena states that the Quinta Monroy development in Chile ignored precedents; the office preferred to study everything "from policy to the building market and the public bidding processes, from meetings with the families to site visits, from building codes to budget restrictions."[16] However, Aravena's work operates at the community level, leaving globalization to the post-critical movement.

The consistencies between the post-critical and the digital architecture movement are not immediately obvious. This circumstance is, in part, an issue of historical fact. Digital design practices arose alongside practices that were later assimilated into post-critical discourse. The incorporation of practices like OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) into the post-critical canon suggests the existence of two parallel but formally discrete practices.[17] Any commonality between the digital and post-critical was obscured by the way in which these discrete design practices mediated context. Greg Lynn, the first architect to popularize digital form-making in the 1990s, was quick to align new digital design methods to key concepts sourced from the writings of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.[18] This alignment cumulated in Lynn's animated diagram—a new type of architectural drawing that attempted to simulate the dynamic contextual conditions as a mechanism of formation.[19] The attraction to Deleuze was understandable given the tendency for all "pragmatist philosophers . . . [to] put . . . action, practice, and movement at the center of [their] ontology."[20] This reappearance of theory was excused because action is believed to be innately congenial to the act of design.

If there is an echo of Deleuzian production within the current dialogue around social advocacy, then this testifies to Deleuze's disciplinary impact as it first arose in the late 1980s. As evidenced in essays by Robert Somol and Michael Speaks, Deleuze's writings influenced post-critical discourse. In the 1989 review of Eisenman's Wexner Centre for the Visual Arts, Somol uses Deleuze's idea of the rhizome to describe the way a project "proliferates within the spaces left between [the existing] cultivated areas."[21] Deleuze reappears as a key reference in Somol and Sarah Whiting's 2002 canonical essay "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and other Moods of Modernism." Deleuze also appears in Speaks' article "Which Way Avant-Garde?" where, after initially dismissing Deleuze's work as outdated, Speaks adds that the real problem is how poorly architectural discourse appropriated Deleuze's work.[22] To accentuate the point, one only needs to look at the titles of Sylvia Lavin's essays to see Deleuze's impact on architectural discourse during the 1990s and 2000s.

Digital and post-critical discourse was attracted to Deleuze because his writings superseded a theory of meaningful objects with a theory of meaningful production. However, each movement arrived at the same position through different arguments. Lynn's interest in formal novelty embodied a deeper dispute with the way in which postmodern and deconstruction design methods prevented new disciplinary forms.[23] This problem resulted from design methods that relied on the appropriation and reorganization of lauded disciplinary precedents or idealized forms or arrangements of form. At the same time, design makes sense only when retaining a semblance of the forms being appropriated. Not only does this design method

prefigure form, but the need for resemblance means the new object is a parody of the referent form. As Linda Hutcheon outlines in *A Theory of Parody* (1985), parody can mock or pay homage, but this type of referential exchange in architecture foregrounds a semiotic relationship between new and pre-existing forms. Architecture only makes sense when communicating through sign and signified.[24]

Notably, Hays situates critical architecture between the prevailing cultural norms and the autonomous formal systems inherited from the likes of Colin Rowe. Critical architecture is "resistant to the self-confirming, conciliatory operations of a dominant culture and yet irreducible to a purely formal structure disengaged from the contingencies of place and time."[25] This ability to *sit between* provided a critical space of action for architecture to resist the politics of late capitalism.[26] Hays' critical architecture addressed the paradox at the heart of contemporary architecture theory: autonomy relied on texts external to the architecture. This paradox is resolved in the practice of architect-theorist Peter Eisenman, who used these external theories to disrupt the canon. The problem for the likes of Somol is that critical theory and the practices of contemporary architecture theory rely more on text than on real-world issues. From the post-critical mindset, both theoretical approaches have a misplaced militancy because both are equally dependent on canon.

Crucially, the architectural interest in Deleuzian production paralleled the 'affective turn' in philosophy.[27] Affect Theory, as it came to be known, extended Deleuze's idea concerning affect as a mode of production. A fuller description of affect can wait; it is enough to note that Brian Massumi applies Deleuze's description of affect as an 'intensity.'[28] Massumi, a social theorist and leading figure of the Affect Theory movement, turned to Deleuze because semiotics encouraged "dumb material interactions of things . . . [that are made] legible according to a dominant signifying scheme into which human subjects . . . were 'interpellated.'"[29] Text instigates a formed conceptual imposition on "what the body knows."[30] This imposition projects predetermined, and often ideologically driven, agendas to supplant the embodied cognition one receives from being in, and a part of, the world. Affect Theory recasts an understanding of form from a signifier of encultured meaning to an after-effect of the *affective* conditions from which form emerges. The alignment of post-critical discourse, digital architecture, and Affect Theory revolves around contextually based production. Digital architecture and post-critical discourse come together over the foregrounding of design as a situated, worldly practice.

Undoubtedly, digital, post-critical, and social advocacy practices have divergent accounts of context. Of all these accounts only Lynn's animated diagram expressed affect as a drawn simulation of contextual forces. Lynn's diagram was unique because it used the animation software Maya® to represent how a field of forces could modify standard primitive shapes. In comparison, post-critical and advocacy practices continued to use text; it merely altered its form from theory to critique. By extension, the digital drawing made it possible to avoid the need for text during the act of design. History tells us that the animated diagram never became a common drawing type. As the initial optimism faded that digital design methods could somehow graphically replicate contextual conditions of formation, the discipline reverted to soberer, established design methods. Post-critical and social advocacy design practices reaffirmed design methods. By reinforcing architecture's established representational modes, the methods also returned to familiar material and tectonic arrangements and programmatic types. More significantly, the representation of context returned to relying on text alone.

It is timely to return to Speaks' essay "Intelligence after Theory" and note that "detached from its continental origins and replanted in the US . . . [theory] took on a lighter, more occasional existence."[31] The coincidence in terminology between this statement and Kundera's account of theory reveals the great paradox at the heart of "contemporary architecture

theory": that this brand of architectural theory searched for autonomy through sources outside the discipline. The difference between these two accounts is that in Speaks' version the violence being erased is the violence theory inflicts on architecture's objects and accompanying processes. With Deleuze, one can renegotiate the exchange between text and design. Critique's interest in contextual, worldly responses reinvests a weightiness to the act of designing and the objects it produces.

Procedural autonomy: text

Post-critical discourse highlights two realities architecture faces when using theory to legitimize its objects. First, architecture theory is capricious; the discipline resorts to different theories at various times. Eisenman provides evidence of this point and, as one of the staunchest advocates of autonomy, transferred his theoretical antecedents from Chomsky to Derrida to Deleuze.[32] Second, designers are not always willing to allow theory to orchestrate the design act. Post-critical practice acknowledged these realities, returning a weightiness to the design act by liberating design from an obligation to theory.

The post-critical negated disciplinary capriciousness by privileging the act of design. The tactic was simple; the post-critical refused to allow theory to legitimize the ideation, production, or assessment of objects. A potent message of Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and other Moods of Modernism" is that design should be architecture's preferred weapon.[33] This battle directly addressed the usual exchange expected between the design act and text. At the same time, post-critical design practice avoided the trappings of the problem-solution paradigm by seeing beyond the client's brief. Michael Speaks used this broader socio-economic and political context to situate a response to the "challenges issued by globalization."[34]

It is important to reiterate that the post-critical rejection of theory is not so much a problem *with* text but *how* the text was appropriated. This much is reinforced in Michael Speaks' article "Intelligence after Theory." Retrieving the term "fast philosophy" from the earlier essay, "Which Way Avant-Garde?" (2000),[35] Speaks' argument with 'contemporary architecture theory' had little to do with the texts themselves. Though these texts may have lost contextual relevance, his primary concern was with the intellectual laxity displayed when the intellectual laxity evident when the "French, German, and Italian philosophical tracts that arrived in the US in the late 1970s" crossed disciplinary boundaries.[36] To this end, it is significant in the short article "Critical or Post-Critical" (2002) that Mark Jarzombek states that the post-critical project was a "fight for the control of academe."[37] The use of the academy is hardly surprising given the influence practice and practitioners have on the nature of education in America. The academy was the perfect platform for the then emerging advocates of post-critical thinking. However, the decision to use universities as the rightful place to fight for design also saw how essential text was in influencing architectural discourse. Even allowing for the pragmatics guiding this decision, this decision unproblematically accepted that text remained indispensable in mediating the translation from idea to object.

Crucially, post-critical thinking initiates more contextually responsive design methods by modifying the form of the text from theory to critique. Given critique and theory use text to inform and assess processes and objects, the nature and spacing of this exchange resemble that found in the design-theory paradigm. In post-critical thinking, this change in the form of the text externalizes the text in two ways. First, it is expected that the source text originates from outside the discipline. Second, different texts can instigate production and judgment. Critique avoids the internalizing operation of text found within the design-theory-design paradigm by

externalizing the design problem such that ideation, production, and assessment of processes and objects are no longer 'bracketed' by one text or body of writing. Instead, the shift to a problem-solution model favors a type of critical analysis more commonly associated with cultural studies.

The post-critical externalization of critique does, however, take different forms. Speaks' rhetorical investment in emerging technologies addresses pressing, real-world design issues. His notion of 'plausible truths' resonates with Deleuzian affect because the focus on innovation privileges production more than objects."[38] Somol and Whiting also argue for a projective, performative diagrammatic framework. However, they also suggest that design not only "encompasses object qualities (form, proportion, materiality, composition, etc.) but it also includes qualities of sensibility, such as effect, ambiance, and atmosphere."[39] Their emphasis on qualities contrasts with Speaks' absolute investment in the inherent value of performance, action, and production. Any desire to make the abstract concrete is simply a "negative reduction of qualitative experience to quantification."[40] There is much at stake in this difference between Somol and Whiting on the one hand, and Speaks on the other. Whereas Speaks focuses on production, Somol and Whiting see affect as an abstract, indeterminate type of experience caused by objects. Clearly, Sylvia Lavin sides with this second experiential approach to affect. "The New Mood or Affective Disorder" (2000), "Design by Mood" (2011), and *Kissing Architecture* (2011) do more than simply suggest that 'mood' can operate as an empirical method of critique.[41] These essays suggest that it is possible to design an 'affective' experience by creating disruptions in the experience of objects. These disruptions are so profound that they break theory's hold on how one explains such objects. Lavin's approach to form is not at all concerned with disciplinary continuity or a continuity of experience. Rather, Lavin's repatriation of Wölffin's jaded observer in the essay "Freshness: In Memoriam, Herbert Muschamp" (2008) makes instrumental a knowledge of disruptive objects.[42] While not directly acknowledging Walter Benjamin, Lavin is arguing for the 'shock effect' that comes with new types of objects.[43] The type of experience is important—any understanding of the specific effects caused by new types of objects requires that "criticism must now understand sensibility as a form of intelligence."[44]

It is worth remembering that Foucault's tool-box analogy still limits design to a theoretical account of the world. Theory still directs design because objects are judged against a view of the worldview mediated by theory. The willingness of post-critical practice to source texts external to the discipline is, however, a temporary measure by which to avoid the exchange seen in the tool-box analogy. Once selected, the texts operate in the same way. It is not just that objects must accord to the semantic interpretation of the text. Critique, recast as theory's proxy, continues that tradition where text judges both design process and object. As with the tool-box analogy, the intimate exchange fostered between theory and design, text and action, allows text to be the pre-generator of design decisions.

Foucault's tool-box analogy intersects with post-critical practice over the latter's preference for production to serve as a basis of disciplinary autonomy. In the first instance, the preference for text offers no procedural mechanism for form-making. Nor does disciplinary autonomy discipline the selection of text. This is not to say that disciplinarity provides a truth, but it does extend individuals beyond personal belief systems. The value of contextually led production comes from its immediacy to pressing, worldly issues. Without a sense of any resistance, these conditions are assumed to be the natural order of things. Somol and Whiting's rejection of Hays and Eisenman's accounts of autonomy typify a faith that production is more adept at overcoming neoliberal thinking than Marxist resistance.[45] They share Michael Speaks' faith that the capitalist ideals of production, competition, and entrepreneurship offer a "fresh, and ideologically smooth" design approach.[46] This unshakable optimism in action demonizes resistance as being negative and unproductive. The demonization of resistance precludes the possibility that

resistance can be contextually strategic. This acceptance of production counters claims that the design of affect is not a "capitulation to market forces."[47] Disciplinarity is not valued because it conveys truth, but because it provides a basis by which to critically scrutinize claims and find alternative ways to intercede in the design act.

Deprived of explicit mechanisms of production or scrutiny, the right to pass judgment requires an acquiescence to the dispensation of disciplinary authority. The term 'acquiescence' is important because such authority is granted through social privilege. The absence of theory shifts disciplinary authority further into the obscure, privileged realm of social relationships. Arguments of the sort made in "The Doppler Effect" demonstrate how a paranoia with critical disciplinarity substitutes scrutiny for the word of the expert. There is no option here: one must believe Somol and Whiting's claim that Robert Mitchum's performative ease is preferable to the labored theatrics of Robert De Niro's 'method acting.'[48] Without consensus around the basis for judgment and an absence of a procedural framework, the design of affective experience becomes a rhetorical exercise. The curation of affects reintroduces authorship, where design mastery confuses the production of atmospheric effects with affective production. Ultimately, affective production turns the design of affects into the staging of effects.

Procedural autonomy: drawing

The development of computational design processes during the 1990s coincided with a broader disciplinary rethinking of architecture's relationship to broader societal changes. Like post-critical discourse, autonomy was rejected in the digital because of the limited capacity for past design methods to address all sorts of natural or fabricated contexts.[49] Lynn's books *Folding in Architecture* (1993), *Animate Form* (1999), and *Folds, Bodies & Blobs* (2004) led the way by searching for design methods that moved beyond the formal limitations of semiotics. The problems of semiotics encompassed the predilection for contradiction, fatigue with "linguistic constructions," and a concern with "ideology of postmodernism."[50] Turning to Deleuze, Lynn used the digital toolset to counter how the prefiguring of form in semiotic design methods limited architecture's agency.[51] Architects Reiser & Umemoto echoed this sentiment, suggesting that architecture had been more concerned with "judgment and asking what the thing is, which has been the dominant mode of questioning in contemporary practice from approaches as divergent as historical postmodernism, deconstructionism, and critical practice."[52] Deleuze's theory of production circumvented the semiotic concern with meaningful objects by focusing on the conditions of formation. To quote Lynn: "The move from . . . meaning to machine, is a necessary shift . . . if one is to tap the potential of abstract machines such as computational motion geometry and time-based, dynamic force simulations."[53]

Lynn's discursive genius lay in merging key Deleuzian concepts of the virtual with the formal possibilities of the digital toolset. Deleuzian virtuality provides a different concept of form from that established by semiotics. For Massumi, semiotics is prejudiced because it constructs an "entire vocabulary . . . from theories of signification that are still wedded to structure even across irreconcilable differences."[54] Using the term 'real-but-abstract,' Massumi describes Deleuzian virtuality as a condition of "pure relationality, the interval of change, the in-itself of transformation."[55] These conditions of formation are real given they can be said to be in the world, but also abstract, being without fixed and explicit form.[56] Deleuzian abstraction differs from modernist methods of figural erasure because it is not interested in transcendental, essential form. Rather, the real-but-abstract nature of the virtual describes a field of pure potentiality.[57] An object is an after-effect of affect, a "residue of a process of change, from which it [the object] stands out.[58]

As previously argued, the digital differs from post-critical and social advocacy by using the drawing rather than text as the primary medium by which to translate affect. Eric Shouse's useful summary of affect in "Feeling, Motion, Affect" (2005) demonstrates how much easier it is to give a textual description of this term. The beauty of text is that it tends to operate retrospectively.[59] Design does not have this luxury, because design must produce things. As Robin Evans argues in his seminal essay "Translations from Drawing to Building" (1997), architectural production is problematic because it is one of the most heavily mediated design practices.[60] This circumstance is a consequence of the size and complexity of architectural objects, which makes it practically impossible to design without drawing objects to scale. Without saying as much, Evans identifies how scale makes the architectural drawing a space of profound transformation. In architecture, the projective demands placed on design meant that the digital's absolute investment in the drawing was not without risk. Digital practice attempted to ameliorate this risk by positing the digital drawing as a workable simulation of the conditions sponsoring form.[61] Simulation escapes semiotics because, representationally speaking, the form of the final architectural object is "inchoate"; it "emerges from the process, derivative of a movement that exceeds it."[62] Digital discourse attempted to solve the problem of semiotics by relating Deleuzian virtuality to the 'virtual' space of the computer. In this respect, Lynn's animated diagram was a fundamentally different type of drawing. In fact, Lynn's diagram represented a radical deployment of Evans' call "to use the transitive, commutative properties of the drawing to better effect."[63] By avoiding the act of re-presenting objects according to established formal tropes, Lynn posited digital form as an after-effect of an authentic mode of production. To achieve this quality, the animated diagram exploited two newfound capacities of the digital drawing. The first capacity involves an argument for novel form, while the second alters the categorical understanding of form from typologies to taxonomies. Formal novelty embraced the rhetoric of production to propose an avant-garde practice without the ideological failings typically apportioned to early modernism. Process avoids avant-garde idealism through a capacity to simulate real-world processes.

If ideology resides in an ability to control what the object signifies, then the provisional nature of the generative drawing removed ideology by making it difficult to author form. The added capacity to recalibrate the drawing to modify and adjust the final object was equally as important, because form making became a question of variability and permutations. An autonomy based on formal types prefigures form, making objects symbolic or emblematic. The generative diagram reset the formal knowledge of architectural objects from typologies to taxonomies. Jeffery Kipnis refers to Lynn's processes as a formal manifold where the classification of objects occurs as families rather than idealized antecedents.[64] Herein lies the significance of Lynn's essay "Variations on the Rowe Complex" (1994).[65] Attacking autonomy through Colin Rowe, this essay refutes the definition of the modernist diagram as a signifier of an ideal type. Lynn's diagram freed objects from *a priori* logics of any favored theory, inspiring a mode of judgment where critique focuses on a facility for production. If the formal mutability of the animated diagram comes close to the weight Kundera apportions to lived experience, then the operation of the digital toolset as a manifold makes drawing digitally a site of what Kundera might refer to as Nietzschean return.[66]

John Rajchman's *Constructions* (1998) provides a formal analogy through which to understand the virtual. Through Rajchman, the virtual is "a world that is disunified, incongruous, composed of multiple divergent paths . . . that . . . are quite real, even though they are not actualized."[67] This precondition of form contextualizes philosopher Andrew Benjamin's claim that the drawing is "a melancholic space."[68] The formal recycling seen in semiotic appropriation uses the drawing as a site of "attempted recovery or overcoming of loss."[69] The challenge issued to semiotic design methods embodies a fundamental shift in the architectural drawing

away from illustrations of the already known towards processes of selective production. The use of digital space to simulate form making resets this 'melancholic space' toward production. This resetting of the drawing is important, because when "the incomplete is viewed as a mark of production then the incomplete has its own generative capacity."[70] If one equates paths with lines, Rajchman's formal description of the virtual recasts digital design as a method to select lines from these multiple divergent paths. In the first instance, these lines are representationally abstract, but the digital toolset can inform the drawing "surface . . . in a particular transformable and deformable manner."[71]

Lynn's alignment of digital design practice to the Deleuzian virtuality was made possible by using the animation software Maya® to mimic the type of formal production that comes when contextual forces deform and transform matter. Significantly, Lynn's opportunistic use of Maya® in *Animate Form* forged a new type of architectural drawing where matter was animated and distorted according to forces either embedded in or external to the standard geometric primitives sourced from the modeling menu. In certain projects, Lynn collapsed force and form into the one entity. Architectural form resulted from skinning the collective volume described by the interaction of multiple primitives as they moved through the project site. The site was a more abstract affair in the projects that separated force and form. In these projects architecture resulted from the way in which an animated field of deforming contextual forces transformed a more complex initial form modeled from the standard primitives.

To the uninitiated eye, the standard primitives in Maya® are similar to the geometric figures used in the past. The distinguishing aspect of Lynn's animated diagram was that it fundamentally altered how one produced formal complexity. Previously, formal complexity relied on additive and subtractive techniques. Generally, the resulting objects bore the trace of the procedural figures used to produce architectural form. Lynn's use of Maya®, when coupled with the often-opaque secondary design decisions used in the tectonic articulation of the object, obscured any resemblance between procedural form and the product of that process. In *Animate Form*, Lynn's use of Maya® as a generative toolset was important in presenting the animated diagram as the "interaction of a multiplicity of abstract statements, [where] signifiers emerge in a more dynamic manner than mere representational effects might."[72] The idea that signification was something that comes after the production of the architectural object required form initially to have a non-symbolic matter-of-factness. As implied by the term 'abstract statement,' the standard primitives used in the process had no shared cultural or disciplinary lineage. The animated digital drawing allowed one to understand form as procedural material rather than an encultured semiotic figure.

Maya® made it possible for the first time to draw form as being a consequence of emergent, non-material, contextual forces. As the term 'matter' suggests, the representation of the transformative capability of dynamic contextual forces to shape new and novel architectural forms required one to rebrand the role of form in the drawing. Using Deleuze's notion of the 'asignifying' concept, Lynn divested form of any encultured meaning. By making any form in the process merely one of many components and non-formal forces within the drawing, Lynn changed drawn form into a representation of matter.[73] Borrowing another of Deleuze's terms, 'abstract statement,' the appearance of form in the animated diagram became merely a functioning component within a 'machinic,' generative digital process.[74]

There is no shortage of those willing to argue for the unique value of the topological geometry found in most computer modeling software. For Massumi, this is a geometry where "form *emerges* from the process, far from enclosing it."[75] In the essay "Notes on the Line" (2013), Benjamin argues that topological spline lines generate form that "is no longer presented as disjunctive but conjunctive."[76] The geometric pliability of conjunctive form also gives lines an abstract representational openness such that "the [computer] screen allows for architecture's

materiality to be investigated."[77] Irrespective of these advantages, the drawing is still only a representation of the dynamic processes operating in the physical world. Digital architecture, like Affect Theory, may well validate artifacts by using movement as the guiding principle of production. In Affect Theory, movement establishes an embodied knowledge that comes from the body being in, or part of, the world. The paradox of embodied knowledge is that its resolution of Descartes' mind-body model simply inverts which of these two terms should be privileged. Lynn's animated diagram may come as close as is possible to simulating this type of embodied production. The value of simulation is that it evacuates authorship by providing a clean transmission between drawing and object. Architectural objects may well resonate with the embodied lived experience of what occurs when working on the screen. They might equally produce certain types of embodied atmospheric conditions. However, the animated diagram remains only a representation of the world as a complex and sophisticated interrelated contextual simulation. Scale haunts architectural production, frustrating the ambition that artifacts might be able to encapsulate a truly uneffected, affective mode of production. The uncertainties of mediation only increase when architectural drawings attempt to engender experience. Drawings mediate both the physical experience of designing as well as the artifacts they envision. Scale questions whether an architectural simulation of context is nothing more than a sign of Deleuzian affect. This circumstance is problematic given "affect in the Deleuzian sense is asubjective and anti-representational."[78] Any hint of representational artifice questions the claim of procedural authenticity. Faced with these uncertainties, it is unsurprising that architects willingly trade the object's sovereignty for text's gift of legitimacy. The representational slippages that are part of every mediated translation from drawing to object compromise the notion of indexical fidelity and thus the possibility of representing a clean mode of production.[79]

The digital process shows the difficulty of overcoming the mediating effects of scale. It isn't only that reliance on text makes Affect Theory better at retrospective analysis of an action or actions. There is little difference in whether precedent or process generates form. The idealization of movement and process returns the interaction of text and action to the conventions implied in Foucault's semantic theory. Any claim of authenticity tends to restore the importance of text. The idealization of production in both digital discourse and Affect Theory negotiates the process-artifact relationship through a textual accordance to a specific theory. The return of Affect Theory is, inescapably, a return of theory. Herein lies the paradox of the architectural appropriation of Deleuze's theory of production: theory still legitimizes design.

The last twenty-five years have witnessed a concerted effort to remove the formal effects of text through the rhetoric of situated, real-world production. This type of production attempted to collapse the space between design, as an action, and formal mediation of that action. The post-critical and social advocacy movements based judgment on a critical response to a textual description of contextually specific design issues. The digital avoided objects altogether, allowing critique to fix judgment to the process. In all three cases, production disentangles judgment from a critique of the object's capacity to embody theoretical concepts. Production effectively separated design on one side; and theory, judgment, and critique on the other. Different tactics have been used to entreat the 'real,' but these tactics ultimately make design reactive to text. The inability to escape text is explained by Hardt and Negri when arguing that Deleuze and Guattari did not describe the constituent parts of affective formation: "the creative elements and the radical ontology of the production of the social remain insubstantial and impotent."[80] Massumi attempts to address this issue, but ultimately Affect Theory is also trapped in a fundamental paradox: any ability to sponsor production is to *effect* affect. Knowledge of formation and production comes through reflection; it arrives retrospectively to what has just passed. Clearly, Hardt and Negri identify that Deleuzian thinking does not automatically provide a projective mechanism.

Irrespective of the temporal shifts and subtle changes in form, the exchange between design and text remains stubbornly the same.

Repetition and Bataille's "l'informe"

Andrew Benjamin, in *Architectural Philosophy: Repetition, Function, Alterity* (2000), suggests that, while "the complex movement of historical time" ensures that the functional requirements of architecture are repeatable, their final formal expression is not.[81] This emphasis on the variation of function over time reveals the disciplinary inevitability of disruption.[82] The thought that architecture should expect formal difference replicates an admittedly banal anecdotal observation that the broader community expects architecture to furnish unique solutions to specific design problems. A significant proportion of architecture's social *largesse*, both from within and external to the discipline, relies on the production of objects that exceed the immediate, pragmatic concerns of the design brief. The expectation of *something additional* means that architects work beyond a simple 'problem-solution' paradigm.

The desire to mitigate theory's influence on design is not the same as arguing for its complete erasure. The sublimated idealism behind production merely expresses that knowledge always forms. The question behind the exchange between theory and design concerns how artifacts are altered by adjustments in the function and judgment of a specific process. Theory's return requires an intellectual reconciliation between its lightness and the weight it bestows upon the embodied experience of designing and a lived experience of built objects. Elizabeth Grosz approaches such a reconciliation when she writes there is no value in the "eternal status of truth, or the more provisional status of knowledge . . . [but in] highly provisional or short-term effects . . . [that] may continue to be read for generations."[83] Grosz raises an interesting idea. No matter how explicit theory is, the *affects* constructed over time indicate the limits of authorship. Obviously, one still requires strategic responses to theory's return. Here, Deleuze's notion of repetition as "a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to that which cannot be replaced" is useful.[84] because return focuses not on the meanings of things but rather on the mechanisms by which things are exchanged. Deleuze notes:

> Repetition as a conduct and as a point of view concerns non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities. Reflections, echoes, doubles, and souls do not belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence; and it is no more possible to exchange one's soul than it is to substitute real twins for one another. If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. There is, therefore, an economic difference between the two.[85]

Grosz is more inclined to initiate the type of economic exchange that Deleuze calls 'theft' or a 'gift.' The notion of repetition assumes that equivalency is not possible—there is always a sense of loss. The subtle difference between a commercial exchange and the logics governing theft or the gift is revealed in Rajchman's permissiveness to formation. This permissiveness rejects critique on the basis that one must transgress "a supposed order or paternity" until one has the courage to refuse "to affirm new possibilities through a virtual construction that says 'yes' as well as 'and.'"[86] Rajchman's naturalization of design is as logically untenable as it is problematic. Naturalization eliminates a basis for critique of the process or final object. These seamless, 'smooth' design acts do not entertain deliberate disruptive political acts.[87] Grosz provides a mode of production without resorting to Rajchman's autonomy of pure production. Instead, Grosz observes:

> [T]exts could . . . scatter thoughts and images into different linkages or new alignments without necessarily destroying them. Ideally they should produce unexpected intensities, peculiar sites of indifference, new connections with other objects, and thus generate affective and conceptual transformations that problematize, challenge, and move beyond existing intellectual and pragmatic frameworks.[88]

Grosz expands the usual framing of Deleuzian thinking by including text within the logics of production. When text asks how a process can 'act' critically, the basis of a critical return arrives in the procedural expression of the artefact. Grosz's quote actively encourages a disruptive mode of return that incorporates how production occurs and performance is measured. Grosz avoids treating artifacts as a mode of linguistic representation, while simultaneously identifying the disruptive capacity of knowledge. Artifacts, as either text or objects, no longer result from the cessation of movement; instead, they are contingencies of action.

The credibility of the post-critical project rests with rejecting theory as a basis for design decisions and critique. This position responds to the capacity of text to preside over or at the beginning of the design act. At the same time, the development of the disciplinary knowledge of form and process insists on some return of theory, critique, and judgment. If theory is a "scheme or system of . . . statements held as an . . . account of a group of facts," then what is required is an intellectual shift away from theory as fact."[89] In Peter Eisenman's introduction to Anthony Vidler's *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (2008), Eisenman argues that Vidler's "idea of a posthistory . . . implies that there is a limit to every discipline."[90] This limiting, or what Eisenman terms 'bracketing,' offers the possibility that theory has performative and experiential consequences. Eisenman's concession to post-criticality's argument with autonomy comes by a tacit acceptance that one must discard theory's status as an absolute truth.

Andrew Benjamin offers a second counter-argument to Rajchman's procedural autonomy in the first chapter of *Architectural Philosophy*. The larger objective of this book is to reconcile disciplinary autonomy with Deleuzian production by erasing the distinction between difference and repetition. Benjamin uses these terms within the single schema, arguing that architectural design differs from other design disciplines through programmatic repetition and formal variation. Alterity, meaning "the possibility of otherness," involves the interplay between time and function that causes a condition of repetition that guarantees a difference in form.[91] Each design act deals with "the nature of already existent relations . . . [where the] already present—the inscription of the given—is the operation of repetition."[92] Judgment is allowed to avoid the disciplinary nostalgia of precedent form because precedent "reinforces the ascription of loss."[93] Precedent is only valuable by its refusal to duplicate the already built. Importantly, alterity modifies Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition by adding a way to assess difference. Not only does Benjamin combine the generative capacity of the toolset with a disciplinary knowledge, but critical judgment operates retrospectively. If every new formal expression of program is contextually situated, then it is the history of these interactions that makes a critical discussion of the object in context possible. The value of precedent lies in the way in which program intersects with all types of physical and social contexts. More importantly, alterity is a relational, taxonomic knowledge that allows the design act to sit outside disciplinarity; it neither dictates what or how form is processed. Alterity, instead, folds critique into design through the appreciation of the material effects of lived socio-cultural, economic, and political consequences of past programmatic incarnations. It allows design to operate before artifacts are positioned relative to the field. Judgment, operating through a rich array of critical frameworks, avoids formal predetermination while identifying the 'placed-ness' of architectural artifacts as a basis for a projective disciplinary practice.

Grosz's inclusion of text into the design act, together with Benjamin's comparative evaluation of alterity, place a value on the potentially disruptive effects of text. There are, of course, operational differences: Grosz's basis of judgment makes text affective, while Benjamin's uses it for to determine disciplinary differences. However, both locate critique within the space of ideation. The inclusion of text within the design process is neither a validation of design through theoretical rectitude or design for design's sake. The operative dimension of text recalls, in fact, Georges Bataille's notion of "l'informe," which is 'defined' in the following way:

> A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.[94]

Bataille's work is a theory in the sense that it is a "conception or mental scheme of something to be done, or of the method of doing it."[95] Bataille's work takes an alternative or deviant trajectory to the interplay between text and action. It differs from Foucault's 'tool-box' or a theory of production, because it is an epistemological system directing an action against meaning—his is a theory of actions against theory. The intellectual consistency in Bataille's project against meaning is evident as he slips between expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative forms of text. The shift between textual forms is purely operative; it's designed to have affects. The value of Bataille's "l'informe" is not that it establishes a conceptual rule set to determine how to design, but because it is a theory of disruptive action.

Andrew Benjamin links "l'informe" to the digital toolset because, as a new representational venue for Deleuzian abstraction, it avoids prefiguring form.[96] Benjamin references Plato's *khora* to locate the generative function of "l'informe" within the moment of ideation and formation.[97] While disciplinarity is the basis of critique that makes design operative as well as generative, its status in the process is less certain. Alterity combines difference and repetition but the former arrives through production, while the latter arrives with a critical judgment of disciplinary variation. Critique returns to give an account of the artifact while form making remains an open space of production. In this scheme, critique sits both outside and over the design. Benjamin's text is nuanced such that the relationship between difference and repetition is not sequential. The staging of design and critique may shift between that of procedural oversight and as a comparative tool of analysis and assessment. However, the more significant implication of this schema is that critique's job is primarily concerned with the artifact more than legitimacy.

Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois' reading of "l'informe" alters Benjamin's sequencing of design and judgment; "l'informe" is "[n]othing in and of itself, the 'formless' has only operational existence: it is a performative, like obscene words, the violence of which derives less from the semantics than from the very act of their delivery."[98] Delivery is vital because affect comes from artifacts situated in the world. Design, as a projective act, still approaches the artifact through a critical awareness of the affects that are effected by difference. Like Benjamin, Bois and (by implication) Krauss establish the contingency of the 'real' as a valid departure point while acknowledging the value of temporality and relativity. They also tacitly accept that meanings are always being exchanged and contested. However, action here involves an undoing of

meaning. The operative dimension of action is applied not to the space of ideation but to the reception of the artifact. Bois and Krauss exploit the representational gap between the form and meaning of the sign. While their application of "l'informe" operates as a disruption to the established theories surrounding modern art, this understanding of artifacts is transferable to design. Thus, *Formless: A User's Guide* (1997) represents the most compelling example of how a deviant theory of action achieves the operative undoing of the social and cultural processes and forms that mask deeper transcendent ideologies. The resistance to semiotic closure rejects the representational process of theoretical ideation in the move from meaning to form. Bois and Krauss identify and exploit the fundamental weakness of semiology by challenging existing figurative structures, where communication involves a clean semiotic transfer between sign and signified.

Bois and Krauss's use of "l'informe" does nothing to prevent the designer and critic from being two separate individuals. The value of their reading is that it embraces Bataille's antagonism to any monolithic intellectual construct. The operational undoing of meaning does not distinguish between the form of communication and the form of the artifact. It is possible to disrupt all procedural and communicative modes of representation. Benjamin's approach to "l'informe" differs from Krauss and Bois in that "l'informe" sits within the process of ideation, whereas Krauss and Bois turn their attention to the reception of the artifact. The focus of critique on the object as a contextual response occurs in the act of design, thus reducing the temptation to have design and critique work independently. The capacity for critique and design to work together dispenses with the need for theory to be a semantic rule set, where the textual form of theory and critique collapses, allowing the "universe . . . to take shape."[99] Obviously, critique, as a reaction to the 'real,' acts as a tool of assessment that is at the service of design. Unlike theory, where legitimacy restricts design, the negotiation of the actual has no need for a set of rules to interpret the world. This critical functioning allows form to operate beyond the polemics of the 'critical' object because the ensuing objects are not representations of an argument, but instead attack the symbolic and performative requirements placed on form.

Conclusion: design-based research

Kundera's writing typically avoids definite answers. When asking "which one is positive, weight or lightness," Kundera introduces the reader into a space between extremes; a space between experience and text, lightness and weight.[100] His protagonists collectively exemplify the range of inversions and inflexions that populate how individuals might negotiate the movement from experience to theory. Of course, Kundera focuses only on the movement between action, event, and text.

Robin Evans makes it impossible to argue that architectural drawings are natural or faithful indexical representations. The difficulty with architecture is that assessment, both during and after the design act, requires judgment through these modes of representation. Design-based research only exacerbates this problem because a desire to legitimize the object often uses text to see past or through the medium or the operational or formal consequences of the process. At the same time, the 'job' of representation is also to propagandize process and artifact. The 'creative' repatriation of the rhetoric only makes ethical sense when employed within an ethos of experimentation that imitates a mode of production that operates to disrupt the dogma constructed around architecture's diverse range of theoretical and critical positions. Disciplinarity reappears here only if there is an ethical commitment to experimentation. The ethics of experimentation explain why critique must sit above the theoretical predetermination of form.

If theory's traditional role removes the problem of representation, then it comes at the cost of limiting design's generative potential. The denial of any theory as absolute relocates the

representational mediation of the artifact away from a quest for legitimacy. In this paradigm, the incorporation of text and image into the process comes through different, but connected, modes of communication. The inclusion of drawing and text as critical and generative tools refuses the notion that images and drawings are less sophisticated than text. If theory alone cannot drive design, then design should not be presented as the sole agent acting within the drawing or artifact. Instead, drawings and text can operate as valid modes of communication and as productive components of design. The disciplinary validation of processes and artifacts no longer depends on procedural fidelity, but on a willingness to investigate how individual processes solicit certain types of artifacts. The design act resists meaning by willingly playing with, and perhaps even abusing, text. The call for disciplinary judgment, found in the work of Grosz, Benjamin, Krauss, and Bois, is vital in appreciating how critique allows for alternative and even deviant artifacts. In this sense, deviation restores weight to both theory and design.

Notes

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