From Autonomy to *Autonomy-within-Relationality*
Alternatives for Architecture after the Global Financial Crisis.

Gerard Reinmuth and Andrew Benjamin

In the decade since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), there has been an upheaval within architecture as both the discipline and profession reorganize their relation and boundaries. For the profession, the key focus has been on how architecture might be valued in the 4th decade of the Neoliberal project and how, working within it, questions of agency can be addressed. For the discipline more broadly, the line of enquiry has been less clear. Here we make a proposition concerning how that line might be developed.[1]

The proposition, which will involve forging a productive interconnection between reworked versions of the concepts of 'autonomy' and 'relationality', is framed by an analysis of three projects by Coop Himmelblau. These projects mark both the start of the neoliberal era, its consolidation in the early 1980s and its first major test in the GFC. Starting with Coop Himmelblau's experimental projects from the late 1960s, *Restless Architecture* (or *Restless Spheres*) came to define a particular form of experimental practice. *Restless Architecture* (*Restless Sphere*) records the practice founders walking through Vienna in a 4m diameter sphere. This performance work explored the possibilities of pneumatic construction as a window into broader questions concerning the evolution of the city and the impacts of different forms of mobility and enclosure on social organisation and interaction. Here, what counts as architecture has a specific determination. Architecture functions as a type of intervention. Rather than focusing directly on design, there is the continuity of experimentation that had, at least initially, a directly experiential or phenomenological component. Implicit in *Restless Sphere* is the suggestion that architecture might open other forms of life based on movement and experience. At the same time, the sphere – in a separate iteration where the sphere is attached to a building [Figure 1] - incorporated a structural system, parts of which would reappear in the subsequent *Rooftop Remodelling Falkestrasse*. So while the identification of this project appears in the first instance to be the object, what was at stake conceptually - experimentation linked to movement within the city - meant this identification was not central.

It could be said that in the *Restless Architecture* project there was an ambivalence in terms of architecture's identification (perhaps self-identification) with the object. This ambivalence vanishes however as Coop Himmelblau's architectural project developed into a more conventional practice model where the object is taken as the defining point - architecture is equated with the project of completion, thus the built. Within that frame of reference, the object of architecture is the completed building.[2] In this context, *Rooftop Remodelling Falkestrasse* 1983-7 could be considered a built manifestation of ideas developed in the decade prior. [Figure 2]. The project was sited at the roof level of an existing building occupied by a legal firm. Yet the addition is not determined by the organizational logic of the existing building. [Figure3] There is clearly an addition; a parasite that introduced a new logic within its own construction and thus sets up the question of the relation between the existing and the new. The complexity of this relation is revealed in the drawings, which have a persistent logic allowing for the parasite but on further analysis reveal that the sense of disconnection from the existing is in the end quite minor. In fact, the separation is more apparent than real.

This observation reveals that the question of relation and/or non-relation depends – to some extent at least - upon the mode of representation; for example, the photograph (where a relation of "non-relation" appears greatest) and the drawn elevation and section (where the dissonance is vastly reduced). By tracing a line through these projects, it can be seen how the potential within *Restless Architecture* allowed for an opening beyond the object, but decades later came to center on the object.

It has to be acknowledged that the addition's reception underscored its presence as an object. It should also be noted that the historical significance of the addition is its refusal to identify with the project of architectural postmodernism prevalent at the time. It did not involve the reuse of historical styles in ways that linked innovation to stylistic decontextualization and subsequent modes or ornamentation.[3]   For Peter Cook, the original *Rooftop Remodelling* project was 'heroic'.[4] Similarly so for Anthony Vidler, who interpreted the addition in symbolic terms, noting the of-repeated motif of a 'wing'. For him, 'the motif seems at once to echo angelic hope and recognize historical catastrophe,' going on to add that the addition provides a space for including 'a population estranged from their once comfortable houses and seeking shelter beneath less historically determined roofs.'[5] The *Rooftop Remodelling* project's incorporation into a group of architects and buildings that came to be identified with 'deconstruction' was based neither on its symbolic dimension not on its 'heroism' but in terms of its transformation of what counted as the architectural object. While there was a transformation, deconstruction in architecture was nonetheless instrumental in securing architecture's dentification with the object. It is that overall transformation that leads to Coop Himmelblau's BMW Welt, a projected designed in 2006 and 2007 at the height of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC).[Figure 4]

While Coop Himmelblau's earlier work could be seen in the context of the Paris Spring in 1969 and the questioning of power structures in its aftermath, the BMW project revealed that in the intervening two decades a significant shift had taken place in regard to their concerns and modes of operation. *BMW Welt* was unapologetically designed as a shrine to consumption; an extraordinary formal repertoire enabled by the new computation technologies and presented with the latest in representation techniques. This was a project about selling cars and being "sold" or marketed just as fiercely to both clients and the profession – all so that new BMW owners could partake in a highly choreographed process to receive their new vehicles. A question then arises: what is the difference between these three projects? What is there in the juxtaposition of these images? More broadly, what happened to architecture in these four decades? Overall, the conjecture here is that the differences between *Restless Sphere*, *Rooftop Remodelling Falkestrasse* and *BMW Welt* and thus a set of related images separated by 35 years, stage the crisis in architecture today – a crisis that took specific form with the onset of the GFC and its aftermath.

The financial crisis commenced a large-scale re-organisation of the economy that left many far wealthier than before, while others are yet to and may never recover. This redistribution of wealth has reinforced pre-crisis financial strata so radically that for Thomas Piketty the current disparities in wealth are similar to the ones found in society prior to the industrial revolution.[6] The shift in wealth as described by Piketty – from a flat middle-class through the 1950s and 1960s to the vast inequities present today – can be seen as refracted through the different projects by Coop Himmelblau. The redistribution in wealth towards the already wealthy brings a significant number of related issues into play, not least of which has been the current state of the planet in the aftermath of that wealth accrual's dependence on fossil fuel use. The reality of operating – designing, writing, judging – within the 'now' that still bears the impact of the GFC, has to be linked to the reality of working within a setting that creates and recreates the conditions of catastrophic climate change. All these elements construct and sustain this 'now' as the contemporary. While that reality does not sanction a singular response, and while it has given rise to diverse if not contradictory political and architectural reactions, what endures is that insistent reality. This is the predicament within which architecture occurs. This 'now' is neither modern nor postmodern. Another conception of historical time – another temporality – has to hold sway. As an opening, it has to be further argued that architecture in the age of the Anthropocene – allowing architecture this 'now' - would cause both architecture's history to be rewritten and its practice reconceived.

While this is the setting in which to locate the design strategies evident in the development of Coop Himmelblau over four decades, the more important claim here is that they stage a more general condition. The first part of the argument is that those strategies have a necessary and strategic *indifference* to the contemporary within which architecture occurs. Indifference, however, is always a possible stance within architecture. It is not as though an architecture of indifference fails to be architecture. Here, its significance resides in what it brings with it. Indifference is contemporaneous with both the continual identification, firstly, of architecture with the object – architecture becomes the building – and then secondly the location of the progressive and thus the innovative with the building's appearance and its use of materials. Even though Coop Himmelblau's early work pointed in another direction - one in which design, material possibility, movement, conjoined to an operational concern

with city created a network of possible activities - which while allowing for building *did not conflate architecture with built form*. However, that project was systematically abandoned in the name of a radical sophistication in the creation of architectural objects. Indifference and object orientated architecture have a necessary reciprocity.

If there is a simple summation that can be drawn from their trajectory then it resides in the claim that architecture's identification with the object, once coupled to the object's indifference to its predicament, involves a form of separation. While there is a coalescence between separation and indifference, that connection alludes to the possibility of autonomy, even if it is defined by a profound failure to understand what autonomy entails. (And, as significantly, that from which autonomy is envisaged.) Hence there is an important logic at work here. Indifference and separation are, despite their clear to the contrary, modes of relationality. And yet their foundering, what will emerge as their inability to capture the force of relationality, opens up the possibility both for relationality's radical reconfiguration and allowing that reconfiguration to yield another thinking of the discipline. It is the primacy and ineliminability of relationality – relationality that defines both continuity and different modalities of discontinuity - that has to be maintained.

In more general theoretical terms, the insistence on relationality means that *the object becomes an after effect of a network of relations*. This is the tenant central to relational architecture. Relationality is understood not as an exception, but rather is an approach to the given that is underpinned by a simple proposition: *any singularity is the after-effect of a network of relations*.[7] Not only does an insistence on the already present nature of relations allows for a different mode of description, it occasions another approach to creation. However, while underscoring the centrality of relationality is essential once the architectural is no longer identified with the object, a fundamental part of the project to be developed here is that relationality does not have a singular quality. So, while architectural *post-object* can be understood in relational terms, it is an insistence on relationality that will allow a thinking of the architectural that has a critical relation to the prevailing orders. Relationality is both a mode of description and the ground of evaluation.

In accepting the primacy and ineliminability of relationality, a return can be made to the question of agency that has been a preoccupation of much of the discourse in architecture for at least the last twenty years under the guise of a return to concerns about autonomy. Yet, with this understanding of relationality, it does not follow that there is a need to abandon the concept of autonomy. Indeed, the opposite is the case. Autonomy has to be rethought within a setting created by the primacy, and thus the originality, of relationality. For while the history of autonomy and its presence within architecture remains an important topic, it is equally true that simply maintaining the centrality of that history cannot dominate discussions of autonomy, and it can be argued, may in fact limit their potential. As will emerge from the ensuing engagement with a number of recent architectural positions and projects, what has to be abandoned is the identification of autonomy with the interplay of separation and indifference. The aim of this essay is to engage and work through different conceptions of autonomy set within a reconfiguration of relationality. Working with the particularity of the contemporary is that it provides the setting in which it is possible to understand that in relation to which autonomy is both possible and necessary.

Autonomy

Addressing different conceptions of the autonomy in the context of architecture post-2008 can be framed by considering Peter Eisenman's defence of the conception of architectural autonomy. His overall claim is a significant one, namely that,

> Autonomy must be understood as a singularity that for its preservation requires it to be cut off from its previous modes of legitimation.[8]

Two questions arise directly from this formulation: Firstly, what does the 'cut' entail? Secondly, how is the term 'modes of legitimation' to be understood? Answering these questions, while identifying the significance of Eisenman's claim opens beyond its immediate concerns, is predicated upon the recognition that 'previous modes of legitimation' becomes the framework provided as much by the conventions of programme as they are by the logic of capital. Thinking both is essential in order to understand architecture 'now', noting that there was a certain reluctance on Eisenman's part

to pursue the consequences of his own position.[9] Equally, however, another mode of legitimation cannot just invoke a different ground. There needs to be another logic at work. What this entails is that the 'cut', to use Eisenman's term, and which signals the presence of no more than a form of separation, has to be more. It has to become an opening; an opening that brings with it the need to think the primacy of relationality insofar as this 'cut' involves neither mere separation let alone indifference. It identifies the possibility of thinking separation as a mode of relationality. As a result, the *relation itself has to be thought*, rather than the consequences of the separation simply assumed. The latter is the form of separation that quickly becomes indifference.

While not here endorsing Eisenman's eventual conclusion - in which autonomy becomes mere separation - what endures as important is to hold to 'preservation' and 'separation' and thus to hold to what will continue to be developed as *autonomy-within-relationality.* In order to demonstrate how this becomes the version of autonomy that is appropriate 'now', it is essential to approach it through a critical engagement with other possibilities and thus other forms of autonomy.

In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the concomitant presence of the growing climate crisis and always aware of the intertwining of these conditions with the aftermath of the turn to the digital - the continual identification of both architecture and architectural innovation with development of ever more intricate and often astounding objects was questioned. In 2008, as the financial crisis unfolded, a number of books, articles and projects emerged that attempted to stage other possibilities - possibilities that maintained architecture, but which refused to define architecture within a framework that was politically and economically 'legitimated' by the network of relations that both sanctioned and occasioned both the financial and the climate crisis.

Given the impact of the GFC on the 'profession' it is not surprising that one way of declaring a version of autonomy was to insist on the profession's capacity – perhaps even obligation – to rethink its own strategies; rethinking the present as a form of separation. In this regard, Jeremy Till argued for a position that while drawing on what he described as 'the febrile architectural intelligence that defines the profession', moves away from the identification of architecture with the object – what Till calls the 'product'- by insisting on 'process'. Hence, he writes in this regard that:

> The architect(ure) of process is a role of active engagement and active directing; it is about taking a lead yet at the same time relinquishing control. It is about having an imaginative vision but executing it in the name of others.[10]

While such a position is laudable on the level of its intent to create locales and objects of interest and humanity, its naivety is nonetheless astounding. It leaves both unanalysed and thus unnoticed that setting that generated architecture's predicament in the first place - the economic-political setting with which architecture is axiomatically in relation. That relation does not allow for a clear distinction to be drawn between 'product' and 'process'. Autonomy as an intended differentiation merely thought in terms of *production*, as though it existed in simple opposition to process, is in the end far from satisfactory. Relationality is inadequately configured within it. Despite its intention, it still focuses, albeit with a slight shift in perspective on the object; an object indifferent to the 'now' in which it is occurring.

Politics of the Envelope vs Parametricism

Alejandro Zaera-Polo also formulated a counter position to the predicament in which architecture found itself. Zaera-Polo's thesis, articulated in 'The Politics of the Envelope' and published in the fall of 2008, is that the profession's loss of domain and subsequent loss of agency can be resisted by focusing on the envelope of a building - the only part he contends, that remains firmly in the architect's control. The claim is straightforward. He argues that as the 'building envelope is the border, the frontier, the edge, the enclosure, and the joint: it is inevitably loaded with political content'.[11] This gives rise to what he goes on to describe as a 'whole new politics of faciality'.[12] Importantly, what is occurring here still maintains the identity of the architectural with the object, albeit one resisting, or diverting, the forces of capital by working exclusively on the envelope. It becomes pure architecture and thus another version of autonomous as architecture.

Zaera-Polo/FOA's Ravensborne College [Figures 5,6] was designed concurrent with the writing of the *Politics of the Envelope* and was completed in 2010 in the direct aftermath of the GFC. (Figure 7) The Ravensborne College project emerged from the relocation of the college to Greenwich, London, an urban regeneration play focused on co-location of knowledge economy organisations. In line with the increasing neoliberalisation of the education sector, the College anticipated that the Greenwich campus could make concrete its desires for students to occupy a 'learning landscape' that fused technology, space and time - narrowing the gap between education and industry. FOA's brief was to bring to life rhetoric around 'blended learning strategies' that digitize many classes in the interests of delivering 'on call' education for students working part time, of which the outcome would be flexible learning spaces that privilege constant movement and resist differentiation.

This focus on new forms of education led to a building interior consisting of a counterpoint between a complex circulation system and the learning spaces themselves – spaces that contain few discrete areas and which, when required, are clearly secondary to an overall logic that privileges flexibility and indifference to specific forms of use. This is deregulated space par excellence where constant movement across a deterritorialised landscape is the dominant logic. The undifferentiated interior is clad in an envelope comprising thousands of small tiles that, in their arrangement, create windows at seemingly random locations dependent on the overall logic of the tile pattern. In Zaera Polo's argument for a correlation between the tiles in the way they represent his understanding of a society - in which 'the articulation between individual and society, part and whole, is drawn by influences and attachments across positions, agencies and scales that transcend both the individuality of the part and the integrity of the whole' – this can be understood as an exemplar of Zaera-Polo's 'differentiated faciality'.[13] Indicative, for Zaera-Polo, of the affective capacity of the envelope as a form of contemporary political expression, are the 'emerging envelope geometries' which 'seem to be exploring modular differentiation as a political effect and developing alternative forms of tessellation capable of addressing emerging political forms.' And yet, what is not clear in the disjunction between the logics of the undifferentiated interior and differentiated exterior – whose organization appears lacking any dependency on the interior logics – is what Zaera-Polo is claiming in terms of the autonomy of the political subject. He writes more generally about the 'politics of the envelope' that the

> current proliferation of alternative political practices, such as trends, movements, and other affect-driven political forms, runs parallel to the development of envelopes that resist primitive models of faciality, that are no longer structured on the oppositions between front and back, private and public, or roof and wall. Once cornices, corners, and windows are no longer technically necessary, and the private and public are tangled in an increasingly complex relationship, the hierarchies of interface become more complex: the envelope has become a field where identity, security, and environmental performances intersect.[14]

Leaving aside the question of the extent to which this description of the envelope is accurate, it remains the case that the position involves a form of separation (where separation is mode of autonomy) thought purely on the level of the building.

Importantly, what is occurring in the development of a 'politics of the envelope' involves maintaining the identity of the architectural with the object and, as a result, what is also maintained is a conception of autonomy that defines the object in connection to the concomitant suspension of any determining form of relationality other than to the object itself. Present here, therefore, is an architectural instantiation of relationality's disavowal. This is the equation of the site of a projected form of autonomy with the economy of building. What is neglected is of course the economy within with the building itself is located, which is clear from Zaera-Polo's description of the building as the sole locale of the political (within and for architecture). It is premised on a reconfiguration of the object as the site of the political. Thus, remaining indifferent, not just to external relations that are also constitutive of the object, but to the possibility that those relations are, in fact, the actual locus of the political. For Zaera-Polo rather than *autonomy-within-relationality* there is the posited autonomy *within the object*. The latter is a position that collapses once the ineliminability of relationality is assumed. As a result, the position he asserts is not *political* in any sustained sense of the term, but rather, is a conception of the political as the merely oppositional – again autonomy as a mode of separation - and as such is politically ineffectual.

The identification of the autonomy of architecture with either separation or indifference, within the context of Neoliberalism, reaches its zenith in the writings of Patrik Schumacher and his argument for 'parametricism'. The position was perhaps first formally articulated at the 2008 Venice Biennale of Architecture and then explored subsequently in a series of lectures, articles and books. Schumacher claims that in parametricism, design becomes a mode or organization in which a singular organizational logic is taken to provide efficiencies. The claim is that parametricism provides an account of connection, adaptation and the integration of the invented such that it involves a 'seamless fluidity' between all the elements. What is created, that argument is, is 'akin to natural systems'.[15] The naturalization of the systems has a twofold determination. In the first instance, all particulars are defined by relations of sameness. Secondly, within the urban though equally nationally and internationally, the disequilibria of power that such systems maintained is itself naturalized (and in effect neutralized.) There is a systematic indifference to an insistent 'now'; thus, the interplay of the natural and the neutral. Movement within systems is accounted for in terms of *epigenesis* or *autopoiesis*. In Schumacher's terms,

> Parametricism holds out the possibility of a free market urbanism that produces an emergent order and local identity in a bottom up process, i.e. without relying on political or bureaucratic power.[16]

What Schumacher is referring to here is the idea of an increased flow of money predicated upon both diminution of national control and the incorporation of essential elements of monetary policy within a setting that undoes the possibility of the political (in the precise sense that politics is defined in terms contestable decisions). Yet the free flow of money – a position that links the elimination of borders to the deregulation of the banking sector - cannot be understood other than as the result of that particular political project whose aim is the severance of the link between the political and the economic. That severance works to redefine the political. Yet financial networks are not located outside the political. Nor are they evidence for the *post-political*. On the contrary, they are the political undoing of the politics of contestability. These acts are always undertaken in the name of 'deregulation'. They are therefore the expression of a particular conception or modality of autonomy. Within it, autonomy takes the form of deregulation. Deregulation is constrained to resist the possibility of re-regulation because, as noted above, it is based on those political acts that stage a severance of the political and the economic. What this means, of course, is the elimination, in fact disavowal, that any architectural setting – the city or site in its narrowest sense – of its already incorporating disequilibria of power (both economic and political) as well as its location within a 'now' defined by the ineliminability of the climate crisis.

At work here is a projected act of separation; 'parametricism' as another version of autonomy. To the extent that Schumacher's conception of autonomy, which stages the neoliberal economic project has its built correlate, then it can be found in Zaha Hadid Architects' *Dongdaemun Design Plaza* (DDP) in Seoul. [Figures 7.8] It is important to note here that the system of free-flowing and continuous circulation which underpins the relation of the DDP to its site has the after-effect of maintaining the necessity to exhibit whilst making exhibition no longer a locus of architectural engagement – such that to use the exhibition spaces to exhibit at the DDP is near impossible. The dominance of the circulation is such that at no point does either the nature of exhibition or the body's relation to art become a concern. To the extent that form is separated from programme, programme then takes on a standard and already determined mode. The tradition of programme is policed in advance. The volumetric diagram retains its hegemony and programmatic concerns remain unaddressed.

In other words, in the context of the DPP *the autonomy of form* yields programmatic repetition of the most conventional kind. In this instance function does not follow form; it is rather that they have an *indifferent relation*. As a result, what is again maintained is the identification of the architectural with the object; this time in its radical separation from programmatic concerns. What characterizes this setting is the presence of another instance of the primacy of indifference. Indifference has different modalities. The question arises of course of the possibility of another version of autonomy – one guided neither by separation nor indifference. It would be a version of autonomy that holds to the primacy of that version of relationality in which the presence of the relation guides design and endures as the locus of architectural thought. Developing his possibility necessitates taking up what has already been identified as *autonomy-within-relationality*.

Autonomy within Relationality

What then, is *autonomy within relationality*? This question has an important history. Decisive elements have already been taken up by Pier Vittorio Aureli in his *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism*.[17] Indeed, despite the differences that emerge in the following, Aureli's writings on both autonomy and the architectural in general are central to the project of developing a relational architecture.[18] In a recent paper Aureli has returned to one of Walter Benjamin's most emphatic texts – *The Destructive Character* – in which not only is there an argument for the necessity of destruction as a response to the given, that destruction is provided with an architectural or urban inflection. Benjamin describes destruction as 'making room' and thus as 'space clearing'.[19] Destruction is positioned against the given. This is why Aureli can go on to argue that,

> The activist and participatory practices that are so popular today are the latest iteration of a reformist syndrome whose pathology is to *preserve* social and political conditions as they are. For example, much of the design rhetoric on sustainability is based on the dilemma between survival or extinction.[20]

What sustainability therefore enables, and thus sustains, is the very system that perpetuates not only disequilibria of power but that impetus for extinction that motivates the system itself. The continual difficulty, and it is one that has to register within architecture, is that growth cannot be separated from a logic of extinction. Aureli's use of the writings of Walter Benjamin is a step in the right direction since Walter Benjamin's conception of 'destruction' is not just an argument for creation through destruction. Far more is involved. Destruction, if Walter Benjamin's lead were followed, has to be understood as a *caesura* – and ending and a beginning - and thus as a counter rhythmic force. This is not destruction that gives rise to a *tabula rasa – pace* Aureli in this instance. Nor is it the destruction that occurs in order that there be another beginning. Destruction is an opening, perhaps one that can be thought as the creation of an island, though in the precise sense that it brings both separation and connection into play.[21]

In his essay 'Toward the Archipelago' Aureli identifies Mies' *Federal Centre* in Chicago as an instance of what he refers to 'absolute architecture'. It functions as an 'island' within the urban field. Aureli, as will become clear, fails to think the original necessity of both separation and connection. For him the island is simply separate. Of such a conception of the island he writes the following:

> These interventions constitute one of the highest examples of absolute architecture, for they make clear its separateness, provoking the agonistic experience of the city. The city made of agonistic parts is the archipelago.[22]

The agonistic, of course, is linked to judgment. Drawing on Arendt, Aureli argues that it becomes a conception of judgment that is itself delimited by the presence of what he identifies as an 'agonistic plurality'. While the possibility of the agonistic is not in dispute, the question that has to be brought to bear on the description is the quality of the elements within it. Of what is the agonistic comprised? And it should be noted that the claim made by Aureli pertains to an 'agonistic experience'. At play here is an aesthetic rather that an ontological state of affairs. The difficulty here is twofold. In the first instance it concerns the status of this sense of plurality on the one hand and then, on the other, why Mies' *Federal Centre* in Chicago is an instance of it.

It is clear, though only on the level of the plan, that it is possible to make such a claim. Levels of separation are staged by the plan. They are reinforced, moreover, by the cross hatching used on the drawing to mark the plaza, and then its absence that results in establishing identity within the urban. In the drawings that comprises the plan [Figure 9] the *Federal Centre* is indeed radically separate. However, the argument has to be that this separateness is no more than a result of a specific mode of representation. (Recalling here the importance of modes of representation in the context of Coop Himmelblau's projects.) What is less clear is that the same claim can be made in regard to other images of the *Federal Centre*. The question of the form of representation becomes important, therefore. The plan presents a certain conception of the relation that the building and the site have to other elements through orientation and position. The plan works to hold the *Centre* apart from other elements within the city. And yet, the relation is underdone when Mies' clear understanding of the role of reflection is considered. [Figure 10] For if the plan contains a certain truth about the site, then this is equally the case with another set of images, ones that stage the site as a locus of

reflection. There is no reason for their exclusion. They can figure equally in the presentation of the site's truth. In images of reflection what is significant is not the literal reflection. Rather significance lies in reflection showing ways in which buildings are implicated in each other in any experience of the urban fabric. Aureli wrote of 'experience'. Reflection underscores the way buildings are *a part* of each other. The plan allows a relation structured by the *apart* to predominate. *A part of* and *apart from*: at work here is a particular instantiation of the logic of the *a part/apart*. Once reflection, both in its literal sense and then allowing it to become an operative within and more significantly as integral to maintaining a project of recovery is allowed equal status then *autonomy within relationality* cannot be equated directly with a literal presence. Autonomy, thus construed, needs to be drawn in. *Autonomy within relationality* is both a concept for analysis and a prompt for design. Far from a simple abstraction, it is precisely in terms of this mode of relationality that it becomes possible to think the predicament of architecture.

Architecture occurs however within a specific 'now'. The task at hand is to think its specificity. Integral to the constitution of that 'now' is its being positioned in the aftermath of the GFC and within the insistence of the climate crisis. It is perhaps not surprising that architecture as both a profession and a discipline has sought forms of differentiation from this predicament. As has been argued, while this has led to the affirmation of different modalities of autonomy, they have been inadequate. This is not to argue however - and this is a central point in the development of a theory and practice of relational architecture - that this is the wrong path. That autonomy has to be thought is undeniable. It is just that autonomy has been ill-thought through. What has been shown here is that the ways in which the failure to think it adequately – a failure that locates a thinking of autonomy as either separation or indifference – occasions openings. Here this occurs in the move from a generalized affirmation of autonomy to the latter's reconfiguration in terms of *autonomy within relationality*. The full development of *autonomy within relationality* is essential if the details of what a relational architecture actually entails are themselves to be demonstrated.[23]

1 By 'discipline' what is intended is the interplay between practice, pedagogy and research in architecture. While the 'term' profession does not exclude these concerns, it is not defined by them. Moreover, the profession' is subject to set of legal constraints that the discipline may both question and seek to subvert. See in this regard Gerard Reinmuth 'Relationality and Architecture: How Refocusing The Discipline Might Reverse The Profession's Seemingly Unstoppable Trajectory Of Decline', *Architectural Theory Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017. pp. 89-107.

2 See Andrew Benjamin. Building, **Building**. In José Aragüez (Editor) Lars Müller. Zurich. 2016.

3 For an example of former see the SIS Building London, Terry Farrell & Partners; and for the latter see Michael Graves' Swann Hotel.

4 Peter Cook. Spreadeagled. *The Architectural Review*. October 1989. Page 76

5 Anthony Vidler. *Warped Space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. MIT Press, 2003. Page 188.

6 Thomas Piketty. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press. Canbridge.2914.

7 This is the position advanced in greater detail in Andrew Benjamin. *Towards a Relational Ontology*. SUNY Press. Albany. 2015.

8 Peter Eisenman. Autonomy and the Avant-Garde. The Necessity of an Architectural Avant-Garde in America. In R.E. Somol (editor) *Autonomy and Ideology. Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*. The Monacelli Press. New York. 1997. Page 74.

9 For a more sustained discussion of this point see: Andrew Benjamin. On Third Space**.** In *Terroir: Third Spaces*. Uro. Publishers. Melbourne. 2019

10 Jeremy Till. *Architecture Depends*. MIT Press. Cambridge. 2010. Page

11 Alejandro Zaera-Polo. The Politics of The Envelope. Log, No. 13/14. Fall 2008), Page 195

12 Alejandro Zaera-Polo. Page 199.

13 Zaera-Polo. Page

14 Zaera-Polo. Page

15 Patrik Schumacher. Parametricism - A New Global Style for Architecture and Urban Design. *AD Architectural Design - Digital Cities*, Vol 79, No 4, July/August 2009.

16 Patrik Schumacher. Hegemonic Parametricism delivers a Market-based Urban Order, in: AD Parametricism 2.0. Rethinking Architecture's Agenda for the 21st Century, Editor: H. Castle, Guest-edited by Patrik Schumacher, AD Profile #240, March/April 2016.

17 Pier Vittorio Aureli. *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism*. Princeton Architectural Press. Princeton. 2008.

18 See in addition the critique of Aureli's work made by Peggy Deamer in her Architecture/Agency/Emancipation, in *Can Architecture Be an Emancipatory Project?: Dialogues On Architecture And The Left* **(**Nadir Z. Lahiji Editor). Zero Books. London. 2016

19 Walter Benjamin. *The Destructive Character*. In Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings, Volume 4*, 1938-1940. Harvard University Press. Cambridge. Page 521.

20 Pier Vittorio Aureli. The Theology of Tabula Rasa: Walter Benjamin and Architecture in the Age of Precarity. *Log* 27 (Spring 2013).

21 On the use of the island as a productive term within architectural theory is Teresa Stoppani. *Paradigm Islands: Manhattan and Venice*. Routledge. London. 2011. Pages 7-8.

22 Pier Vittorio Aureli. *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. MIT Press. Cambridge. 2011. Page 42.

23 This paper is part of an integrated research project on relational architecture. In addition to the preparation of a book, the research involves a four year studio (2017-2020) based analysis in the context of a Masters Studio in the School of Architecture. directed by Gerard Reinmuth and Andrew Benjamin at the University of Technology Sydney that has studied Seoul.