

# Four Acts: Between Legibility and Ambivalence

Architectural timelines are often marked by new acts in the theatre of form. Over the last 30 years this theatre has witnessed post-modernism's applique of historical references, the heterogeneous, fragmented, and contradictory forms of deconstruction, and is likely most notable for the supple, pliant forms of blobs, folds, topological surfaces, and computational techniques. During this same time period two categories of historic divide became more apparent.

**CLARK THENHAUS**  
University of Michigan

## THE THEATER OF FORM

The divide between the expanded field and autonomous formalism has become increasingly apparent in relation to emerging technologies as a territorial practice and a digital project. This polemic is marked on one hand by a geographic and territorial model of relations influenced by socio-economic, environmental, and political forces with an aim to integrate ecological systems, infrastructural networks, and social collectives staked against 'form hunters'.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the digital project staked a claim to technology's capacity to reinstate disciplinary expertise and customization as aesthetic, geometric data-managing, and ideological drivers. In the expanded field of relations, the terms and conditions of networking, connectivity, and systemization re-located a disciplinary and historical project of architectural form-making to consequences of political, infrastructural, or environmental forces. In the digital project, the same culturally pervasive terms of the times, networks and systems, served as both internal relational protocols with aesthetic demonstrations of complexity (honeycombs, Voronoi's, Delaunay meshes, etc) and a predominant concentration on digital virtuosity with the appearance of networks and interconnectedness, a calling card for a time marked by technique, connectivity, fields, and fineness.<sup>2</sup> Even with the exclusion of the social and political dimension, networks and connectivity were built into the protocols, aesthetics, and digital techniques themselves.<sup>3</sup> Bob Somol articulates this distance between territorial practice as characterized by 'politics + environment' and digital formalism as 'science + fiction'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, relationism can be understood as linkages between a presumed concreteness of geographic or environmental correlations of data and material infrastructure with rational or 'consequential' outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the digital project, with all its complexity and aesthetics aimed at high and fine fidelity with a demonstrated virtuosity of techniques and effects, lacks the disciplinary traction it once had and it seems unlikely that further refinement and fidelity will reclaim the original inertia. As a discipline, having largely, though not wholly, skirted explicit discussions on form

in favor of networks, infrastructure, systems, and fields and having also mastered topological complexity, component differentiation, gradation, and computational and tectonic intricacy, it seems appropriate to ask what are alternatives for a contemporary formalism; one marked not by relational externalities or by demonstrations of digital fidelity? This question seems appropriate as attention to objects, history, figure, coarseness, volume, and association appear to be ushering out the last two or three decades of work dedicated to fields, invention, networks, elegance, surface, and sensation.<sup>6</sup>

The following text aims to engage new modes of architectural thought dedicated to form in a post-digital era. This is done with a goal to dove-tail post-digital formalism with emerging disciplinary and ideological shifts that go Beyond Relationism. The emphasis on form suggests a model of architectural production in which “we do not bring forms into contact with their ground by stewing on and on about whom they might pillage and exploit. We do it by detaching forms from the superficial relations in which they become entangled, thus enabling resonance between figure and ground.”<sup>7</sup> This further suggests that architectural form can be non-relational yet identify with a context, or ground. Specifically, attention is called to distinctions between legible and ambivalent form in an effort to appropriate these terms, in what I am calling operative form, which aims to “continue disciplinary formalism by fusing classical knowledge with emerging [existing] technologies.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **ACT 1: FORMAL LEGIBILITY & AMBIVALENCE**

Let us first differentiate legible from literal. Literal form would be, as popularized by Robert Venturi and the Long Island Duck building, a literal representation without metaphor, allegory, or visual abstraction. This does not, however, make legible form simply the ducks other, the decorated shed with tacked on cues indicative of use.<sup>9</sup> Rather, legibility is graphic, expedient, illicit, and automatic independent of historical cues, explicit signage, or literal representation. Claiming shapes are ‘crude, fast, and explicit’ in 12 Reasons To Get Back Into Shape Bob Somol describes that graphic expediency has the capacity to communicate quickly among diverse audiences, and this has the capacity to convene new social collectives. This is not entirely dissimilar from Nicolas Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics (1998) where “...convivial aesthetics [or] an art that draws people from their introverted and alienated reveries and forces interaction between them.”<sup>10</sup> The ‘graphic’ is characterized by shapes and may be easily recognized by strong figural profiles or figural sections<sup>11</sup> allowing direct and immediate legibility of visual and cognitive access.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, an expressive mass offers the possibility for subjective [mis]-readings and cognitive ‘error’, thereby clearing room for qualitative interpretations based primarily on aesthetic and spatial experience. This condition operates at a slower, non-automatic speed of reception and is capable of provoking differences among subjective perceptions. As Le Corbusier wrote in the introduction to *Towards A New Architecture*, “mass is the element by which our senses perceive and measure and are most fully affected.”<sup>13</sup> Whereas shape has something to do with graphic familiarity and recognition, an expressive mass has something to do with spatial perception and experience.

Colin Rowe claimed that “when considering intercourse with a building, its face, however veiled, must always be a desirable and provocative item.”<sup>14</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, however, favored bodies and association, claiming “with head and foot, back and front: We can comprehend the dumb imprisoned existence of a

bulky, memberless, amorphous, conglomeration, heavy and immovable, as easily as the fine and clear disposition of something delicate and lightly articulated.”<sup>15</sup> While Rowe assigns primacy to the face, or façade, Wolfflin speaks of the attendant qualities of bodies; weight, height, stability all pointing to issues of posture, figure, and association. Yet, in George Simmel’s 1907 book *The Aesthetic Significance of the Human Face* he wrote “Bodies differ to the trained eye just as faces do; but unlike faces, bodies do not at the same time interpret these differences.”<sup>16</sup> Simmel also coined the phrase “the face is the mirror to the soul.”<sup>17</sup> This is important as it recognizes the face as the bearer of meaning or feeling felt from within and signals, as Lacan notes of mirrors, a critical self-awareness as a state of personal reflection and expression. Rowe combines the face, or façade, with the soul, or interior, by stating the façade represents “internal animation, both opaque and revealing.”<sup>18</sup> For Rowe, the façade was a register and a representation of, or responsive to, internal functions, like that of Simmel’s face or Lacan’s mirror. As Simmel and Wolfflin speak of the human face or body, Rowe appropriates these qualities more directly to architecture. In this appropriation, the graphic qualities of shape outlined by Somol and those of face, or façade by Rowe, find commonality. From this we can generally understand legible form as that which can be immediately oriented, read facially, and is graphically accessible. Or, as characterized by 1) graphic frontality, 2) emphasis on facade, 3) figuration and shape-based profiles 4) interior registration on the exterior (spatial ‘tell’), and 5) shared readings or interpretations.

It’s interesting to recall Sigfried Giedion’s claim that “the routine misuse of shapes from the past, the devaluation of traditional language, [initiates] a loss of monumentality attributable to no ‘special political or economic system.’”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps accepting such ‘misuse’ offers a bridge to ambivalent form.

Firstly, ambivalence is careful, not carefree. To be carefree is to be indifferent. Ambivalence is more cunning in the composition of form and locates issues of reception between a subjective pre-existing familiarity with identifiable qualities and its potential gestalt, or reading as something other, as a spatial and cultural project. Ambivalence frustrates the recognition of something by appearing as two or more things at once, while indifference cares equally little for replica as it does for novelty.

Jason Payne describes ambivalence by stating “the base condition of uncertainty is one thing, but the conscious awareness of this state of being is something more: ambivalence. To be ambivalent is to choose to be unclear, undecided, and equivocal.”<sup>20</sup> Through calculated comparisons of a disco ball in metaphoric relation to planetesimals (such as Mars’ moon, Phobos) Payne outlines five principles for an ambivalent architectural object; 1) Not a sphere, (but nearly so) 2) Concavity’s Awkward Influence, 3) Irregular Albedo, 4) Elevational Ambivalence and 5) Contextual Indifference.<sup>21</sup> It’s useful to unpack these principles, starting with Not a Sphere (but nearly so). For something to be ‘not a sphere, but nearly so’ automatically preferences rotundity and volume over surface and flat frontality. An object that is nearly spherical sheds a collectively shared identity, and instead opens up possibilities for alternative readings, experiences, and associations. Payne uses the deformation of a disco ball in relation to planetesimals and asteroids to make this point, however we might also take it more literally as spheres and manipulated spheroidal objects as potentially occupiable volumes. Concavity’s Awkward Influence, the second principle, is a quality for scientific classification with regard to planetesimals and asteroids. More

generally, however, it is a condition of an object being inwardly deformed, perhaps a slumped body, a moon's meteoric divot, or a willfully manipulated solid. Concavity is generally assumed as a result of external force causing inward deformation. However, if we invert this assumed force diagram of concavity, we might consider concavity as the result of internal voids within an object against which the exterior pushes or conforms into. This would then make contact with Rowe's discussion on the registration of the interior on the exterior. Yet a third possibility exists where concavity might also be the illusion of inward deformation. For example, when two spheres intersect they produce a cleft which appears concave despite the convexity of both objects. The third principle, Irregular Albedo, is the more slippery of the five. In the context of Payne's research, this principle is articulated via the reflective effects of a disco ball and the capacities for such effects to alter, enhance, or stimulate spatial effects and behavior outside the object itself. This is a more clever atmospheric effect as opposed to an environmental condition normally associated with albedo. The amount of reflectivity, or albedo, is both symptomatic of the geometry of the nearly spherical mass and its mirrored mosaic tiles (albedo = 1), but also initiates spatial conditions residing outside the mass itself through its reflective effects. However, Payne also notes that a lack of reflection or phenomena that are black (albedo = 0) are also important for the purposes of connecting to the fourth principle, which articulates the difficulties of identifying edges. On this same topic, though not one of the principles of ambivalence, Payne also interestingly notes that a 'blank' form, or blank face if we recall Rowe, "is not absent of affect, not at all. To the contrary blankened forms convey very strong valence – usually repulsive rather than attractive..."<sup>22</sup> The fourth principle, Elevational Ambivalence, is a condition in which undevelopable geometries and the lack of orthogonal corners, conditions normal to typical elevations and orthographic projections, deny the possibility of constructing an accurate orthographic elevation, one in which geometry is effectively unfolded or projected onto a flat plane. This is both a problem of geometry and representation, but should not be confused as an object without profile continuity, as would be the case with, for example, Alberto Giacometti's face drawing. Rather it's an impossibility of unrolling the object onto orthographic planes as one does easily with a cube or Cartesian form. A parallel to this is found in the numerous types of map projections of the spheroidal Earth with their varying degrees of geographically 'factual' and representational correspondence. Lastly, Contextual Indifference permits the architectural object to exist without reverence or responsibility to a context. In this way, scales may shift, orientations may rotate, locations may change, or gravity may or may not exert force. This principle elevates the status of the object's qualities and effects while limiting external contingencies that might otherwise to precisely locate the responsibilities and preconceived receptions of the architectural object.

## **ACT 2: SPHERES, CONES, AND CYLINDERS**

With legibility and ambivalence now outlined, it will be useful to introduce a much abbreviated discussion on moving from fineness to figures in an effort to locate a possible post-digital, beyond relationism target. Within many top schools of architecture in the 1990's and early 2000's, coupled with the philosophical borrowings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, rhizomatic complexity, folding, topological surfaces, and computation seemingly rendered primitive solids as mundane as they were largely discarded as simplistic, scooped away by an epochal style of digital formalism. The digital project of the academy was heavily invested in the ideologies and aesthetics of systematized fields, fineness,

surface blending and smoothing, and tectonic intricacy. These characterizations generally represent an overall ambition towards surfaces and seamlessness on one hand, and ever smaller, more intricate parts in the composition of irreducible wholes on the other. In the latter, the discipline effectively moved “from an understanding of the architectural detail as an isolated, fetishized instance within an otherwise minimal framework...[to one where] in an intricate network there are not details per se, detail is everywhere, ubiquitously distributed and continuously variegated in collaboration with formal and spatial effects.”<sup>23</sup> Intricacy, fineness, and gradation inherently suggest relational fields of connectivity within an expanded domain of forces that is not entirely dissimilar from those of territorial practices. Primitive forms, however, inherently concentrate intellectual and aesthetic efforts onto volume, association, figure, and, by-comparison to fineness, coarseness.

Yet, we should proceed with caution and clarity. For, while it’s true that architects like Frank Gehry used primitive forms as fodder for formal manipulation, it is precisely the techniques and effects of deformation that locate projects such as the Vitra Design Museum in the camp of disassociation. Even the *Deconstructivist Architecture*<sup>24</sup> show exhibited many projects which aggregated, then deformed and manipulated primitive solids into heterogeneous assemblages.<sup>25</sup> The compulsion to manipulate these base solids into heterogeneous and disjunctive expressions portraying difference, deformation, and discontinuity locates such work as tectonically intricate. One might think this could initiate this work as ambivalent form, however it is precisely the emphasis on formal and compositional complication, disjunction, discontinuity, and geometric de-familiarization that elides ambivalence. They become aesthetic ensembles for conveying the perceived complexity and fragmented status of culture<sup>26</sup>, locating such work as deconstructivist, or work operating on oppositional terms of irreconcilable and confrontational stances to architectural history in order to disassemble architecture itself.

In recalling Rowe’s eventual rejection of his own mathematical approach to form making, evidenced by his introduction to *Five Architects* or *Collage City* (with Fred Koetter), we see a similar disciplinary attitude emerging today, not in aesthetic or technique, but in principle. The emphasis on mathematical and computational virtuosity that was so saturated in the digital culture of the early 2000’s has wrung itself out and post-digital attitudes towards form, such as legibility and ambivalence, aim to renew the status of architectural form without an orthodoxy for code or explicit dedication to digital technique. In this light, having witnessed the accumulation of novel forms spurred by digital fidelity, it seems more likely that best suited to operate with a post-digital attitude is not the invention of new forms, but rather revisiting more humbled ones through today’s discourse and technologies.

In fact, common to both legibility and ambivalence is explicit use or reference to known shapes and primitive geometries, namely the sphere. Interestingly, while ambivalent form would elide the most notable architectural spheres of history, perhaps belonging to Etienne Boullée’s Newtons Cenotaph, or Claude Nicholas LeDoux’s House of the Farm Guard, for being too spherical, the terms of legibility would recall them as an art form as a cultural and political device.<sup>27</sup>

Curiously, OMA’s 1989 Zeebrugge Sea Terminal proposal sought to produce a “form that resists classification”<sup>28</sup> by combing a sphere atop an inverted cone with an explicit ambition to “poeticize the pragmatic.” This poeticizing the

pragmatic, notably here through strategies of aggregation rather than primitive singularity, parallels Rowe's claims for functional expression of the interior on the exterior, but does so in the spirit of Rossian irreverence to typological formalism, as noted in the claim that the project resists classification. In this we find the potentials of aggregating un-deformed primitives to be a likely scenario where legibility and ambivalence find an unsuspecting commonality. Unlike the flatness of cubes and pyramids, or Platonic solids, inherent to spheres, cones, and cylinders is the quality of rotundity. Domes, vaults, arches, and turrets, for example, are products of halved or quartered spheres, cones, and cylinders. From this, we might suspect that with more pluralistic aggregations of spheres, cones, and cylinders, the more rarefied qualities of multivalent cleavages and clefts, bloated yet taut bodies, and voluptuous concavities may become present. Spheres, cones, and cylinders, then, will be the "worthy constraint" that offers the aesthetic validity concentrating on the status of architectural objects, rather than abstract concepts of external relations<sup>29</sup> or internal relational protocols embedded in digital technique and effect.

### ACT 3: OPERATIVE FORM: COUPLING LEGIBILITY AND AMBIVALENCE

The term operative form is appropriated from Operational Criticism by Bruno Zevi and advanced by Manfredo Tafuri. Operational Criticism was used to "designate a form of history that, by grasping the current significance of the past, was at one and the same time a form of criticism."<sup>30</sup> Daniel Sherer points out that this form of criticism in architecture has been used to manipulate history in order to extend one's own agenda or approach, and therefore differs drastically from the history of a scholarly historian. In other words, architects edit history in order to "force the hand" of the present. He also notes, however, "architecture requires a special mode of criticism – operative criticism – to justify its constitutive strategies and make the semi-conscious apprehension of architecture a matter of conscious choice."<sup>31</sup> It's also useful to recall Henry-Russell Hitchcock's claim that there was a time when looking to history was for the purposes of revivalism, but this is no longer true. Rather, "When we re-examine—or discover—this or that aspect of earlier building production today, it is with no idea of repeating its forms, but rather in the expectation of feeding more amply new sensibilities that are wholly the product of the present."<sup>32</sup> Operative form is therefore concerned with certain formal lineages and, perhaps, anachronistic geometries wilfully adopted under the today's terms in order to project alternative formal possibilities that go Beyond Relationsim.

Whereas in the article *Architectural Curvilinearity* Greg Lynn describes the ability of pliant systems to adapt to contextual, cultural, programmatic, or economic contingencies<sup>33</sup>, Graham Harman, in commenting on Sanford Kwinter's *Whose Afraid of Formalism*, states that by "detaching form from the superficial relations in which they become entangled, [forms] enable resonance between figure and ground."<sup>34</sup> Where Lynn claims that characteristics of pliancy and suppleness can accommodate, or in fact be formed by, external relations in the production of form, Harman advocates that by detaching form from these externalities new relationships can be established between the architectural object and its ground, or what we might consider, with some liberties, as context.

With a goal towards identifying possible post-digital formal qualities, we in fact find many of the principles of ambivalent form in the aggregation spheres, cones, and cylinders. For example, a-frontality, moments of being not spherical but

### ENDNOTES

- 1 The use of the term 'form hunter's refers to Sanford Kwinter's dismissal and pejorative remarks concerning form-making, articulated in *Far From Equilibrium: Essays on Technology and Design Culture*. Actar, Barcelona, 2008. 13
- 2 The use of the word Fineness is here used in direct reference to Jesse Reiser's text, "The New Fineness" published in *Assemblage*, 2006. This alludes, as well, to elegance in general, captured most prominently in the discourse of that time in *AD Elegance* (2007) guest edited by Ali Rahim and Hina Jamelle. In addition, Greg Lynn's article "Intricacy" directly associates infinitely small parts with tectonics and aggregations that can arise from digital techniques.
- 3 This is reference to Clement Greenberg work on visual arts that excluded social aspects but were internally and wholly relational within the art piece itself.
- 4 Bob Somol, "What's Next?" Lecture at University of Kentucky College of Design. 2011
- 5 This is paraphrased from Graham Harman's "Towards A Non-Relational Los Angeles; Or How to Free Kwinter from Whitehead". <http://www.offramp-la.com/towards-non-relational-los-angeles/>. Central to this is the dismantling of the idea that these external relations are concrete and therefore fixed. Rather, Harman articulates it is the concepts that are themselves the basis for relational thought, not the objects that constitute the abstraction of relationism
- 6 This observation is made by a close read of recent scholarly essays, journals, and conferences occurring over the last 2 years. In particular the conceptual distance between *Log 17* (2007) and *Log 31* (2014) serve as evidence in this paradigmatic shift. Other publications, such as *AD* and *Project Journal* articulate this shift in recent issues, while a series of conferences and workshops, including those held in 2013 at Syracuse University, the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning and the upcoming ACSA 103 Conference themes are indicative of the stated position. This is also observed in the growing adoption of Object Oriented Ontology (OOO) as a philosophical framework which moves away from external forces and effects towards qualities of and between objects.
- 7 Graham Harman, "Towards A Non-Relational Los Angeles; Or How to Free Kwinter from Whitehead". <http://www.offramp-la.com/towards-non-relational-los-angeles/>
- 8 Bryony Roberts, « Beyond the Qurelle » in *LOG 31 : New Ancients*. Anycorp, 2014. 13-17
- 9 A point of reference to this claim could be Venturi Rauch Scott Brown's National College Football Hall of Fame (1967) or Building-Board. This work used direct language and advertisement to convey typological or functional content rather than preferencing geometry and form.
- 10 Harman, "Towards A Non-Relational Los Angeles; Or How to Free Kwinter from Whitehead". <http://www.offramp-la.com/towards-non-relational-los-angeles/>
- 11 Reference to FAT's use of the term 'figural section' in *AD Radical Postmodernism* guest edited by Charles Jencks, Sean Griffiths, Charles Holland, Sam Jacob
- 12 Bob Somol, "What's Next?" Lecture at University of Kentucky College of Design. 2011
- 13 Le Corbusier, « Introduction » to *Towards a New Architecture*. Dover Architecture, 1985
- 14 Anthony Vidler, "Losing Face" in *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Boston, MIT Press, 1994. 87
- 15 Ibid, 87

nearly so, and elevations that “are not the same as the corners found in rectilinear forms because they usually do not define the hard boundaries common to architectural elevations.”<sup>35</sup> However, also present are qualities of legible form, such as graphic shapes, figural profiles, and exterior articulation via interiority, often the illusion of concavity in this case. We can infer from above that ground is not elided, rather is itself a non-relational resonator with form and figure. Therefore, an attempt to identify the qualities of synthesis between legibility and ambivalence reveals:

- 1) Distributed legibility (visual oscillation of recognition of parts with ambivalent wholes)
- 2) Contextual de-concealing (reveals something of ground as a figure)
- 3) Concavity (cleavages and clefts) as exterior articulation resultant from interior
- 4) Orientation without frontality
- 5) Figural profiles with elevational ambivalence

These are not stated as design principles or points to be followed for a contemporary architecture. They are not manifesto. Rather they arise from, and call attention to, possible combinations of legibility and ambivalence as a way of dovetailing form-making strategies in a post-digital era with emerging disciplinary discourse that elevates the status of form and object.



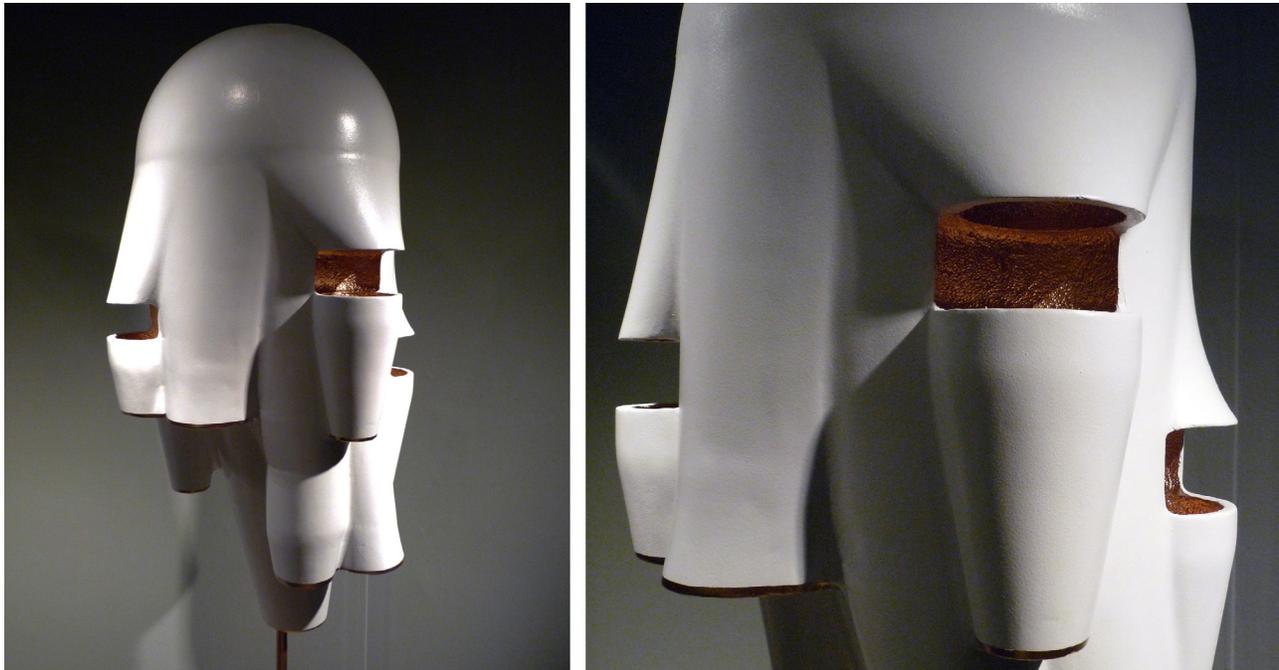
1

#### ACT 4: THE BELVEDERE

It will be useful here to apply these terms. A Belvedere offers a unique typology for experimentation in which, traditionally, a belvedere is an architectural feature or building constructed for the purposes of looking out over a pleasing scene. Provided such simple programmatic responsibility, emphasis can concentrate on the formal qualities yet have some spatially occupiable constraint. Our Belvedere

Figure 1: Spheres, Cones, & Cylinders models

appropriates an abandoned missile silo in southern Wyoming. In the context of this post-military landscape, it rises proximate to 199 other missile silo sites dating from the Cold War national defense and deterrence network. Rather than acting to uphold this network or contextualize it, the Belvedere de-networks and de-infrastructuralizes the 200 sites from their relational status as architecture-infrastructure.<sup>36</sup> It atomizes the network, emphasizing and elevating the status of the architectural object while limiting external contingencies. The Belvedere is a construct whose presence signals neutralization of an otherwise unsettling, though ultimately covert militarized ground and facilitates new orientations to the pastoral scene. The Belvedere, composed of only spheres, cones, and cylinders, seems almost alien in relation to context, a monumental object in a field; a tired trope.



2

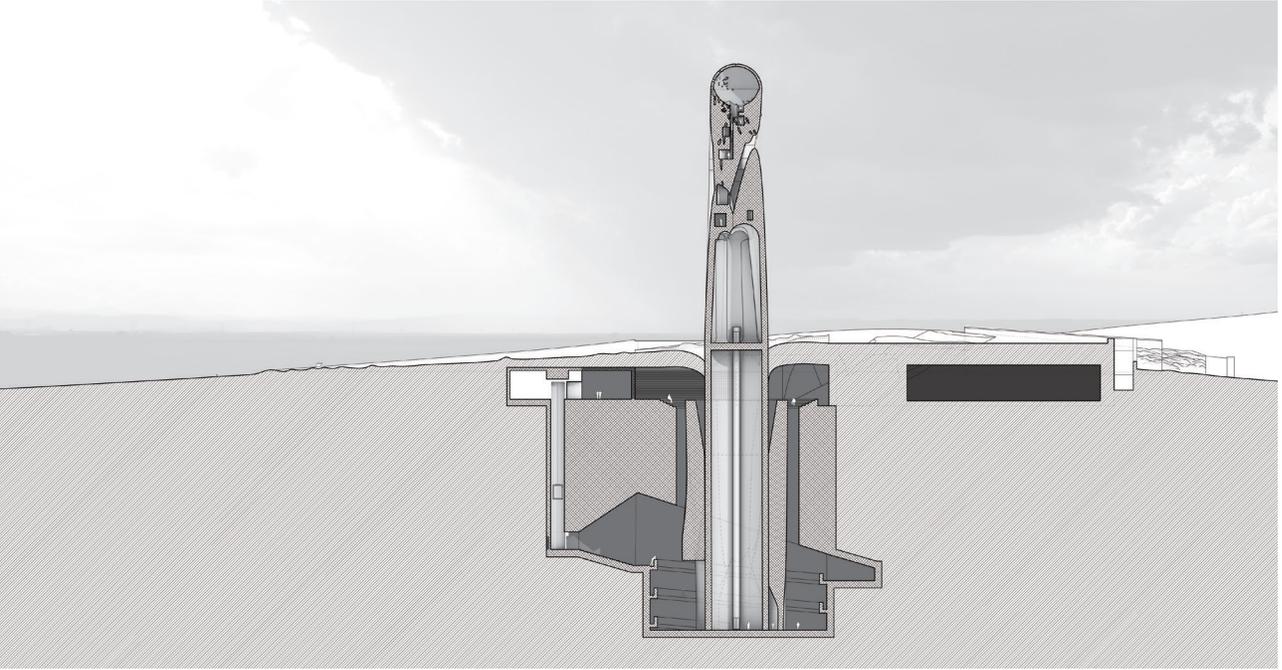
Yet, it is precisely the condition of familiar strangeness that allows everything around it to be experienced differently; de-concealed, de-networked, de-infrastructuralized, and de-familiarized. Thus, the figure of the Belvedere acquires resonance with ground without having been formed or 'entangled' with or by consequences of relational contextualization or responsible to the expanded field of networked relations or abstracted concepts. Architectural form therefore becomes a point of interruption that de-relationalizes the territorial network. The Belvedere sits atop the buried cylindrical silo, extending it vertically with four intersecting cones of equal base diameters to that of the existing silo, topped by a crown composed from 11 spheres, 20 cones, and eight cylinders. These recognizable spherical, conical, and cylindrical parts come into and out of focus within the overall mass, both alleviating and frustrating recognizability with a visual oscillation between legible parts and ambivalent wholes.

The Belvedere aggregates 10 small spheres (1/50th the size of Newton's Cenotaph) connected to an eleventh crowning sphere with cylinders and cones. By nature of aggregating 10 spheres with cones and cylinders, the Belvedere does

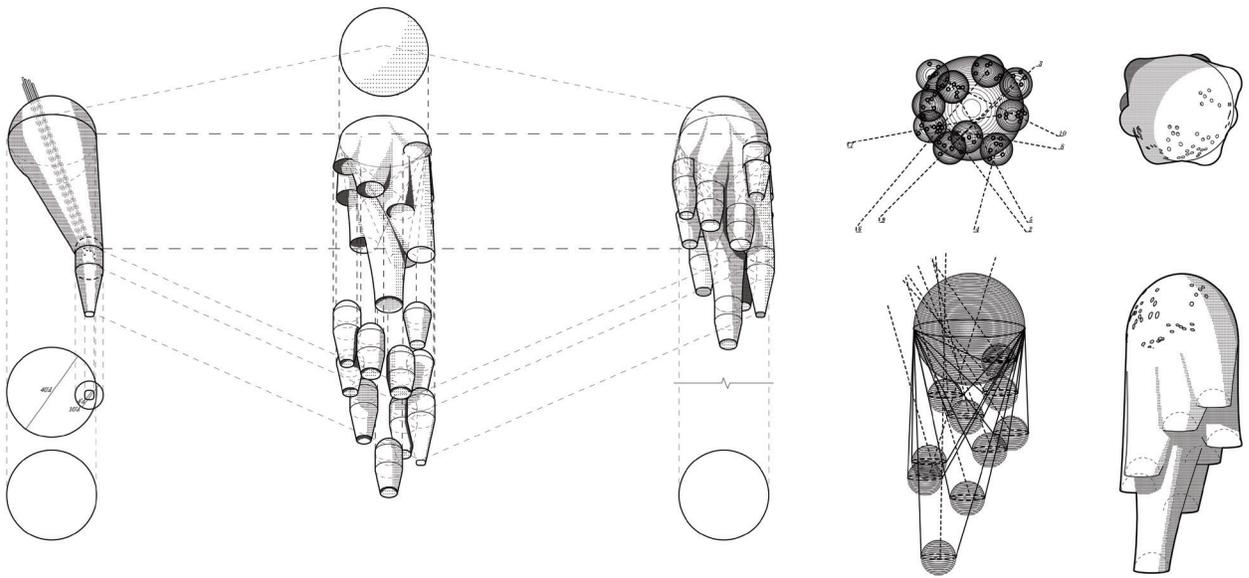


3

Figure 2: Large scale Belvedere plaster model  
Figure 3: Belvedere in situ



4



5

Figure 4: Belvedere Section

Figure 5: Belveder sphere, cone, & cylinder composition

not have a frontal face, yet it is graphic with figural profiles composed by aggregated volumes, and is therefore characterized by multiple figural profiles with elevational ambivalence in a similar way to Payne's disco balls.

Each of the 10 spheres are cut horizontally in half, forming domes. The vertical locations of each of the 10 domes are located in such a way as to neither overlap, nor appear as autonomous, therefore aggregating into one figural-mass. Four of these directly connect to the four cones of the tower base, providing access and structure. This provides the Belvedere with a specific, singular orientation in the z-dimension yet lacks frontality or facial expression. The formal synthesis of aggregated and intersecting parts produces clefts and cleavages as exterior composition

expressions and articulations derived from functionality and interior use, recalling Rowe's and Simmel's claim for an exterior articulation of interiority, as well as Corbusier's attention to mass as the main perceptual and experiential element.

### INTERMISSION

Perhaps in combining the qualities and intellectualization of the conceptual and aesthetic distance between legibility and ambivalence, post-digital formalism may call attention to modes of research and practice that go beyond relationism. This allows for a kind of stealth mode, or cunning of disciplinary and contextual exchange through an emphasis on disciplinary discourse and form-making sensibilities alleviated from the past two decades of networks, systems, and connectivity which aims to renew the status of architectural form from within the discipline. Yet, it seems necessary to note that these discussions and usefulness to architecture are still in the early stages...they require more work, debate, and experimentation; new acts. Key problems present themselves to architects, such as issues pertaining to ground / context, as difficulties in light of the previous two or three decades of concentration. Nevertheless, the aim is to refocus attention onto architectural form and the qualities of architectural objects in a post-digital era with the technologies and discussions of today. Through this, perhaps new acts of architecture will take the stage; ones that eschew the transference of net-based concepts to the aesthetics of the discipline of architecture.

- 16 Ibid, 89
- 17 Ibid, 88
- 18 Ibid, 92
- 19 Ibid, 94
- 20 Jason Payne, "Variations on the Disco Ball, or The Ambivalent Object" in Project Journal, issue 2. Consolidated Urbanism Incorporated, 2013. 20-27
- 21 Ibid, 21-25
- 22 Jason Payne, "Doppelganger" <http://www.offramp-la.com/doppelganger/>
- 23 Greg Lynn, Intricacy Exhibition introduction at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. 2003
- 24 Curated by Phillip Johnson and Mark Wigley, MOMA. 1988
- 25 This reference is in relation to Greg Lynn's text, Intricacy in which Lynn outlines four main themes: Assemblages and Aggregation, Voluptuous Surfaces and Undulating Lattices, Vital Mechanism, and Fused Forms.
- 26 This references Jacques Derrida philosophical and literary analysis in his 1967 Of Grammatology, which was adopted into architecture with an core belief in the destabilization of essential or intrinsic meaning and thus relinquishing claims for absolute truth.
- 27 This makes reference to Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 essay "Art as Device" which claims "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make things unfamiliar, and to increase the difficulty and length of perception..."
- 28 project description excerpt from <http://oma.eu/projects/1989/zeeburgee-sea-terminal>. Found in "City of Spheres" Project Journal, Issue 1 by Emmanuel Petit
- 29 The idea of worthy constraints and working firstly within the discipline, rather than an extroverted or common experience is in reference to Clement Greenberg's 1935 text, Avant Garde and Kitsch.
- 30 Daniel Sherer, "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities" in LOG31 New Ancients, Anycorp 2014. 121
- 31 Ibid, 123
- 32 Ibid, 123
- 33 Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Plian, and the Supple" in Architectural Design: Folding in Architecture. 1995 & 2004 (revised edition)
- 34 Graham Harman, "Towards A Non-Relational Los Angeles; Or How to Free Kwinter from Whitehead". <http://www.offramp-la.com/towards-non-relational-los-angeles/>
- 35 Jason Payne, "Variations on the Disco Ball, or The Ambivalent Object" in Project Journal, issue 2. Consolidated Urbanism Incorporated, 2013. 20-27
- 36 This is referenced to Anthony Vidler's, Architecture's Expanded Field as an architecture – architecture but within an architecture-landscape. The terms of use are altered to pertain to the de-networking of an infrastructural condition, thus atomizing the network of sites into resonant grounds with foreign-like figures.