S/erialurreal (Re)Presentation, or, a Žižekian 'Sustainability' for Architects

ROBERT SVETZ
Syracuse University

Mike Twohy. The New Yorker; Kunaver/Mohar. Slavoj Žižek Does Not Exist

"Sure, the picture is in my eye, but I, I am also in the picture." -Jacques Lacan[1]

"Materialism is not the direct assertion of my inclusion in objective reality (such an assertion presupposes that my position of enunciation is that of an external observer who can grasp the whole of reality); rather it resides in the reflexive twist by means of which I myself am included in the picture constituted by me - it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of myself as standing both outside and inside my picture, that bears witness to my 'material existence.' Materialism means that the reality I see is never 'whole' - not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it.'"
-Slavoj Žižek[2]

It is perhaps taken for granted that architectural discourse should regularly reinvest itself with testing and debating its different practices for *integrating* - most often by accommodating or excluding - the competing and sometimes wholly contradic-

tory demands among its economic, social, material, technological, aesthetic, and other design interests - comprehensive and sustainable design no less than complex geometry, custom fabrication, and design-build studios offering cases in point. Less well examined are how and to what degree these same competing interests' *incommensurabilities*, forever inscribed a *priori* as inherent tensions or unfulfilled "virtual" dimensions of actual designs, might also be understood positively to *disallow* any singular representability or performance of a building or project. This very split condition of incommensurability is the "parallax" of Slavoj Žižek's most recent work to figure the "minimal difference" or "gap" of the real within the myriad politico-aesthetic subjects and objects of his Lacanian-Marxist cultural analyses. And it is the blind-spot *constructedness* operating in Žižek's dialectic, with its perverse[3] *double-framing* between a perspective literalism and a perspective lapse, that I want to argue holds promise for engaging the architectural divide between today's still post-critical and post-political Deleuze-and-Guattarian affect-oriented projective/emergent sensibilities[4] and the more recent pragmatic call for a critical renewal of architecture's potential for socially motivated strategic intervention and engagement.[5] Thus taking up Žižek's injunction to leverage the "real virtuality" potential for reflexively engaging architectural form's inevitably ideological projections and readings, this paper looks both to examine certain aspects of Žižek's theoretical program and to further project onto it two often overlooked modernist practices - musical Serialism and photographic Surrealism - whose own blind-spot formulations for some disjunctive inscription can already be seen emerging among certain design practices today.[6]

ŽIŽEK ON ARCHITECTURE?

With the 2010 release of his *Living in the End of Times*, Slavoj Žižek at last arrived at architecture's doorstep and, wasting not a moment, directly enjoined the discourse to get on with enjoying the necessary failures of its irreconcilable politico-aesthetic differences.[7] Like all of Žižek's "lighter" case-study and current-event montages, *Living's* interlude chapter on "The Architectural Parallax" grafts an array of common and highbrow examples into the larger fabric of his own critical positions on: the "flattening" inherent to postmodern relativism, the properly "reflexive twist" of Hegelian dialectics, the formally relational constructedness of the Lacanian "gap," and,

most fundamental to his Marxist project, the relationship of these and other themes to the fostering of "emancipatory politics" under global capitalism. If to an architectural readership this terrain of Žižekian concepts sounds already too overwrought, then Žižek is both innocent and guilty as charged. For, on the one hand, while having remained among the most important cultural theorists of the past twenty years across EU and more especially US academe, Žižek's scant presence within architectural discourse suggests something of a dereliction of duties among historians and theorists otherwise invested in Marx and Lacan, not to mention various anxious modernisms and utopian ghosts.[8] Yet, on the other hand, there are certainly issues of timing, intentional difficulty and double-framing complexity which offer some explanation to this apparent exclusion, and that bear our quick review here.

First, quite simply, the momentum of Žižek's popular rise following his 1989 inaugural release of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* came in the midst of architectural theory's Derridean high and ensuing reprisal of Deleuzian affectivity, not to mention that Žižek, unlike these writers, had not engaged (until presently) in any explicit architectural speculation. Second, as with Lacan's avowed aim to forestall the kind of everyday misappropriations that enervated Freud's clinical specificity, it stands to reason that Žižek, too, seeks an efficacious activation and not merely a jargonistic appropriation of his work, whereas jargonistic appropriation and blunt translations into formalist technique - aporia, emergence, rhizomatic ? - are in fact how many designers take theory out for a drive.[9] Appropriately then, and quite alike Derrida's and Deleuze's work, Žižek's writing is a dense *meta-discourse* (on Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Lacan, just for starters), evasive of casual surplus value extraction while ever generous in the sheer use value pleasures engendered by its brilliantly tantalizing repertoires on Hitchcock, sci-fi, and a never-ending smorgasbord of pop-culture and political references.

Finally, and most germane to our discussion, is that Žižek's form of writing is itself quite purposefully reflective of the most signal *psycho-analytically* informed difficulties he is writing about - the unrepresentability of the Real, dialectically subjective reflexivity towards the object, and the Kantian sublimity of ideological obfuscation inherent to cultural practices like, yes, architecture. As Tom Brockelman has noted, "In his unique combination of lucidity and dif-

ficulty, the ability to produce the sense of a definite meaning just out of the reader's grasp, Žižek writes in precisely the way that sets him up as the 'writer-supposed-to-know' - a relationship with his reader that we might, in order to differentiate it from full-bore analysis, call a ''philosophical transference.'''[10] Thus entirely apropos the psycho-analytical *mise en scène* in which he immerses us, and so quite on a par with Derrida's densely multivalent layers of inter-pretation or Deleuze's writerly "lines of flight," Žižek quite literally stages a Freudian "working through" for his readers' desires for analytical insight.[11]

To be sure then, in "The Architectural Parallax" we are put "on the couch" amidst a fusillade of often freely associated references - from Loos, Venturi, Jameson, Gehry, Liebeskind, Koolhaas, Foster and Zaera Polo, to Albanian bunkers, gold faucets, Stalin-ist neo-Gothic Baroque apartments, the Korean DMZ and, of course, Sarah Palin - that we might better work through how Žižek is prompting us to put archi-tecture - and most particularly the building envelope - on the couch. To accept this theoretical maneuver, we must first give over to the idea that architecture could productively enlist a kind of psycho-analytic perspectivism, i.e., one invested in a symptomatic recognition of its incommensurabilities and lacks, as represented through the different registrations of blunt formal manipulations (Imaginary) and their in-evitable ideological projections (Symbolic), such that in the *strategically minimal difference* between the two a fuller virtual dimension might perversely be activated (Real). What Žižek will claim this conceptu-ally animorphotic approach has to offer is a recogni-tion of the politically positive because formally side-stepping role of *relationally* critical tensions which do not regress into the pastiche of politically *expres-sive* representations. Tension, in other words, is a means, not an end, a struggle with content, but not a picture of content. This scenario, of course, de-rives quite directly from Freud's assertion that the "Sisyphean tasks" of a clinical working through are always experiential tasks of the *analysand* and not the representational tasks of the analyst; viz., here of you the reader, and successively for architecture of the proverbial man-in-the-street, but not here of Žižek, nor for architecture of its designers.

PARALLAX VIEW

Žižek frames his, "Interlude 3. The Architectural Parallax," with a straight-forward description for

distinguishing a philosophical (as opposed to mere-ly optical) parallax:

> "'Parallax,' according to its common definition is the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight. The philosophical twist to be added, of course, is that the observed difference is not simply "sub-jective," thanks to the fact that it is the same object existing "out there" which is seen from two different points of view. It is rather, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently "mediated," so that an "epistemological" shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an "ontological" shift in the object itself."[12]

The "architectural" parallax, in other words, *is* dia-lectical materialism enacted vis-à-vis architecture, which is to say it remains in the mode of critical analysis and is not a prescriptive thing; a "way of seeing" architecture, yet one that is certainly no guide for how to specifically represent or build ar-chitecture. Captured here by our attentively Mon-et-gazing headphoned amphibians no less than by Kunaver and Mohar's brilliantly double-framed surreal portrait, "Slavoj Žižek Does Not Exist," this "stained" Lacanian seeing is doubly critical for its capacity to locate *in the shift* from one limited vi-sion to another the ground of our being able to *see more in the thing* than the thing-in-itself.

As embedded in Žižek's own writerly "parallaxical" descriptions, the inherent difficulty of this concept - perhaps most especially for architecture's visually oriented thinking - resides in its blunt unrepresent-ability to consciousness: even as we are asked to picture that our "materialist" sense of reality has a limit, hinting we need only zoom out to discern such a limit, we are told that *the limit is in fact in and of ourselves*, and nothing we can do nor imagine will allow us to stand outside it. As the al-ways *first invisible frame* in our perceptions of what are already ideologically framed realities, we are "standing both inside and outside" the picture con-stituted by us. Explaining this sidestepping balance of Žižek's dialectical prose, Frederic Jameson notes how, "[his] interpretive work... seems to revel in these paradoxes: but that is itself only 'some stu-pid first impression' (one of his favorite phrases). In reality, the paradox-effect is designed to undo that second moment of ingenuity, which is that of interpretation (it looks like this to you, but in real-ity what is going on is this...): the paradox is of the second order, so that what looks like a paradox is

in reality simply a return of the first impression to itself."[13] Or as Žižek himself so succinctly crystallizes the point, "This is what [Hegel's] 'negation of negation' is: the shift in perspective which turns failure into true success."[14]

As for architecture, Žižek argues that such a blindspot visuality affords buildings a unique *bargaining* capacity[15] towards a renewed critique of political-economy: that because a temporal dimension must enter into the spatial engagement of our moving toward and eventually into a building, there is already a kind of parallax event subsumed in the very "epistemological" shift between our perceiving the space of an inside *as seen from the outside* and our further perceiving that "same" inside - "ontologically" shifted but actually no different - *as then seen from the inside*. While Žižek will conclude that it is the everyday and anonymously self- proclaimed functional buildings which ought most to heed this parallax call, this (returned to) conclusion is, of course, worked through (paradoxically, interpretatively) across the gap opened up between today's "great symbolic projects" of starchitects and elites, as compared with the self-proclaimed functional austerity that triggered modernism's failure of livability and succeeding political critique (first impression). Particularly given the vast and publicly revealed interiors of performance and arts complexes - from the folds and slices of Liebeskind's Wohl Center or Snøhetta's National Opera House to the billowing curves of Paul Andreu's National Grand theater of China, Calatrava's Tenerife Concert Hall, or Gehry's Jay Pritzker Pavilion - what is most significant for Žižek is whether the kind of bargaining discourses these projects' layered envelopes engender will be situated in the tensions of a truly dialectical parallax of *unrepresentable* incommensurabilities or instead be consumed by the palliatives of integration and the merely ironic *visual* parallaxes of incommensurability cast as formal expression.

For Žižek, modernism's functionalist aesthetic projections once fostered the genuinely inherent dialectical tensions of exterior versus interior *inequalities* across the ideological membrane of its less than functional envelopes. Yet with contemporary arts complexes, Žižek finds both their extravagant transparencies and ironical opacities tending toward the regressive and cynical relativism which he further judges to be postmodernism's politically venal "denial":

"...in postmodernism, the parallax is openly admitted, displayed - and, in this way, neutralized: the antagonistic tension between different standpoints is flattened out into an indifferent plurality of standpoints. 'Contradiction' thus loses its subversive edge: in a space of globalized permissiveness, inconsistent standpoints cynically coexist - cynicism is the reaction of the 'So what?' to inconsistency."[16]

While condemning this postmodern flattening, Žižek likewise cautions against instrumentalizing such criticality, warning that politically evacuated or politically expressive approaches will fare no better:

"Koolhaas was right to reject what he dismissively calls architecture's 'fundamental moralism,' and to doubt the possibility of any directly 'critical' architectural practice - however, our point is not that architecture *should* be 'critical,' but that it *cannot not* reflect and interact with social and ideological antagonisms: the more it tries to be pure and purely aesthetic and/or functional, the more it reproduces these antagonisms."[17]

This Adornian turn is, of course, apropos the parallax view, reaffirming, as it does, that one can't position themselves on both sides of the "gap" at any one time - i.e., pursue an outcome from a socio-political perspective while operating in the blindspot conditioned by a formally aesthetic- oriented view. Here echoes from another moment in architecture's poignantly dialectical depression-into-acceptance segue are surely to be discerned: "Which is again to establish that the *physique* and the *morale* of modern architecture, its flesh and its word, were (and could) never be coincident;..."[18] But whereas Rowe's Cubist over-investment flattened his vision toward more totalizing exercises in quasi pre-modern Nolli plan visions and (by others' hands) postmodern stylized urban façades, Žižek's parallax seems poised to consider alternate tensions endemic to appropriating leftover and interstitial spaces - or, *pace* Gould and Lewontin, "exaptating" "spandrels" - among both the unprogrammed surfaces of infrastructures (bridges, train station interiors, etc.) and the "virtual poché" of falsely thick but otherwise underutilized envelopes of facades as "the proper place for utopian dreaming."[19]

Yet I would argue that Žižek's turning towards marginal sites of appropriation as *acceptance* already goes too far in foreclosing the *bargaining* power of the architectural envelope he himself identified. In this, Žižek is perhaps victim of his own desire (his counter-transference?) for diagrammatic closure, having mapped Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief -

denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance - not only onto *Living's* chapters but also onto our architectural interlude's five sections. For instance, his (section 5) reference to Lacaton & Vassal's housing block transformations as analogous to *acceptance* are surely better situated in relation to his (section 3) *bargaining* discussion of Alejandro Zaero-Polo's politically charged border-reading conclusion that the *market*, rather than state-run bureaucracy, is the proper agent for architecture's most *political* ambitions to engage.

And without doubt Žižek's singularly most profound insight in the whole of "The Architectural Parallax" involves his reframing of Zaero-Polo's conclusions about a "'neo-capitalist Deleuzianism'" through our by now familiar paradox-like reflexive twist. If the choice in how to reappraise architectural form's role relative to its agents' ambitions for political intervention is between, a) "reterritorialization" as always caught in the for-profit framework, as Deleuze and Guattari do, versus, b) capitalism itself offering the single chance for "nomadic molecular productivity," then:

> "Paradoxically, one should admit that there is more truth in the second answer: although Deleuze and Guattari are right in conceiving the capitalist framework as an obstacle to fully released productivity, they here make the same mistake as did Marx himself, ignoring how the obstacle is (like the Lacanian *objet a*) a positive condition of what it enframes, so that, by abolishing it, we paradoxically lose the very productivity it was obstructing."[20]

To retreat from the *a priori* failed engagement - a formal solution that cannot truly answer a political problem - is to pass over the chance to create a tension in the very spacing between the formal and the political, that a new "ontological" ground (object) can emerge to "reread" the "epistemological" perspective (subject) in support of whatever agency may then wager some further and more directly political response.

Whether architecture's political desires can get past their own disciplinary formalism's direct ineffectuality and so move on to accepting the real tangential contribution of fostering others' agency remains to be seen. But if what we find again and again in Žižek's parallaxical examples is how, a) the self-enframed vision of some blindspot provisional objective totality, b) refracted against an alternately ideological perspective, c) opens a gap between the two wherein a subjectively affective dislocation - the reflexive twist - d) emerges to re-envision a kind of real virtuality or *supplemental totality* within the selfsame image of the original provision, then it is toward certain formalisms of *provisional totality* and *affective dislocation* from the avant-garde past (as Hal Foster might argue, returning from the future in the work of the present) we might turn if we are further to devise a relationally modernist-like tension up to the task of a properly Žižekian reflexivity.[21] And specifically, it is in the formal calibrations of musical Serialism and photographic Surrealism that I want to suggest a potentially dialectically parallax-inducing doublet

		E	F	G	Db	Gb	Eb	Ab	D	B	C	A	Bb	
P-0	E	0	1	3	9	2	11	4	10	7	8	5	6	Bb
P-11	Eb	11	0	2	8	1	10	3	9	6	7	4	5	A
P-9	Db	9	10	0	6	11	8	1	7	4	5	2	3	G
P-3	G	3	4	6	0	5	2	7	1	10	11	8	9	Db
P-10	D	10	11	1	7	0	9	2	8	5	6	3	4	Ab
P-1	F	1	2	4	10	3	0	5	11	8	9	6	7	B
P-8	C	8	9	11	5	10	7	0	6	3	4	1	2	Gb
P-2	Gb	2	3	5	11	4	1	6	0	9	10	7	8	C
P-5	A	5	6	8	2	7	4	9	3	0	1	10	11	Eb
P-4	Ab	4	5	7	1	6	3	8	2	11	0	9	10	D
P-7	B	7	8	10	4	9	6	11	5	2	3	0	1	F
P-6	Bb	6	7	9	3	8	5	10	4	1	2	11	0	E
		Bb	B	Db	G	C	A	D	Ab	F	Gb	Eb	E	

Schoenberg. 12-tone Matrix; Man Ray. La Marquise Casati

exists whose alternately objective/subjective disjunctive inscriptions might offer insights on just such an already emerging present in architecture and landscape design. The image- limited publication format here of this otherwise visually motivated Serial/Surreal relation - or more parallaxically, S/erialurreal (Re)Presentation - notwithstanding, its conceptual provocations in tandem with Žižek's parallax views will yet hopefully stimulate interest among others working on what, following Ranciere, has been dubbed the "The Politics of Aesthetics."[22]

TOWARDS AN AFFECTIVELY SUPPLEMENTED TOTALITY

The formal austerity of musical Serialism might seem, at first "glance," to place it at great remove from the "convulsive beauty" of Surrealism's fantastic projections. Yet not only were both of these interwar-originating aesthetic practices similarly *politically* motivated, but their respective forms' radical "emancipation of dissonance" - in tonality for Serialism, and, let us say, in figural nomination for Surrealism - were likewise modeled by an "écriture automatique" whose very *constructedness* placed the relational indexicality or (pace Derrida) "spacing" of writing at the heart of their acoustical and visual challenges to normative bourgeois expressionism.[23] For musical Serialism this writing was prominently figured by the 12-tone (dodecaphonic) series of Arnold Schoenberg which replaced the compositional motifs and harmonies of major/minor (diatonic) structure with the pitch class tables of inversion and retrograde sequences that have become the hallmark of the movement's post- or pan-tonally abstract systematicity.[24] For Surrealism, in whose "photographic conditions" like Man Ray's *Marquise* Rosiland Krauss so acutely identified writing itself as "the master supplement" which produces the Surreal moment of our "experience of *reality as representation*," it is the syntax of doubling - the "babbling" "signifier of signification" - that concretizes the abstraction of real virtuality into the sublime suspension of our attention caught in the conceptual gap of an infinite loop of difference and repetition, of sense and nonsense.[25]

These structurally formal distinctions between the writerly productions of Serial versus Surreal dissonance are in fact quite critical to the larger argument that these two practices together might further suggest themselves to an architecturally

parallaxical imbrication. Serialist writing, being *literally* (i.e., actually) constructive, casts a wide net (or, not surprisingly, grid) of indexical spacings across an entire series of elements to authorize their freedom of difference as constrained by a regimen of repetition. Surrealist writing, being instead a *lapsible* (i.e., virtual) construct, hovers always in the certain uncertitude of an *ontological* gap that opens between a signifier and its "double," and which contrariwise insists on the sublime arrest of an optically mesmerizing because epistemologically torn repetition as initiated by the calculating difference of redoubling. This is not to say that the acoustic effects of Serial dissonances are not likewise arresting of our attention. Quite the contrary, and also especially for serial or series- based visual arts, their totality might surely engage us, even induce a mesmerized search for the key to their making or indexing, but certainly not a search for ourselves as the shifting ground of meaning within their net-work, whereas Surreal dissonance always "stares back," seeing me in the picture constituted by me. This suggests that, *even as the repetitions of writing produces both types of dissonance, Serial dissonance remains on the side of the object, whereas Surreal dissonance is quite reflexively produced both in and by, i.e. through, the subject.*

If this distinction bears out, and an architectural grafting of these two practices' writerly constructedness might be achieved vis-à-vis the building envelope, then perhaps we can resituate the "bargain" of Žižek's spatially traversed outside-to-inside reflexive shift toward an object/subject shift of equal import that is neither necessarily movement dependent nor movement resistant. To be sure, an architectural parallax which overcomes movement as a deciding factor holds some value, since it was the subject's literally embodied movement around the often serialized "specific objects" of Minimalism that spurred Michael Freid's condemnation of "literalness" as the abandonment of modernist "grace" by a subject over-involved positionally with art's distancing opticality. Yet we might suggest, at least in Žižek's terms, that Freid's critique of the drift from an aesthetics of painterly frontality or "presentness" to one of over- invested theatricality merely denotes an *optical* parallax shift, but surely not a *dialectically materialist* - i.e., genuinely subject-transforming - one. By our account, *serially* dissonant patterns, whether experienced in the optical flatness of musical matrices and analogous façade patterns,

or in the architecturally dimensional theatricality of sculptural exploration, will always situate in the same materialist blindspot perspectivism of a purely aestheticized formal presentness *or* presence. What the Serial effect of dissonance affords, then, is an objective provisional aesthetic totality that engages, mesmerizes, even *aesthetically affects* us, but which, on its own, does not insist on our materially altering - i.e., socially consciously (and so ultimately economically) resituating - our relation to it.

How, then, might we situate the "Surrealist gaze" of the object staring back from *within* a Serial matrix so as to *affectively* supplement that matrices' provisional totality in a manner that *does* tend to insinuate some materialist displacement in our relation to the original "serial" object? Following Krauss's suggestion, we should look to examples wherein the parallax is approached through a "construction *en abyme*," that is, one "that places within the field of the representation another representation that reduplicates an aspect of the first," thereby providing the necessary spacing that "destroys simultaneous presence."[26] Certainly we would consider Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, especially as it was further framed within Foucault's own famously redoubled multiplicity of serial analyses, and within which we shift from a casual observer outside the frame to an aesthetic catalyst standing at the point of privilege from which it's virtual patrons are implied to have been recorded .[27] Similarly disjunctive are are the brilliant reframing displacements of Magritte's poetical paintings whose "unravalled calligrams," again after Foucault, "prevent us from being both the reader and the viewer at the same time,"[28] and which further remind us how, in works like *The Key of Dreams* or *Les Deux mystères*, Magritte the Surrealist would leverage a serial framework in which to graft his writerly spacings.

Following Magritte, recent examples of explicitly S/erialurreal graftings are more likely to be found in film and video, such as Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993), Mike Figgis's *Timecode* (2000), or Christopher Nolan's *Momento* (2000), to name only a few. Perhaps most quintessentially S/erialurreal are the music videos of Michel Gondry, such as for Cibo Matto's *Sugar Water* (1996), Beck's *Deadweight* (1997), the Chemical Brothers' *Star Guitar* (2001), Kylie Minogue's *Come Into My World* (2002), and the White Stripes *The Hardest Button to Button* (2003), which, like their photographic Surrealist precursors,

leverage an exposed filmic constructedness to graft their musically serial choreographies into the "*mise en abyme*" of a tireless metadiscourse on the making of music video itself. As recent as 2010, the New York Guggenheim's show, *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/ Video/ Performance*, was likewise replete with works whose uncanny contents stared back from within serialized *viewing* frames - TV's, peepholes, mirrors - that shift our relation to the work from museum- going viewer to channel surfing consumer, voyeur, narcissist, etc. For instance, with the opening gallery's figuratively administered shock of Warhol's serially surreal *Orange Disaster #5* (1963), our presumably innocent eye scans the three-by-five grid of empty electric-chair silk- screen representations in search of the scene's morbid truth, only to realize that our own voyeurism *already is* the morbid truth, as with so many of Warhol's works, of this s/erialurreal trance. Žižek's own filmic analyses are likewise filled with such "perverse short circuits" whereby a protagonist must "ontologically shift" their position to take up the "epistemological gaze" of the other - such as the detective in Michael Mann's *Manhunter* who must "work through" seeing his home video crime evidence "perversely," or *as if from the murderer's perspective*, in order to solve the crime.[29] And yet if these representational "construction *en abyme*" examples were, in fact, to *affect* even temporarily some "ontologically" materialist shift in their observers, does this not further beg the question of whether a changed agent necessarily insinuates an agent of change, or at least a *belief* in change's possibility?

Stepping out from behind the camera, Žižek reminds us, with Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003), how truly modern films today must engage this notion of belief (at least belief in movies themselves) not by celebrating irony but by putting it to work in the service of illusionism's tensions. In *Dogville*, a full-scale two-dimensional drawing of a residential block is the three- dimensional *mise en scène* itself - such that there is, "something real in the illusion more real than in the reality behind it."[30]   This cinematic reading echoes Felicity Scott's analysis of Bernard Rudofsky's s/erialurreal U.S. pavilion exhibition design for the 1958 Brussel's World Fair. Here both an ironically suspended U.S. map and perhaps more importantly the fact of fifty *objets trouvés* below - from the $7.2 million cancelled check used to purchase Alaska (actually, a facsimile) to five Idaho potatoes - affords the re-

ality of the illusion or "provisional totality" (Scott's phrase) of a *believable* "Encounter With America" apropos the Fair's "A New Humanism" theme.[31] And while Rudofsky's curatorial refusal to indulge in more symbolically nationalistic references proved too defamiliarizing for most American visitors, the exhibit was well received by Europeans who were quite willing to engage the *politically* reflexive twist necessary to move beyond their own preconceptions of American grandiosity (stupid first impression) to the affective "space of encounter" with the everyday "tumbleweed" artifacts (reflexive twist) that can then be seen to more virtually constitute America's "greatness" (return to first impression).

Sauerbruch Hutton, Federal Environmental Agency

THE SPECTRE OF POST-POSTMODERNISM?

If we may thus reframe Žižek's parallax view in the terms of our dually dissonant S/erialurreal aesthetic constructedness, we find how a) some visually charged serial web of differentiated repetitions engages us to believe in the aesthetic illusion of its own provisional totality, whereby b) some surreal doubling of content grafted therein might c) affectively shift our materialist perspective from one blindspot view to another that d) we may return us to the original serial totality now reconstituted or supplemented by us. Alternately, in the language of today's critical/post-critical architectural divide, I would speculate that we are witnessing a return from the future present of a post-post-modern Serial aesthetics of pure objective surface effects distilled through a return from the past of a modern Surreal

aesthetics of pure subjective tension, working in tandem to dislocate or defamiliarize the subject into an altered state of consciousness where, thanks to an even provisional belief in illusion, a condition of change in the subject is affectively made manifest.

Certainly among architects there is no shortage of serialism with which to begin to consider this proposal. Among Late Modern work, perhaps most well known are the Corbusian façades of the Unités, Ronchamp, and (particularly given Iannis Xenaxis's contributions) the screens at La Tourette.[32] And then there are the endless serial meditations Louis Kahn - from the planning of the Richards Medical Center and the façades of the Esherick House, stretching through the folds of the Salk and the vaults and spacings of the Kimbell on to the elevations of the British Art Center. Graphic arts and advertising have long since accepted the efficacy of serial repetition both in singular advertisements and across a product campaigns, of which the work by 2x4 and Pentegram are exemplary.[33] Among contemporary architectural and landscape design practices, scores of serial aesthetic examples with the added infections of surreal tropes are to be found in the works of, Sauerbruch Hutton, Toyo Ito, Herzog and deMeuron, Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, Stanley Saitowitz, SHoP Architects, Lewis Tsurumaki Lewis, MOS, West8, Field Operations, and others too many to name.

For example, recalling Žižek's suggestion to look to both everyday buildings and the possibilities of "exaptating spandrels" might we not consider the amazing candy colored façades of Sauerbruch Hutton's entire body of work as the exemplary case of a highly charged serial aesthetic appropriating the most basic elements of their otherwise high-performance curtain walls? Whether these arrestingly chromatic civic displays might foster productive tensions of awareness - between sustainability as a potentially integral pleasure or late capitalist trick, between the façade as anonymously institutional wrapper or marker of personal identification, between art as private property or civic necessity - remains to be seen. As we have argued, there is no simple linkage to be found between aesthetic efficacy and progressive politics. There is only performance and ideology and the hope that some agency might emerge in the failure to directly communicate between the two.

ENDNOTES

1   Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, as quoted in Slavoj Žižek. *The Parallax View*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 17. Žižek notes that his reading of the parallax is derived from Kojin Karatani's Transcritique: On Kant and Marx, see endnote #9, p387.

2   Ibid., p.17.

3   Here, as per Žižek's frequent usage, "perverse" is intended theoretically to describe the impropriety of the subject's persepctive having shifted to take up the uncanny perspective of the object's gaze. For an extended discussion, cf., Slavoj Žižek. "Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage: A Triad of the Gaze." *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

4   Rallying essays for Deleuze-and-Guattarian folding and the post-political include those by Greg Lynn and Jeffrey Kipnis in, *Greg Lynn,* ed. *Folding in Architecture*, (London: Academy Group Ltd., 1993); for the post-critical/-dialectical and performative see, Robert Somol, "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism." *Perspecta 33: Mining Autonomy, (*Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 72-77.

5   See, for example, Felicity Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), and more recently the essays by Barry Bergdoll and Andres Lepik in, Andres Lepik. Small Scale Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement, (NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010).

6   For his conscise description of "virtual reality" vs "the reality of the virtual" or "real virtuality" cf.: Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, (NY: Routledge, 2004), 3-4.

7   Slavoj Žižek, "The Architectural Parallax," *Living in the End of Times*, (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2010).

8   There are, for example, no references to Žižek in the essays of Goldhagen and Legault (eds.) *Anxious Modernisms* (2000), nor Reinhold Martin's *Utopia's Ghost* (2010), nor indexical references anywhere among the three well-known major post-'68 architectural theory readers by Nesbitt (1996), Leach (1997), and Hays (1998). Passing references, hardly engaging Žižek's work, can be found in Vidler's *Warped Space* and more recently (if to slightly greater degree) in Hays' *Architecture's Desire*. One is here tempted to recall Peggy Deamer's censure for *Assemblage's* lack of political work, "Unless one subscribes to the idea that 'everything is political' - and hence to the idea that nothing in particular need be scrutinized - this lack is both curious and suspicious. Its effect is also awkard and self-conscious." Deamer, Peggy. *Assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture* 41 (April, 2000), 22. Regrettably, Deamer's trenchant Marxist call, which also critiques applications of Deleuze and Derrida, does itself neither make mention of Žižek's work.

9   In reference to which, Žižek's disdain for Guattari's import to Deleuze are well often repeated: "The line of Deleuze proper is that of the great early monographs (*Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense*) as well as some of the shorter introductory writings. In his later work, it is the two cinema books... one can only regret the Anglo-Saxon reception of Deleuze (and also the political impact of Deleuze) is predominantly that of a 'guattarized' Deleuze." Op.cit., Žižek. *Organs Without Bodies*. p20. For a more recent discussion on Deleuze, see also, Slavoj Žižek. *In Defense of Lost Causes*, (NY: Verso, 2008).

10   Thomas Brockelman, Žižek and Heidegger: *The Question Concerning Techno-Capitalism*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 139. Also, Brockelman's examination of Žižek vis-à-vis collage and thereby in tandem with Rowe & Koetter and Koolhaas throughout his *The Frame and the Mirror* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001) is a rare exception.

11   Cf., Mark J. Sedlar, M.D., "Freud's Concept of Working Through." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly LII* (1983). This text offers a very clear and understandlable synopsis on the analysand's tasks of repetition and remembering in relation to the treib of the death drive described by Freud in "Remembering, repeating and working-through, further recommendations on the technique of psycho-analysis," of 1914.

12   Žižek, op.cit., *Living in the End of Times*, p.244.

13   Fredric Jameson, "First Impressions." Rev. of *The Parallax View*, by Slavoj Žižek. *London Review of Books* 28.17 (2006): 7-8. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n17/fredric-jameson/first-impressions>

14   Žižek, op.cit., *The Parallax View*, p.27.

15   Ibid., p.xii. Žižek enlists Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's "five stages of grief" - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance - to frame his five chapters which presage "the way our social consciousness" is already attempting to deal with the impending global capitalist "apocalypse" revealed by ecological crises, biogenteics, systemic breakdowns in global capital, and exploding social divisions and upheavals. Four variation-on-a-theme "interludes" follow chapters one through four; "The Architectural Parallax" following c.3, is thus presented as a variation on grief's third stage - bargaining.

16   Žižek, op.cit., *Living in the End of Times*, 253.

17   Ibid., 274

18   Colin Rowe, "Introduction." *Five Architects*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1975), 7.

19   Žižek, op.cit., *Living in the End of Times*, p.276-278. Here Žižek is referencing the already architecturally appropriated arguments of Gould and Lewontin about the "co-opted" pendentives of San Marco as has also recently been taken up by Peter Sloterdijk in his Spheres trilogy. If there is any doubt as to whether architectural theory-practitioners in search of philosophically approved soft shape solutions (in lieu of Žižek's more difficult dialectical relationships) will likely be "foaming" at the mouth over Sloterdijk's "bubbles" and "balloons," cf. Karl Chu's rambling Panglossian keynote performance at the 2010 ACADIA: InForming Life conference.

20   Žižek, op.cit., *Living in the End of Times*, 264.

21   Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press), 1996. Foster's Lacanian return looks to the uncanny repetition of minimalist affectivity traced in the repressed alternate modernisms running between Duchamp and Warhol (i.e., contra Picasso to Pollack flattening).

22   Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004).

23   Though the political reactivity nascent to Serialism is less often discussed than the more well known

disgust for war which gave birth to Surrealism's appeals to the unconscious, in fact Schoenberg's twelve- tone matrices, solidified in the 1920's, were born of a, "strong foundation in his political attitude against nationalistic and warlike tendancies," while the 1950's resurgence of Serialist principles among composers like Webern, Messiaen, and Stockhausen, was openly gauged to overcoming a musical hedonism that both they and Schoenberg further associated with the barbarism of WWII's horrors. Cf. Markus Bandur. *Aesthetics of Total Serialism: Contemporary Research from Music to Architecture*, (Boston, MA: Birkhäuser, 2001), 30-37.

24   Arnold Whittal, *Serialism*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

25   Rosiland Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealsim,"(1981). *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985). Paperback ed., 1986. 11th printing, 1997.

26   Ibid., 102. Here, I believe, "simultaneous presence" would be the equivalent of Fried's "presentness."

27   Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas." *The Order of Things*, (NY: Random House, Inc., Vintage Books ed., 1994).

28   Michel Foucault, *This In Not A Pipe*, (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1983), 36.

29   Slavoj Žižek, "Pornography, Nostalgia, Montage: A triad of the Gaze." *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 107.

30   Perf. Slavoj Žižek, Sophie Fiennes, dir. "Dogville." *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, (Lone Star, Mischief Films, Amoeba Film Prod. Microcinema Int'l. Inc., 2006).

31   Felicity Scott, "Encounters With The Face of America," in *Architecture and the Sciences: Exchanging Metaphores*, Antoine Picone and Alessandra Ponte, eds., (NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003).

32   Sven Sterken, "Music as an Arrt of Space: Interactions between Music and Architecture in the Works of Iannis Xenakis." Mikesch W. Muecke, Miriam S. Zach, eds. *Resonance: Essays on the Intersection of Music and Architecture*, v.1., (Ames, IA: Culicidae Architectural Press, 2007).

33   Cf. Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimalist Music as Cultural Practice*, (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2005).