[In] Form Less
The Hippo's Sweat, Horizontality, Isotropy and Entropy

Part one: in the form of principles

In contrast to the linear schemes and cause-effect systems with which scientific objectivity revolutionised knowledge, the end of century is witnessing a more complex description of reality. Like the image of Rome that Freud used to describe the stratified structure of the subconscious, modernism has been heading towards contiguities, overlaps and transparencies, strata and deformations.

> *"What event, what law do they obey, these mutations that suddenly decide that things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way, and that it is no longer wealth, living beings, and discourse that are presented to knowledge in the interstices of words or through their transparency, but beings radically different from them?"* **1**

In his archaeology of knowledge, Foucault traced the points of discontinuity in the history of Western thinking. He tried to identify the operations that have superimposed a new order over things; principles of order which, associated with systems of inclusions and exclusions, have always conditioned the mechanisms of any given experience: the classifying experience of a gaze, the visualisation of the elements that construct a new landscape, an interpretation of the idea of space...

However, Foucault was not interested in the orderly description of events, or even the multiple variety of species, subspecies and individuals that populate any section of reality. His aim was to reveal the makeup of the overall systems, those which have enabled every event and every individual to be set in each moment at a given position within the complex mesh of reality or, more to the point, of each description of it.

And what could be a more appropriate moment to know, identify and describe these models of knowledge than when they fail, change or collapse and are replaced by others? This is where and when the presence of a base becomes visible, what another structuralist such as Lyotard might call a general matrix, capable of establishing the rules of the game, its codes and limits. The point at which we can start to perceive the association between a concept of order, a language and an experience, forming a triad which at every stable moment can provide an explanation of the visible.

In the history of humanity, the configurations of thought have repeatedly been dislodged and opened only to be recomposed immediately, always in accordance with a different order of priorities, another internal organisation in the redistribution of the components of knowledge. And it is in the interstice of these fractures, in the space of these discontinuities, where the impulse arises, and forcing reality to be perceived, described and enunciated in a different way.

> *"Where did this unexpected mobility of epistemological arrangement suddenly come from, or the drift of positivities in relation to one another, or, deeper still, the alteration in their mode of being? How is it that thought detaches itself from the squares it inhabited before -general grammar, natural*

The analysis of these fractures enabled Foucault, in his archaeology of knowledge, to describe the changes that have shaped the world as we perceive it today. It is characterized by the replacement of language for discourse, production for wealth, or the subordination of character to function. Above all, however, it is identified by a fundamental fact: the space of knowledge is no longer that of identities and differences, but instead a new and distinct, constituted not by the elements, but of the internal relationships amongst elements; A space where visibility and identity lose their predominant value in favour of 'analogy' and 'organisation'.

This has a myriad of consequences.

Firstly, having changed the relationships between the visible structure and the criteria of identity, the very principle of classifications can be questioned. Previously, classifications were accepted as fundamental tools of knowledge and analysis. Order was fed in by the classifiers through the comparison of visible structures. They established relationships between homogeneous elements, and finally proposed an overall framework in which all groups; both known and unknown could find their place.

Today, however, it is all the same to us to refer to Duchamp, Borges, Barthes or Lyotard; all of them, in their reflections on thought, have questioned the current validity of any criteria of certainty and hence any classification system. The modern world, with art at the forefront, has erased not only the concept of stable meaning from the work, but indeed that of identity as well. Every object, every act, strives to define a territory in which it controls the variables of its surroundings, each of which should be accompanied by the rules of play. Space is patterned for every act, for every performance. This is perhaps the most radical consequence of avant-garde activity: the point beyond which each new work is a fresh start and is accompanied by the formulation of its own rules.

Secondly, although this might only be important for those who take on such a task, we must ask what the role of the critic should be in this new context.

> '*The acts of distinction, dissection and separation of a given structure can be found in the origins of any critical approach.*'
> *3*

But a distinction based on what identities? What body is being dissected, and with reference to what function of the structure? Having made the notions of similarity and identity useless as tools of analysis, what sense is there in seeking the order of the object in its internal structure, in its content?

The object is no longer necessarily perceived as a synthesis of the material and conceptual forces that converge on it. In consequence, interpretation is a futile task. Any interpretation whatsoever will empty the object from within, exposing what it encloses to the light. So what should be done with the objects outside this concept of 'interior'- the objects whose content is 'external'?

Textuality, disseminated from linguistic theory into all areas of knowledge, now dominates the techniques of the production of meaning. Having replaced interpretation and hermeneutics, textuality has pushed reading and criticism in that direction. The meaning of the text or the work is no longer stable or unique. In fact, this only surfaces during its reading, in the relationship with the 'spectator'. Meaning is thus multiple but also instrumental.

Borges describes a French author, Pierre Menard, who devoted his life to writing Don Quixote.

> "*He did not wish to compose another Quixote- an easy task- but instead, The Quixote. Needless to say he never strove for a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable goal was to produce pages that coincided, word for word, line for line, with those of Miguel de Cervantes.*" **4**

For Borges, the value of the task undertaken by the fictitious Menard resided in the series of shifts that this embodied- Don Quixote written by a Frenchman, Don Quixote written after Hegel, Don Quixote written by a contemporary of Russell, etc. and the ability to produce new meanings from the same text, from a single object.

> "*Cervantes and Menard's texts are verbally identical, but the latter is infinitely richer (More ambiguous, his critics might say; but then again, ambiguity is a treasure.)*" **5**

The current critical discourse has become *poetic*. It is not aimed at the analysis of objects, but at the shifts of metaphors and metonymy whose purpose is to create meaning. Shifts based on the idea that similarity is nothing but a manufactured relationship that highlights a generic affinity between heterogeneous ideas. And, as a consequence, things and ideas which seem distant suddenly seem close.

The capacity of these mechanisms to produce new visions and interpretations of known existing objects is similar to Borges' proposal. Hence its attraction: the promise of an inexhaustible multiplication of meanings, not the fruit of an alteration of existing objects or the physical generation of new ones, but rather the result of relationships with and amongst which it establishes the critical discourse, now raised to the status of autonomy from materiality.

There is no longer a 'marked space' within which to leave a footprint, but a flexible perimeter on which to exercise deformations from within. Today, to do is to transform and to create, to appropriate an image and project it over another. Borges writes:

> "*Menard (perhaps unwittingly) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the hesitant and rudimentary art of reading: the technique of deliberate anachronism and erroneous attributions. This technique, with its infinite applications, urges us to read the Odyssey as if it were written after the Aeneid, and to read Le Jardin du Centaure by Madame Henri Bachelier as if it were by Madame Henri Bachelier. This technique populates the most peaceful books with adventure.*" **6**

However, this technique is also responsible for the independence of discourse from object, which has unquestionable consequences for architecture. What role does the material condition of the object play in this context? How do descriptions, constructed with words that

enjoy an unstable fluidity, relate to objects, conditioned by the static stability of materiality? The exteriority of the critical discourse, its operativity and its effectiveness, should be the subject of critical debate.

In denouncing the historical injustice committed against the forgotten Menard, Borges reminds us of the complexity in the production of meaning. How do we come to know things: from what they are, or perhaps from what they mean in a given circumstance? This question, while exaggerated in its ambition end even its innocence, is especially relevant in the case of architecture.

Part two: on techniques

It is within this complex, unstable intellectual context that we can and indeed should analyse recent Spanish architecture as well. In fact, architects have been unable or unwilling to distance themselves from this cultural and intellectual scenario. As a consequence, different reactions and varied responses to these proposals can be traced in recent works and projects. This is a congruous reaction to an inevitable enveloping; engulfing environment, but it is also a symptom of a degree of generational typification. It is a feature which, along with others, lets us describe a particular area of research and labour, and identify a generational differentiation that has been produced without rupture.

Immersed in this scenario, some have reacted with incredulity or caution, preferring to remain concerned with an earlier but not necessarily less complex problem- the difficult relationship between tradition and innovation or between imitation and originality- a feature of post-modernism. As a result, they have become involved in the re-evaluation of the fundamentals of architectural language and its potential manipulation, framing their work in an understanding of the city as a structured, historic system.

Language and city as hypothetically congruous systems, accompanied by a greater or lesser intensity of the concept of place, of specificity associated with localism, and of humanisation of architecture, whether through iconographic resources or substituting the primacy of the programme with the protagonism of form, have for them become the basic elements of an ideological and operative *corpus* with which they could associate without difficulty.

Others, however, have preferred to delve into the field of speculation, translating problems formulated in the abstract sphere of words into their projects. Nomadic, lightness, crossbreeding, grafts, transformations and others are proposed as operative systems, sometimes via complex mechanisms of formalisation and sometimes simply metaphors. Ultimately, however, they become the problems that must be the conceptual basis for the projects and even the reason for their form or their purported lack of it. Naturally, between these two extremes there are innumerable hybrids which always adapt their response to the circumstances.

Congruence with the above obviously prevents me from proposing a classification or even a map of works and projects. I do, however, propose to advance several concepts which, in association with certain architectural problems, enable the reader to journey to and between the projects in order to establish relationships amongst them.

Isotropy

The concept of isotropy and its uniform, regulated order introduces us to the opposition between structure and the subconscious. Structure implies sequence, a space patterned by a harmony or a repetition, given form through a narrative. As with language, the law of identities operates in the system of structuralist order associate with modernism. Ideas and things must thus be different from each other; they must follow the rules of congruence and non-contradiction. It is a system composed of units and its infinite combinations based on the play of similarities and differences.

The subconscious, on the other hand, is capable of operating in contradiction. It can propose not only the transformation of one thing into its opposite, but also the simultaneous presence of both. Thus, a space opens that is manipulated by means of shift, overlap and condensation- operations that are aimed at intensifying experience on the basis of the manipulation of the object. This intensification may be triggered by the simple proliferation of impulses. In this case, the densification is literal, replacing complexity with mere multiplicity.

Intensification can also be produced by means of more complex mechanisms. Influencing the meaning of an object by resituating it in a different conceptual or material context; altering the laws of its constitution, identifying idea and matter to the point where they overlap; or contaminating the object with iconographic manipulations that are capable of reactivating the complex and difficult problem of ornamentation.

Borrowing the conscious/subconscious opposition from psychoanalysis is a characteristic license of textuality. However, this analogy enables us to highlight the differences between two fundamental modes of production at the end of this century: not the most literal differences between rationalism and expressionism, but the more complex ones existing between surrealism and rationalism.

In fact, this divergence between structural isotropy and subconscious space has been present in our architectural culture for some time. It has been at the forefront since 1962, when Robert Venturi, albeit for a different purpose, announced that,

> *"I prefer hybrid to pure elements, compromised to clean, ambiguous to articulate... redundant to simple, irregular and mistaken to direct and clear. I defend the richness of meanings instead of the clarity of meanings... I prefer 'this and that' to 'either this or that."* **8**

Venturi proposed the substitution of the aesthetic system as a mental, abstract construction, peculiar to modernism, with a procedure capable of recognising the unique qualities proposed by each case.9 He thus introduced the idea of contamination and ambiguity, but also instability and heterogeneity. Anything may exist in its place of origin, associated with a stable significance, but it may also be shifted to anywhere else, making the most of the alterations produced by a reaction to the new environment or circumstances.

While Rem Koolhaas' intentions and ideology are quite different, certain fundamentals of his work derive from the same base. In his manifesto for the 'congestion culture' in Delirious New York, Koolhaas

proposes the three axioms on which to base the modern city- no less than mesh, lobotomy and schizophrenia. All of these are uncoupling mechanisms which facilitate proliferation. They are mechanisms that enable the city to be described as a 'metropolitan archipelago' which, given the lack of a real history, proposes an 'instant folklore' for each building, each skyscraper. Through the dual disconnection of lobotomy and schizophrenia, they also permit the separation of interior and exterior to later develop the interior in independent portions and devote the exteriors exclusively to the manipulation of language. The means to resolve the relationship between form and content is as paradoxical and surreal as effective: not through balance, but through total independence; not as the result of analysis, but as negation of the problem.

Koolhaas not only shares an aversion to the articulation of form with Venturi. They also coincide in the refusal to be subjected to a superstructure that assigns a stable meaning, linked to a physical or conceptual location within the system. And both work to provoke a crisis in the system, as they aim to distort not only objects but also the laws that control their production.

Entropy

Affinity towards heterogeneity is linked to the concept of entropy. Lyotard poses the following question:

> *"What happens if the 'geometrician' is possessed by an affinity for heterogeneity? What if its curiosity achieves continuous sizes precisely because they are incommensurable, because they cannot be superimposed and they are not independent of their position? This is when a geometric machine in reverse arises from 'Analysis situs', from topology, not to make it measurable but to make it incommensurable."* **10**

As architecture becomes freed of the models of identity and difference, it conquers a higher degree in the freedom of form and the manipulation of structure. The *'geometric machine operating backwards'* cancels out identities, imposing continuity in their place. The object, or architecture, does not aspire to a coherent identity but rather to a figure without outline.

Rosalind Krauss explains the concept of entropy with the following example: a box is full of sand; half of the sand is white and the other half black. A child begins to run in clockwise circles, mixing the dark and light sand with her feet. She then starts to run in the opposite direction, but this new movement is of no use for restoring the black and white order; on the contrary, it is mixed even more. As long as she keeps running, entropy will continue to increase irreversibly.

The aim of architecture is, or has been, to escape entropy. Architecture involves the imposition of an order, the structured organisation of solids and voids, and the implementation of a hierarchy. Through the plan, architecture indicates the means of occupying spaces and moving around them. It therefore controls experience. In this orthodoxy, the plan is the generator of architecture.

> *"Without the plan there would only be disorder and arbitrariness."* **11**

Approached in these terms, architecture can be compared to an ideal concept of order and structure, constructed around a transcendental subject that dominates it visually. It is thus linked to the definition of edges and limits, which is to say to the mechanisms of identity and difference, whose translation to the visual, in its most operative expression, is the distinction between background and figure.

Entropy, on the other hand, works in architecture like camouflage in nature. It enhances the uniformity of an on-going texture, collapsing the limits of the individual objects, introducing continuity by means of duality or ambiguity. As a consequence, it boycotts the laws of the '*gestalt*' vision and provokes a crisis in the concept of form. Entropy provokes a space in which visibility and identity lose their dominant value in favour of analogy and organisation: a space that is ultimately urban.

> "*As an organism, the city always tries, of course, to combat entropic proliferation at the same time that it generates it; as a capitalist enterprise, the city always invents new means of recycling waste.*" **12**

The modern city is not ruled by a strategy, but rather by multiples. It is not the expression of a reason, but of many contradictory reasons. It is the fruit of material necessities rather than historic or intellectual needs. We may therefore accept the cities of today as objective facts- realities without a transcendental purpose. They fit, in fact, in the concept of 'exteriority', distant and opaque to interpretation. Their meaning does not reside in their interior, in their congruence as object or organisation. Their meaning is 'external', given that it resides in its potential and consequences. The modern city is not valued for what it is, but for the relationships and activities it generates. Its wealth is not internal and substantial, but external and immaterial. One does not even have to be in it physically to use or enjoy it. It is not a monument: it is a tool.

This is the environment in which architecture is often produced. And in this description there is no drama or renunciation, although the opposite may seem to be the case. At least there is no renunciation of architecture, while there is of interpretation. One must, however, ask how architecture will respond in such context. From our point of view it will necessarily be on the defensive, as only three words seem to properly describe the strategies consequently proposed: schizophrenia, autism and camouflage.

The container is schizophrenic but efficient. It is an expression of the analogy proposed by the dichotomy between the conscious and the subconscious as a model, and hence as the operative viability and efficiency achieved on assuming the lack of internal coherence between container and content.

The reutilization of the language of modern architecture, and its aspirations to become silent, simulates autism. Close to consuming itself in its own diagram, the only emphasis of this architecture confides in repetition, with its laws of regularity and identity, in the hope that the system of voids thus generated will be capable of substituting the lack of expression of the repeated solids.

And finally camouflage, a new form of contextualism that recycles the greater complexity of other systems on the smaller scale of architecture. Urban disorder is sometimes represented in the form of controlled chaos. Other more sophisticated forms translate to architecture the production mechanisms that correspond to other genres- city, landscape, infrastructure, topography, geography, etc.-.

Horizontality

The concept of *horizontality* was introduced by Walter Benjamin. The difference he identified between the orientation of the horizontal and the vertical plane is fundamental and qualitative:

> *"We should speak of two cuts through the world's substance: the longitudinal cut of painting, and the transversal cut of certain graphic production. The longitudinal cut seems to be that of representation, of a certain way it encloses things; the transversal cut is symbolic, it encloses signs."* **13**

The vertical plane, associated with the traditional artist's canvas, is the place for representation, where the struggles to reproduce spatial reality using different techniques including perspective have taken place. It is thus the space of vision, of the image constructed in the semblance of nature. Experience is represented on this plane, and it is therefore governed by the rules of Gestalt and its principles of good form dependent on the erect body of the spectator- vertical and frontal.

The horizontal plane, on the other hand, is the place for writing. Signs such as the letters on the printing plate are inscribed in it. Disconnected from the verticality of the body, the horizontal plane is contrary to the idea of image. Dissociated from vision and anthropomorphism, signs and inscriptions coexist here, reinforcing the analogy with the written page. This suppression of the vertical plane for the benefit of horizontality is a distinctive feature of our culture, and it has its resultant manifestation in architecture.

First example: Andy Warhol is said to have laid white canvases in his doorway for visitors to tread on when they entered his apartment. He was interested in the mark on the canvas as a print and, when regarded as a whole, as choreography. On the basis of this idea, he produced *Dance Diagrams* which was displayed on the floor of his gallery.

The perception of space through time is part of the vertical axis. It is visual and gestaltic. Its phenomenological nature belongs to the 'natural' ambit. Horizontality, on the other hand, is neither phenomenological nor spatial. It is sign, not representation. It marks relationships, but does not describe experiences and in fact it ignores but does not deny occupation.

The plan has and may still be a tool for the control and arrangement of sequences and itineraries. As an imaginary horizontal section, cut at a certain height, it marks the position of walls, doors, windows and stairs. It is used to structure the order of fillings and voids, of opaque, transparent and all the intermediate states. The manner of occupying space and moving through it is established on the plan. In this approach, the plan is an abstract representation of the experience of space in time. It thus belongs to the vertical axis. It is, like architecture, an abstract consideration of a real problem.

The plan as a tool, however, can be transformed into a horizontal plane- into a flat surface in which activities, movements and programmatic units are inscribed as signs. The aim is not to determine the location of the solid and the void, but rather to mark relative positions and programmatic locations. The plan does not aspire to specify form, but to anticipate all possible actions in it, for the purpose of which they are inscribed as marks or signs- as text. This is not a question of the abstract representation of a real phenomenon, given that it is the trail or physical mark of an abstract phenomenon. In this model, the plan does not try to arrange solids and voids in order to control occupations and itineraries. It operates as an inscription of movements on the horizontal plane. It defines positions, not places.

Second example: Robert Morris spreads a felt cloth over the floor and cuts it into strips. While on the floor, the parallel, repetitive order of the cuts is perceptible. There is a form. However, when he picks it up off the floor and hangs it on a hook on the wall, the cloth's very weight deforms it. Now it is just an irregular set of felt strips and slashes between them. The force of gravity, which operates on the vertical plane, evidences the shapeless nature of the felt, i.e., the lack of a backing structure, while the irregular spaces between the strips are its manifestation.

Gravity is not operative on the horizontal plane, thus weight and structural restrictions disappear. Consequently, surfaces are worked with like cloths: as abstract and ornamental problems. When the horizontal plane is abated and the surface is once again placed on the vertical axis, the most significant aspect is not the order in which it is manufactured, but the deformations with which it is transformed. The 'horizontal writing' used to inscribe the surfaces, with facades and floors, elevations and plans now equated, does not reach its ultimate state until it is deformed to absorb the forces that inevitably work on the vertical axis: gravity, representation, experience, etc. Analogy lets us operate within a discipline with the tools of another, but the result is measured using the rules of both.

The hippo's sweat

> "*At the end of March 1944, Dubuffet gave Jean Paulhan one of his recent paintings as a gift. Several days later it began to melt. If we are to believe Michael Tapié ... Debuffet was 'hugely amused by these adventures', which he characterized as 'hippo sweats'". In fact, the painter wasn't all that happy, for the painting kept melting due to the untested materials he was then employing (asphalt, for example). The hippo is fat; it is in danger of melting -as, occasionally, are paintings.*" **14**

In their description of the concept of *formless*, Krauss and Bois draw our attention to the difference between the qualities of liquid and solid conditions, in order to insist on the opposition between systems with a structured order and more complex systems of order. Language is the paradigm of structure. It is a system that operates on the basis of the criterion of identities and differences formed by stable units with infinite combinations according to laws of articulation known to all. Liquid, on the other hand, is indivisible. It is the paradigm of formlessness, of that which lacks a form of its own, as this is only received from the container. Liquid has order but not structure.

Due to the belief that architecture and language bear a resemblance and that one may be studied using the tools of the other, even to the point of identifying them together, it is hard not to associate the idea of architecture with those of structure and articulation.

Today, however, architecture often has to be inscribed in places whose most important physical and conceptual condition is their very *liquidity*; places identified by formal inconsistency, lack of perimeter, figureless or featureless places. Places whose state is closer that of the quasi-liquid body of a hippopotamus, whose sweaty envelope and apparent lack of skeleton hinder their proposal as model or ideal. This does not mean, however, that their potential as an analogy is any less appropriate, or that we cannot use their invertebrate formlessness when describing the material reality in which we operate.

We often have an environment, a site, a perimeter, a brief..., all piled up to one side. On the other side, we have the particular balance between abstract and specific, through which architectural ideas are formulated. And the physical place, in its lack of definition, in its inconsistency, is replaced by a state of forces, a condition of relationships between the parts of the problem.

Tackling architecture in these terms and trying to exploit these limitations, the project is proposed as something independent of its physical surroundings, but necessarily inscribed in them. Thus, an alignment is a factor to be taken into consideration, but it is difficult for us to extract a meaning from it or transcend its physical relevance. The alignment, in its condition as perimeter, is constructed as the surface of a vase that outlines and differentiates the exterior air from the interior content. The earthen surface is transformed into an accumulator of tensions, a membrane whose equilibrium depends on the gradient between the exterior and interior forces. However, having attained equilibrium, the vase surface is also the limit that defines an independent interior environment, an area of formal relations that only provides an explanation to itself. It therefore does not aspire to any influence over its physical environment other than that deriving from its individuality, its independence in a system of order that encourages diversity.

Part three: on the facts

As a consequence of the above, the purpose of a critical text can be neither interpretative nor classificatory. It must be exploratory and, at best, instrumental. Its function should be the identification and description of tools which, placed at the disposal of the critic or the reader, enable them to penetrate the labyrinth of the facts, works and projects, helping the journey to follow a defined, purposeful itinerary like a compass.

The differences we have seen between isotropy and entropy, between structure and diversity and between language and camouflage enable different, alternative fields of action to be identified in the projects described in this volume. The works of Aranda/Pigem/Vilalta or Tuñón/Mansilla, among others, face one direction while those of Arroyo or Soriano/Palacios face another.

In the former case, the projects aim to define a form and a stable, substantial, structural order that can control both the whole and its

parts. Sometimes this order is characterised and dominated by the abstract condition of certain geometry.

In other cases, they confide in a superior formal or material system which is superimposed on the project, conditioning not only the result but also the production process and the subsequent steps to be taken. It is a system that ensures control via an internal congruence, constructed for the occasion, which is made legible as a figure or as geometry, or simply as repetition. At the same time, however, it makes each work an independent entity whose striving for aesthetic self-sufficiency draws it away from us towards modernism.

Once on this path, the resort of the container and its operative efficiency is both the result of a choice and a necessity. Although this is an architecture that works by following the rules of congruence and non-contradiction, it relies systematically on the schizophrenic differentiation between container and content, not only for ideological or programmatic reasons, but also due to pragmatism and operativity.

We are confronted with a strategy that responds to an aesthetic programme inclined to differentiate architecture as work and art, refraining from contaminating or diluting it in an ambiguous, little-structured reality. A reality with which the relationship established is, in most cases, by contrast. The impression such contrast is inevitable in the presence of an object that strives to be complete and congruent in itself, the expression of a concept of internal, isotropic order and structure, which is materialised through a deliberately abstract image.

These architects inscribe each project in its place but produce them independently using internal, abstract generative systems which to some extent are free of their specific circumstances- location, surroundings, brief, etc. Even the careful relationship between the abstract concept and its physical materialisation, also a feature of these proposals, helps to intensify this condition of object that has been designed in accordance with its specific internal laws of configuration.

As a consequence, the section acquires a fundamental role in these proposals. It is a tool that permits the generation of a complex, continuous spatial system from within, regardless of the exterior, now definitively interiorised; a section that is not an abstract or constructive expression of architecture but rather its most spatial expression. This horizontal or vertical section is also the mechanism that permits the assurance that 'vision' will be the primary source of information about this architecture, the way it is perceived. The section structures the sequence of voids- experience through spaces bounded by solids. Sometimes this comes from a direct reliance on the 'promenade', extrusion or other forms of linear experience; at other times it is due to a more complex, compact system that can alternate or combine solids and voids in a three dimensional matrix.

Experience and knowledge of these proposals is part of the visual and gestaltic field, and its phenomenological nature tries to hide its character as constructed artifice, drawing it towards the 'natural'. Ultimately, these spaces have a uniform, regulated order that evidences a trust in the concept of structure. This is stable, spatial architecture with forms identified by their limits and by figures that reveal a closed geometry, distanced from ambiguity and contradiction.

A partiality for diversity, for opposites, is materialised in proposals that try to disengage themselves from the concepts of stability, identity, congruence, structure or edge. For this purpose, they propose diverse formalisations of the concepts of lightness, continuity, ambiguity and ornament.

On the one hand, they aspire to a broader manipulation of architecture. They might, for example, propose a richer, more complex interpretation of the briefs, with symbolic or even figurative instead of purely functional interpretations, or shift their architecture from the field of signification to field of communication, replacing tools of geometry and representation with metaphoric and metonymic images-'small' buildings like children or 'beached' constructions like ships.

On the other hand, they trust that contamination (cross-breeding, they would say), is a clean energy source whose action is not only healthy but inevitable. Their architecture therefore blurs its limits, making contact with a more complex but also more ambiguous reality. In this reality, the challenge is to know how to distinguish complexity from simple disorder, the juxtaposition of pure piling-up or the sophisticated accumulation of productivistic multiplicity. A wide range of resources identify this architecture, only a few of which can be mentioned here: the substitution of the ground plan by the diagram, language by camouflage and articulation by ornamentation.

Behind all of this, however, there is a desire to make architecture live; to dismember a discipline from within, whose fundamentals are not trusted. For this purpose, they take the narrow path trodden in different ways in the past by Venturi and Koolhaas; a path that wends its way between sophistication and kitsch, between the unexpected use of architectural tools and its surrender to politicians and developers.

1 Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (Vintage, New York, 1970).
2 Michel Foucault, Op. cit.
3 Manfredo Tafuri, "L'architecture dans le Boudoir" (1974) Oppositions 3, New York
4 Jorge Luis Borges, Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote (1939) Nimes
5 Op. cit. Jorge Luis Borges
6 Op. cit. Jorge Luis Borges
7 These and other concepts were proposed by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois at the exhibition 'L'Informe: mode d'emploi', at the Pompidou Centre in 1996. The catalogue was published in English under the title: Formless, A User's Guide, Yve-Alain Bois y Rosalind E. Krauss. MIT Press, New York 1997
8 Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1966) MOMA, New York
9 Helio Piñon, La Arquitectura de las Neovanguardias (1984) Ed GG, Barcelona
10 Jean-Francois Lyotard, Duchamp's TRANS/formers (1990) The Lapis Press, New York
11 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture (1923) Paris
12 Yve-Alain Bois y Rosalind E. Krauss, Formless, A User's Guide (1977) MIT Press, New York
13 Walter Benjamin, "Peinture et graphisme", La Part de l'oeil n°6 (1990)
14 Op. cit. Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss