

PRECEDENTS IN CRITICAL PRACTICE

4.297

Fall 2008

SA+P MIT

Instructor: Ana Miljacki

Wednesday 2-5pm, Room 9-250

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of this seminar is to produce a map of contemporary architectural practice and to develop tools for scrutinizing that map, through formal reading, an understanding of (and speculations on) popular culture and politics, and by using our general grasp of the recent history of architectural thinking.

The seminar will open by examining several collective attempts at theorizing the current situation in architectural discourse, published recently in *Hunch*, *Log*, the last issue of *Assemblage*, and in the *Harvard Design Magazine*. Drawing out the most salient themes from these, the course will be structured in terms of 6 headings, or rather, 6 coupled themes: City → Global Economy, Urban Plan → Map of Operations, Program → Performance (Relations, Effects, Atmospheres), Drawing → Scripting, Image → Surface, Utopia → Projection. These will each be examined in terms of the recent history of the coupled subjects – as topics that are in the process of definition, rather than as singularly defined themes.

In order to set up each topic we will consider a combination of texts and recent architectural work. A map of contemporary practice and discourse will emerge as the course unfolds and as our terms/themes accumulate, allowing us to consider certain works through a variety of lenses and forcing us to invent new lenses to accommodate relationships that will inevitably emerge from the course. We will dedicate a large portion of our time to situating projects within a disciplinary and cultural context, which will directly involve formal reading of buildings in conjunction with the reading of relevant texts.

STRUCTURE:

Each of the six themes for the course will be developed over a period of two weeks. Each class will begin with a lecture/presentation by the instructor of the contemporary writings outlining the topic of the debate (and some of its earlier variations) and a presentation of architectural work. The second portion of the class will be devoted to student presentations assigned for that meeting, followed by an open discussion intended to question the issues and topics introduced in that session.

REQUIREMENTS:

- attending the weekly seminar session
- completing all readings in time for respective class discussions,
- producing one question weekly (due before the class)
- delivering two 30 min. presentations over the course of the term (each presentation will deal with a specific theme or body of work chosen in a short discussion with the instructor),
- producing a visual dossier on a theme, or body of work, that is of a particular interest to the student, which has to include a critical analysis/text of 1000-2000 words. The final form of this “deliverable” will be determined in a conversation with the instructor.

BASIS FOR THE GRADE:

- class presentations (and handouts) in pairs (or groups of 3)
- contribution to class discussions
- the visual dossier

WEEKLY READINGS:

All the required readings will be available on the Stellar course site as pdf files.. Also, all the books I am recommending you peruse will be available on reserve at the library.

COURSE SCHEDULE + THEMES AND MATERIAL

Introduction

1.

Read:

Mark Wigley, "Storytime," Assemblage 27 (August 1995), pp. 81-94.
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Projects presented: We will go to the Carpenter Center for the second half of the class (to see what "stories" it tells us).

Recommended:

K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture Between Culture and Form," Perspecta 21, 1984, pp. 14-29.
K. Michael Hays, "Theory Constitutive Conventions and Theory Change" Assemblage 1, October 1986, 116-128.
Sylvia Lavin, "The Temporary Contemporary," Perspecta 34, 2003, p.128.
Roland Barthes, "What is Criticism?" *Critical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972)

+ think about projects you might want to present in class

2.

Read:

Alejandro Zaera Polo, "A Scientific Autobiography," Harvard Design Magazine 21, pp. 5-15
Sarah Whiting, "Critical Reflections" Assemblage 41, Cambridge: MIT Press 2000, pp. 88-89
Peter Eisenman, "Autonomy and the Will to the Critical" Assemblage 41, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000, pp. 91-92
R. E. Somol "In the Wake of Assemblage" Assemblage 41, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000, pp. 92-93
Reinhold Martin, "Double Agency," Assemblage 41, p. 49
Laura Kurgan, "Trying not to avoid propositions altogether," Assemblage 41. p. 37
Roemer Van Toorn, "Beyond Wonderland," Hunch, The Berlage Institute report 6/7, summer 2003, p. 10
Wiel Arets, "Different Strategies," Hunch 6/7, p. 67-71
Detlef Mertins, "Job Description," Hunch 6/7, p. 335
Michael Speaks, "Design Intelligence," Hunch 6/7, pp. 416-421.
Stan Allen/James Corner, "Urban Natures," *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), pp. 16-17.
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Recommended:

Stan Allen, "Revising Our Expertise," Hunch 6/7, pp. 64-66
Winy Maas, "Architecture is a Device," Hunch 6/7, pp. 321-324
Michael Sorkin, "The Avant-Garde in Time of War," *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), pp. 22-23

Peruse:

Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng (eds.), *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003).
Hunch, The Berlage Institute report, no. 6/7, Summer 2003
Assemblage 41, April 2000
Log 5, guest editors R.E. Somol and Sarah Whiting, Spring 2005
Harvard Design Magazine 20, Spring/Summer 2004: Stocktaking

City → Global Economy

3.

Read:

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1972), pp. 3-9, 18-20, 34-35, 49-53, 72.

* Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," *The Cultural Turn, Selected Writings on the Postmodern (1983-1998)*, (Verso 1998), pp. 1-20.

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Projects presented:

Corbs's Paris Plans and Chandigarh, the early work of Venturi and Scott Brown students present: *Learning from Las Vegas* – the books

Peter Eisenman the Cannaregio Project (and House 11a)

Recommended:

Rafael Moneo, Chapter on Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategy in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Barcelona: Actar, 2004), pp. 51-100. ***do skim**

Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). ***do skim**

Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Pop," K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 60-66.

Reinhold Martin, "Architecture's image Problem: Have we Ever Been Postmodern?" Grey Room 22 (Winter 2006), pp. 6-29.

Peruse:

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1972).

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978).

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978).

4.

Read:

* Rem Koolhaas, "Globalization," *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 363-369.

* Rem Koolhaas, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism," *S,M,L,XL*, pp. 960-971.

Rem Koolhaas, "The Generic City," *S,M,L,XL*, pp. 1238-1264. [image heavy]

Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," *Content* (Köln, London, L.A., Madrid, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2004), pp. 162-171.

A selection from Hal Foster, *Design and Crime* and the Design and Crime Forum (by Michael Speaks, Michael Hays, Sanford Kwinter, Felicity Scott) Praxis 5: *After Capitalism*, 2003, pp. 11-23.

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Projects presented:

The early work of Rem Koolhaas and OMA (+ 2 recent super xl works)

Students present: FOA the Yokohama Terminal

The Shrinking Cities Competition or the Berlage Biennial 07

Recommended:

Rafael Moneo, Chapter on Rem Koolhaas, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategy in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects*, (Barcelona: Actar, 2004), pp. 307-359. ***do skim**

Rem Koolhaas, "White Briefs Against Filth; The waning power of New York," *Content* (Köln, London L.A. Madrid, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2004), pp. 236-239.

Sanford Kwinter, "Flying the Bullet, or when did the future begin?" Sanford Kwinter (ed.) *Rem Koolhaas: Conversations with Students*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), pp. 68-91.

Sanford Kwinter, "New Babylons: Urbanism at the End of the Millennium," Assemblage 25, 1995, pp.80-81

“Re-learning from Las Vegas,” Interview with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown by Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Content* (Koln, London, L.A., Madrid, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2004), pp. 150-157.
Felicity Scott, “On Architecture Under Capitalism,” *Grey Room* 6 (Winter 2002), pp. 44-65.

Peruse:

Rem Koolhaas, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995).

Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi, Daniela Fabricius, *Mutations* (Barcelona: Actar, 2001).

Praxis 5: After Capitalism, 2003

Urban Plan → Map of operations

5.

Read:

Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books), pp. 239-56.

* Michel De Certeau, "Spatial Practices: Walking in the City," *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1984), pp. 91-110.

* Bernard Tschumi, "Spaces and Events," *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 139-149.

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Projects presented:

La Villette competition entries

Students present: Manhattan Transcripts (+ one building by Tschumi)

Atelier Bow Wow: Found in Tokyo (+ one building by Bow Wow)

West 8 – Toronto waterfront competition entry

Recommended:

Rem Koolhaas, "Urbanism after Innocence: Four Projects: The Reinvention of Geometry," *Assemblage* 18.

Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts: Theoretical Projects* (St. Martin's Press, expanded edition 1995).

Peter Eisenman, "Folding In Time: The Singularity of Rebstock," *D: Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory*, vol. 2, 1993, pp. 99-112.

Peruse:

Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts: Theoretical Projects* (St. Martin's Press, expanded edition 1995).

6.

Read:

Stan Allen, "Field Conditions," *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), pp. 92-103.

* James Corner, "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes," James Corner (ed.), *Recovering Landscape* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), pp. 153-168.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. "Introduction: Rhizome," *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 3-13.

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Projects presented:

James Corner's maps, Stan Allen's Barcelona Manual, UN Studio maps

Students present: Downsview Park Competition

Recommended:

Stan Allen, "From Object to Field," Architectural Design: After Geometry, Vol.67, 5/6, London, 1995, pp. 24–31.

Sanford Kwinter, "The Complex and the Singular," *Architectures of Time* (Cambridge, MA 2001), pp. 2–31.

Peruse:

Stan Allen, *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

Program -> Performance (Relations, Effects, Atmospheres)

7.

Read:

Peter Eisenman, "Post-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 6, K Michael Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 234-239.

* Colin Rowe, "Program versus Paradigm: Otherwise Casual Notes on the Pragmatic, the Typical and the Possible," *As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays: Texas, Pre-Texas*, Cambridge (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 36-42.

Anthony Vidler, "Toward a Theory of the Architectural Program," *October* vol. 106, no. 1, September 2003, pp. 59-74.

* Rem Koolhaas, "Programmatic Lava," *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 1210-1237.

[image heavy, condensed to 4 pages in the pdf]

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Projects presented:

An example of early modern functionalist thinking, Eisenman, Colin Rowe's diagrams, Alison and Peter Smithson Drawings, Archigram drawings.

Students present: OMA: Seattle Public Library + Tres Grande Bibliotheque

MVRDV

Atelier FCJZ

Recommended:

Manuel Delanda, "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Genesis of Form" *ANY* 23, 1998, No. 23, p. 30-34.

8.

Read:

Jorge Silvetti, "The Muses are not Amused, Pandemonium in the House of Architecture," *Harvard Design Magazine* 19, Fall 2003-Winter 2004, pp. 22-33.

* Sanford Kwinter, "Concepts: The Architecture of Hope," *Harvard Design Magazine* 19.

Mark Wigley, "The Architecture of Atmosphere," in *Daidalos* no. 68, 1998, pp. 18-27.

* Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos, "The New Concept of the Architect" and "Deep Plan," *MOVE*, Vol. 1 *Imagination*, (Amsterdam: Un Studio and Goose Press, 1999), pp. 27-33.

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Projects presented:

Ito's Mediatheque, Scoggin Elam – Knowlton School of Architecture, WW, Interloop and Yoon+Howeller

Students present: PS 1 finalists

Machado+Silvetti – 2 projects in Boston

Reiser-Umemoto projects (+Atlas of novel tectonics)

R&Sie Architects

KVA project

Recommended:

Jeffrey Kipnis, "The Cunning of Cosmetics," in *El Croquis*, no. 84, 1997, pp. 22-28.

Dawn Finley and Mark Wamble, "The Rest of the World Exists," *Perspecta* 34, 2003.

Peruse:

Ben Van Berkel and Caroline Bos (ed.), *ANY 23: Diagram Work*, 1998.
 Ben Van Berkel and Caroline Bos, *MOVE* (Amsterdam: UN Studio and Goose Press, 1999)
 Jeff Kipnis and Annetta Massie, *Mood River exhibition catalogue*, The Wexner Center for the Arts 2002.
 Fredric Migayrou and Marie-Ange Brayer (eds.), *Archilab: Radical Experiments in Global Architecture* (Thames and Hudson, 2001).

Drawing -> Scripting

9.

Read:

Robin Evans, "Translations from Drawing to Building," *Translations from Drawing to Building* (London: 1997), pp. 153-193.
 * Robin Evans, "In Front of Lines that Leave Nothing Behind," on Chamber Works, K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), pp 480-490.
 K Michael Hays, "Architecture by Numbers," *Praxis*, Issue 7, 2005, pp. 88-99.
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Projects presented:

Robin Evans's diagrams, *The Perfect Acts of Architecture* exhibit, Daniel Libeskind's *Micromegas*, *Chamber Works* and the Berlin Museum, Lebbeus Woods, Hejduk's drawings, LTL
 Students present: Peter Eisenman: Early Houses (pick 2)
 Diller and Scofidio early work (drawings) and ICA Boston
 Steven Holl early drawings and the Simmons Hall at MIT

Recommended:

Edward Robins, "The Social Uses of Drawing: Drawing and Architectural Practice," *Why Architects Draw*, pp. 27-49.
 Robin Evans, "Chapter 3: Seeing through paper," *The Projective Cast*, pp. 107-121.

Peruse:

Jeffrey Kipnis, Terence Riley and Sherri Geldin (eds.), *Perfect Acts of Architecture* Exhibition Catalogue (Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

10.

Read:

R.E. Somol, "Dummy Text, Or The Diagrammatic Basis of Contemporary Architecture," *Diagram Diaries* (New York: Universe, 1999), pp. 6-25.
 * Greg Lynn, "Geometry in Time," *Anyhow* (New York, 1998), pp. 165-173.
 * Stan Allen, "The Digital Complex," *Log 5*, Spring/Summer 2005, pp. 93-99.
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Projects presented:

Seeing MVRDV as scripting, or La Villette projects as scripting + Gregg Lynn's work, Aranda+Lash work, and the "Non-Standard Architecture Show"
 Students present: Decoi
 Ali Rahim
 UN Studio
 Hernan Diaz

Recommended:

Gilles Deleuze, Section on the diagrammatic in "587 B.C.-A.D. 70: On Several Regimes of Signs," *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 141-148.

Andrew Benjamin, "Lines of Work: On Diagrams and Drawing," *Architectural Philosophy: Repetition, Function, Alterity* (London: Athlone Press 2001), pp. 143-55.

Antoine Picon, "Science, Technology and the Virtual Realm," in Alessandra Ponte and Antoine Picon eds. *Architecture and the Sciences: Exchanging Metaphors* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003), pp. 292-313.

Peruse:

Ben Van Berkel and Caroline Bos (ed.), ANY 23: Diagram Work, 1998.
MVRDV, *FarMax* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998).

Image -> Surface

11.

Read:

Aldo Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, Oppositions Books (Cambridge, MAL MIT Press, 1982), pp. 21-41.

* Venturi and Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour, "Theories of Ugly and Ordinary and Related Contrary Theories," *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1972), pp. 128-163. (concentrate on the definitions of the decorated shed and the duck).

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Projects presented:

Aldo Rossi's early work, Site (James Wines)

Students present: Zaha Hadid: The Vitra Fire Station and the BMW plant

LoTEK

Jurgen Meyer

Recommended:

Rafael Moneo, Chapter on Aldo Rossi, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategy in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Barcelona: Actar, 2004), pp. 101-142. **do skim*

K. Michael Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsman, or, Mies's Abstraction Once Again," in the *Presence of Mies*, ed. Detlef Mertins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994) pp. 235-248.

Fredric Jameson, "Transformations of the Image in Postmodernity," *The Cultural Turn* (London, NY: Verso, 1998, 2000), pp. 93-135.

Reinhold Martin, "Atrocities, or Curtain Wall as Mass Medium," *Perspecta* 32 (2001), pp. 66-75.

K Michael Hays, "Mies Effect," *Mies in America*, Phyllis Lambert (ed.), (Montreal: CCA; New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001).

Reinhold Martin, "Architecture's image Problem: Have we Ever Been Postmodern?" Grey Room 22 (Winter 2006), pp. 6-29.

Peruse:

Aldo Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, Oppositions Books (Cambridge, MAL MIT Press, 1982).

12.

Read:

* K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture Between Culture and Form," *Perspecta* 21, 1984, pp. 14-29.

K Michael Hays, "The Envelope as Mediator," *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng (eds.), (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), pp. 66-67.

Jeffrey Kipnis, "The Cunning of Cosmetics," in El Croquis, no. 84, 1997, pp. 22-28.

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Projects presented:

Mies's Seagram's façade, Herzog and Demeuron's early work
 Students present: Diller and Scofidio: Blur Building + the ICA in Boston
 Herzog and Demeuron American works
 Jean Nouvel: La Fondation Cartier
 Office dA

Recommended:

Rafael Moneo, Chapter on Herzog and de Meuron, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategy in the work of eight contemporary architects* (Barcelona: Actar, 2004), pp. 361-404. **do skim*

Peggy Deamer, "Structuring Surfaces: The Legacy of Whites," *Perspecta* 32: Resurfacing Modernism, pp. 9—99.

Mark Taylor, "Reflections on Skin," *Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory*, v. 6, 1997, pp. 13-20.

"An interview with Herzog & de Meuron," with Pierre de Meuron, Jacques Herzog and Cynthia Davidson in *ANY* no.13, 1996, p.48-58.

Sanford Kwinter, "Playboys of the Western World," *ANY* no.13, 1996.

Peruse:

Terence Riley, *Light Construction* (Museum of Modern Art, 2004).

Utopia → Projection

13.

Read:

Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir; Architecture of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," in K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 148-167.

Jorge Silvetti, "The Beauty of Shadows," *Oppositions* 9, Summer 1977, in K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 262-283.

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Projects presented:

The work implicated by Tafuri (Piranese's Campo Marzio, Rossi, Eisenman, and especially James Sterling's architecture)

Recommended:

Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, "Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997, original publication in 1944), pp. 3-42.

Peruse:

Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia, Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1979).

14.

Read:

Rem Koolhaas, "Europeans: Biuer! Dali and Le Corbusier Conquer New York," *Delirious New York* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994, originally published 1978), pp. 235-249. (text is on every other page).

Sarah Whiting and RE Somol, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and other Moods of Modernism," in *Perspecta* 33, 2002. pp 72-77.

Reinhold Martin, "Critical of What?" *Harvard Design Magazine* 21.

Hilde Heynen, "The need for Utopian thinking in Architecture," *Hunch* 6/7, pp. 241-243.

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Recommended:

Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (Basic Books, 2004).

Michael Speaks, "Big Soft Orange Exhibition introduction" *Archis* 8, 1995, p. 80.
Winy Maas/MVRDV. "Toward an Urbanistic Architecture," *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, eds. Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng. pp. 14-15.
Alejandro Zaera-Polo. "Breeding Architecture," Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng (eds.) *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, pp. 56-57.
Michel Foucault, "What is Revolution?" *The Politics of Truth*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), pp. 83-100.
Bruce Mau, "An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth," *Life Style* (Phaidon Press, 2000), pp.88-91.
Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1978).

Peruse: Hunch 6/7