

John Hejduk's Pursuit of an Architectural Ethos

Martin Søbereg

Within the past decade the visual arts have witnessed an increase in the production of artistic research. This is a type of practice-driven research that, based on creative investigation and the production of artistic work combined with processes of reflection and documentation, arguably results in the creation of new insights, recognitions, if not to say genuine knowledge.¹ Generally speaking, artistic research differs methodologically from traditional scientific research as it relies primarily on the imagination and aesthetic impetus of the artist rather than on concepts, logical thinking and transparent argumentation. In architecture this tendency has been less prominent. While much has been done to conceptualize, map and theorize the targets, history and assessment of artistic research in visual arts, similar work is still somehow absent when it comes to architecture. This prompts us to ask how we would conceptualize and assess a type of artistic architectural research that would differ from scientific architectural research since based on the development of architectural proposals, projects and prototypes such as new aesthetic models and followed by interpretation and a type of theorization specifically linked to these design practices?

Indeed, there is a recent history of investigatory, imaginary architecture that flourished particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. This includes projects that explored the specific media and language of architecture, its programmes and semantics, combined with a sense of poetic imagination that pointed to questions regarding the relationship between architecture and the world that surrounds it. The latter

in particular indicates a certain depth within such projects, a desire for transgressing questions of formalism and mere aesthetics while coming to terms with fundamental principles and purposes of architecture. These objectives may be described as a pursuit of an architectural *ethos* that investigates what is architecturally proper and meaningful in a contemporary context, including architecture's symbolic potentials – and as such addresses normative questions.² My hypothesis is that such questions concerning the media, language, programmes, semantics, and ethos of architecture would also be relevant to a field of artistic architectural research today and that knowing more about previous projects that explored these questions, obvious differences apart, could help us to conduct artistic architectural research in a more focused manner.

Assessing investigatory, imaginary work in a historical context would include examination of its aims and methodologies, even if such work might not have been considered research proper by its authors. In this text I focus on a number of projects by American architect John Hejduk (1929-2000) – work that exists only on paper, in drawings, collages, only occasionally as scale models – as examples of a practice that spans from investigations into the specific media and language of architecture to the creation of complex schemes that even included the invention of human characters to inhabit and fulfil the purpose of each individual architectural structure.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Hejduk explored different spatial problems and what we might term the formal language of architecture through his imaginary work. To some extent this paralleled a structuralist tendency within the humanities, founded on theories stemming from linguistics and semiotics, and correlated as well to studies of basic spatial and geometric elements and structures in visual art, particularly in Minimal Art. Hejduk's focus on the media and language of architecture was nevertheless not an end in itself but was continuously – and particularly in his later work from the middle of the 1970s onwards – linked to a notion of imagination implying that architecture could not be reduced to formal exercises but would always entail aspects of narrative, of action, of symbolic meaning. Somewhat contrary to Peter Eisenman's idea of an autonomous exploration of pure form, to Hejduk formal gestures and manipulation such as repetition, appropriation, fragmentation and layering were therefore, as we shall see, never separable from semantic content. As such, his objective increasingly mirrored that of contemporary poststructuralist thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida as they attempted to conceptualize topological conditions in which structure and formal language were contrasted and complemented by the decomposition of meaning and the play of signification.

To these poststructuralist thinkers, as to Hejduk, this would entail a critique of the dichotomy between form and meaning as they pointed to more complex relationships between the syntactic and semantic aspects of aesthetic production. In architectural culture, a similar critique was presented during the 1970s, particularly of the dichotomy between form and function as upheld by the modern movement. Thus Peter Eisenman in an editorial in the journal *Oppositions* in 1976 questioned the operations of functionalism and neo-functionalism and its inherent humanism whilst arguing for the advent of postfunctionalism, stating that 'the primary theo-

retical justification given to formal arrangements was a moral imperative that is not longer operative within contemporary experience'.³ Eisenman then described a new dialectic consisting of two tendencies that together would constitute the basis of an architecture focused on the development and representation of form itself: one tendency presuming form to be the result of a reductionist transformation of geometric solids – the other relying on decomposition and fragmentation as a fundamental condition.⁴

Following Eisenman's description of this dialectic, Hejduk could to some degree be seen as a protagonist of a postfunctionalist agenda. Yet Eisenman's implied focus on form per se, as well as his critique of a functionalist ethos, seems to neglect the possibility of a different kind of architectural ethos – one that would rely on the decomposition of form while still insisting on the possibilities of the programme, of meaning, the communicability and symbolic potentials of architecture, even suggesting that formal decomposition could be instituted through programme and vice versa. To Hejduk, pursuing such an ethos was a challenge that led him to the question of how to generate architectural character(s) as based on the imagination of the architect, understood as the possibilities of making proposals with no regards to specific realities.⁵ As such, the notion of character allowed him to overcome the functionalism of the Modern Movement while retaining to some degree its formal language. Furthermore, this emphasized the possibilities of architectural signification on a symbolic, expressive level, thus pointing in the direction of a new architectural ethos in which form and programme amalgamate. As he stated: 'I cannot do a building without building a new repertoire of characters of stories of language and it's all parallel. It's not just building per se. It's building worlds.'⁶ Thus the creation of characters may not only relate to the creation of architectural representations and appearances, but simultaneously to the creation of programmes

and the combination of forms and programmes into syntheses for which Hejduk applied the term *worlds*.

The notion of character was introduced to architectural lingo during the eighteenth century – initially with reference to the use of the same notion in rhetoric – referring to the meaning and readability of a building and the appropriateness of its visual expression in relation to its functional purposes. But increasingly, particularly during the nineteenth century, it came to be identified with formal expression, with the notion of style. Hejduk and Colin Rowe touched upon the term in their studies of the American town Lockhart, published in 1957.⁷ However, Rowe had already dealt with character in his essay *Character and Composition* written in 1953-1954, but not published until 1974.⁸ In this essay, Rowe analysed the historical importance of the notion of character, particularly in an Anglo-American setting, as a hard-to-define term that does, nonetheless, imply symbolic content and a fusion of individual artistic expression and the expression of the purpose of a building. Though Rowe argued that this term had lost importance along with the increasing success of modernist architecture, he concluded his essay by identifying an idea of characteristic expression, described as ‘emphasizing the particular, the personal, and the curious’.⁹ Accordingly, rather than understanding Hejduk’s architecture and its characters purely with regards to the symbolic, figurative aspects of architecture, a deeper aspect may be associated, which makes it appropriate to speak of the notion of ethos. In rhetoric, ethos is usually translated into English as *character*; however, this should not lead us to understand the notion of character in architectural discourse as equivalent to an architectural ethos per se. For, as Dalibor Vesely has argued, we might distinguish between character as related extensively to the creation of a formal aesthetic appearance, legibility, the surface of an edifice – and what he describes as ethos, ‘the depth of architectural reality’.¹⁰ As I argue, it is exactly this depth that Hejduk strived for, desired, that situation

of inexhaustible layers of meaning and purposeful purposelessness unfolding in an interplay between form and programme as described by the imagination of the architect.

Building Character

The notion of character became increasingly important to Hejduk during the middle of the 1970s, a period in which he exhibited three projects in Italy, all of them, in very different ways, relating to the city of Venice. Until then Hejduk had to a large extent created work situated in undefined contexts but having to relate to the historical surroundings of Venice, the investigatory method of repetition and re-appropriation and thereby questioning of pre-existing elements, some even designed by Hejduk himself, became a still more important aspect of his work. Deleuze has pointed to the singularity of such repetition – that in a sense, Monet’s first water lily comprised all the following.¹¹ Thus Hejduk destabilized asserted configurations and meaning through repetition, not in order to dissolve the features and significance of each project, but in order to show that even what we consider to be stable has the ability to change.

From the mid-1970s onwards Hejduk worked on several projects under the title *Silent Witnesses*, developed in various media and demonstrating an interrelationship between images, texts and models. *Silent Witnesses*, exhibited in Venice in 1976, is a project consisting of five parts, each meant to convey a ‘30 year generation’ or ‘an attempt to compress one hundred and twenty years into five distinct models; yet, they are all part of one single model, as if time zoomed back into space. The model is a representation of the abstract concepts of time and thought.’¹² Hejduk applied the architectural model to demonstrate an interpretation of specific periods of time, from 1878 until post-1998, each model paired with the name of an author who was meant to epitomize that specific period. The models illustrate technical developments symbolized by boats

and airplanes, or what he termed *conditions*, as do different materials, times of day, architecture and types of spatial organization: a panoramic narrative, a symbolic representation of a historical period of time expressed by spatial and visual means.

The final result of this presumed teleology was, according to Hejduk, nothing but grey matter with the density of butter – a conclusion which at first may seem rather pessimistic.¹³ But notably the last model is also the only one that is not a representation to scale of an outer reality. The final grey cubic, supposedly buttery construction recalls the relationship between framework and fluid matter, structure and volume, geometry and movement, of the reinforced concrete construction of Hejduk's Diamond Houses. As such, *Silent Witness* is an interpretation and approximated model of history, in fact, Hejduk would call architecture in general an approximation: 'You can only be approximate. Architecture is always an edge condition.'¹⁴ Even the chosen context of the project, a coastline between the mountains and the sea, literally represents such an edge. But moreover, the project was an attempt at interrelating different conditions, spatial as well as symbolic.

This objective was further developed in Hejduk's photo-essay *The Silent Witnesses* [fig. 1], published in 1976 in a volume of the journal *Parametro* dedicated to the 50-year anniversary of the final issue of the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*, which was edited by Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant.¹⁵ The adjacent publication of this anniversary tribute and Hejduk's essay seems like more than a mere coincidence, bearing in mind Le Corbusier's significant influence on Hejduk's work. And as we might note, Le Corbusier described various architectural elements of the Ronchamp Chapel as 'witnesses'.¹⁶ Hejduk's essay, consisting of images only, also demonstrates the epistemological potentials of the method of iconic juxtaposition and as such may be a tribute to Le Corbusier's visual communication skills, as

indeed the argument of the articles and arguments in *L'Esprit Nouveau* were heavily supported by images and image comparisons.

The differences between Le Corbusier's and Hejduk's use of images is nevertheless significant. While Le Corbusier would primarily use image comparisons to demonstrate formal relationships or differences, the meaning of Hejduk's essay is much more symbolic, suggesting psychological and empathic content, particularly by focusing on the expressions of faces. The essay consists of various types of images: film stills, photographs of paintings, of sculpture, architectural drawings and a few realized buildings, some shown only in detail. Figuration is predominant and by placing the images side by side, Hejduk points to formal similarities, for instance between the architecture of Aldo Rossi and the representation of architecture in the paintings of De Chirico. But also to parallels between the way the human body attaches to architectural structures in Raimund Abraham's *House Without Rooms* and Michelangelo's Medici Chapel statues, suggesting a close relationship between body and building. More than just image comparisons, the essay opens with a montage of René Magritte's painting *Image of Mind* (1960) in which the elements of this image – a bird, a man and a fish – are split into separate, new images, mirrored (folded), repeated on different backgrounds (black, grey and white), while the backgrounds are also shown without the figure of the man, evoking Hejduk's later statement: 'Certain images remain fixed in one's memory.'¹⁷

We might think of this collection of images as a visual theory, arising from comparison and analogy, but also as a memory chart – and in that regard also differing from the agenda of the Modern Movement, which at least rhetorically renounced the importance and relevance of memory.¹⁸ Even the graphic layout of the essay as nine square grids repeats one of Hejduk's favourite visual schemata.¹⁹ Accordingly, we may note that memory is in itself a



Fig. 1: John Hejduk, *The Silent Witnesses*, pl. 2, 1976.
Image courtesy John Hejduk and Parametro. Source: Parametro, 49-50 (1976), p. 7.

sort of repetition, as when we recall past moments and experiences, but that through such repetition we also in some sense (re-)create what is recalled and represented by our imagination. In his analysis of stills from S.M. Eisenstein's films, Roland Barthes has pointed to an *obtuse* or third meaning of these images, a type of supplementary meaning that the intellect finds hard to grasp as it appears fleetingly, though persistently.²⁰ Or as he stated: 'The obtuse meaning is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it. My reading remains suspended between the image and its description, between definition and approximation.'²¹ This obtuse meaning escapes representing something, it is a sort of fragmented meaning, a signification without something to signify directly. It remains in a state of openness in terms of signification, it is in 'the very form of an emergence, of a fold', that is, in an indeterminate state likened by Barthes to the Japanese haiku poem, as a gesture and ruling out of meaning as such.²² This obtuse meaning of the image is precisely what Hejduk points to in *The Silent Witnesses* as we never fully grasp the intended logic behind each image comparison, thereby recognizing how visual media may feature inexplicable, inexhaustible layers of meaning.

Silent Witnesses returned in 1980, when Hejduk published *The Silent Witness and Other Poems*.²³ Written in 1978, almost all of these poems relate directly to the images printed in the photo-essay, potentially resulting in an intermedial combination of image and text. Written in a distinctly modern style, with no rhymes and almost no punctuation, and with complex interrelations between nouns and verbs, subjects, objects and actions, many of the poems describe situations, atmospheres and, indeed, spatial conditions. Hejduk frequently returned to Ingres' portrait of *Madame d'Haussonville*, the top row, central image of *The Silent Witnesses* photo-essay, pl. 2 [fig. 1].

there are no reflections
within Madame d'Haussonville
only opacities which sink
into the cloth and folds
of a Fuseli monster
the arm holds the drapes
of a hidden birth
the flower vase
perpetuates the myth
her smile shames Leonardo
red bow the wait
hands are suspended
that never scratch the earth
but tip the tongue
for infusion
dare that breast be held²⁴

Described here are relations, oppositions, conditions, with references to fine art (Fuseli and Leonardo) and the reappearance of paradox (no reflections in an image that includes a mirror, but of course, exactly as painting, it is opaque). In an almost contemporary text describing the cross-disciplinary collaborations at Cooper Union, Hejduk further touched upon the possibilities of simultaneous singularity and relatedness, referring also to the images presented in the *Silent Witnesses* photo-essay:

Each is his own, yet there might be some distant link...
Ibid. . In most cases a part of their creations has to do with the under-real or with the aspect of void; there is an undertone and there is an opaque reflection. The state of opaque reflection can also be found in the paintings 'Countess D'Haussonville' by Ingres, 'A Girl Asleep' by Vermeer, and 'Music Lesson' by Matisse.²⁵

Fabricating Form

As *The Silent Witnesses* projects attest to, Hejduk not only made heavy reference to architects and artists such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Van Doesburg and Mondrian, interweaving spatial conditions with symbolic content, he furthermore

rehearsed, even played with his own previous work. This layering and decomposition indirectly questions the notion of a coherent authorship by repetitively embracing and challenging *difference*, a notion relating to poststructuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Deleuze and their respective attempts to define movements between positions and positions in-between.²⁶ Yet Hejduk was not only interested in ambiguity, in opacity or the effect of the void, but also in the most absolute or refined conditions. Throughout his work he demonstrated this dialectic attitude, transgressing asserted differences as when he ‘translated’ or ‘transferred’ images into poems, or poems into architectural structures.

The schematic presentation of Hejduk’s *The Silent Witnesses* photo-essay points to a sensibility towards the possible relation between imagination and logos. The images are, however, also a chart of possibilities of spatial representation and as such resemble the diagrammatic schematization of objects or phenomena in natural sciences or other fields inspired by the methods and ethos of science. Although he organized and systematized the images in this strict framework, Hejduk did not pretend to offer a complete mapping that exhausted the meaning and visual potentials of the images, but rather suggested the contrary by leaving some of the squares of the schema empty. Hence this imaginative presentation appears enigmatic, obtuse, as if it presents the images to us based on a certain logic which we are, nevertheless, unable to decode. As such, it is a subversion of formal language as well as of logical thinking and organization, but nevertheless a subversion that curiously explores whatever creative potential such logics and its cracks and folds might have to architecture and its representation.

In 1974 Hejduk published *Fabrications* – a collection of 12 photographs of colourful drawings [fig. 2].²⁷ The drawings represent a number of projects for buildings composed of simple geomet-

ric forms, coloured in primary shades and set as isolated objects in the context of rural landscapes. We might note the way the buildings are graphically represented. The correspondence between these images and some of Hejduk’s earlier projects, like the Wall Houses, is clear: the Wall Houses consist of coloured shapes displayed on the background of a plain wall. Likewise, the fabrications are displayed on a white paper background, itself positioned on top of a sheet of coloured paper in a variety of shades for each plate, each photograph, orange, pink, black, red, resulting in a layered effect.

The notion of fabrication calls to mind the small follies, *fabriques*, found in French eighteenth-century landscape gardens, in a sense similar exercises in composition, style and signification, and often published in pattern books. Hejduk’s style of drawing paraphrases the later more codified version of a type of representations found in these books, the *analytique*, which traditionally would assemble plan, section, elevation and detail renderings, sometimes even perspectives of a project, in one single drawing – a type of representation usually associated with the Beaux-Arts tradition. Notably, the *analytique* allows a movement between different scales of a building, different points of view and even different dimensions. Furthermore, many of Hejduk’s drawings contain text, not only to indicate the name of a building, but also as words or sentences that suggest possible interpretations. *Fabrications* may well consist of a very elementary architecture, but this does not disconnect it from the semantic, as suggested by the writings on one of the drawings:

ELEMENTAL
SEMANTIC ARCHITECTURE = SYMBOLIST
ARCHITECTURE

Such statements written on the drawings, some of them even appearing as definitions, point towards a certain architectural sensibility in terms of exploring that which moves beyond given notions. Hejduk combined concepts, not necessarily in a rigid logical way, but collage-like, associatively, intuitively and metaphorically, as a poet combines words, but mirroring a logical language that relies on statements and definitions. He operated with appropriations of 'scientific' or 'logical' ways of organizing the world while simultaneously redefining our pre-existent understandings of these concepts, that is, redefining the world as such. A good example of this investigatory, but essentially poetic method is his contrast between reflection and opacity, recalling the modernist dichotomy between flatness and depth, most famously discussed through the concepts of literal and phenomenal transparency by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky.²⁸ In *Fabrications* we are no longer dealing with oppositions but rather with a transition, a dynamic relationship of becoming – reflections become opaque.

The graphic style of the *analytique* also bears resemblance to those explanatory plates that we find in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century encyclopaedias. In his essay on such plates, Roland Barthes points to how the graphic organization of the plates stems from the wish to catalogue things but that cataloguing is also an appropriation of the particular object. Or as he argues: 'To appropriate is to fragment the world, to divide it into finite objects subject to man in proportion to their very discontinuity: for we cannot separate without finally naming and classifying, and at that moment, property is born.'²⁹ Barthes notes the relationship between the object presented in a vignette, as part of action, a syntagmatic presentation, contrary to the presentation of the object isolated from its use and context, in a paradigmatic way. Thus Barthes' insights into the meaning of these plates are similar to how Hejduk perceived the image as something that simultaneously emits meaning and appears as semantically

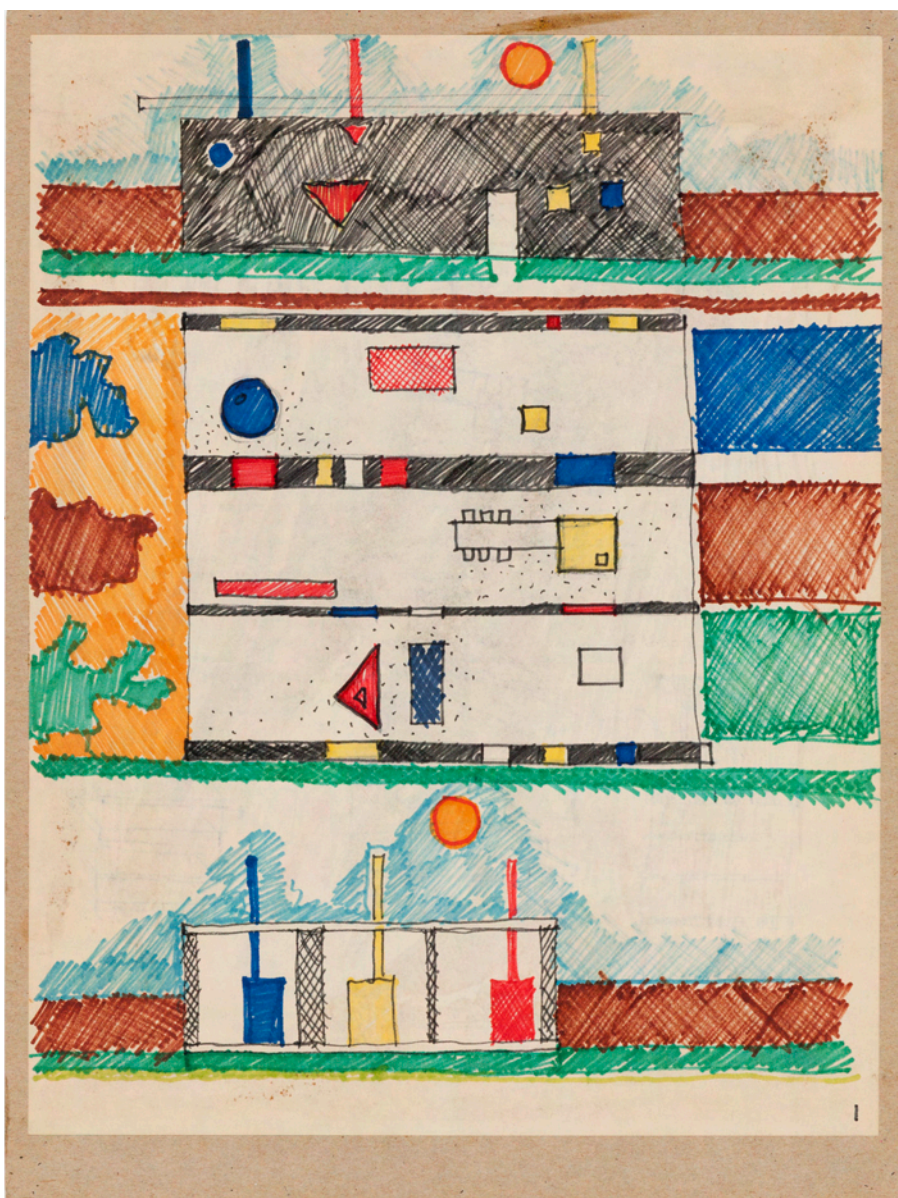


Fig. 2: John Hejduk, *Fabrications*, pl. 1, 1974.
Image courtesy Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal. Fonds John Hejduk.

opaque.

It is exactly as images that the encyclopaedia plates receive the particular ability to form a circle of meaning, rather than a logical strain, argued Barthes. The image is somewhat able to escape meaning or to turn it around. There is a certain kind of suspension in the circularity of the reading process of the image that Barthes describes as the poetic aspects of the image, its 'infinite vibrations of meaning'.³⁰ And this curious visual display is linked to a philosophical questioning; we will simply begin to wonder. Explanation and dissection does not lead us anywhere further, as the meaning simply spins around, multiplies for every layer that we uncover.³¹ Hejduk employed and manipulated the formal schemata of scientific illustration – the table or catalogue, the diagrammatic, genealogical chart – but distorted it, inserting differences into it that point in more complex directions. Through this approach, repeating his own projects within new compositions, he questioned the nature of these formal, scientific schemata as well as the supposedly stable being of each of his own projects, but simultaneously and importantly still allowed for comparison and understanding. As Derrida stated concerning difference and the potential of playfulness:

Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around.³²

According to Hejduk, such sensibility was already present in his Diamond Houses, where he employed the notion of the membrane to describe relations between what appears as opposites, stating that:

In the Diamonds one is always talking about the edge membranes. That membrane is an edge condition, a line condition, a threshold condition. It's non-physical; it's physical in memory. There's a universal; it's an expanding universe. It's emanating from a center; it's an explosive center.³³

This explosion, this movement, stems in part from the play between the perception of two- and three-dimensionality. When rendering a building with a diamond-shaped plan in isometric drawing, what should appear three-dimensional appears flat, two-dimensional.³⁴ This play is most fully explored in the Diamond House Museum:

Explored within the Museum Project and within a Diamond Field are the problems of spatial compression and spatial tension; the interaction of curvilinear volumes, compressing the center of the space, which then explodes into taut planes moving towards the periphery of the exhibition space; all played within the frame. Sculpture would be exhibited in and about the curved walls and volumes. Paintings would be exhibited on the straight extended walls.³⁵

In the plan of this project, as a mirror of its programme, Hejduk also distinguished between spaces for two-dimensional perception: paintings displayed on straight walls, and three-dimensional perception: sculptures surrounded by curved walls. Scrutinizing the possibilities of a meeting between stable and dynamic forces, he played with contained and containing elements such as the curved walls surrounding sculptures, almost as if these were little houses sheltering the bodies of each sculpture-figure-character. Rather than conceived in purely static and dichotomous terms, space is considered topological in offering the experience of simultaneous, but different conditions, in transformations of space. This even counts for the construction of the Diamond Houses, suggestively built of walls, beams and slabs as a framework for reinforced concrete: solid structure meets liquid, formless matter.³⁶

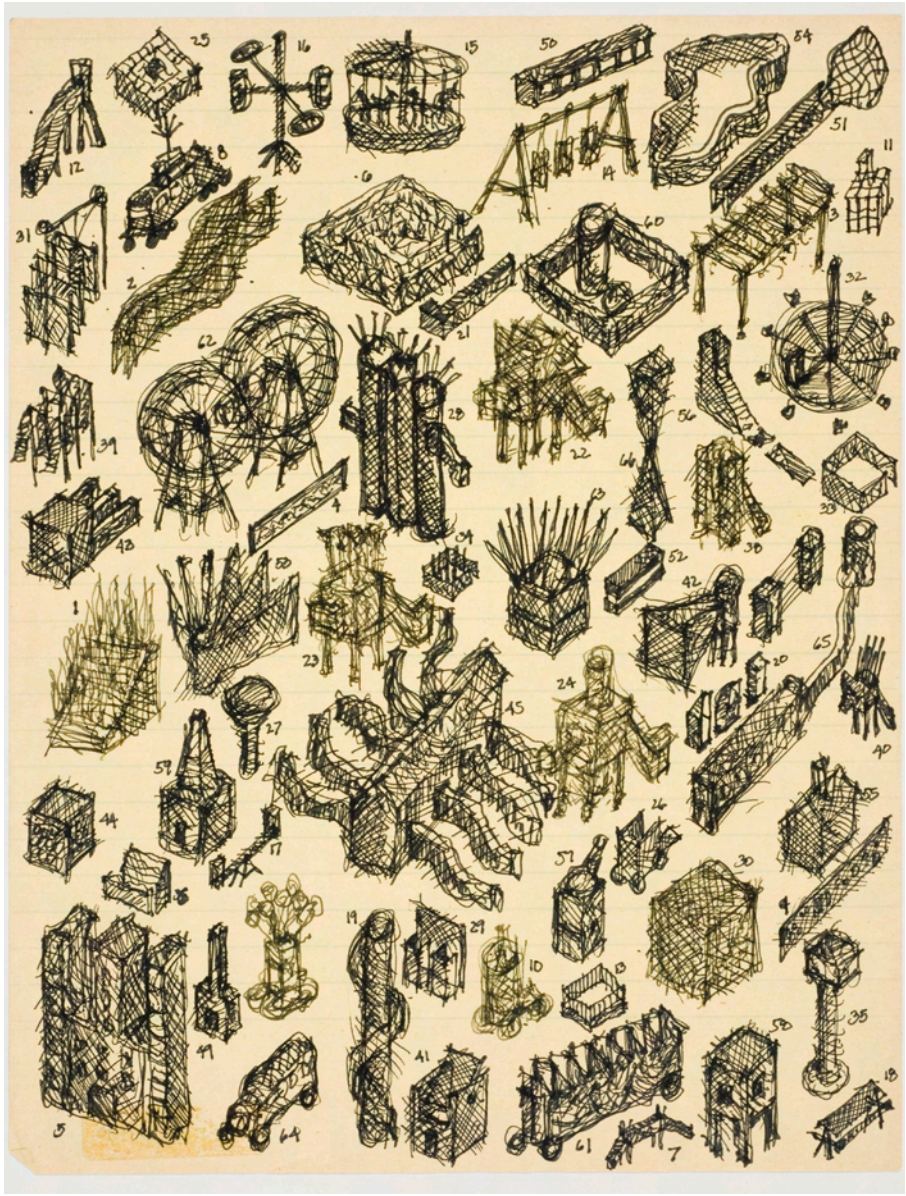


Fig. 3: John Hejduk, Victims, 1983.
Image courtesy Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal. Fonds John Hejduk.

The Ethos of a Masque

While Hejduk had slowly approached the notion of character during the 1970s, it would not be until the 1980s that he fully explored its potentials. The *Berlin Masque* was Hejduk's contribution to an international competition in 1980-1981. The proposal is an investigation of what a programme means as he not only created an architectural scheme consisting of 28 different structures, but moreover provided detailed descriptions of the agency of each structure, how it would perform or be handled by its inhabitant or caretaker. More aspects than the notion of the masque connect the contexts of Venice and Berlin: again, the interplay between singularities and relations. The archipelagic landscape of Venice consists of singular, but interconnected islands. Likewise, West Berlin at that time was metaphorically an island, surrounded by the German Democratic Republic. These parallels did not go unnoticed: in fact, the Berlin brief included a quote from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, a paraphrased hymn to the city of Venice. Accordingly, Hejduk – himself working on the island of Manhattan – proposed a scheme in which his structures would be situated within two island-like areas, surrounded by hedges and connected by a single bridge, thus isolated from the rest of the city.³⁷

We have seen how Hejduk repeated, but also distorted and subverted the graphic techniques of scientific illustration. Parallel to this, he would refer to the schematization and rigidity of dictionaries – another type of epistemological organization – as inspiration for the *Berlin Masque*, using selected definitions from *Webster's New International Dictionary*, many of these alluding to the world of theatre but also to ancient structures and mythology. When publishing the *Berlin Masque*, he concurrently published the reproductions of a group of definitions.³⁸

Arbitration
 Armadillo
 Capsule
 Caretaker
 Disappear
 Dispensary
 Foundation
 Labyrinth
 Marionette
 Medusa
 Pantomime
 Puppet
 Theatre
 Tower

In the presentation of the proposal Hejduk arranged the material in a way that simulated dictionary entries, connecting sketches and descriptive texts, subjects and objects. In this way, he pointed to how the supposed representational gesture of the dictionary is in fact a repetition of the act of signification: the dictionary creates – or masks – what it proposes to signify. And by recognizing this aspect of repetitive signification, Hejduk was able to embrace the creative potential of such statements of logical thinking. Masks generally bring together different elements, a subject and an object, which amalgamate so that form and person become the same. Or as Deleuze would state: 'The mask is the true subject of repetition. Because repetition differs in kind from representation, the repeated cannot be represented: rather, it must always be signified, masked by what signifies it, itself masking what it signifies.'³⁹

Hejduk perceived architecture as not only consisting of buildings, but as something that inserts itself into a much broader human culture in a dialogue between forms and characters. It means that in many instances things are not what they appear to be. During the masque, the identity of the subject and the identity, essentially the form or shape of the mask, amalgamate, equally dynamic. Like the deli-

cate relationship between the grid and the formless volume, between reason and sensation, Hejduk noted how logos might be complemented through programming of bodily action. As he stated in the *Berlin Masque*:

So completes the masque which in a way composed into a masque in our time, for as it was necessary for the highly rational-pragmatic city of 15th century Venice to create masques, masks, masses for its time in order to function, it would appear that we of our time must create masques (programs ?????) for our times.⁴⁰

To be masked is to become someone else, the character represented by the mask. But masks also protect and shelter. In that sense, they are like houses, like architectural structures. Thus to mask is in a sense parallel to building a house. Brought into the masque, the masking of the mass turns into ritual, the carnivalesque performance that opposes but brings balance into everyday life.

Ideas from the *Berlin Masque* were further developed in the project *Victims*, presented as a programme for the creation of a place within two 30-year periods by the citizens of Berlin: 'A growing, incremental place – incremental time.'⁴¹ Hejduk's sketches appear as the result of such an incrementally proceeding method. All the elements or structures are comprised into other drawings, shown schematically in either silhouette or perspective. Rather than applying a grid layout, Hejduk displayed the structures in a dispersed manner, constituting a field of elements rather than a geometrically ordered system. One sketch still has the structures or characters lined up in numerical order, running from the top left to the bottom right corner, while other sketches show them spread out on the paper as if constituting a small incrementally developed town [fig. 3].

With *Victims* Hejduk created a specific synthesis by combining the bodily sensibility (the character)

and conceptual formalism (the grid). One element in particular, the Jungle Jim playground equipment (object/subject no. 11), in fact explicitly contrasts structure and sensation, grid and body: 'Round steel bars producing a three-dimensional grid, bent nail-pinned joint. The hierarchy of the crow's-nest, a geometric confrontation of biological parts. The armpits of the legs encompassing a tubular section. Upside down the blood rushes to the head.'⁴² Hejduk's structures would connote both joyful emancipation and terror since the site chosen for *Victims* bordered the Berlin Wall where the SS and Gestapo had their headquarters during the Nazi regime.

The mask blurs the identity of the person wearing it by establishing a new character, new relations, new patterns of thought and behaviour. As such it was a suitable emblem of Hejduk's interest in establishing relations rather than identities between different media and different architectural elements. As indicated, the conceptual framework of such a method is exactly not a theoretical pursuit of logos, not autonomous formalism, but in so far as it implies situations of bodily location, of action and of force, it may be described as a matter of embracing character.

The notion of ethos emphasizes Hejduk's architectural practise as world-interpreting and thereby as world-making, that is, as expressing ideas of what the world is and could be. His silhouetted fabrications are not only characters in a world of his imagination, but also symbolic elements, part-takers of a masque, and exactly as such, constitute a different world. It is this understanding of how spatial/formal manipulation and the programming of characters and actions might blend and support each other, the relationship between aesthetic expression and human behaviour, that we may associate with a notion of architectural ethos since it points in directions of certain spatiotemporal as well as social and psychological even political impli-

cations, even if it is not explicitly normative.⁴³

By relying on imagination – not solely in contrast to, but frequently in fruitful dialogue with aspects of logical thinking – Hejduk’s methodological approach consistently operated as a search for new forms and programmes, but first and foremost in a broader sense dynamically and dialectically relating human beings and their surroundings in and through events and actions. Thus architecture was considering more than a mere formal practice as he investigated the possibilities and limits of architectural signification through imaginary projects and thereby the possibilities of arriving at a contemporary architectural ethos. Architects today have completely different media at hand than Hejduk did three or four decades ago, in particular digital systems of notation and representation. Yet his methodological approach to architectural practice, the notion of imaginary architecture as an operative undertaking with possible philosophical, even ethical implications, may potentially guide comparable investigatory practices today and thereby contribute to the development of a specific field of artistic research within architectural culture.

Notes

1. Cf. Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager eds., *Artistic Research* (Amsterdam; New York: L&B Series, 2004) and James Elkins ed., *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art* (New York: New Academia Press, 2009). Most artistic research projects are located within institutional frameworks such as art schools and academies, to some degree stimulated by increasing demands for research-based education.
2. Peggy Deamer has called the notion of form as a type of knowledge the true heritage of the so-called ‘White’ architects, a group that included John Hejduk. Peggy Deamer, ‘Structuring Surfaces: The Legacy of the Whites’, *Perspecta*, 32 (2001), p. 90. My argument here is that the ‘White’ architects – at least in some cases and in particular in their later works – went even further by demonstrating that such formal knowledge was to be associated with questions of purpose, meaning and action.
3. Peter Eisenman, ‘Post-Functionalism’, *Oppositions*, 6 (1976).
4. Eisenman, ‘Post-Functionalism’.
5. Note the etymological links between the building of a character and building of edifices. See Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture’s Historical Turn. Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 20-2.
6. John Hejduk and David Shapiro, ‘John Hejduk or The Architect Who Drew Angels’, *Architecture and Urbanism*, 471, 12 (2009), p. 75.
7. Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, ‘Lockhart, Texas’, *Architectural Record*, 121 (1957), pp. 201-06. See also R.E. Somol, ‘One or Several Masters?’, in *Hejduk’s Chrototope*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 105.
8. Colin Rowe, ‘Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century’, in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 59-87.
9. Rowe, ‘Character and Composition’, p. 80.
10. Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2004), p. 363.
11. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, transl. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 1, 23.
12. John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa: Works 1947-1983*, ed. by Kim Shkapich (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 81.
13. Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*.
14. Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*.
15. John Hejduk, ‘The Silent Witnesses’, *Parametro*, 49-50 (1976), pp. 5-13.
16. Alexander Gorlin, ‘The Ghost in the Machine: Surrealism in the Work of Le Corbusier’, *Perspecta*, 18 (1982), p. 63.
17. John Hejduk, ‘Afterword’, in *Solitary Travelers* (New

- York City: Cooper Union School of Architecture, 1979), p. 117.
18. The analogy between image and architecture was also explored by O.M. Ungers in a similar project exhibited at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York in 1976, later published in O.M. Ungers, *Morphologie = City Metaphors* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung W. König, 1982).
 19. A revised version of the photo-essay was published in 1982 using a different layout. This version included 65 images while the original included only 50. John Hejduk, 'Silent Witnesses', *Perspecta*, 19 (1982), pp. 70-80.
 20. Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 54.
 21. Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', p. 61.
 22. Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', p. 62.
 23. John Hejduk, *The Silent Witness and Other Poems* (New York: The Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, 1980).
 24. John Hejduk, 'To Madame d'Haussonville', as reprinted in Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 103. Also in Hejduk, *The Silent Witness*, p. 10.
 25. Hejduk, 'Afterword', p. 117.
 26. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, transl. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). R.E. Somol has also pointed to the importance of the notion of *difference* in Hejduk's work. Somol, p. 118.
 27. John Hejduk, *Fabrications: A Collection of 12 Projects* (New York: Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, 1974).
 28. Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, 'Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal', *Perspecta*, 8 (1963). K. Michael Hays has described Hejduk's endeavour as a further development of some of the questions examined by Rowe and Slutzky. Michael Hays, 'The Wall as Event', *Architecture and Urbanism*, 471, 12 (2009), p. 6.
 29. Roland Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*', trans. by Richard Howard, in *A Roland Barthes Reader*, ed. by Susan Sontag (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 222.
 30. Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*', p. 230.
 31. Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*', pp. 234-35.
 32. Derrida, p. 292.
 33. Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 50.
 34. John Hejduk, *Three Projects* (New York: Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, 1969).
 35. Hejduk, *Three Projects*.
 36. Hejduk, *Three Projects*.
 37. A few years earlier, New York had been likened to Venice by Rem Koolhaas, see Rem Koolhaas, 'Dali and Le Corbusier: The Paranoid-Critical Method', *Architectural Design*, 2-3 (1978), p. 155.
 38. John Hejduk, *Vier Entwürfe* (Zurich: ETH Zürich, 1983), pp. 12-3.
 39. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 18.
 40. Hejduk, *Vier Entwürfe*, p. 51.
 41. John Hejduk, *Victims* (London: Architectural Association, 1986).
 42. Hejduk, *Victims*.
 43. Somol, 'One or Several Masters?', p. 125, n. 17.

Biography

Martin Søberg is a PhD Fellow at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture. His doctoral research focuses on reflected artistic practices and the medium of the architectural sketch. He holds a research degree (mag.art.) in art history from the University of Copenhagen and has worked as Head of Communications at SLA Architects.

