

Benjamin and Koolhaas: History's Afterlife

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Paris

Walter Benjamin called Paris the capital of the nineteenth century. In his eponymous expository exposé, written between 1935 and 1939, he outlines a project to uncover the reality of the recent past, the pre-history of modernity, through the excavation of the ideologies, i.e., dreamworlds, embodied in material and cultural artefacts of the nineteenth century. He used images to create a history that would illuminate the contemporaneous workings of capital that had created the dreamlands of the city. The *loci* for the production of dreamworlds were the arcades – pedestrian passages, situated between two masonry structures, that were lined on both sides with cafés, shops and other amusements and typically enclosed by an iron and glass roof. Over three hundred arcades were once scattered throughout the urban fabric of Paris. This building type flourished before they were destroyed by Haussman's boulevards. When Benjamin arrived in Paris, the arcades were places haunted by ghosts of the past. *The Arcades Project* identified in the arcades a commodity-filled dream state – phantasmagoria, which operated through the mechanisms of displays, advertising, newspapers, lighting and other newly developing technologies to create desire while masking the underpinnings of consumer manipulation. To prompt a new awareness and collective awakening from the dream of the nineteenth century his book's unmasking of the social and psychological deceptions perpetrated by architecture '[led] the past to bring the present into a critical state'.¹

Benjamin intended his arcades project to be politically revolutionary. He worked on his opus while living dangerously under Fascism as a refugee in Paris, where, unable to secure an academic position, he wrote for newspapers under various German pseudonyms. He had solicited support from the Institute for Social Research that was re-established in New York in 1934 in association with Columbia University. His project was unfinished at the end of the 1930s. He had collected numerous artefacts, drawings, photographs, texts, letters and papers – images reflecting the life of poets, artists, writers, workers, engineers and others. He had also produced many loose, handwritten pages organised into folders that catalogued not only his early exposés but also literary and philosophical passages from nineteenth century sources and his observations, commentaries and reflections for a theory and method of addressing the past. *Das Passagen-Werk* and the first complete English translation *The Arcades Project* are divided into sections called *Konvolute*, the German word derived from the Latin term for bundles.² Labelled from A to Z and then lowercase a to r, the convolutes refer to Benjamin's folders, or folios, covering a broad range of subjects bearing titles such as 'Arcades, magasins de nouveautés, calicots'; 'Baudelaire'; 'Iron Construction'; 'Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty'; 'Saint-Simon, Railroads'; and 'The Seine, The Oldest Paris'.

Benjamin's unfinished research compiled in *The Arcades Project* has been subject to rigorous scrutiny of both its structure and its content across

disciplines, in architecture, literary criticism, sociology, aesthetics, cultural and media studies.³ This essay primarily addresses Convolute N, 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress', the section containing core statements of *The Arcades Project* where the term 'dialectical image' is theorised and Benjamin struggles with questions of social critique. For Susan Buck-Morss, whose book *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* was one of the first works on Benjamin to reach a broad audience of American architects in the 1990s, Benjamin's dialectical images were conceived and perceived as dream images that had the power to reveal the myth of progress behind industrial production. It was 'a question of the dissolution of "mythology" into the space of history. That, of course, can happen only through the awakening of a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been.'⁴ In other words, the dialectical image was part of the commodity – a dream object that acts as a screen between consciousness (knowledge) and unconscious desire. (It was not until the time of his suicide in 1940 that the semi-Marxist Benjamin wrote, 'To articulate the past historically [...] means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.'⁵ He used Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* to invoke a theological image of the 'angel of history' blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress, the catastrophic detritus of history at his feet.

Manhattan

Rem Koolhaas sought to expose the irrational side of modern architecture. In *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* he called Manhattan the twentieth century's Rosetta Stone. His book refuted the modern movement's claims to functionalism, propriety, and objectivity, or *Sachlichkeit*, through the detection of programmatic fantasy – delirium – driving the development of the speculative, capitalist city based on optimisation of land use, cost, and building construction. He

invented the concept of Manhattanism in order to reformulate the principles of the modern movement for contemporary times – and prove that New York was an invention of the twentieth century.⁶

Koolhaas was rooted in an academic milieu. The Dutch architect remained in voluntary exile from 1968 to 1978, during his architecture studies in England and the US at schools from which significant architectural thinkers emerged.⁷ At Cornell University and the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies he researched the technology and infrastructure of places such as Coney Island and Radio City Music Hall as well as the building type of the developer-driven skyscraper – Rockefeller Centre, New York Athletic Club and the anonymous (unbranded) tall buildings that made up much of Manhattan's urban fabric.⁸ He was supported by the philanthropic Harkness Fellowship and taught courses at Columbia, UCLA, Delft, and the AA. During this time, neo-Marxist urban theory was an important part of academic architecture discourse at many schools. While he does not mention Benjamin in his writings, he may surely have had the opportunity to familiarise himself with the German philosopher's writings through his proximity to Manfredo Tafuri. Both the influential Italian philosopher and the young Dutch graduate student were Europeans at the Institute researching the history of Manhattan.⁹ Tafuri associated the historical avant-garde with dialectical thought.¹⁰ His identification of architecture as ideology and consequently the historian's obligation to play a demystifying role was greatly influenced by Benjamin's notion of history, merging Surrealism and Marxism with a language of images.

Delirious New York is structured like a series of Manhattan city blocks determined by the grid: chapters are similar in size and, with the exception of the first chapter and conclusion, are organised without hierarchy. In the prologue called 'Prehistory',

Koolhaas discovers that New York had developed a mythical past. For the advancement of the city it is necessary for him to 'mythologise its past and to rewrite a history that can serve its future'.¹¹ In the middle chapters, linear historical narratives are fragmented and viewed episodically. Within the chapters, passages are headed with titles such as 'end', 'theorem', 'alibis', and 'camouflage', terms that remain unexplained and imprecise both in the larger context of the book and the passages themselves. The last chapter, 'A Fictional Conclusion' shows the OMA projects that were exhibited concurrently with the book's first publication at The Sparkling Metropolis exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum.

Delirious New York was well-promoted and reviewed in both the popular press and architecture publications.¹² Just before leaving New York, Koolhaas organised an exhibition on Wallace Harrison called 'Beyond Good or Bad'. His interest in the American architect's professional skills had been sparked by criticism of OMA's work as part of the deprofessionalisation of architecture. Koolhaas edited and wrote an introduction for the exhibition catalogue *Wallace Harrison: Fifty years of Architecture* (IAUS, 1980). Upon opening OMA and getting his first building commissions in 1980, Koolhaas continued to address the construction of the city. His writing was journalistic; he did not attempt to formalise his historical findings as realised in *Delirious New York*.¹³

History, revolution, awakening

The Arcades Project and *Delirious New York* both map the connections between images of the city captured in objects, sites and artefacts, and the social space of the images; both authors are intent on revealing the hegemonic ideological systems supporting canonical readings of history. Benjamin addresses the processes of constructing history. His work,

comparable, in method, to the process of splitting the atom – liberates the enormous energies of history that are bound up in the 'once upon a time' of classical historiography. The history that showed things 'as they really were' was the strongest narcotic of the century.¹⁴

He looks to alternative temporal models of psychoanalysis and Marxism to counter traditional notions of historiography which he calls 'historicism'. He writes, 'historical "understanding" is to be grasped, in principle, as an afterlife of that which is understood; and what has been recognised in the analysis of the "afterlife of works".¹⁵ He attempts to integrate his ideas about the twentieth century visual realm with their origin in the singular realities of the working class: 'Must the Marxist understanding of history bourgeois be acquired at the expense of the perceptibility of history? Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened graphicness (*Anschaulichkeit*) to the realisation of the Marxist method?'¹⁶ Yet while he wishes to see historical artefacts as products of individual action and collective human consciousness, Benjamin questions the orthodoxy of the Marxist, linear, nineteenth century view of history: 'It may be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress [...]. Its founding concept is not progress but actualisation.'¹⁷ And, 'so must every presentation of history begin with awakening; in fact, it should treat of nothing else. This one, accordingly, deals with awakening from the nineteenth century.'¹⁸

The method employs images whose meaning is determined by the conflation between the time of the viewing in the present and the time of the image:

For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time [...]. Every present day is determined by the images

that are synchronic with it: each “now” is the now of a particular recognisability [...]. It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.¹⁹

Benjamin sees the dilemma of his problematic concept of history in modern times based on images that are both temporal and ‘eternal’. The image is ‘dialectics at a standstill’ – it ‘coagulates into stasis’, both recording a particular historical event and having the potential to transmute the past and coalesce with the present.²⁰ According to Rolf Tiedemann, editor of *The Arcades Project*, in his misreadings of Marxist theory Benjamin rationalises the paradox of double meaning by conceiving the image as a ‘historical constellation’ of the collective subconscious past – a kind of psychoanalytical Surrealist Marxism removed from the Marxian idea of history as successive, inevitable stages in the development of a society.²¹

For Koolhaas, production itself has no meaning (in *Delirious New York* he writes about architecture created through design collaboration but not the labour of building) and visual representations prevail over the reality of their historical origin. Architecture is an intellectual practice in which elements from the past can be reassembled to create a new ‘image’ or meaning through a personal interpretative process. Consequently, meaning in the city remains individual and subjective: ‘Since the world of nations is made by men, it is inside their minds that its principles should be sought’; and ‘Why do we have a mind if not to get our way?’²² Koolhaas had learned to view architecture as a set of given images, elements, models that could be reassembled at will in his studies with O. M. Ungers at Cornell. Ungers’s research into morphology was influenced by the analogy of architecture to language. The city was an assemblage of given artefacts that were in a constant state of typological transformation,

a kind of grammar where models and images were like letters or pieces of writing. The content of the models and images, their meanings, were expressed in literary terms as metaphors, symbols and allegories:

Thinking and designing in images, metaphors, models, analogies, symbols and allegories is nothing more than a transition from purely pragmatic approaches and a more creative mode of thinking. These are part of a morphological concept understood as the study of formations and transformations, whether of thoughts, facts, objects or conditions as they present themselves to sentient experiences.²³

Delirious New York identifies typological and programmatic transformations in the history of Manhattan. Koolhaas’s goal in so doing is to address the problem of architectural meaning discussed in the debate on postmodernism in Anglo-American architecture culture.²⁴ The significance of Manhattan does not lie in the inventive use of its historical styles. He opposes the uses of history by those he perceives as his adversaries: on one hand, the contextualism of Colin Rowe and the historicism of Leon Krier are superficial references to history; on the other, historians’ canonical view of the modern movement’s refusal of history is one-sided. Koolhaas wants to restore the social, cultural and symbolic values to the modern architecture of Manhattan by viewing it through the lenses of narrative, symbol and type. The forms and programmes of the modern city are ‘a repertoire of shapes and activities that await a possible meaning.’²⁵ His work is a ‘delirium of interpretation’ that ‘ties the loose ends left by the rationalism of the Enlightenment finally together.’²⁶ Manhattan is an archive, ‘a catalogue of models and precedents: all the desirable elements that exist scattered through the Old World finally assembled in a single place.’²⁷ *Delirious New York* is ‘conceptual recycling’, that would ‘destroy [...] the definitive catalogue, to short-circuit all existing categorisations, to make a fresh start – as

if the world can be reshuffled like a pack of cards whose original sequence is a disappointment.¹²⁸

Surrealism, image

When Benjamin and Koolhaas apply psychoanalytic vocabulary to objects they refer to Surrealism's use of chance encounters, or dialectical juxtapositions, to ally the everyday life of the past with the unconscious. The visual practices of Surrealism conceived images as complex emblems of imagination and awareness. Benjamin used a dialectical interpretation of images to disrupt the established understanding of historical progress. In his essay 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', written in 1929, while he was working on *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin uses the term 'profane illumination' to describe the unexpected and transfiguring dialectical nature of images and artefacts.²⁹ Not only does he relocate the historical image to the present through the Surrealist notion of experience connected to images. He also values the aspect of Surrealism that reads into artefacts a mythical and magical dimension representing a larger collective. His is a cultural rather than sociological or empirical (Marxian) way of interpreting urban space. His rhetoric on the revolutionary energy of the image includes the visibility of technology:

Only a thoughtless observer can deny that correspondences come into play between the world of modern technology and the archaic symbol-world of mythology [...]. Only, it takes form not in the aura of novelty but in the aura of the habitual. In memory, childhood, and dream. Awakening.³⁰

Benjamin recognises the Surrealist content of images in the twentieth century when he associates his concept of the dialectical image with the temporal moment:

On the dialectical image. In it lies time. Already with Hegel, time enters into dialectic. But the Hegelian

dialectic knows time solely as the properly historical, if not psychological, time of thinking. The time differential (*Zeitdifferential*) in which alone the dialectical image is real is still unknown to him [...]. All in all, the temporal momentum (*das Zeitmoment*) in the dialectical image can be determined only through confrontation with another concept. This concept is the 'now of recognisability' (*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*).³¹

The historian should construct a new history by creating dialectical image fragments from the wreckage of bourgeois history:

Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them [...].³²

The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event.³³

In their analysis of architectural artefacts, Benjamin and Koolhaas are examples of the use of Surrealist montage as a device to rescue critique. The arcades were a place where the new is intermingled with the old. Montage is the presence of the past in the present, the relationship of the 'now' to the 'what-has-been' in material and cultural objects. Through montage, phenomena 'are saved through the exhibition of the fissure within them [...] from the discredit and neglect into which they have fallen, [...] their enshrinement as heritage'.³⁴ One dialectical image might be found in the ancient figures found in turn of the century iron construction. These images are symbols of desire in which the ancient figures appeal to a 'prehistory' associated with a classless society while preserving the innovation of the

system of production. In other words, the image is a representation that expresses the unconscious. The materials for montage could be found in images of the outmoded – the ‘refuse’ of history reflecting accelerated time, falling quickly out of fashion and losing newness to seem paradoxically archaic; debris of industrial-capitalist society. The outmoded includes ‘the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them’.³⁵ The method of montage is a multi-step process that moves from unconsciousness to the conscious perception of the unconscious, followed by the ‘lightning flash’ of recognition, or awakening:

First dialectical stage: the arcade changes from a place of splendor to a place of decay.

Second dialectical stage: the arcade changes from an unconscious experience to something consciously penetrated.

Not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been. Structure of what-has-been at this stage. Knowledge of what has been as a becoming aware, one that has the structure of awakening.

Not-yet-conscious knowledge on the part of the collective.

All insight to be grasped according to the schema of awakening. And shouldn’t the “not-yet-conscious knowledge” have the structure of dream?³⁶

The Arcades Project, originally subtitled *Eine dialektische Feerie* (A Dialectical Fairyland) juxtaposes fragmented quotes from various sources with the author’s own commentary. It both describes and is structured around the montage principle. ‘To write history, Benjamin says, means to quote history. But the concept of quotation implies that any given

historical object must be ripped out of its context.’³⁷ His aim was ‘to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks.’³⁸ Reflection and critique go hand in hand: ‘To grasp the construction of history as such. In the structure of commentary. Refuse of History.’³⁹

Delirious New York is composed almost entirely of dialectical pairs – opposites, odd couples and alter egos – on the level of literary devices, buildings, symbols and movements. These are the constituent parts of the ‘Capital of Perpetual Crisis’. Skyscrapers are described as a form that resolves the contradiction between flexible program and architectural permanence: ‘both architecture and hyper-efficient machines, both modern and eternal [...] resolving forever the conflict between form and function [...] creating a city where permanent monoliths celebrate metropolitan instability.’⁴⁰ The fifth chapter positions Koolhaas as the point of convergence between Salvador Dali and Le Corbusier. *Delirious New York* is part of the discourse on the postmodern dialectical city founded on oppositional values and aimed at merging the real and the ideal, fact and fiction, the metaphorical and the literal.⁴¹ It is part of the development of postmodern architectural thought directly related to the proliferation of images in the rapid development of the architectural press. The book depicts Manhattan as an amalgam of historical dream images, created by architects, artists, developers, visionaries, philosophers and journalists set in unexpected combinations. The city is a palimpsest of media made possible by technology in the age of art’s mechanical reproduction.

Koolhaas framed his work as the unveiling of the unconscious of Manhattan. The discovery of Manhattan as the unconscious, irrational side of the Modern Movement would breathe life into modern architecture and rescue it from the suffocation of literal structure. His book describes the process by which images are made critical through Salvador Dali’s process of paranoid interpretation that

related Auguste Millet's 1857 painting *L'Angelus* to Dali's own preoccupations. He associates the delirious process described in Dali's diagram to Le Corbusier's reinforced-concrete construction, describing the transformative moment when calcified images begin to liquefy and a stream of new associations flows forth:

Diagram of the inner workings of the Paranoid-Critical Method: limp, improvable conjectures generated through the deliberate simulation of paranoiac thought processes, supported (made critical) by the 'crutches' of Cartesian rationality.⁴²

Dali's diagram of the Paranoid-Critical Method at work doubles as diagram of reinforced-concrete construction: a mouse-gray liquid with the substance of vomit, held up by steel reinforcements calculated according to the strictest Newtonian physics; infinitely malleable at first, then suddenly hard as a rock.⁴³

Paris and Manhattan are conceived as cities of postponed consciousness where meanings can be grasped only after the fact. Just as *Delirious New York* is demonstration and proof of Koolhaas's operation for reinserting historical images into the present, so *The Arcades Project* is both illustration and description of Benjamin's method of awakening. Koolhaas turns to Dali's paranoid method that consciously exploited the unconscious. Benjamin uses 'cunning' and 'tricks' to 'awaken' readers:

We construct an awakening theoretically – that is, we imitate, in the realm of language, the trick that is decisive physiologically in awakening, for awakening operates with cunning. Only with cunning, not without it, can we work free of the realm of dream.⁴⁴

Illumination, retroaction

In his Surrealism essay, Benjamin conceptualised the irrationality of awakening as a kind of profane illumination in contrast to mystical or 'messianic' religious experience. Throughout his writings the

dialectical image was a mental concept, a wish image whose power to reveal the myth of progress behind industrial production was dependent upon the mind's eye, the ability of the author to transfigure the image. The arcades were part of an intellectual reflection on the newly-arrived twentieth century and springboard for his own imagination. For Koolhaas, the affectation of paranoid delirium was the key to valorising his ambition to theorise and place the vernacular architecture of Manhattan in the framework of the modernist avant-garde. Calling Dali's paranoid method the 'conscious exploitation of the unconscious', he derived his own operative method, called retroaction, for exposing the irrational side of modern architecture by viewing it from multiple dialectical perspectives. The method enabled him to use Manhattan's modern architecture, during the 1970s, as a 'natural' archive of historical artefacts.

Manhattan must have seemed surreal to the European architecture student who had dreamt of New York as a child, observed it from afar, and upon his arrival saw things that a native-born American might not notice. *Delirious New York* is in part an examination of Manhattan after the war when the majority of the Surrealists arrived.⁴⁵ It is as if Koolhaas experienced and recorded the 'interpretive delirium [which] begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols.'⁴⁶ Benjamin had himself solicited support from the Institute for Social Research that had been re-established in 1934 in association with Columbia University. His work lies implicitly within the parameters of Koolhaas's work, part of the dream world of urban space and images of mass culture, whose critical value, like that of *The Arcades Project*, lay in its ability to look forwards and backwards at the same time, to view past and the present in a dialectic relationship.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. H.

- Eiland and K. McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press / Harvard University Press, 2000), N7a,S. Originally published as *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981).
2. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*.
 3. Accounts of Benjamin's thinking include: Ackbar Abbas, 'On Fascination: Walter Benjamin's Images', *New German Critique*, no. 48 (Autumn 1989), 43–62; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Michael Jennings, 'Re: Richard Sieburth on Walter Benjamin', *Assemblage*, no. 7 (Oct. 1988), 118–120; Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Richard Wolin, 'Experience and Materialism in Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*', in G. Smith et al., *Benjamin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Rolf Tiedemann, 'Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to the *Passagen-Werk*' introduction to Benjamin, *Arcades Project*.
 4. Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*.
 5. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 255.
 6. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
 7. Koolhaas returned to the Netherlands to open the OMA office in Rotterdam with Madelon Vriesendorp and Elia and Zoe Zenghelis after the publication of *Delirious New York*.
 8. Many buildings from the 1920s and 30s were still standing in 1972 when Koolhaas visited the city.
 9. Frances Hsu, 'The Operative Criticism of Rem Koolhaas', *ReBuilding: Proceedings of the ACSA Annual Meeting* (2010): 379–384. Tafuri was a controversial figure known for addressing the 'eclipse of history', 'crisis of the object' and the death of modern architecture. *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), was published in 1973, the year he was invited to teach at the Institute. Koolhaas found Tafuri intimidating. Though Koolhaas tells the story of his avoidance of and antagonism towards Tafuri and distrust of Marxism, their paths surely crossed at the Institute even though there are no records of personal intercourse that would provide some clues to their exchanges. One could speculate on the basis of suggestive details from intellectual life at the Institute involving many including Rosalind Krauss who wrote on Surrealism, Kenneth Frampton, et al. My argument for Tafuri's importance to Koolhaas is based on their common concerns with Manhattan, art, myth and history and comparison of their ideologically distinct essays both published in the same journal: Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'Architecture dans le boudoir', *Oppositions*, 3 (1974); Rem Koolhaas, 'Architect's Ball, 1931', *Oppositions* 3, (1974).
 10. Tafuri, Manfredo, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. Giorgio Verrecchia (New York: Harper & Row, [1968] 1980); Tafuri in 'L'Architecture dans le boudoir' *Oppositions*, 3 (1974) presented the binary oppositions of theory and practice, architectural project and utopia; and proposed a critical method based on the juxtaposition of comment and criticism. While at the Institute, Tafuri criticised the activity in New York centred around the IAUS, including the 'jokes' of Koolhaas. (The 'formal terrorism of Eisenman, the polysemia of Graves, the rigorism of Meier, the linguistic cruelty of Agrest and Gandelsonas, the ingenious aphorisms of Robert Stern, the meta-physical games of Machado and Silvetti, the "jokes" of Koolhaas' – all were neuroses stemming from the inability to build'. Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere & The Labyrinth*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 299.
 11. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 13.
 12. See *The Village Voice*, Nov. 6 1978; Peter Blake, *New York Magazine*; Pascal Dupont, *Les Nouvelles*

- Litteraires*; Richard Ingersoll, *Concrete*, February 14, 1979; Reyner Banham, *New Society*, April 12, 1979; Paul Goldberger, *New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1979; Patrick Pinnell, *Skyline*, March 1979.
13. Rem Koolhaas and Wakefield, 'Arthur Erickson vs. the All-Stars: The Battle of Bunker Hill', *Trace* 1, no. 3 (1981): 9–15. Rem Koolhaas, 'A Foundation of Amnesia', *Design Quarterly* 125 (1984): 5–13. Rem Koolhaas, 'L'Architecture, pour qui? pour quoi?', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 4, no. 238 (1985): 71. Rem Koolhaas, 'De wereld is rijp voor de architect als visionair' (Maaskant Prize lecture, 1986).
 14. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, N3,4.
 15. *Ibid.*, N2,3.
 16. *Ibid.*, N2,6.
 17. *Ibid.*, N2,2.
 18. *Ibid.*, N4,3.
 19. *Ibid.*, N3,1.
 20. *Ibid.*, N3,1. 'In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural [*bildlich*]. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.' *Ibid.*, 10. Modernity 'occurs through the ambiguity peculiar to the social relations and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectics in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image. Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish. Such an image is presented by the arcades, which are house no less than street. Such an image is the prostitute-seller and sold in one.'
 21. Tiedemann, 'Dialectics at a Standstill', 942–43.
 22. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 9.
 23. Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Morphologie, City Metaphors* (Cologne: Walter König, 1982). (Catalogue to the exhibition 'Man Transforms' held at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, October 1976).
 24. Broadly speaking, there were two camps, which, despite their differences, focused primarily on stylistic issues. A distinction existed between those who believed architecture could transmit meaning exterior to itself and those for whom architecture was a self-referential language. The former group opposed the modern aesthetic of corporate architecture and looked back to classical, vernacular and popular models. The latter, intending to retrieve the profession from political interests, severed modern architecture from its social and symbolic meanings to develop an autonomous language of essentially formalist typologies and morphologies that were structuralist in spirit (the neorationalists).
 25. Bernard Tschumi, 'On Delirious New York: A Critique of Critiques, Review', *International Architect*, no. 3, vol. 1, (1980): 68–69.
 26. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 243.
 27. *Ibid.*, *Delirious New York*, 7.
 28. *Ibid.*, *Delirious New York*, 238, 241.
 29. Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', trans. Edmond Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 1, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). For an in-depth discussion of the nuances between Benjamin's *One Way Street* and the Surrealism essay focusing on the revolutionary potential found by Benjamin in Surrealism's literary works see Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley, University of California Press 1993.) Cohen addresses the discussion of 'the subject's more equivocal contact with contemporary reality', the experience of shock in Benjamin's late work 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939) where the concept 'comes to its full-blown expression.'
 30. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, N2a,1.
 31. *Ibid.*, Q°,21.
 32. *Ibid.*, N1a,8.
 33. *Ibid.*, N2,6.
 34. *Ibid.*, N9,4.
 35. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. Peter Demetz (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 181.

36. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 907.
37. *Ibid.*, N11,3.
38. *Ibid.*, N1,10.
39. *Ibid.*, N2,6.
40. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 296.
41. *Complexity and Contradiction* is based on the oppositions of pure / hybrid, distorted / straightforward, ambiguous / articulated, etc. *Collage City* is the sum of two received representations, the traditional urbanism made up of open spaces 'carved out of a solid mass' and its opposite, Le Corbusier's *ville verte* of isolated buildings standing free in 'natural' space. Both then contrast with the representation of the ideal city. The book is predicated on the polarities of figure/ground, object/void, inside/outside, ancient/modern, sacred/profane. Literal and phenomenal transparency were opposed in the 'Transparency' essays by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky ('Transparency', *Perspecta* 8, 1963 and 13/14, 1971) Also see Aldo Rossi, *La città analoga*.
42. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 236.
43. *Ibid.*, 248.
44. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 907.
45. Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). 'When the majority of the Surrealists arrived in New York after the war, they found America alien and as a whole a "land without myth". Looking for icons and symbols to give meaning to their environment, they found nothing in the city that would fit into the modes of thinking that they had brought with them from Paris and elsewhere. New York lacked precisely that which gave resonance to the places from which they had come. Those sculptural and architectural icons that fulfilled the need for unifying symbols, the streets, buildings and squares resonant with the ever-present past, had few counterparts in the urban environments of the new world.'
46. Andre Breton, *L'Amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937).

Biography

Frances Hsu teaches courses in architectural history, theory and criticism as well as advanced graduate research studios in housing and urbanism at Aalto University. She has taught at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Mississippi State University, and worked at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Ben van Berkel and Peter Eisenman. Her essays addressing the influence of French theory on architectural postmodernism with a focus on the work of Rem Koolhaas appear most recently in *A Critical History of Modern Architecture 1960–2010*, *Spielraum*, *Walter Benjamin et l'Architecture*, *JAE*, *Clog*, and *The Cambridge Architectural Journal* (forthcoming). She received a B.S. Architecture from the University of Virginia, a Master of Architecture from Harvard University, and her Ph.D. from the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at the ETH in Zurich.