

Architecture After the Age of Printing (1992)

Peter Eisenman

These two essays by Peter Eisenman inaugurate digital discourse in architecture in the 1990s, and highlight the continuity between Deconstructivism and the first age of digital design. The contrast between the photograph and the telefax, cited in both essays, refers less to image-making than to the different nature of mechanical and digital reproducibility: unlike mechanical copies, which once printed are fixed and stable, digital images derive from number-based notations, or files, that can morph and change all the time. In Eisenman's reading, the new paradigm of electronic mediation destabilises and 'dislocates' centuries-old habits of anthropocentric vision, rooted in the monocular, perspectival tradition and in the modern technologies of mechanical reproduction, and should inspire and prod architects to further contest 'the space of classical vision' and break 'the gridded space of the Cartesian order'.

In the first essay Eisenman also refers to Gilles Deleuze's theory of 'the fold' (from Deleuze's book *The Fold, Leibniz and the Baroque*, first published in French in 1988, and which would inspire a seminal issue of *AD*, guest-edited by Greg Lynn with major contributions by Eisenman himself: see pages 28–47). Folding, Eisenman argues, may provide a new 'strategy for dislocating vision', by subverting the hierarchy of interior and exterior and by weakening the notational correspondence between drawing and building. The second essay republished here, 'The Affects of Singularity', does not mention Deleuze but refers to 'singularity' as a new ontological condition of the subject – significantly, not of the object, yet, Eisenman suggests, equally opposed to the mechanical ideas of standardisation and repetition, and in sync with the new technical logic of electronics.

Both Deleuze's 'fold' and the notion of digital singularity will become topoi of digital discourse in the 1990s. Similar notions of 'singularity' also generally refer to the new post-modern differentiation of subjects and objects alike. But in 1992 the digital is not yet a tool for a new mode of design, or even less for building; the rise of electronics is seen here as a general techno-cultural shift that should inspire architects to engage with an unprecedented cultural environment and with a new view of the world. Electronics, in Eisenman's view, vindicate and corroborate the stance of all the historical enemies of the dominion of the classical eye. Deleuze's Folding is seen as a new Deconstructivist weapon of choice, and the forthcoming digital fold as a continuation of Deconstructivism by electronic means.

Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media *AD* September–October 1992

During the 50 years since the Second World War, a paradigm shift has taken place that should have profoundly affected architecture: this was the shift from the mechanical paradigm to the electronic one. This change can be simply understood by comparing the impact of the role of the human subject on such primary modes of reproduction as the photograph and the fax; the photograph within the mechanical paradigm, the fax within the electronic one.

In photographic reproduction the subject still maintains a controlled interaction with the object. A photograph can be developed with more or less contrast, texture or clarity. The photograph can be said to remain in the control of human vision. The human subject thus retains its function as interpreter, as discursive function. With the fax, the subject is no longer called upon to interpret, for reproduction takes place without any control or adjustment. The fax also challenges the concept of originality. While in a photograph the original reproduction still retains a privileged value, in facsimile transmission the original remains intact but with no differentiating value since it is no longer sent. The mutual devaluation of both original and copy is not the only transformation affected by the electronic paradigm. The entire nature of what we have come to know as the reality of our world has been called into question by the invasion of media into everyday life. For reality always demanded that our vision be interpretive.

How have these developments affected architecture? Since architecture has traditionally housed value as well as fact, one would imagine that architecture would have been greatly transformed. But this is not the case, for architecture seems little changed at all. This in itself ought to warrant investigation, since architecture has traditionally been a bastion of what is considered to be the real. Metaphors such as house and home, bricks and mortar, foundations and shelter attest to architecture's role in defining what we consider to be real. Clearly, a change in the everyday concepts of reality should have had some effect on architecture. It did not because the mechanical paradigm was the *sine qua non* of architecture; architecture was the visible manifestation of the overcoming of natural forces such as gravity and weather by mechanical means. Architecture not only overcame gravity, it was also the monument to that overcoming; it interpreted the value society placed on its vision.

The electronic paradigm directs a powerful challenge to architecture because it defines reality in terms of media and simulation; it values appearance over existence, what can be seen over what is. Not the seen as we formerly knew it, but rather a seeing that can no longer interpret. Media introduce fundamental ambiguities into how and what we see. Architecture has resisted this question because, since the importation and absorption of perspective by architectural space in the 15th century, architecture has been dominated by the mechanics of vision. Thus architecture assumes sight to be pre-eminent and also in some way natural to its own processes, not a thing to be questioned. It is precisely this traditional concept of sight that the electronic paradigm questions.

Sight is traditionally understood in terms of vision. When I use the term 'vision' I mean that particular characteristic of sight which attaches seeing to thinking, the eye to the mind. In architecture, vision refers to a particular category of perception linked to monocular perspectival vision. The monocular vision of the subject in architecture allows for all projections of space to be resolved on a single planimetric surface. It is therefore not surprising that perspective, with its ability to define and reproduce the perception of depth on a two-dimensional surface, should find architecture a waiting and wanting vehicle. Nor is it surprising that architecture soon began to conform itself to this monocular, rationalising vision – in its own body. Whatever the style, space was constituted as an understandable construct, organised around spatial elements such as axes, places, symmetries, etc. Perspective is even more virulent in architecture than in painting because of the imperious demands of the eye and the body to orient itself in architectural space through processes of rational perspectival ordering. It was thus not without cause that Brunelleschi's invention of one-point perspective should correspond to a time when there was a paradigm shift from the theological and theocentric to the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric views of the world. Perspective became the vehicle by which anthropocentric vision crystallised itself in the architecture that followed this shift.

Brunelleschi's projection system, however, was deeper in its effect than all subsequent stylistic changes because it confirmed vision as the dominant discourse in architecture from the 16th century to the present. Thus, despite repeated changes in style from the Renaissance through Post-Modernism and despite many attempts to the contrary, the seeing human subject – monocular and anthropocentric – remains the primary discursive term of architecture.

The tradition of planimetric projection in architecture persisted unchallenged because it allowed the projection and hence the understanding of a three-dimensional space in two dimensions. In other disciplines – perhaps since Leibniz and certainly since Sartre – there has been a consistent attempt to demonstrate the problematic qualities inherent in vision but in architecture the sight/mind construct has persisted as the dominant discourse.

In an essay entitled 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', Martin Jay notes that 'Baroque visual experience has a strongly tactile or haptic quality which prevents it from turning into the absolute ocular centrism of its Cartesian perspectivalist rival.' Norman Bryson, in his article 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', introduces the idea of the gaze (*le regard*) as the looking back of the other. He discusses the gaze in terms of Sartre's intruder in *Being and Nothingness* or in terms of Lacan's concept of a darkness that cuts across the space of sight. Lacan also introduces the idea of a space looking back which he likens to a disturbance of the visual field of reason.

From time to time architecture has attempted to overcome its rationalising vision. If one takes for example the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, one can explain the solitary column almost blocking the entry or the incomplete groin vaulting as an attempt to signal a change from a Pagan to a Christian architecture. Piranesi created similar effects with his architectural projections. Piranesi diffracted the monocular subject by creating

perspectival visions with multiple vanishing points so that there was no way of correlating what was seen into a unified whole. Equally, Cubism attempted to deflect the relationship between a monocular subject and the object. The subject could no longer put the painting into some meaningful structure through the use of perspective. Cubism used a non-monocular perspectival condition: it flattened objects to the edges, it upturned objects, it undermined the stability of the picture plane. Architecture attempted similar dislocations through Constructivism and its own, albeit normalising, version of Cubism – the International Style. But this work only looked cubistic and modern, the subject remained rooted in a profound anthropocentric stability, comfortably upright and in place on a flat, tabular ground. There was no shift in the relationship between the subject and the object. While the object looked different it failed to displace the viewing subject. Though the buildings were sometimes conceptualised, by axonometric or isometric projection rather than by perspective, no consistent deflection of the subject was carried out. Yet Modernist sculpture did in many cases effect such a displacement of the subject. These dislocations were fundamental to Minimalism: the early work of Robert Morris, Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson. This historical project, however, was never taken up in architecture. The question now begs to be asked: why did architecture resist developments that were taking place in other disciplines? And further, why has the issue of vision never been properly problematised in architecture?

It might be said that architecture never adequately thought through the problem of vision because it remained within the concept of the subject and the four walls. Architecture, unlike any other discipline, concretised vision. The hierarchy inherent in all architectural space begins as a structure for the mind's eye. It is perhaps the idea of interiority as a hierarchy between inside and outside that causes architecture to conceptualise itself ever more comfortably and conservatively in vision. The interiority of architecture more than any other discourse defined a hierarchy of vision articulated by inside and outside. The fact that one is actually both inside and outside with architecture, unlike painting or music, required vision to conceptualise itself in this way. As long as architecture refuses to take up the problem of vision, it will remain within a Renaissance or Classical view of its discourse.

Now what would it mean for architecture to take up the problem of vision? Vision can be defined as essentially a way of organising space and elements in space. It is a way of looking at, and defines a relationship between a subject and an object. Traditional architecture is structured so that any position occupied by a subject provides a means for understanding that position in relation to a particular spatial typology, such as a rotunda, a transept crossing, an axis, an entry. Any number of these typological conditionals deploy architecture as a screen for looking at.

The idea of a 'looking back' begins to displace the anthropocentric subject. Looking back does not require the object to become a subject, that is to anthropomorphise the object. Looking back concerns the possibility of detaching the subject from the rationalisation of space. In other words, to allow the subject to have a vision of space that no longer can be put together in the normalising, classicising or traditional construct of vision; an

other space, where in fact the space 'looks back' at the subject. A possible first step in conceptualising this other space, would be to detach what one sees from what one knows – the eye from the mind. A second step would be to inscribe space in such a way as to endow it with the possibility of looking back at the subject. All architecture can be said to be already inscribed. Windows, doors, beams and columns are a kind of inscription. These make architecture known, they reinforce vision. Since no space is un-inscribed, we do not see a window without relating it to an idea of window, this kind of inscription seems not only natural but also necessary to architecture. In order to have a looking back, it is necessary to rethink the idea of inscription. In the Baroque and Rococo such an inscription was in the plaster decoration that began to obscure the traditional form of functional inscription. This kind of 'decorative' description was thought too excessive when undefined by function. Architecture tends to resist this form of excess in a way that is unique amongst the arts, precisely because of the power and pervasive nature of functional inscription. The anomalous column at San Vitale inscribes space in a way that was at the time foreign to the eye. This is also true of the columns in the staircase at the Wexner Center; however most of such inscriptions are the result of design intention, the will of an authorial subjective expression which then only reconstitutes vision as before. To dislocate vision might require an inscription which is the result of an outside text which is neither overly determined by design expression or function. But how could such an inscription of an outside text translate into space?

Suppose for a moment that architecture could be conceptualised as a Moebius strip, with an unbroken continuity between interior and exterior. What would this mean for vision? Gilles Deleuze has proposed just such a possible continuity with his idea of the fold. For Deleuze, folded space articulates a new relationship between vertical and horizontal, figure and ground, inside and out – all structures articulated by traditional vision. Unlike the space of classical vision, the idea of folded space denies framing in favour of a temporal modulation. The fold no longer privileges planimetric projection; instead there is a variable curvature. Deleuze's idea of folding is more radical than origami, because it contains no narrative, linear sequence; rather, in terms of traditional vision it contains a quality of the unseen.

Folding changes the traditional space of vision. That is, it can be considered to be effective; it functions, it shelters, it is meaningful, it frames, it is aesthetic. Folding also constitutes a move from effective to affective space. Folding is not another subject expressionism, a promiscuity, but rather unfolds in space alongside of its functioning and its meaning in space – it has what might be called an excessive condition or affect. Folding is a type of affective space which concerns those aspects that are not associated with the affective, that are more than reason, meaning and function.

In order to change the relationship of perspectival projection to three-dimensional space it is necessary to change the relationship between project drawing and real space. This would mean that one would no longer be able to draw with any level of meaningfulness the space that is being projected. For example, when it is no longer possible to draw a line that stands for some scale relationship to another line in space, it has nothing to do with reason,

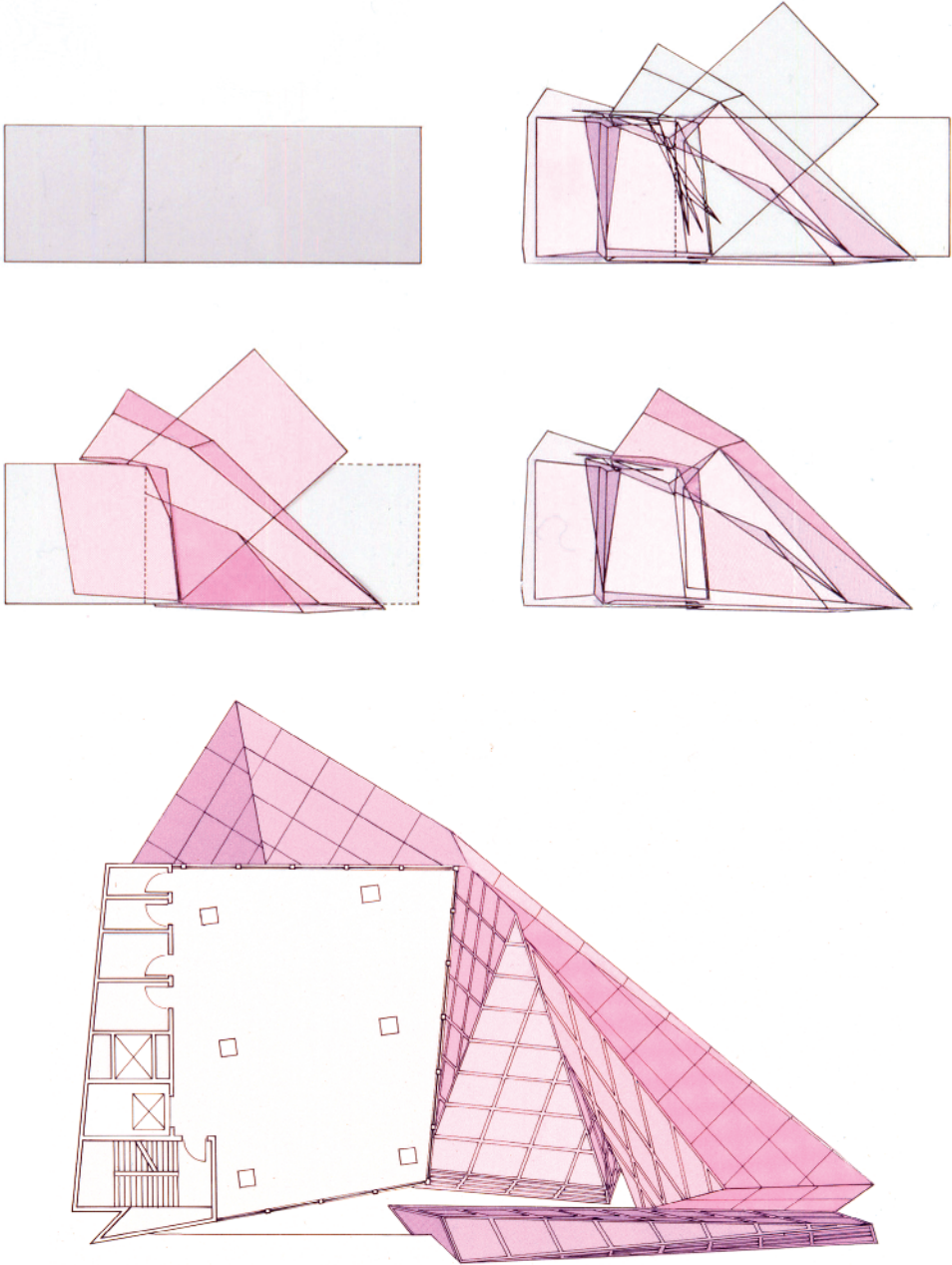
of the connection of the mind to the eye. The deflection from that line in space means that there no longer exists a one-to-one scale correspondence.

My folded projects are a primitive beginning. In them the subject understands that he or she can no longer conceptualise experience in space in the same way that he or she did in the gridded space. They attempt to provide this dislocation of the subject from effective space; an idea of presentness. Once the environment becomes affective, inscribed with another logic or an ur-logic, one which is no longer translatable into the vision of the mind, then reason becomes detached from vision. While we can still understand space in terms of its function, structure, and aesthetic – we are still within the ‘four walls’ – somehow reason becomes detached from the affective condition of the environment itself. This begins to produce an environment that ‘looks back’ – that is, the environment seems to have an order that we can perceive even though it does not seem to mean anything. It does not seek to be understood in the traditional way of architecture yet it possesses some sense of ‘aura’, an ur-logic which is the sense of something outside of our vision. Yet one that is not another subjective expression. Folding is only one of perhaps many strategies for dislocating vision – dislocating the hierarchy of interior and exterior that pre-empts vision.

The Alteka Tower project begins simultaneously with an ‘L’ shape drawn both in plan and section. Here, a change in the relationship of perspectival projection to three-dimensional space changes the relationship between project drawing and real space. In this sense, these drawings would have little relationship to the space that is being projected. For example, it is no longer possible to draw a line that stands for some scale relationship to another line in the space of the project, thus the drawn lines no longer have anything to do with reason, the connection of the mind to the eye. The drawn lines are folded with some ur-logic according to sections of a fold in René Thom’s catastrophe theory. These folded plans and sections in turn create an object, which is cut into from the ground floor to the top.

When the environment is inscribed or folded in such a way the individual no longer remains the discursive function; the individual is no longer required to understand or interpret space. Questions such as what the space means are no longer relevant. It is not just that the environment is detached from vision, but that it also presents its own vision, a vision that looks back at the individual. The inscription is no longer concerned with aesthetics or with meaning but with some other order. It is only necessary to perceive the fact that this other order exists; this perception alone dislocates the knowing subject.

The fold presents the possibility of an alternative to the gridded space of the Cartesian order. The fold produces a dislocation of the dialectical distinction between figure and ground; in the process it animates what Gilles Deleuze calls a smooth space. Smooth space presents the possibility of overcoming or exceeding the grid. The grid remains in place and the four walls will always exist but they are in fact overtaken by the folding of space. Here there is no longer one planimetric view which is then extruded to provide a sectional space. Instead it is no longer possible to relate a vision of space in a two-dimensional drawing to the three-dimensional reality of a folded space. Drawing no



Eisenman Architects, Alteka Office Building, Tokyo, 1991; folding diagrams and plan, levels five to seven. Courtesy of Eisenman Architects. © Peter Eisenman.

longer has any scale value relationship to the three-dimensional environment. This dislocation of the two-dimensional drawing from the three-dimensional reality also begins to dislocate vision, inscribed by this ur-logic. There are no longer grid datum planes for the upright individual.

Alteka is not merely a surface architecture or a surface folding. Rather, the folds create an affective space, a dimension in the space that dislocates the discursive function of the human subject and thus vision, and at the same moment creates a condition of time, of an event in which there is the possibility of the environment looking back at the subject, the possibility of the *gaze*.

The gaze according to Maurice Blanchot is that possibility of seeing which remains covered up by vision. The gaze opens the possibility of seeing what Blanchot calls the light lying within the darkness. It is not the light of the dialectic of light/dark, but it is the light of an otherness, which lies hidden within presence. It is the capacity to see this otherness which is repressed by vision. The looking back, the gaze, exposes architecture to another light, one which could not have been seen before.

Architecture will continue to stand up, to deal with gravity, to have 'four walls'. But these four walls no longer need to be expressive of the mechanical paradigm. Rather they could deal with the possibility of these other discourses, the other affective senses of sound, touch and of that light lying within the darkness.

The Affects of Singularity AD November–December 1992

There are two English words, 'affect' and 'effect', that sound alike but mean quite different things. *Effect* is something produced by an agent or cause. In architecture it is the relationship between some object and its function or meaning; it is an idea that has dominated Western architecture for the last 200 years. Since the French Revolution, architecture, in its political, social and economical sense, has dealt with effect. If it is good it is effective; if it is good it serves more people. The clearest example of effect is the utilitarian creed of modern architecture; form follows function. This argued that a socially viable programme, properly elaborated, would provide good architecture. Affect, on the other hand, has nothing necessarily to do with good. *Affect* is the conscious subjective aspect of an emotion considered apart from bodily changes. Affect in architecture is simply the sensate response to a physical environment.

Effect can be contrasted with the word affect in many different contexts. This is particularly true when it comes to mediated environments. For example, when I lecture in a foreign country, everyone listens with headphones to a technical translation of my words. This experience is different from the here and now of a physical place: the earphones diminish the affect of my live voice; its emotion, animation and spirit. At the same time the translator desperately tries to tell the audience what I mean. And what I mean is precisely what is at issue. The audience feels it must understand what I say – it must have an effective response to my presence. But I want them to feel my presence, my affect. Like the audience at my lecture, people all over the world are also walking around with headphones listening to rock music, losing the affect of being in space. The loss of the individual response to unmediated stimuli is one consequence of the phenomenon.

The same loss of affect appears when we watch television. For example, for sporting events there is something called instant replay which allows you to watch the play over again in slow motion. Now, in the actual arenas there is also instant replay because people are so attuned to watching the slow motion they can no longer see because of the speed of the actual event; they begin to cheer only after they have seen the instant replay. This is because we have all become junkies of simulated reality to the detriment of the reality of the event itself. For example, after the kick off, in a recent Super Bowl of American football, the players all piled up but the referee blew his whistle and said, 'No play'. What was wrong? The television camera was not ready, so they had to go back and kick off again. The question arises: 'Is this real or is it a mediated event?' And the effect of this non-human mediation is very real; it has become another kind of affect in itself.

The same thing happened at a wedding a year ago. As the bride was coming down the aisle (they were filming for home video use), suddenly the producer said, 'Cut, OK, go back. We need this again.' And so the bride stops, walks back and comes down the aisle again. This continued through the whole service: the exchanging of rings, the 'I do's' and the kiss. The question, again, was whether there was ever a real event because it looked rather like a rehearsal for a video tape. Perhaps the only time the real wedding would be seen would be on the edited video tape, in which case the edited video

tape would become the reality. In a similar sense, just this year, in a beauty contest being taped for airing later, they had to shoot two different endings with two different contestants making acceptance speeches and pretending to be happy about winning. This was done because the judging had not taken place. Again the affective reality of the event lay in the video tape.

Another agency that contributes to this loss of affect seeping into our homes is the 1984-like creature called CNN, which is everywhere on the globe bringing 'instant' news. I remember one night at home before dinner two years ago when I was suddenly watching the bombardment of Baghdad. This action was interspersed with soft drink and travel commercials. I remember the grotesque paradox of watching people being annihilated live, as if for television, only to be interrupted by 'normal' life: buy a car, have a beer. Sitting in front of the CNN television news, one is practically anaesthetised to an affect. Does one believe the commercials or the live bombing? Is it possible to know what is real in such a situation and, therefore is it possible to have any affective response to such a juxtaposition? That is not to say that simulation is not a form of reality. It would be ingenuous to say that what is on television is not real, that it is some form of child's nightmare, a Grimms' fairy tale brought up to date. But if this is the case, that we are uncertain today what reality is, then it is also difficult to understand what architecture is, because architecture has traditionally been seen as the home of reality.

This is addressed by Walter Benjamin in his essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. Benjamin says that a photograph is clearly an original, although a different kind of original from that which, let us say, is crafted by hand. In one sense the art or the craft product, such as, a handmade piece of furniture or a handmade book is different from a book that is made on a mechanical press or a piece of bentwood furniture – which is reproduced many times. But in another sense they are both original, the craft product being individual and the bentwood furniture multiple.

Now there is a difference between repetition in mechanical reproduction and repetition in electronic reproduction: this is the difference between a photograph and a telefax.

The photograph is mechanically produced: it is a product of repetition. It is not a unique handmade artefact: that is, it is not an object of art as craft. The mechanical paradigm dealt with the shift in value from the individual hand, as in the hand of a painter as an original maker; to the value of the hand as intermediary, as in the developer of raw film: from the creation of an individual to the meditation of the multiple. The photograph can be manipulated by an individual to have more contrast, more texture, more tone. Thus, there remains within the mechanical repetition of a photograph a unique, individual quality: it remains a particular object even within the idea of the multiple. And within the process, the individual subject is still able to effect as well as affect.

In electronic repetition, that is the telefax, there is less human intervention, a less value-added dimension by the individual. Further, the condition of the original is thrown into question. Whereas one can agree that there is an original negative plate for a photograph and that this plate can be reproduced, there is no negative plate in a telefax. The original that may be on a disk in a computer: it is no longer an object but rather a

series of electronic impulses stored in a matrix. Even the disk original is often modified by corrections, and thus a unique individual original is hardly ever kept. And in fact now, with telefax, the original may not even ever be sent so as not to confuse the reception with the reception of the telefax.

The nature of both repetition and originality changes from mechanical reproduction to electronic reproduction. The change in the nature of originality effects a definition of singularity. Thus, it is difficult to know what reality is, the reality as the former notion of reality, as the scientific, the organic, the anthropocentric notion of reality that existed in the mechanical paradigm. But if it can be said that if only by virtue of the relationship of media to reality that reality is no longer homogeneous but rather heterogeneous, then there are possibilities for conceptualising architecture.

Within the mechanical paradigm the subject's relationship to the object was clearly understood since the mechanical paradigm evolved from the classical anthropocentric, organicist paradigm. There was a continuity; that is, with every change there was a homogeneity within each paradigm. The individual knew how to react to the object, even though the individual became clearly displaced from his or her centric position. It can be argued that architecture, even though it deals with the same physical individual with the same functional needs and the same need for an affective response to a physical space, no longer produces the same affect because of the shift of the human subject's relationship to the paradigm, that is, the shift from the mechanical to the electronic.

From the beginning of the mechanical paradigm, that is from the beginning of the 15th century, architecture was considered strong media. There is no question that architecture was the *sine qua non* of the mechanical paradigm in that it was the embodiment of the material resistance to natural forces. In its sheltering and enclosing function it provided not only a metaphorical image but an actual physical image of statics: architecture stood against natural forces. Architecture, in order to shelter and enclose, was therefore not only actually but metaphorically a symbol of a mechanical paradigm.

For example, in the late Middle Ages, in the Gothic cathedrals and even in the early Renaissance wall churches, the symbolic evocation of a town was in the church, was articulated in the body of the church itself; in the facades, the side chapels, the carvings, etc. The discourse of the mass was the discourse of the structure and organisation and decoration of the Gothic church. Now obviously this all changed in the 15th century, with the change from Theocentrism to Anthropocentrism.

Another important change occurred in the 18th century when new functions and new political institutions began after the French Revolution. With the rise of the social and economic state, there was a new demand for architecture to make apparent these institutions through new forms. New building types, for example the library, the prison, the hospital, the public school and social housing were introduced into architecture. Because of this, architecture of necessity became more effective: there was a primary relationship between the object of architecture and the physical programme, rather than with the mediating or symbolic functions. Because of this, architecture began to lose its condition as strong media. While it housed and provided for the functions of

society, it began to symbolise these functions less. The more the effective nature of the mechanism became important, the less the affective nature of both the medium and the message: the social and political type replaced the metaphorical or the affective type. As the public recognition of these building types became more important, little distinction was made between the type and the unique instance of the type in the individual building. As architecture became more of a public, collective concern, it naturally began to deal with the question of repetition and standardisation.

Throughout the 19th century, there is a development of architecture for a mass society parallel to the development of the new political state. It is not without interest that the modern political state of the late 18th and the early 19th century corresponded with the rise of social and economic institutions and with the beginning of the change of architecture from strong media to weak media. While strong media as architecture was about affect, strong media today in terms of commercial television and journalism, is basically concerned with effect: how quickly, compactly and distinctly can the message get across?

But crucial to this argument, is the fact that the mediated behaviour of today does not come from any personal or individual form of behaviour: it is collective behaviour. Media not only sets out to destroy the possibility of individual affect in order to be affective itself, but also must substitute effect for affect. Media assumes that an affective message must be an effective one and this influence alone has entirely altered our concept of affect as well as individual behaviour. For example, media cannot tolerate the possibility of mistake, the misgotten message, error and untruth, all of which are part of the possibility of affect.

Architecture not only does not deal with affect, but it no longer deals with effect as well as strong media. Then how does architecture stand in the face of media, and specifically with the loss of the affecting aspect of individual expression. A possible way of returning architecture to the realm of affect may not be through the idea of the individual or the expressive, or through any kind of standardisation or repetition of a norm but, in fact, through an idea of singularity.

Architecture — now operating as weak media — needs to regain the possibility of an affective discourse. The term singularity begins to explore the possibility of a discourse which brings to the electronic paradigm what particularity, individuality, personal expression was to the mechanical paradigm. That is a general context for exploring the possibility of an architecture of affect. It begins to suggest a contemporary notion of how architecture which is seen as singular can operate as weak media in an affective way within the electronic paradigm.

One way to approach the question of affect in architecture is by looking at the difference between singularity and individual expression, and to answer the questions: 'Why is individual expression no longer valid?' and 'Why is singularity not merely a form of expressionism?' The difference is at the heart of the idea of singularity.

Singularity, as the Japanese critic, Kojin Karatani, suggests is the difference between 'I' the individual subject and the 'I' which belongs to the general category of everybody.

It is precisely the difference between a 'this I' and all 'I'-s that must be distinguished. The attachment of the 'this' to the 'I' does not mean that 'this I', the 'me' is special. Rather the reverse, it is taking the ego, the individual subjectivity, the persona, out of the 'me' which is in this 'I'. This begins to distinguish the idea of singularity from the idea of particularity and individuality. In other words, Karatani is trying to take the idea of the special 'me'. Even though I know that I am like everyone else, I am not anyone else. What is at stake here is the 'this' in 'this I' and not the 'I' as consciousness. It is the qualification of 'I', the naming of the 'this I', that is important in this context. What is the this of 'this I'? This applies equally for Karatani from the subject, to the object thing and to 'this thing'. Karatani says that 'this-ness' of the subject and object, 'this I' or 'this thing' has nothing to do with its formal or physical features and characteristics. The 'this-ness' of a 'this I' or a 'this dog' is singularity, it distinguishes it from particularity. So it is the 'ness' of this — the 'this-ness' — that is the condition of singularity as opposed to the 'I'. Singularity does not mean that a thing is unique. As opposed to particularity and individuality, which are seen as unique when seen in relationship to generality, singularity is an individuality no longer able to belong to the realm of generality. The attempt is to move the question of 'I' and the individual outside a metaphysical discourse. The singularity of a thing is inseparable from the act of calling it by a proper noun. Thus the nomination of 'this thing' also begins to separate singularity from particularity.

Peter Eisenman, 'Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media', *Domus* 734 (January 1992), pp 17–24; *AD* 62, September–October 1992, pp xvi–xviii; Ole Bouman and Roemer van Toorn (eds), *The Invisible in Architecture*, Academy Editions (London), 1994, pp 144–9; Kate Nesbitt (ed), *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: an Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995*, Princeton Architectural Press (New York), 1996, pp 554–61; Eisenman, *Written into the Void, Selected Writings 1990–2004*, Yale University Press (New Haven), 2007, pp 34–41. © Eisenman Architects.

Peter Eisenman, 'The Affects of Singularity', Andreas C Papadakis (ed), *Theory + Experimentation*, *AD Profile* 100, *AD* 62, November–December 1992, pp 42–5; Eisenman, *Written into the Void, Selected Writings 1990–2004*, Yale University Press (New Haven), 2007, pp 19–24. © Eisenman Architects.