

## **Savage Titillation** or Wide Open on The Fence

**Savage titillation of a nerve in the dark.  
Images as responses. Images as energies.  
Images as skin-pricks.**

Henri Michaux, Emergences/Resurgences, Skira 2000

Where do we stand is an attractive call to arms but it might –paradoxically - be doomed from the outset. This might well be its winning formula. For within this tacit framing of the catastrophic lie the seeds of its own perpetuity. For to ask of us, anyone, wishing to declare a responsibility to the chosen field, is to assume a position not quite as challenging and as rigorous as we imagine. We might, unbeknownst to the re-tooled world, be residing in a more permanent condition than might be any reality recognized today. On the closing of the architectural mind, of the narrowing of the functional, conserved world where capital flow meets software and the imagination, perhaps there is really only one truly philosophical position: if we don't commit suicide, where do we stand? New models of organization will not be held back for much longer, nor will the ownership of the derailed world be ours and ours alone. Architecture will replicate the fence, the perfect fence, by internal copying, by becoming more about the manufacturing of the work, its process and production rather than the actual work, possibly condemning us once more to blame this wanton condition on the computer. Trial by google: death by architecture: resistance or redemption? Is this not the moment we ask the same question over and over again – where do you stand? – in order to cease these questions. In an expanding, self-confessed world of an architecture losing pace with the present, how are we to talk now? What position are we to put the tongue in? <sup>1</sup>

What then might be this grievous but creative position? We need only consider architects, conference goers and organisers, hosts, guests and instructors, over the last 30 to 40 years, to discover how some talk the architectural text but don't always walk the architecture.<sup>2</sup> Some talk very well, comfortable with a new-found *archobabble* that funds careers and publishers. Others do it less well, scraping around for the poetry in lost forms, lonely cities. This is true, today more than ever, in schools of architecture where the research engine has come unattached from the project engine. Here with vacant but clever poetics, a subtle series of derailing and re-coupling passes for the future, as universities scramble to re-structure their funding programs with instant research programs and re-invented curricula.<sup>3</sup> Does this condition then not invite us to ask, rather quickly and admittedly without scholarly pace, how close is the stance taken, the responsibility to be demonstrated in critical terms, to that of a profound, partial and at all times constantly de-stabilising, dislocated architecture? If we are to heed this call for responsibility, the call and avowals might not be enough. To state which side one is on, where one stands, may appease the critical urgency but in all likelihood will remain disconnected from the creative instability and ambiguity of daily education or practice. It is also obvious, if we shift our own red dwarfs and worm-holes, that thinkers and architects of other eras, including the teaching profession, will find themselves re-charged by realising that their own engaged and committed worlds are slowly returning to relevance. The trick is of course in the language: to know how to trip between techno-utopias and spatial and social inequalities. From our position on the perfect fence, this begs another question: if change and expediency are prevalent, albeit untidy positions, does this make the ability to take a stance less effective?

Many younger architects, instructors and students would be the first to demonstrate that they actually revel in the shifting strands of a partial architecture. Many are drunk on multiplicity and would fight you to avoid situating themselves in the gradient between the extremes of optimism and the apprehension that attends this call for responsive architecture. How quickly, and at what moment, do we rush then to insert this call for the reconstitution of the foundations of this discipline, remains an open question. For years now architecture has talked in spiral of the expanded interdisciplinary world but hardly walked that world. Few, on either side or any side of the perfect fence, will admit to the phoney island of the mind though many, like Ferlinghetti, are sponged with clues to an expanding territory which will ultimately reach that vision defined by useful inverse; an expanded architecture without the burden of expansion?<sup>4</sup> Are we thus to insert a measured critical frame implied in taking a stand, or acknowledge critical stances are not, or have never been, as fixed as ideology wars, icon-crushers, conference-positioners and paradigm-shifters claim. It should not then be a stretch to imagine the ideal stance to be taken, one of extreme commitment and responsibility, would be to sit on the absolute or wide open fence.

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There is no doubt architects reveal themselves through doubt. And this too is of course a brave call, made even braver as it atomises into its expanded territories of after text, post-disciplinary reversals, the age of uncertainty and response, or even those moves to put architecture back into the box. From the outset we may have to wonder whether expecting architects and their agents to announce their position, to partake of this re-take of the agenda of architecture is not a failed aftermath of the political and cultural program implied in the architectural profession from the last century. For to respond to this, to alight upon this expanded architecture and another re-founding of the discipline, would not the pedagogy and profession need to introduce radically new curricula, or a double period of sabotage every Thursday for two hours, to ensure we eventually veer away from much of the boot-camp and prison house language indoctrination of architecture schools?<sup>5</sup>

The lip service paid to the inter-disciplinary, a parallel and plagued condition of an expanded architecture, has been simultaneously miraculous and delinquent. We stand together often creatively cursed, sounding as if we can, in this case, use the insightful media critic to indicate our futures, this potential "next step on the evolutionary chain" of architecture. Of course it is useful to use the momentary to define the condition of eternity, for this is often acknowledged by those able to contest knowledge with fallibility theories. In this way we assert the *via negativa* to call out to contemporary beliefs, to that wondrous condition of a human and humane architecture that "must somehow embrace seemingly contradictory values." Naturally these self-contained utopias are ours and ours alone, but as if to acknowledge the dream state of our own epistemology, we would need to pass beyond the cliché of the in-between, beyond the in-and-out focus of dream-like reality. And yet we are asked to turn to, and we often also ask ourselves to do this, to use the media as prompt for the critical in criticality, for the pedagogy in pedagogies and for the structure in infrastructuralism.

To set the terms of this agenda, we turn not to the novelist, not to the poet, nor the chemist or mathematician. We wish instead to be dynamic instead of static, indeed we invent this rather novel condition for our urgency, wiping away as we do, centuries of similar urge and élan. In so doing, we are also doomed to ask our new language to meet its old language and respond to the politicization of architectural education which itself is unbuttered and un-yeasted, un-risen in the tacit condition of this imagined chain?<sup>6</sup> Is this not the very tool that goes hand in hand with only certain kinds of architecture but, which along with agreed pedagogies and schools of thought, is used to re-tool a commitment from the outside: amongst academics, critics, students and architects. Does this really stack up?

The architectural nemesis is upon us. Periodically we are returned and must return to the self-contest in our own language. It is the thrill of this reverse world, the irreversible in the backward glance that tempts this, that pinpricks the architectural skin, to declare precisely the angle and coordinates of the position on the fence. We might ask ourselves to go even further. If we are brave enough to recognise that this century need not be more of the last, then we begin to dwell in the spaces where we move in and out of sense daily, by the hour, by the minute. Perhaps our clue should be in the self-definition of the word 'crisis'; the necessity of the rubbed edge that does our editing for us, that erases the issues in front of us as if to re-write events and realities that cannot confirm to the imagined, taught and promoted world. Whether this sounds like a crisis once more may matter less than the gathered definitions that pull at this self-contained evolutionary chain we call critical thinking. And there is one such chain to which we give special eminence; that of the tokens and urgencies that emerge from sustainability, and sustainable design.<sup>7</sup>

Wider agendas are attributed to each stage whether, like the often misread and abused Postmodernism, they leave the discipline of architecture open, or wide open. Connecting this evolutionary chain to the claim for the architect's *raison d'être* ignores the ambiguity that will not free us from the universalist, utopian, clichéd confines of Modernism which have always been self-defined by architects at odds with the more vibrant and challenging notions of Modernism in literature, cinema and culture. Surely, if we are to read between the lines of this nemesis, there is no eminence in our current occupation of the agenda, or the tendency towards that self-righteous condition that sees us workers in an intellectual context trying desperately to embrace a more complex conception of contemporary reality that others live daily.

This questionable reality is summed up by the invention and critical fiction explored in the novel, *Disinternet 451*.<sup>8</sup> If architects are now not only free, but required to interpret and, indeed, choose their position relative to this expanded field, then they are free also to burn their books. And with a nod to Ray Bradbury, along with the burning of the books comes the responsibility to ask: Which do we save? And where do we stand? In this inner auditing, it is suggested we avoid this tremulous evolutionary chain of chosen and self-selected critics calling for yet another avowal. This tempts the fraudulent soul of the committed individual. This entices us to believe in the removal of the architect's self-doubt, and the return of the wondrous *raison d'être* as a way to pretend to redress the runaway condition that many architects and educators have brought on themselves.

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So where do *You* Stand? Where and how would we best occupy this invited responsibility if we have not already declared it in our everyday lives? Do we write, speak or design the protest that invites ambiguity into our souls. Or do we then award ourselves this responsibility and not only move in and out of sense by the minute, but extend this to where we stand on our own thinking and doing in architecture? Of course, it doesn't take a genius to see that architecture continually keeps coming round to try and over-reach itself. There is despair in this insistence that keeps the marginal discourse so utterly contained by its own imagined centrality. This may of course be a desirable dynamic that keeps architecture reaching for the unknown agenda, this time within a human architecture or the humane. The question this poses is not as simple as we may think. If we can pose questions so recklessly and internally, how do we untie architecture from the notion of the aging and the aged? Here we tread ever so gingerly along this passage from the educational establishment, which all but designs the 'disconnect' to the profession, to the profession which all but scripts the 'disconnect' to the schools. It is not an easy ride and as faculties in our universities age, as histories pass with heroes and partners of the leading firms, are those that re-tread architecture as a magic ritual, (gentle?) redeemers, saviours, content-hounds or miracle micromanagers?

There is a hoodwink in this that is consistently ignored, consistently bypassed by the talk-and-walk processions and architectural promenades in conferences and colloquia. Young students begin actively to engage to undermine this hoodwink but are often turned back to the fold of architectural repertoire and the theatre of the architectural image.<sup>9</sup> Conferences, this one may be an exception, continually run this into the ground, causing practitioners to sport with academics, and dream of this futile but ever so entertaining *end of architecture*. This sees us convinced that architecture can periodically return to the start, return to that golden moment when it could scratch the skin of dinosaur excrement, this smallest sample looking a little like a piece of hard-baked playdo. This is the affair. And as with all affairs, we can and must – if we are to rediscover our *raison d'être* - dream of starting over. This is naturally easier said than done, easier talked than walked. To remove the emotional, phenomenological and philosophical baggage, the poetics of upset that constantly drive architects into its own cul-de-sac, must ask the obvious: will there ever be that first touch or even kiss again?

Meanwhile in this dream we are all subject – though many of us do not quite realise this – to what we think architecture can achieve. This is the critical fiction we all occupy. This is the fiction that allows us not to recognize what architecture might achieve if it let go. Nor does it allow us to accept the necessary condition of detachment that architecture should and has started to bring on itself.<sup>10</sup> A de-architecturization is not too far away from what is implied in penetrating this ambiguity of the expanded world, this wider lens and richer humane experience. The self-doubt will lift, momentarily, and the condition of richness, the pull to life, would in all likelihood transgress any serious program outlines in schools of architecture, so heavily have they become embedded in the tacit condition of a known and accepted architectural narrowness. But, and this is the savage titillation architecture plays on itself, this is where de-architecturization could play a crucial role, could allow some to take the committed stand required. This asks for more than reversal and re-assessment – this places the soul in a condition necessarily divided, implying the inter-disciplinary as thinking process itself.

This de-architecturization implies the use of a language that we may all be able to participate within but has yet to be discovered. Even the simplest transfer from Industrial Design to an Architecture department offers huge disparity but potential in 'thinking' design. Doing and representing this thought must set up the everyday, free the confined senses of the past, cripple the structures that are too easily obeyed, broach the economic unwellness and go, against the odds, for a more flexible, uncertain system. This is not an architecture call; this is a life call. This is to live in the scorched world of ambiguity inviting multiple parallel actions and agencies. Only those who wish to announce this condition will probably take responsibility without the expanded world being part of that framing. Pedagogically, too, this would need addressing. The narrowness of architecture and its tacit world embedded in architectural schools would be the first to go.<sup>11</sup> As we noted, in many schools, due to the nature of demography and our wondrous medicines, today we have aging faculties, educators and researchers who rarely let go of the prescriptions brought down from when they were taught, and likewise imparted to students more or less in varying degrees of dogma into which the students must be slotted. There is much re-arrangement of the words on the stage for the next conference or symposium, but the cut and paste has taken over through appropriation and self-appropriation. It has become an essential gain in the word document era; it has also produced re-writing of extraordinary wealth. It will not be long before the same processes re-write architecture too.

Counter-intuitive this might be, but we are all disastrous abusers of the term crisis, and, as if by using the word, we imagine getting out of it. This is the first error. We should live this disaster more thoroughly, more rigorously. We should live (and live in) the imperfections of our knowledge, the stupidity of our language, the sovereignty of our arrogance; we should undress all that we pertain to architecture. Pragmatism has received bad press, it generally does but it is the everyday pragmatism of life's call that will change architecture, not the assertion of committed positions re-hashing time-worn discourse. The collapse of the financial system also invites us to live in and redefine collapse, not to find a way back to errant spending. And here too we are not free of the blame. The eventual language of the conference will itself become an escapism. And contrary to the doomsayers, there is constant ground for productive exchange between two apparently uncommunicative partners, whether this is technology and human agency, or hand-drawing and digital methodologies. Disconnects between computational architects, whatever they are, and the beautiful life historian are over-exaggerated; asking these two figures to speak once more as if they have never spoken is tantamount to asking architecture to go and play in the Dinosaur 'poo' again.

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Let us continue to take the contrarian position for a little longer. It is quite possible that far from skewing where we stand – a traditional call to re-situate ourselves as architects and our codes – we may need to understand the hopelessness of this request, whilst it appears so ethically sound, so delinquently sensible to ask of architects, students and instructors and other agents of change. We must put alongside this request for an avowal the evidence that this shifts the level of interest in the notion itself. Does this call for responsibility actually translate into the agents for change that it invites? It is quite possible that asking for this call and acknowledgment of commitment (which many architects and educators would say they never relinquished) in the face of an apparent closed architectural mind would have the desired affect. But what is the desired affect: that wider lens, a humane architecture, an ambiguity and the interdisciplinary? Have we not travelled this road and will be forced to travel it constantly as we negotiate stasis and the apparent actions of those that take architecture into realms we wish not to have been taken, into an activism that we find unable to support in our pedagogies?

And it is also likely – given the issues we have outlined – to perpetuate the codes of a limited professional class who wish for the wider agenda without having the critical self, the cultural role or the economic ‘nous’ to effect change. The wider lens may offer wider management for the architect but it may also be determined by a competence to live within its own re-evaluation of past glory, implicit closure, and the architect inserting himself or herself into an era of unending vulnerability and – dare we say it under these conditions of the enigma of energy and capital - irrelevance. If it did this, if we achieved this, if we could speak of the agents of change making more sense than the call for change itself, it might remove the space on which it stands (where do we stand?) and open up the wider call to a more radical process of effacement and ambiguity. Here the key to such change may not be commitment in the traditional sense of the word but ‘generosity’. Here we may veer towards realising our *raison d’être* is a self-effacing one; the art of leaving with everything but the architecture completed.

One has to wonder today whether any other proclamations and ethical positions coming out of the blackball clubs and discourse centres in the profession and education could achieve more than this? And if they conceivably could, to where might we direct this responsibility if not to ‘generosity’ itself? Responsibility becomes a political issue when it has long lost its self-governing role, the inner utopias, or the codes that obey the phoney island of the mind.<sup>12</sup> This is anesthesia for an artificially induced sensibility. It may attempt to combat narrowness or even an (un)adaptive consciousness but there is nothing but language to distinguish it from an artificially induced engagement. This avowal –in whatever form it takes – will of course make us feel good, may even embrace supporting programs, research and strategies that confirm ‘the committed individual’. However we might also just be better off pausing all sessions and papers at the conference and considering the politics and phenomenology of engagement itself.<sup>13</sup>

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When we come across the phenomenology of engagement, the contours of commitment within the responsible self, all valid but wind-blown phrases, it is the condition of the absolute fence that should interest us here. We are reminded of the poem written by the scientist Miroslav Holub called *Brief Reflection on Fence*<sup>14</sup>

A fence  
begins nowhere  
ends nowhere  
and  
separates the place where it is  
from the place where it isn't.

Unfortunately, however,  
every fence is relatively  
permeable, some for small  
others for large things, so that  
the fence actually  
does not separate but indicates  
that something should be separated.  
And that trespassers will be prosecuted.

In this sense  
the fence can  
perfectly well be replaced  
with an angry word, or sometimes even  
a kind word, but that as a rule  
does not occur to anyone

In this sense therefore  
a truly perfect fence  
is one  
that separates nothing from nothing,  
a place where there is nothing.  
from a place where there's also nothing.

That is the absolute fence, similar to the poet's words.

To occupy this absolute fence in architectural terms is neither as irresponsible nor as uncommitted as it might at first appear. The contrarian proves able to run either side of the fence, see the gaps, glide back and forth in the shifting realities that abut any fence that creates a world of separation. This is a world we cannot escape, the slow, creeping idiocy of mindlessness not the necessary move towards kenosis, or that over-anticipated desire for generosity in the world of architecture, the world of a lesser self. The absolute fence will help us through the zero, take us beyond the un-bearableness of those who may lack generosity, for these are the soul-tenders tempting to right their own world with the ashes of a defeat initiated so many years ago.

Here is the unshaped (un)space of the future world. Even here we forget the rhythm of researchers and historians of worlds. Those knights of the word-worlds, when put to the test of mindlessness, unappetizing as it may be, unglamorous as this directed life has become, explode through the hinged world, to reach life's only refuge. In *Disinternet 451*, the novel previously mentioned, the books were not only burnt, but they began the awakening all over again without having to pretend anymore that the books were read, and the special one offering a new life, offering (un)space, became the next forbidden book under the pillow. What we do not read has become the issue. What stays untouched that could have altered our world? What remains a risk to a soul too easily calmed?

But along the absolute fence we'll not ask for help any longer, nor will love of architecture turn to lost virtue, where the loneliness of insight still guilty is free to be entered once more, giving us a chance, through the inhabited worlds of staying alive. This is the architecture similar to the poet's world, the rhymed, hymned world of the unsung. We turn not to new worlds, to new duties. We remind ourselves that a memo on randomness can never be random, and a call for engagement can never be announced. The ideas taught generously in the Disinternet world, do not frighten us but might be more generous to architecture than we have imagined, against the bullying of the reason found, the intimidation of planned, known motives. A generous move could well offer itself: support the presentation of reading into this what we hold to be true to ourselves. What chance do we give the random encounter if we have never looked over our shoulders?

*Disinternet 451*, oblique, not quite the lucidity invited, invites better rapid judgement with an intensity and depth unimaginable. On the perfect fence, in the shifting requests for commitment and responsibility a change of mind changes architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a question posed in N.Alice Challinor, *Frank Heron meets the Rocket Girls*, Raketa Stockholm, 2008 – a story of the relationship between art, the tongue and uncontrolled scripts.

<sup>2</sup> For a useful but relatively unknown exploration of this see the essay Archobabble in *How Architecture got its Hump*, Connah, MIT Press. 2001. Connah reminds us of what we keep having to do; kill and then revive the grieved architectural imagination through catastrophe and the application of what Michaux called the 'murk' – asking us at the same time how we usefully stay away from that all too often over-used notion of 'ambiguity'.

<sup>3</sup> Cf *Sisyphus Montale, the notebooks of*, Vertigo press, 2005 – Montale shows us how capitalist economies have created periods of expansion which exist only to be revived by being brought devastatingly low by the meltdown; the seduction of recessions and depressions. The fantasy about the death of architecture never quite meeting its agenda is no longer tied to ruins but the ruinous forms of life itself.

<sup>4</sup> Willem de Cunha, *The Phoney Island of the Mind*. Penmaenmaur, 2008. In the essay from this collection called The Irresponsible Self, de Cunha goes against present theory about economic contraction and finds in it the redemption of the built environment. The author also takes the view that most spectacular and expanded architecture of the present day are marginal projects open to what he calls the systematic embarrassment of architecture over the decades and centuries which erases itself in due course. As architecture emerges from the Postmodern era in which linguistic models and analogies infamously dominated design and theory, other cultural influences are asserting—and in some cases re-asserting—themselves as productive forces. Although some theorists identify the current moment as cohesively Post-critical and/ or Supermodern, contemporary architectural culture is also characterized by a diverse, even sprawling, cadre of projects and practices that posit potential alternatives to the linguistic paradigm that grounded architectural production of the past decades. Indeed, as the longstanding linguistic influence of poetics, semiotics, and deconstruction wanes, it is being replaced by a laundry list of agendas that variously celebrate: sustainable ecologies, digital bio-genetics, political economies of globalization, post-phenomenology, new (sub)urbanisms, synthetic materialism, market-based scenario planning, anti-form parametrics, mass customization, and so forth

<sup>5</sup> One of Glen Baxter's paintings shows us a school class preparing what looks like a miniature rocket in what appears to be the chemistry class, though it could well be an architecture seminar. We might return to Baxter and question the positive idealizations of survival and sustainability where, to the artist, catastrophe is not

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measured in terms of abandoned houses and blackened cities, but is measured in fruits in danger, or scenarios subject to deep architectural upset, even we might say, to diastolic extreme. Architecture will continue to imagine its own demise, frame it and then deny its reality as the architectural imagination becomes critical at one moment, uncritical the next, and super-critical the moment after. Where architecture, and popular culture intersect, the *via negativa* merges to close the gap; there are no more “non-places” except those in learning.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Edward G. Speed, *The Malady of the Architectural Soul*, Hightop (2004). Speed takes on the clichés and repetitions in his analysis of architectural language and especially the conference circuit. Picking up where Garry Stevens left off, Speed identifies the obvious when we claim that the politicization of architectural education has had profound consequences. Of course it has but nothing in today’s mediocrity gives us the eminence to claim that the resurgence of neo-liberalism did much to tame any radicalization of architectural pedagogy. The legacy of 1968 and its aftermath soon forgot about the role of the academy in relation to the profession; the aftermath was brutal and opportunistic. Speed cites interesting passages from *The Piglet Years*, Connah, Tampere, 2005. The role of the architect and the ethical function of architecture in society was never quite as it seemed in Finland in spite of all its gloss. The book chronicles the short-lived militarism in Finnish architecture between 1969-1972.

<sup>7</sup> For a further assessment of this and the notion that the cloud of self-doubt in architects is periodically lifted when their eminence takes on greater political will and wishfulfillment, see the essays by W.Challinor called *After-All, After-Life, After-Architecture* (Jalki, 1996). Challinor questions whether this self-doubt ever lifts in architects who remain alienated from public discourse in spite of their efforts to connect to it. Conferences and teaching in schools of architecture always push the promise of a better, richer, and fuller life. The clichés about Postmodernism only focusing on the banality of everyday life and consumerism indicates less about Postmodernism and more about the architects failure to comprehend its own wider lens. Challinor also indicates how architects failed in their destruction of Deconstruction, thinking it merely a movement offering futile enquiry about the meanings of built objects. The author reverses this easy call where with little to praise architecture for, the society of the spectacle takes yet another hit. Challinor warns: when will architects smell the coffee and realize their opinions are just of little importance in the wider scheme of the things they assert? That architects have a *raison d’être* seems to be one of the biggest chestnuts around. Challinor’s annotated bibliography is especially good on this.

<sup>8</sup> The novel *Disinternet 451* by Anton Zurmeyer (Basel, 2002) explores the fictional mechanisms that critically position disciplines (including architecture) within new world-worlds like superstructuralism, infrastructuralism. Setting the novel up it embraces infrastructural and systems research as a form of literary practice that moves the reader away from infrastructural sense and style to re-define the morphology of the sentence structure itself. In city terms this is an ecological network. The writer re-occupies obsolete infrastructural texts and those grand-idea Modernist volumes. The links to the architect as this redundant but brave grand thinker rather than facilitator comes to mind.

<sup>9</sup> *The Enigma of Energy*, Ryan O’Connor (Dublin, 1999). On the eve of the new millennium O’Connor charts how this triad of energy, economy, and environment was at the forefront of the change. The writer, a sociologist from Trinity College Dublin, studies the emergence of green energies and how they will be heralded as the token guarantor of sustainability, economic growth and political independence. The slip into the tacit, intrinsic just world is indicated by recent TV adverts about recycling – it’s your world, don’t throw it away. The low-carbon world is brave but mismanaged by the advertisers; O’Connor saw the Mad-men coming. The world as power plant was the final observation. Solaris was the final destination. But not the George Clooney version.

<sup>10</sup> Op cit, Speed, *Malady*. Speed compares the introduction of computational technologies into architectural production and questions the constant use of the word ‘representation’. Elegantly writing and researching the liminal zone between hand drawing and digital media, Speed suggests the ‘murk’ produced between these two forms have yet to produce their real gain to architecture. Digital media, like postmodernism and deconstruction, is yet one more area misread and misunderstood by most architects, especially in the teaching profession. It is not the case that hand-drawing persists, of course it persists. Why are we so surprised? It is the insistence on new design paradigms after the last, this evolutionary chain driven by inertia which is a substitute for tradition. Speed indicates how when architects and educators say now is the time to ‘really’ assess how these media affect and define architecture’s unique disciplinarity, they miss of the total and partial realities of architecture’s uniqueness. Speed, like Connah in *Archobbbable*, though he doesn’t use the term suggests this will keep conferences afloat and hotel rooms occupied but not do a lot for the chasm between education and practice.

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<sup>11</sup> Whilst sociologists have identified a set of contemporary phenomena which frame a fiction called "second modernity", the writer Sev Panicz has taken this a step further and contrived to situate us within a re-reflexive modernism of the third kind. Here Panicz believes we are doomed to recreate these fictions in conference after conference which repeat the (lost) pedagogies of old. This re-contextualization of Modernism Panicz links with the 'phoney island of the mind' (op cit., de Cunha), a lingering return to the social, political, cultural and aesthetic aspirations of the pre-modern movements with new tools and once more a gay abandonment of and to utopia's seductions and dangers. Re-reflexivity is key, Panicz says, cf. *Persona Lucida*, Terezin, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> The phenomenology of engagement and generosity are the themes of the forthcoming volume edited by James Vertigo, *No Longer Random* (Heron, Fort Worth 2011).

<sup>14</sup> M.Holub, *Poems Before & After*, Bloodaxe, 2006