

ULTRA

Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis

TO CITE THIS PAPER | Michael Jasper. "Untimely Meditations: Decomposition and Timelessness in Select Writings of Peter Eisenman." In *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 38, Ultra: Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis*, edited by David Kroll, James Curry and Madeline Nolan, 563-571. Adelaide: SAHANZ, 2022. Accepted for publication December 1, 2021.
DOI: 10.55939/a4004pmiov



Image: Michaelmore, Roeger & Russell, *Chester House*, Belair 1966, State Library of South Australia BRG 346/28/6/2.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (SAHANZ) VOLUME 38

Convened by The University of Adelaide, School of Architecture and Built Environment, Adelaide,
10-13 November, 2021.

Edited by David Kroll, James Curry and Madeline Nolan.

Published in Adelaide, South Australia, by SAHANZ, 2022.

ISBN: 978-0-646-85443-4

Copyright of this volume belongs to SAHANZ; authors retain the copyright of the content of their individual papers. All efforts have been undertaken to ensure the authors have secured appropriate permissions to reproduce the images illustrating individual contributions. Interested parties may contact the editors.

Untimely Meditations: Decomposition and Timelessness in Select Writings of Peter Eisenman

Michael Jasper
University of Canberra

Keywords

Architecture
Decomposition
History
Temperament
Time
Peter Eisenman

Abstract

This paper investigates one aspect in the work of architect, educator and theorist Peter Eisenman (b 1932) through the filter of select writings from the mid 1980s. It does this by examining two texts published in 1984, a period characterised as one of rupture if not emphatically in crisis. The writings considered are "The Futility of Objects: Decomposition and the Processes of Difference" and "The End of the Classical: the End of the Beginning, the End of the End". Secondary authors referenced include Robin Evans, Kenneth Frampton and Raphael Moneo. The paper conjectures that certain approaches such as Eisenman's to materials and phenomena from architecture's past can open new conditions of possibility for architecture today. A number of questions are asked: By what means and in what forms are Eisenman's thinking about architecture in a moment of crisis revealed in these essays? Which architectural qualities and form generation devices does Eisenman discern in the past? How might the processes for interrogating architecture's past as displayed in the two essays inform an approach to architecture today? The paper adds to scholarship on Eisenman, examining a little studied facet of his work in a period marked by swerves in his thinking. In a conference that seeks to identify a spectrum of disciplinary positions, the paper contributes to discussions around conference thematic sub-stream Design Practice and Education in its consideration of one stance vis-à-vis architecture's past.

Introduction

1. The conference call for papers suggests a number of possible areas marked by crisis today. These include a 'loss of a distinctive regional architecture or construction tradition' and the failure of 'once dominant narratives ... to sustain belief or explanatory power'. Equally provocative is the suggested need for the architect historian to adopt a stance in front of the object of study that critically considers the limits and biases of acts such as commemoration as well as celebration, not to forget if not specifically called out, eulogisation. "Ultra: Positions and Polarities beyond Crisis. Call for Papers," Society of Architectural Historians Australia New Zealand, accessed: 24-12-2020, <https://www.sahanz2021.com/cfp>.

2. Kenneth Frampton, "Formation and Transformation," in *De Stijl: 1917-1931, Visions of Utopia*, ed. Mildred Friedman (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982), 99-123, 120. *Cambridge Dictionary* provides the following definition for deliquescence: *noun*. 1 the process of becoming liquid as a result of absorbing moisture from the air; 2 The process of melting or turning liquid. Accessed 02-07-2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deliquescence>.

3. Frampton cites at length an essay of Eisenman's from 1980 and refers to the contemporaneous House X1a in support of his assessments. Frampton references the following essay: Peter Eisenman, "Sandboxes: House X1a," *A+U (Architecture and Urbanism): Special Issue Peter Eisenman 112* (January 1980): 223-227. In this essay, see in particular Eisenman's statement suggesting that it is no longer possible to return to a belief in any 'original totality' or 'unity'. Rather the present age is for Eisenman one of partial fragments, that is fragments that have no trace or hope an original whole (Eisenman, "Sandboxes," 223). The idea of partial objects continues to accompany Eisenman for the next twenty years, finding one manifestation around the question of the partial figure.

4. Frampton, "Formation and Transformation," 123.

In an essay published in 1982, Kenneth Frampton transcribes a sentiment not only in the air but also revealed in architecture schools and in work on the boards in offices at the time. This is a period that describes itself as in crisis or at best outside the comforts of disciplinary and professional stabilities. Accepting that conceit, one can hypothesise that an investigation into work from the period may provide some sign posts and lessons for moving beyond the crises that have accompanied or at minimum provoked certain ambitions behind this conference.¹

Ruminating on what he characterises as a lost or vitiated vitality, Frampton arrives at a turn of phrase resonate at this distance of some forty years, a brooding reflection that captures a mood of disenchantment with modern architecture's ability to deliver on the goods. To deliver, that is, on its social and technological premises, themselves gathered about ideas and devices that convention - according to one trajectory -, locates in the wake of movements such as avant-gardism, neoplasticism, and rationalism. Other trends or temperaments that preoccupied architecture culture and which Frampton will address more directly a year or so later fall loosely in postmodernist and deconstructivist camps.

In developing his argument, Frampton turns to the work of Peter Eisenman as providing a singular response to this state of affairs, discerning in the latter's period projects and writing a stance that is able to resist - at the level of the building as well as at the level of city ideas therein revealed -, or at minimum repel the pull of a decomposing modernity. A modernity, for a despondent Frampton, that is literally becoming limp and eventually turning liquid. Frampton writes of double lines accompanying Eisenman's work. Not at all theoretical, for Frampton what stands out is Eisenman's ability to simultaneously repel 'to an equal degree, the deliquescence of a vulgar modernity and [at the same time] the recurrent, naïve nostalgia'² for a supposed ideal future.

To state differently Frampton's suggestion, Eisenman's project is distinctive in its capacity to deny stable architectures in favour of those that demand multiple readings. And at the same time for Frampton, Eisenman's work favours an equally ambiguous urban realm, without claiming that Eisenman has an idea of the city per se. Eisenman allows, that is, for the possibility of an urban scale proposition never achieving let alone even wanting to imagine the possibility of, an urban totality. Specifically referencing Eisenman's contemporary projects and writing at this key point of his argument,³ Frampton finds therein 'a kind of perpetual "emancipation of dissonance" executed within the fissures of history.'⁴ This emancipation, this freedom found in instabilities and positive ambiguities will a few years later see Frampton sidling up to and siding with Eisenman's call for what the latter characterises as a not-classical architecture.

The temperament discerned by Frampton can serve as a preface to the following reflections. With Frampton, whom one senses is particularly close to those fading lines of early 20th century avant-gardism, there is a feeling of being betrayed and in crisis, already unmoored and awash, abandoned to the dangers opened up in the gapping ground rent by a

history no longer linear, and with no hope of retreat or recovery. Perhaps to counter this state, Frampton appeals to Eisenman as a contemporary witness, one uniquely placed to take up a different stance, and perhaps – returning to an underlying conjecture in this paper – provide elements of a response to certain perceived crises in architecture.

5. Peter Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects: Decomposition and the Processes of Difference," *Harvard Architecture Review* 3 (Winter 1984), 64-81. The essay is reprised in Peter Eisenman, *Inside Out Selected Writings 1964-1988* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 169-187.

6. Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," *Perspecta. The Yale Architectural Journal* 21 (1984), 154-173. The essay is reprinted in a slightly different format and without the original illustrations in Peter Eisenman, *Inside Out Selected Writings 1964-1988* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 152-168.

7. It can be argued that Eisenman uses the phrase 'the act of architecture' to signal a whole program of activity including a critical re-reading of the past, and an engagement with the ruptures that come with the different 'sensibility' announced in "The Futility of Objects" (Eisenman, 65): the realization around 1945 of the 'potential extinction of the entire civilisation' which shatters for Eisenman 'the classical and triadic condition of past, present, and future time (Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects," 65-66).

8. Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects," see page 81, note 8 for a discussion of a rupture in sensibility that has occurred relative to the presumed continuity embracing classicism and modernism from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.

9. Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects," 67.

10. Frampton, "Formation and Transformation," 123.

Taking Frampton at his word, let us examine two contemporary essays by Eisenman and see what if any evidence there is of this stancer. Both published in 1984, the essays are "The Futility of Objects: Decomposition and the Processes of Difference"⁵ and "The End of the Classical: the End of the Beginning, the End of the End"⁶.

While different points of view could be adopted, for the purposes of this paper two hypotheses can organise the analysis. First hypothesis: that there are elements in the two essays that support Frampton's claim to see at play in Eisenman an architectural stance that effectively and perpetually resists the crutch of beginnings and ends, of a logic of a before and an after as symptoms of that vulgar modernity. As we'll see, Eisenman acknowledges the difficulty of maintaining such a stance, referring to the tidal pull of ruptures in his own thinking and work and for the discipline more generally. Second hypothesis: that this stance is predicated on a certain relationship to the past.

In order to approach these hypotheses, the following questions provide a further lens for the analysis: By what means and in what forms are Eisenman's thinking about architecture's past rendered in these essays? How might such processes for interrogating works from architecture's past and that of history specifically, and adoption of a position of what will be characterised as one of perpetual resistance, contribute to how one might think about the act of architecture today?⁷ Are there lessons found in a close reading of these two essays that may contribute to better positioning the teaching and thinking of architecture when again in a state of crisis?

For Eisenman in these years, if one can claim a state of crisis, it is one marked by ruptures: ruptures that Eisenman links to history and changing sensibilities.⁸ History, he asserts, is no longer continuous. In other words, writes Eisenman, 'the objects and processes of the classical/modern continuity are no longer sustained by the present sensibility.'⁹ The fiction of stable histories is disrupted and architecture is thus asked to seek out techniques appropriate to that condition: formal-spatial devices, and stances that embrace the conditions of possibility opened in those self-same ruptures. Such acts connote a condition of impossible return, as much for what they demarcate as to what they 'invent' to use Eisenman's term: to invent a space for architecture when confronted with the end of history. This includes hypothesising architecture as a system of differences - this is architecture as text -, distinct from architecture as image.

Different from a position that springs from a logic of moving beyond, and thus of beginnings and ends, Eisenman offers a counter practice outside of or different from such a beginnings and ends-dependent position. This is to adopt a state of perpetual freedom characterised by what Frampton describes, as noted earlier, an 'emancipation [generated out] of dissonance.'¹⁰ This is a kind of freedom from those biases that

11. Peter Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 169.

Eisenman claims create limits in the classical/modernist sensibility, limits that rely on a fiction of a time beyond, and of a system of differences dependent on a logic of linear time that progresses or regresses relative to ends or beginnings. By way of difference, Eisenman advocates for a logic situated in what he called a 'time beyond history'.¹¹

Before starting to unpack the two essays, it is worth a further note on what this paper is not doing. The paper is not taking the analysis to works built or projected by Eisenman in any material way. Nor is it contextualising in any depth Eisenman's position in relation to key protagonists such as Colin Rowe. Both moves, while important and relevant, are outside the scope of the present effort.

Decomposition. Or Techniques of Form Finding

12. Eisenman, "The Futility of Objects," 70.

"The Futility of Objects", published in *Harvard Architecture Review*, is cast in the shadows of a period of crisis, or to use Eisenman's term as noted above, of rupture.¹² What is at work behind or underneath the formulation of decomposition and the launch of a polemic toward a not-classical/not-modern architecture? What characterises such an architecture and what might that say about Eisenman's attitude toward history?

13. Raphael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects*, trans. Gina Carino (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004), 174.

Raphael Moneo, in addition to the challenge of elaborating on Frampton's claims, provides another motivation to reading "The Futility of Objects" today. Moneo saw at the time in Eisenman's text an 'ambitious, brilliant, attractive program'.¹³ The comments are made in Moneo's chapter on Eisenman in the former's *Theoretical Anxiety* and specifically concern the notion of decomposition.

14. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 67.

15. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 67.

Decomposition, according to Eisenman, sets out, or is offered as a mode of reading the past that opens the conditions of possibility for new relationships of objects and processes more congruent with 'the present ... sensibility'.¹⁴ Eisenman describes the key aim of the essay as 'an attempt to sketch certain aspects of the negative of classical composition by deconstructing a series of buildings which are used as heuristic approximations of [the current] sensibility'.¹⁵ This in turn leads Eisenman to propose architectural categories that he associates with the not-classical, and describe and provide examples of architectures that manifest this or that category. The categories are the pre-compositional, the composite, and the extra-compositional. Within the limits of this paper, I will focus on this latter category, which occupies along with a set of diagrammatic analyses the key parts of Eisenman's essay.

The extra-compositional is distinguished for Eisenman by a number of qualities. These include the following six qualities or aspects that together can be claimed to contribute to bracketing techniques of what Moneo saw as decomposition's ambitious program. (a.) There is no recourse to an originating type (see Eisenman's reading of the plans of Palazzo Surian and Fabbrica Fino); (b.) There is no stable hierarchy of formal-spatial relationships (see again his analysis of Palazzo Surian); (c.) There is no logic of fragments that might imply an ideal but absent whole or an originary 'completeness', rather there is a condition

16. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 70.

17. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 71-72.

18. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 73.

19. Eisenman, "Futility of Objects," 74. See also: *Blurred Zones: Investigations of the Interstitial. Eisenman Architects, 1988-1998* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2003).

of partial fragments¹⁶; (d.) This not-classical order encourages the simply sequential (one after the other) or successional conditions that suspend or resist progressive time (see Eisenman's analysis of the plan of Scamozzi's *Fabrica Fino* compared to Palladio's plan for *Palazzo della Torre*)¹⁷; (e.) Certain architectural works are multivalent, creating fluctuations in reading of implied and actual volume such that no single reading dominates (see for example Eisenman's reading of the north façade of Giuseppe Terragni's *Giuliani Figerio Apartment Block* and variances between planar and volumetric qualities;¹⁸ (f.) There are other qualities described by Eisenman, ones whose interpretation cannot be reconciled by recourse to stable polarities such as symmetry/asymmetry or plane/volume. These qualities are distinguished by an oscillation native to the work, ones that Eisenman will later in his career refer to as states of blurring.¹⁹

20. Peter Eisenman, "Preface," in *Palladio Virtuel*, eds. Peter Eisenman with Matt Roman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Accessed 02-07-2021, <https://eisenmanarchitects.com/Palladio-Virtuel>.

The ambition throughout the essay, to take up a more recent phrase by Eisenman and propose a provisional shorthand, is to 'reawaken history'.²⁰ It is to reawaken architecture's past with the intent specifically not to arrive at any stable interpretation but instead to accompany what he calls the act of architecture as one of perpetual resistance to temptations of hierarchy, centrality, and closure, all with an aim to introduce instability, multivalence, and openness.

Timeless, Objectless, Arbitrary: Conditions of a Not-Classical Architecture

In the same year as "The Futility of Objects" appears, Eisenman publishes "The End of the Classical" in *Perspecta. The Yale Architectural Journal*. The title of the essay says it all: or does it? The sub-title does tell a bit more: "the End of the Beginning, the End of the End". The resistance to what Eisenman at the time calls centrism preoccupies him in these years and this essay works through a group of centrism or fictions.

21. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 156, n. 5.

In a similar manner but different from "The Futility of Objects" essay, "The End of the Classical" also starts off with remarks about the problem of continuity, another sign of the predicament at hand. Eisenman suggests that there are three continuities that together demarcate the state of what he calls 'the classical' and that a specific stance to each other in relation to thinking architecture differently needs to be adopted. By the classical, he refers to an abstract system of relations in place since the sixteenth century and demarcated by three continuities or fictions. According to Eisenman, the three fictions are representation, reason, and history. He further characterises the classical as that which is distinguished by several conditions, including a logic of origins, of ends, and 'the process of composition'.²¹

22. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 155.

Eisenman then goes on to refer to the qualities that might distinguish a 'not-classical' architecture. The dialectic being staged calls for a temperament different from a succession of styles such as 'classicism, neoclassicism, romanticism, modernism, postmodernism'²². An underlying proposition is that beyond stylistic differences, one is better off thinking about architectural culture as 'a system of relations' that are beyond style.

23. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 170.

24. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 171.

25. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 171, n. 22.

26. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 168-169, n. 19.

Key aspects of a not-classical architecture include the following: (a.) Modification replaces composition and transformation²³; (b.) Invention of a 'non-dialectical, non-directional, non-goal oriented process' such that architectural form is imagined such that it is not 'a strictly practical device' but by some means is itself a 'a "place of invention"; (c.) The architect-historian is positioned to read the architectural object as text.²⁴ Eisenman in this essay, in other words, proposes to conceptualise as well as set out markers for work on 'the act of architecture' per se. Within the act of architecture, he continues, 'Architecture becomes text rather than object when it is conceived and presented as a system of differences rather than as an image or a dialectical presence.'²⁵; (d.) Finally, Eisenman claims the purpose of the essay includes to transpose a number of ideas – graft, motivation, decomposition – 'from a purely analytic framework to a program for work'.²⁶

27. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 172.

Eisenman concludes by suggesting that the architect's aim is to invent the conditions for a perpetual present, one without obligation or burden toward either an 'idealised past' nor one maintaining endless naïve hope in a never-to-arrive future. In this, Eisenman falls into Frampton's positive trap of resisting repeating what the latter identified as that naïve nostalgia discussed earlier. In their place, Eisenman's project aims to open what he characterises as 'an *other* "timeless" space of invention'.²⁷ The space of invention to be opened is one that contains a relation to certain past architectures. Needing to find forms and spaces, however, calls up the problem of design technique. In an essay discussed below, Eisenman will suggest a not-classical architecture as one that no longer manifests history, reason, or the present/the contemporary and rather may appropriately be described as an 'architecture as *is*'. I will return to this below.

28. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 163.

29. Eisenman, "End of the Classical," 163, emphasis in the original.

From a certain point of view, then, Eisenman's position, radically opposed to 'the ideology of the zeitgeist'²⁸ adds a terrible burden on the architect that is also a terrible freedom: the luxury of believing one released from the past as well as a future time. For Eisenman, the classical/moderns were '*trapped in the illusion of the eternity of their own time*'.²⁹

Eisenman's attitude, whether leading or following Frampton, is exactly one of resistance to the 'illusion' of being trapped in one's own time thus the essay can also be claimed to perform ultimately a kind of work on 'the ideology of the zeitgeist'.

Concluding Remarks

Let us return to the opening hypotheses, and this idea of taking a position, and see what if any approximate findings can be made. To the first hypothesis that Eisenman provides a point of resistance to the crutch of history and to beginnings and ends: there does appear evidence of a practice of resistance in how Eisenman situates his thinking about the architect's position relative to the classical/modern trajectory. This occurs in relation to, for example, a logic of the new and of the contemporary. He intentionally, even provocatively, claims to abandon any pretext or pretence of a new and the continuity that would imply.

To the second hypothesis, and the claim that such a stance is made always already in relation to architecture's past: further elaboration is required to more critically consider the use of materials from architecture's past as heuristic devices. Aren't they simply providing theoretical support to his built and projected work? So additional research to tease out and further open these provisional considerations to an expanded field is required. Such additional research would include following a number of lines of inquiry. Three lines stand out and concern relationships to Eisenman's teaching, to period work of his office, and to Aldo Rossi.

30. A selection of student work, opening remarks by Henry Cobb, then Chair of Architecture, Graduate School of Design at the time of Eisenman's appointment, and essays by those who assisted Eisenman in delivery of the studios was published in 1986 as *Investigations in Architecture: Eisenman Studios at the GSD*, ed. Jonathan Jova Marvel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 1986).

31. Eisenman, "The End of the Classical," 172.

32. Robin Evans, "Not to be Used for Wrapping Purposes," *AA Files* 10 (Autumn 1985), 68-78, 74.

Relationship to teaching: While Eisenman is writing and publishing the "Decomposition" article, he is in the middle of a three-year visiting professorship at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (1983-1985).³⁰ Some student work arising out of period studios are the object of a public exhibition and included in a monograph. Is there evidence of the preoccupations discussed above in the teaching materials and student work?

Relationship to the office: While the two essays that have been the target of reflections are under development and eventual publication, a number of projects are in parallel underway in the office. These include Wexner Center for the Visual Arts and Fine Arts Library (Columbus, 1983-1989), Fin d'Ou T Hou S (1983), Romeo and Juliet (1984-1985), University Art Museum (Long Beach, 1985), Tokyo Opera House (Tokyo, 1985-1986), and Progressive Corporation Office Building (Cleveland, 1986). Is there evidence of Eisenman's conceptual preoccupations on display in period projects, completed variously by Eisenman/Robertson or Eisenman Architects? To get it started, two projects could be examined to see if there is any relation – complimentary, antagonistic, neutral - to the preoccupations discussed above. Tokyo Opera House and Fin D'Ou T Hou S in their claimed resistance to stabilities might lead this inquiry: the former via its deployment of scaling and tracing as form-space generation techniques; the latter via view elaborations of the cube/not cube investigations. A number of factors might inform such a review: (a.) a consideration of his use of partial figures; (b.) the emphatic or unapologetic embrace of discontinuities (is that what he was thinking in "The End of the Classical" essay by the term 'arbitrary'³¹? (c.) Robin Evans in a contemporary essay provides another clue to what it all might mean. In his investigation of Fin d'Ou T Hou S, Evans believes he finds evidence that Eisenman has insinuated ideas of movement 'into the speechless immobility of the object ... [and that such ideas of movement] give it an unworldly animation that takes the place of the meaning he [Eisenman] made such efforts to evict all those years ago.'³² The suggestion that animation supplants meaning is only one of several ideas worth tracking here.

33. Peter Eisenman, "Editor's Introduction. The Houses of Memory: The Texts of Analogue," in Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982), 2-11.

Relationship to Aldo Rossi: Evidence both circumstantial and direct suggest it is appropriate to explore Eisenman's relation to Rossi to further understand what is at stake. In these same years, for example, Eisenman publishes his Editor's Introduction to the English language version of Rossi's, *The Architecture of the City*. Under the title "The Houses of Memory: The Text of Analogue", Eisenman's essay is at least on the surface worth a close reading in its own right.³³ Topics fall more or less on the side of the autobiographical, of temperament and

sensibility, and of the architect-historian's stance. What is the nature of the influence and/or impact of Rossi on Eisenman at this moment of swerves in his office and his teaching? Is there any?

34. The Alberta Association of Architects has hosted since 1956 a conference called the Banff Session. In the mid 1980s, Banff Session '84 included presentations by Bofill, Eisenman, Frampton and Jones and a portion of discussions was published as "The Transcripts," *Section a* (September 1984), 20-26, 21.

To wrap this up, let's consider another episode in that eventful year. It's still 1984 and Ricardo Bofill, Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, and Edward Jones are brought together at a conference in Canada. The conference is Banff Session '84, a meeting that itself sought to confront different positions to see what might be created. In addition to separate presentations, an abbreviated transcript of discussions between the four along with audience comments is published as "The Transcripts". Echoing sentiments Frampton already made in 1982 referenced at the opening of this paper, in "The Transcripts" Frampton refers to the time as 'a dark period' with specific reference to the shadows cast in the prospect of nuclear conflict. Describing his own mood as 'pessimistic', Frampton states that what he thinks is needed in such a context 'is to create sensibility and strong nerves [in order] to continue with the possibility of cultivating the species [referring here to the profession of architecture] under very adverse conditions.'³⁴

35. "The Transcripts," 22.

Frampton goes on to articulate a difference which might be useful for providing another point of clarification to close off these meditations. Discussing the 'Ohio State building' – Eisenman's office has recently been announced as the 1983 competition winners for what will become the Wexner Center -, Frampton states: 'I often feel that one of the differences that divides Peter and myself is the degree to which I am concerned or I have become more concerned with the capacity of certain architects to build in a significant way, whereas Peter is more concerned with the conceptual ground of the act [of architecture] in the first place.'³⁵

The architect's stance rendered in "The Futility of Objects" and "The End of the Classical" essays might be heralded as containing a program of perpetual resistance in order, that is, to recognise in Eisenman's position one specifically always focused on the side of conceptual grounds, perhaps a not unreasonable place to position oneself in times of rupture. That this program is marked by a desirable or at minimum intentional indeterminacy is provisionally found in at least two planes of activity that correspond to the key terms that can be taken as abbreviations of the conceptual/formal preoccupations in the two essays that have been the focus of this paper: decomposition, timelessness. On the one hand, a plane of form generation or space discovery; on the other hand, a plane positioning one's thinking outside of, and different to, ideas of beginnings and ends, outside or different from time as continuous. The one can be claimed to be revealed through an open process of decomposition. The other plane of activity might be rendered by a state of perpetual resistance that is intended to maintain a "timeless" space of invention or discovery, one that requires a radical engagement with the present. This is to contribute to opening up the conditions of possibility for architecture's capacity to resist that state of dissipation that so shook Frampton: a capacity which favours the multivalent, the blurred, the positively ambivalent.

At that moment in the mid 1980s, and perhaps still today, Eisenman's activity can be claimed to provide one version of a practice of

resistance, one capable of repelling architecture's vulgar capacity to imagine something like a linear time. Instead, we are left with an insistent plea for the present, and an architecture as is, a rare and perhaps one of the few viable acts of architecture that remains.

36. "The Transcripts", 26, emphasis in the original.

In "The Transcripts", the following is attributed to Eisenman as a summary of a not-classical architecture, and can serve appropriately as the last word: "It is no longer a certification of experience, a simulation of history, reason or reality in the present. Instead it [a not-classical architecture] may more appropriately be described as an architecture as is - ... a representation of itself... [an] architecture as a process of inventing an artificial past and futureless present."³⁶