From Drawings to Drawls
Coy Howard's Artifacts of Architectural Production

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Abstract

Design does not happen in a vacuum, but neither does it rely on the past for validation. Nietzsche offers a convincing view of history in his book, Untimely Meditations, where he charges the cynic and the champion of history to use history critically, to achieve balance between the past and the present. The promise in finding this balance is through the production of something new. This paper develops the expression, "artifacts of architectural production", through a reading of representational projects from the 1970s and 1980s by Los Angeles architect, Coy Howard. Howard's architectural artifacts demonstrate diverse strategies in experimentation with media and are related to ideas from aesthetic philosophy. Wittgenstein's thoughts regarding the perspicuous representation of intermediate cases, Clive Bell's assertions for significant form, and Kant's suggestions of purposiveness as a means to achieve beauty inform ways to consider an architectural work and its ambitions. The investigation of Howard's pursuits reveals architecture's ability to embrace qualitative differences, generate nuanced distinctions, and challenge architecture's conventions. Questioning the work an architect produces, whether as a conceptual tool to analyse and describe qualities of architectural space, or as a tool that permits engagement with architecture directly, examines the capacity for architectural artifacts to participate in the aesthetic nature of experience.

Introduction
In addition to buildings, architecture can also be experienced through other objects of creative expression that address interests in form, materiality, and culture. This paper addresses this topic by reviewing several representational projects from the 1970s and 1980s by Los Angeles architect, Coy Howard, which provoke architectural questions through their explorations in media. Two strategies of Howard's are reviewed, expressive perspective drawings and mixed media configurations called Drawls. Howard's drawings, and his Drawls, which he conceptualised as models of drawings, provide examples to consider how composition, media, and format in representational artifacts emerge as acts of architecture through the experiential effects of scale, formal and material differentiation, and tone. Through these means architecture gains dexterity that extends its boundaries.

Architecture in Drawing
In 1977, Howard's drawings for the Boudov Residence in Palos Verdes, California and the Hauser Residence in Pacific Palisades, California were included in the *Architectural Design* issue, "America Now: Drawing Towards a More Modern Architecture" guest edited by Robert AM Stern, which featured drawings shown in two concurrent exhibitions curated by Stern at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum and The Drawing Center. Howard's drawings, included at The Drawing Center exhibition were shown alongside other drawings by architects, including Peter Eisenman's House X, John Hejduk's Texas House, and Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia, among others. Howard's drawings stand out in the exhibition, not due to the style of architecture depicted, but rather because of the means through which architecture was conveyed. The drawing became an object in its own right, exceeding its status as a device to communicate something that it was not.

In the *Architectural Design* publication, the Boudov and Hauser houses did not include plans and sections. Only graphite perspectives situated the houses with brooding character. Rather than clean lines on a stark page, the drawings exploit artefactual residue - drawn and leftover. The evidence of tape marks where the Hauser drawing was fixed to a surface remained on the edge of the paper. Squiggles of a graphite pencil trail off the edge of an atmospheric depiction of the interior perspectives of the Boudov residence. These artifacts translated into a reading of the drawing as a drawing, an object with presence, not only a representation. This confounded the representational quality of an architectural work and doubled its aesthetic reception.

The doubleness revealed how architecture was drawn, which deserved its own measure of evaluation relative to form and an understanding of spatial qualities, but the drawing also appropriated the conventions of an art-object that used architecture as its means to evoke an aesthetic quality associated with the effects of perception. Being relatively atypical for how architectural drawings are usually read signaled an alternative mechanism for the experience of architecture, and where that experience resides. Howard used the architectural drawing to foreground qualities of artefactual reception by embedding perspectives with grit and shadow around recognisable forms, but occluded them with hewn detritus. Equally cognitive as the analytical drawings of Eisenman's House X, the graphite drawings of Howard eschew an a priori and underlying virtual logic implicit in the formal generation of axonometrics, and instead structure poetic relationships between form and shadow, context and drawn page, suggesting architectural qualities laden with emotive physicality.

Earlier in 1977, Robert Stern included Howard in his article for *Architecture and Urbanism*, "Some Notes on the New '40 Under 40'". Stern speculated on the merits associated with the next generation of young architects emerging around the world, including Howard.

> Howard echoes Machado and Silvetti's concerns with the functional determinism of orthodox modernism, though he is more involved with behavioral issues than they. . . . [Stern quotes Howard who states] "We should recognize that architecture is not simply the inevitable consequence of needs, as the functionalists suggest; that both needs and

the forms which respond to these needs demand high levels of social and psychological perceptiveness and formal skills, and that these skills are a scarcer and more precious commodity than the organizational talent we have for so long been praising".[1]

Howard's remark suggested that architecture's value was not only the organisation of form, but also the reception of form. His position proclaimed architecture as being less objective, and more subjective relative to the emotional potential of architecture to affect its users' imaginations through their feelings. Howard's work demonstrated this ambition through the role of the drawings and what their aesthetic presentation communicated through the perspective.

Howard also received his first *Progressive Architecture* (*PA*) Award in 1977, a citation for the Boudov Residence renovation.[2] What was surprising was the radical difference between the drawings included in the two publications. In *Progressive Architecture* the conventional plans utilised a legend and colored axonometrics, whereas, the perspective drawings of the Boudov Residence featured in *Architectural Design* expressed an emotional countenance contrasting the clinical precision of the drawings in *Progressive Architecture*. Likely, this was due to the audience of the publications; one was a professional design publication giving awards for plausibility and eventual construction, the other publication focused on the disciplinary attitudes toward the medium of drawing.

In *Progressive Architecture* Howard described the Boudov addition through its programmatic and pragmatic responses describing sundecks, alcoves, and where the jacuzzi would go. Critics waivered about its vernacular readings and described the clarity of the representational efforts for a small project.[3] These kinds of descriptions are in stark contrast to Stern's ambition for his exhibition that showcased drawings featuring three qualities: 1) beautiful drawings that aid the conceptual process; 2) are emblematic of a post-modern style; and 3) critically reflect what it means to produce an architectural drawing.[4] The narrative for Stern's exhibition sought ways drawings achieved agency to produce decisive results for architecture. The drawings they chose performed as self-conscious objects relying on their aesthetic presentation to comment on the time in which they were produced, as well as reveal an attitude about the qualitative status of drawings.

Supporting this difference between the *PA* Awards and Stern's exhibition are Howard's words in *Architectural Design* that described his work that "oscillate[s] between the 'cool' drawing of plan, section, and elevation, and the 'hotter' perspective studies. [...] Here the role of the graphic journalist takes precedence over the role of the architect".[5] What became clear was that there were different venues for public exposure and consumption of contemporary architecture in the 1970s through publication. There were trade journals that spoke to the profession. These tended to describe architecture's value relative to new ideas circulating within the built environment. Other publications like *Architectural Design* and *Architecture and Urbanism* offered alternative benchmarks for architecture's cultural value that focused with inward motives and conversations between designers and the discipline. Three years later, when Howard received two *PA* citations, each of the projects featured perspectives along with the antiseptic plans and axonometrics, demonstrating Howard's self-described "hot" and "cool" drawing motifs.

Experiencing Drawls
In a 1982 *Los Angeles Times* article discussing the exhibition, *California Counterpoint,* John Dreyfuss raised the role of exhibitions in architecture to increase the public's awareness of architectural artifacts. Dreyfuss explained the position of Robert Mangurian, a Los Angeles architect and colleague of Howard's at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc).

> An architect's work is far better represented in an exhibition of drawings and models than in the resulting buildings. "The architect doesn't make the buildings", Mangurian said.

"The architect makes the models and drawings. They are the purest expression of his ideas. They are uncompromised".[6]

Mangurian's claim suggested an attitude of authority in regard to the objects that an architect creates. What Mangurian called attention to was that architects do not only rely on buildings to explore what architecture is, but that it can also be questioned through the artifacts architects produce by foregrounding or combining representation and objecthood. In this mode, architectural artifacts have the opportunity to not only reflect concrete ideas about built architecture, but they can also spark a viewer's imagination to understand material and immaterial qualities in architecture.

Four years later, Robin Evans echoed Mangurian's observation in his text, "Translations from Drawing to Building". A passage from Evans' text described a situation architects find themselves when working. "I was soon struck by what seemed at the time the peculiar disadvantage under which architects labour, never working directly with the object of their thought, always working at it through some intervening medium, almost always the drawing".[7] Evans identified two options regarding the status of the drawing.

One emphasiz[es the] corporeal property of things made, the other concentrat[es] on the disembodied properties of the drawing. … in the one corner, involvement, substantiality, tangibility, presence, immediacy, direct action; in the other, disengagement, obliqueness, abstraction, mediation and action at a distance. They are opposed but not necessarily incompatible.[8]

One body of work included in the *California Counterpoint* exhibition that demonstrated the confluence of representation and objecthood was Coy Howard's Drawls that physicalised some of the properties explored in his graphite perspectives [Figure 1].

Figure 1. Ashley Drawl, by Coy Howard, 1980. Image printed with permission from Coy Howard.

The Drawls offered specific qualities of architecture through Howard's precise selections and compositions of media and format. Architectural qualities emerged through attention to scale, formal differentiation, and details. Hovering in an ambiguous territory between representation and object, the Drawls fused material effects while relying on representation to nudge a work toward a recognisable form charged by rigid edges balanced with soft curves. The grit of the Drawls patina offset the pristine clarity of abstract linework. In this respect they alienated architecture by diminishing representational properties for experiential ones. They repelled traditional readings of the architectural object by

commanding the interpretation of an object, hinting at contextual relationships masked in dark blacks and greys, or by the shape of a frame. Howard's Drawls produced the quality of estrangement by straddling conventions of painting, sculpture, and architectural representation. While subverting expectations of what an architect creates, they expanded opportunities for architectural artifacts to establish new territories of discovery through aesthetic play where it became too simple to label the Drawls as drawings, paintings, or sculpture, and became a perspicuous representation of an intermediate case, a quality proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*.[9] For example, the Daniel Studio Drawl used a series of black vertical appendages that look like nondescript columns supporting an abstract form, but they continue, terminating at the of the edge of the piece, hinting as if part of the frame, performing as something compositional, but also suggest a representational attitude about tectonics [Figure 2].
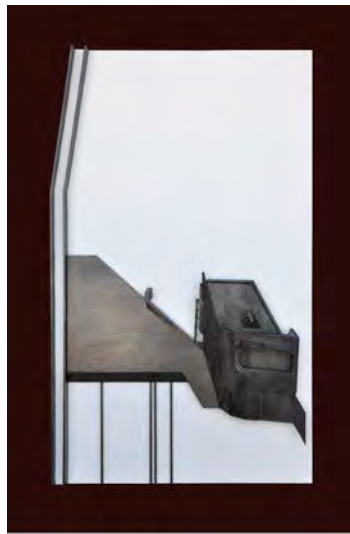
Figure 2. Daniel Studio Drawl, by Coy Howard, 1980. Image printed
with permission from Coy Howard.

Howard's Drawls challenged the quotidian understanding of architectural representation through their tendency to distort scalable forms. They mixed identifiable 3-dimensional objects with suggestive formal sensibility. They were oftentimes made from conventional found materials, forged into place, appearing raw and fluttering between phase changes. Instead of images with correspondence to architecture they produced contingencies, becoming 1-to-1 manifestations of ideas - objects no longer residing as a description for architecture, but became a medium of architecture, drawing on tones and essences. The qualities inherent to the Drawls suggest an attitude about architectural experience that John Dewey would describe as the quality of "perception that replaces bare recognition. […] The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender".[10] The Drawls surrender preconceptions of representation by manipulating materials and forms for aesthetic affect, producing architectural qualities through their configurations.

The Drawls aesthetic relies on tactility, profluence, and hybridised orders of geometry rather than being an explanation of material and form.[11] Howard's approach differed from other types of hybridisations in architecture's past. His work does not relate to Bernard Tschumi's ideas about disjunction from the early 1980s that proposed "surrealistically absurd sets of activities [such as] pole vaulting in a chapel, bicycling in the laundromat, [and] sky diving in the elevator shaft", which challenged form and use.[12] Neither does Howard's work communicate like Rem Koolhaas's description of skyscrapers that mashed together activities including "eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked, on the 9th floor".[13] Qualities apparent in the Drawls reveal formal explorations in geometry combining rectilinear, angular, and curvilinear characteristics.[14]

A complimentary Drawl for the Daniel Studio is a ceiling study that investigates how a coffered form with staggered beams meets a barrel vault [Figure 3]. The articulated effects enrich the understanding of an architectural detail through low bas-relief and its compositional aesthetic. Instead of a typical detail drawing that conveys abstract technical information, Howard's sectional Drawl physicalises a representation of the ceiling's experience. Oblique architectural forms painted in dark hues set onto a backing with matching and contrasting geometries completes a form that avoids singular readings, triggering associations to El Lissitzky's Prouns and primitive objects from an archaeological dig. The Drawls dismantle preconceptions about representational aspects in architecture by merging recognisable and unfamiliar objects. Identifiable objects juxtapose, and sometimes conflate, with objects that remain undefined. The work instigates a process of looking at something to see the connections between forms, generating an overall sense of the piece in a feedback loop between the various elements of the configuration. Through the Drawls, Howard sought properties to create a "quality of geometric order to constantly be shifting and changing".[15]

Figure 3. Daniel Studio Ceiling Drawl, by Coy Howard, 1980. Image printed with permission from Coy Howard.

Richard Armstrong wrote a review of Howard's Drawls in the exhibition catalog for *California Counterpoint: New West Coast Architecture 1982*. "The shallow pasteboard reliefs [Howard] has begun making . . . [are] too graphically illustrative to pass as art, yet too enigmatic to serve architecture".[16] Armstrong recognised the unique disposition of the Drawls through the impurities of their aesthetic and how they deal with the functional aspects of architecture. However, the humility of the Drawls question architecture's necessity to arrive at concrete resolution. Being inconclusive makes them exciting. They do not give the answers for the viewer. The viewer has to decide what makes them architectural, or not. They perform by instigating discovery with multiple solutions.

Howard resists labeling his work as art or architecture based on the belief that labels reduce opportunities for experience, limiting reception, and refers to labels as the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness". [17] Instead, Howard believes architecture synthesises difference becoming an epiphenomenon. An alternative view offered in Kendall Walton's essay, "Categories of Art", gives the perspective that what an audience knows about something matters relative to their experience of a creative work. "Hints derived from facts about a work's history, however dispensable they may be 'in principle', are often crucially important in practice". Although works of art and architecture are evaluated differently, Howard's Drawls synthesise into architecture. As configurations with multiple scales of legibility they steer experience through form and texture, color and organisation as a reflections on occupation for a program, even if that reflection blurs without concrete resolution [Figure 04]. Howard exploits these readings, creating challenges about assumptions in architecture,

offering alternative criteria to measure architecture's performance. What Howard renders, though subdued, participates with distinct codes and languages of architectural practice, even if it only occurs when recognising that in parts of a Drawl a person fits inside. This residue of performance creates fitness relative to his ideas about form and occupation. Recognising a form as a ceiling, in the case of the Daniel Ceiling Drawl, does not limit creative response to that form, but guides creativity to perceive and imagine the concept of a ceiling with renewed vitality.

Figure 4. Palmer Eckard Condominium Drawl, by Coy Howard, 1979.
Image printed with permission from Coy Howard.

Effects of Architectural Artifacts

Architects and architectural critics have discussed the role of representation in architecture in a number of ways. In Stan Allen's essay "Constructing with Lines: On Projection" he described architectural representation as being different than imitation, suggesting that architecture's use of representation is more peculiar. This is evident in Allen's statement that in architecture "the represented object does not exist prior to its depiction in drawing: not something that once was, but something not yet present".[18] This apparent strangeness of architecture allows the architect to freely imagine multiple and possible outcomes and appears to reach Allen's desire for architecture to accommodate the "interplay between abstraction and the transformation of reality".[19] A paragraph later in Allen's essay he cites Robin Evans' belief that architectural projection is an "interval [and] transitive".[20] These qualities adhere to important dialectics within Allen's articulation of architecture to find comfort with the tensions between "thought and reality, imagination and realisation, and theory and practice".[21] Though both Allen and Evans refer to architectural drawings and not mixed media works such as the Drawls, the value of their points situate the unusual nature surrounding the work architects do when they engage their ideas through representational artifacts.

Alternatively, Peter Cook wrote about architectural representation as providing "appropriate visual registers", and suggested that although an image can be clear in an architect's mind those images are oftentimes interfered with by technique, clumsiness, or lack of precedent, making the act of visualisation a difficult task.[22] Cook's writing on drawing raised issues related to how the image of architecture becomes legible. In his chapter "Drawing and Motive" he suggests that particular kinds of interpretation exist relative to the style of representation. He identified four methods of architectural communication that reveal motives within work: 1) gesture, which is spontaneous and captures the idea in the moment; 2) theatricality, where the drawing rivals reality through its potential, 3) part-to-whole relationships that characterise drawings that utilise technical and free-hand styles, and 4) collage which embraces lateral thinking and hybridisation.[23] A latent understanding of Cook's is that not all things are possible in one type of representational strategy. Aesthetics scholar, Daniel Herwitz,

has a similar view in relation to media and sculpture, something he has discussed through a reading of Bernini's sculpture.

> Change the material and everything changes with it. The materiality of the finished form is something that cannot be abstracted from visual experience or from meaning and effect. That Bernini can render the hard clarity of marble soft, making hair bounce is a work of magic. Were he a modernist working in string and wood, it would not be so hard, nor make us catch our breaths. These things give truth to Hegel's adage that "not all things are possible in all media of art" and related that it is the discovery of the potentialities of any given medium, their exploitation and indeed, creation that defines the history of an art form.[24]

The Drawls hover in a more ambiguous territory than what is described by Allen, Evans, and Cook and embrace distinct relations to the kind of material qualities identified by Herwitz. Howard's graphite drawings, while not pushing the same disciplinary boundaries of interpretation as the Drawls, do make distinct claims about a drawing's communication of production. Alternatively, the Drawls' magic becomes fused with the alchemy of working a material to convey attitudes of spatial effect that relies on representation, but challenges that signification to reach properties charged with emotional intensity. In contrast to coded linework the Drawls address representational properties with experiential magnitudes and appear to have aesthetic affinities with 20th century avant-garde art practices. They relate to Duchamp's Readymades, which critiqued established notions of art. In a work such as *Fountain*, Duchamp started a game in aesthetics that was whimsical, but a game that created a rupture within art and sculpture. With anti-artworks such as Duchamp's upside-down urinal entering the world of sculpture it forced art critics to re-investigate the traditional representational and symbolic attributes of this medium. Duchamp created a condition that was *other*, between sculpture and not sculpture.

Howard's Drawls produce the quality *otherness* by straddling conventions of art and architecture. The Drawls, like Duchamp's Readymades, recognise disciplinary rules as well as the rules of culture, and while subverting the expectations they simultaneously expand them by generating new territory through aesthetic play. While Duchamp does not work from an architectural paradigm, he presents a significant example for architecture by the ways he curates relationships between forms and ideas, artifacts and concepts, and technology and aesthetics.

The Drawls also present similar effects that Clive Bell described in his text, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis". Bell characterised particular artworks to have the ability to provoke "the aesthetic emotion", [25] which is "aesthetic ecstasy" [26] achieved through objects that contain within them "significant form".[27] For Bell, significant form is often seen in primitive art through three properties - "absence of representation, absence of technical swagger, and sublimely impressive form".[28] The Drawls ask the viewer to surrender preconceptions of architectural representation and to allow the experience of the work to unfold and enliven a direct connection to aesthetic qualities. In this sense the Drawls are real architecture, activating perception presently through forms that give enough information to suggest 3-dimensional space. Echoing Bell, the viewer has to have an understanding of space to be able to perceive these kinds of qualities to transgress imitation through a creative act of feeling.[29] This reading of the Drawls shares similarities with Michael Hays' writing about Hejduk's Wall House in *Architecture's Desire*. Hays writes about the Wall House that "we find ourselves forced to resort to a language of psychological and phenomenal forces, of emotions and affections, of an unencoded or preencoded morphology that works first upon sensation before it quickly collapses back into known fact".[30] Where the Drawls are different is that absolutes of facts and idiosyncratic sensation comingle simultaneously. The verge of understanding is malleable.

A final observation about Howard's architectural artifacts suggests value in ambiguity to elicit creative responses from an audience to experience architecture in a novel way. The graphic quality of the house perspectives suggest an extended field through glimpses of curated vignettes, as well as evacuated distance in the depths of composed positive and negative voids. The Drawls exemplify the importance of finding comfort in the struggle to discover through seeing. The ambiguity of Howard's work, in particular, the Drawls, parallels Kant's belief in the aesthetic value of purposiveness. Kant suggests that what is beautiful is form that has purposiveness without purpose. "Beauty is the form of purposiveness in an object, so far as this is perceived in it apart from the representation of an end".[31] This statement appears contradictory to most instances of architectural representation that provide the instructions to build a finished and total work. However, the purposiveness within Howard's work becomes the ability of forms to imply aesthetic features of buildings that linger between being literal and metaphoric, while encompassing mysterious qualities in forms that suggest purpose without having or representing any purpose. Rather than culminating in determinant resolution, Howard's work fosters creative deliberation to reveal architecture through manifold qualities for aesthetic experience.

Endnotes

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[1] Coy Howard quoted in Robert Stern's "Some Notes on the New "40 under 40'," "40 Under 40", Special Issue *Architecture and Urbanism* No 73 (1977), 49-69.

[2] Coy Howard, "The 24th Awards Program", *Progressive Architecture* Vol LVIII, No 1 (January 1977), 64.

[3] Howard, "The 24th Awards Program".

[4] Robert AM Stern, "Drawing Towards a More Modern Architecture", *Architecture Design* Vol 43, No 6 (1977), 382.

[5] Coy Howard, "Coy Howard", *America Now: Drawing Towards a More Modern Architecture, Architecture Design*, Vol 47, No 6 (June 1977), 428.

[6] John Dreyfuss, "Architecture in Search of a Style", *Los Angeles Times* (May 7, 1982), H1.

[7] Robin Evans, "Translations from Drawing to Building (1986)", *Translations from Drawing to Building,* London: Architectural Associations Publications, 1997), 156.

[8] Evans, "Translations from Drawing to Building", 160.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "122" *Philosophical Investigations*, Second Ed., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1958.

[10] John Dewey, "Having an Experience", in *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigree, Penguin Group Inc., 2005, 54-55.

[11] Dewey, "Having an Experience".

[12] Bernard Tschumi, "Part II: Program (1981 and 1983)", in Architecture and Disjunction. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996, 146.

[13] Rem Koolhaas, "'Life in the Metropolis' or 'The Culture of Congestion'," in Architectural Design vol. 45, no. 5 (August 1977), 319-325

[14] Coy Howard, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, June 19, 2013.

[15] Howard, interview with Benjamin J. Smith.

[16] Richard Armstrong, "My Coy Howard", in California Counterpoint: New West Coast Architecture, 1982 (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 65.

[17] Coy Howard, interview with Benjamin J. Smith, June 19, 2013.

[18] Stan Allen. "Constructing with Lines: On Projection", in *Practice: Architecture, Representation, + Technique*, Expanded Second Edition. Oxford: Routledge, 2009, 7.

[19] Allen. "Constructing with Lines: On Projection".

[20] Robin Evans, "Conclusion: The Projective Cast", in *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, 366.

[21] Allen. "Constructing with Lines: On Projection", 7.

[22] Peter Cook. "Drawing and Motive", in *Drawing: The Motive Force of Architecture*. England: Wiley, 2008, 12.

[23] Cook. "Drawing and Motive", 10-28.

[24] Daniel Herwitz, "The Film Aura", in The Star as Icon: Celebrity In the Age of Mass Consumption. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 71.

[25] Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis (1914)", in *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics*, 2nd Edition, ed. W.E. Kennick. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 61.

[26] Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis", 72.

[27] Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis", 62.

[28] Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis", 67.

[29] Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis (1914)", in *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics*, 2nd Edition, ed. W.E. Kennick. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 69.

[30] K. Michael Hays, "Encounter", in *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010, 95.

[31] Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment", in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, 66.