ABSTRACT

This essay identifies novel strategies for the activist mode of architectural thought and production, strategies that suggest a shift from architectural activism as the authorless production of events and artifacts to the production of authored environments and atmospheres. I develop this taxonomy in part by drawing on the disagreement between American art critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg over the status and objectives of what would be come to be called action painting. The goal of this taxonomic approach is to propose strategies through which a socially engaged architecture might generate authored physical atmospheres, transcending the domain of authorless processes, actions and *ad hoc* artifacts increasingly common today.

INTRODUCTION: ONE OR SEVERAL CRISES

An ongoing series of cascading and intertwined crises in our physical, political, and economic contexts has led to a rethinking of architecture's relationship to the environment of which it is part. This movement has challenged both the means though which environments are created and, in some cases, the nature of the constructed environment itself. As one result of this development, we have witnessed a proliferation of happenings, actions, and installations that seize moments of disorder and opportunity to propose and execute micro-acts of architecture and urbanism[1]. These projects, generally undertaken by collectives like Assemble, Basurama, EXYZT, Raumlabor, and Recetas Urbanas (Figure 1)**,** reduce or eliminate the space between architecture as an autonomous discipline and architecture as the physical expression of active citizenship, problematizing any discussion of the architectural 'project' as distinct from the specific actions and results themselves.[2]

It is, perhaps, the very stealthy and tactical nature of this work that has made it so hard to define precisely or describe with a single easily digestible epithet: I will use the term "activist architecture," though labels like "participatory architecture," "tactical urbanism," "*jugaad* urbanism" or "guerrilla architecture" have also been applied, and they do describe something of the spirit behind it. These names allude to military action, to "making-do," or to civil disobedience, and they describe an architecture that engages everyday spaces and everyday affairs, with or without official sanction. The work may adopt a range of strategies, from the construction of temporary installations with found or donated materials, to community organizing, or direct political action. Per this

definition, activist work in most cases understands the architect's role—to the extent that architects are considered necessary and relevant in the process—to be as facilitator or choreographer, rather than author. Such processes sometimes lead to the design and construction of buildings, but they are more often intended to sponsor fleeting episodes of social engagement (Figure 2), or to install either temporary infrastructures (Figure 3), or more permanent infrastructures executed with the do-it-yourself, *ad hoc* formal vocabulary of the provisional (Figure 4). The work therefore privileges episodes, processes, and artifacts (however transient) over atmospheres and environments.

Much has been written about this new development, and about the opportunities and dilemmas that emerge from it. There is little agreement. Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till have enthusiastically defined the new mode of working as one in which the architect relinquishes his or her authority in service of the greater good, as part of a critical and 'emancipatory' mode of working.[3] A similar approach has been outlined by Nadia Anderson, who has suggested that a turn to 'Public Interest Design' would favor 'action and process rather than products' in order to affect social change[4]. Others have been somewhat more circumspect about the activist turn, suggesting that it may consign architecture to a reactive and contingent position[5], while Tahl Kaminer has suggested that in many cases the work of the activist architect has been directed not to dismantling the neo-liberal agenda, as many of the authors of the work presume, but rather to evading or eroding the statist regulations put in place precisely to tame or direct market forces.[6] Kaminer thus suggests that much of the participatory work is—unconsciously, perhaps—directed at extending the free-market politics it presumes to resist. The recent work of Pier Vittorio Aureli, meanwhile, returns to an earlier notion of the autonomous architectural object as a vehicle for political resistance. In his book *The Project of Autonomy*, Aureli expresses skepticism that activism and its 'clichés' can offer a coherent challenge to the current order, arguing that autonomy and "Theory with a capital 'T'" might be the only way to resist or expose the workings of a capitalist system whose contingent existence has come to seem inevitable and ahistorical.[7]

The disagreement we find around the activist work is not merely a question of autonomy versus engagement, though these terms are usually present or latent in the discussion. What is actually being debated here is the possibility, desirability, and efficacy of resistance and critique, and whether that critical posture—if in fact it is deemed to be both possible and desirable—is best deployed through theory or practice, or some combination of the two. Largely missing from this debate, however, has been a

precise discussion of the kinds of physical environments generated through the new mode of social engagement, and a theorization of what other kinds of physical work might be possible when working within the critical, socially-engaged mode. If this critical mode is *not* always desired—and it seems fair to concede that not all those who wish to practice architecture must always also wish to upend the current order of things through their work—then we are simultaneously faced with a debate over how to productively engage in a non-critical mode, and what this might mean for the discipline of architecture.

It would at this point be tempting to argue that what is really needed today is an integrative model, a middle ground between the apparently opposed poles of autonomy and engagement, but that is not the goal of this paper. Such an integration may not even be possible, because these two terms can be understood in contradictory ways: the literature has at various times defined engagement as either tacit support for the *status quo* or direct action taken to subvert it.[8] That is, engagement can be understood both as an effort to change the world as found, and as an attitude that accepts conditions largely without critique. Both cannot simultaneously be true. A similar confusion surrounds the notion of autonomy, which can alternately describe a Greenbergian/Adornian turn to medium specificity[9], or a highly authorial, expressive, and individualistic understanding of the architectural project.[10] Autonomy may thus describe an architecture centered on the self, or centered on the material of the discipline. Again, either might be an acceptable definition, but to use the same term to characterize such distinct approaches is, at best, to speak imprecisely. Perhaps the true crisis unleashed by the new activist work is therefore not so much the crisis of late capitalism that it sometimes presumes to illustrate or to hasten, but rather a crisis of terminology, one that stems from our own disciplinary confusion as to what autonomy and engagement actually are and what kind of artifacts or environments might be produced as a result.

It is the goal of this essay to identify novel, atmospheric strategies for the activist mode of architectural production, strategies that could mark a shift from architectural activism as the authorless production of events and artifacts, to activism as the production of authored environments and atmospheres. As I will explain below, I believe that such a turn from activism as performance to activism as immersive atmosphere may simultaneously prove to be more effective as an agent of change, and more productively tied to the disciplinary tools and capacities of the architect.

In order to define this new mode of production and to situate it within a framework of existing architectures, I will propose a taxonomy of architecture thought and production, one that I suggest may allow us to transcend the autonomy/engagement dyad.

Taxonomy is a tool most frequently used in the natural sciences, based in part on the pioneering work of Carl Linnaeus, who in the 18th century developed a standardized system for the classification of organisms. In the 1970s, Zoologist Sydney Anderson argued that taxonomy was in fact more than a simple system of labelling and classification, applying instead a broader tripartite definition. Taxonomy could, according to Anderson, refer to the classification process itself, the classifications that emerge from that process, and the principles used to develop the process.[11] Anderson adopted this broad definition in order to propose a way out of a contemporary debate about the nature of taxonomy as either "science" or "art," suggesting instead that clearer and more productive work might be possible by attempting to transcend this division. The goal of taxonomy, for Anderson, was to make sense of the world and to do so by developing a system that both simplifies our understanding of the world by providing names and categories that apply to similar but nevertheless distinct elements, and by enriching our understanding of the world by proposing a model in which categories relate to one another in a systematic way. It is my hope that the taxonomy I develop here will provide such a system, and may lead not only to a greater precision in how we categorize and label architectural thought and production, but also to suggest areas for future architectural production focused on the socially-engaged atmosphere.

I will develop this taxonomy in part by drawing on an earlier debate that resonates with the current moment, the disagreement between American art critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg over the status and objectives of what would later be called action painting. It is easy to caricature the positions of Rosenberg and Greenberg and to arrive at a simple split between engagement and autonomy. In this paper, I argue that the reality is somewhat more complicated and therefore much more potentially useful in the current moment, one in which the turn to activism and the *ad hoc* may challenge architecture's very ability to propose new visions, and to create environments that transcend the merely reactive, contingent, and opportunistic.

Alejandro Zaera-Polo has argued that the recent turn to activist work is, in fact, a symptom of our passage into a post-capitalist order, using a radial mapping of current architectural practices (Figure 5) to argue that emerging modes of "post-post-political" work may present an alternative to the architecture of "the neo-liberal era". [12]

While Zaera-Polo's diagram provides a useful catalogue and characterization of emerging practices' work, the actual meaning of the diagram's unlabeled axes and overlapping categories, as well as the specific position of each firm and each approach within the diagram, might benefit from a more rigorous and systematic approach. Furthermore, the diagram tells us quite a lot about what exists now, but not very much about where and how future work might develop. The goal of what follows in this paper, therefore, is not merely to classify with rigor and precision the modes of architectural production that currently exist, but also to use a systematic mode of taxonomy to suggest new areas for architectural production (activist and otherwise) following from the logical system that underpins the taxonomy itself.

Antoine Picon has argued that the domain of theory historically has been to provide guidelines for practice, and that the critical and political project might best be taken up through the writing of history[13]. I use Picon's observation as a point of departure, and hope that a rigorous taxonomy of approaches and outputs might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how a socially engaged architecture might also generate new physical environments and atmospheres, transcending the domain of processes, actions and *ad hoc* artifacts.

2. A (FIRST) MATRIX MODEL

I have suggested above that the binary pair autonomy/engagement contains internal contradictions within each term. I would argue that these categories might more productively be broken down into two sub-pairs of descriptive terms. (Figure 6) That is, we might distinguish between a version of autonomy that accommodates itself within the current socio-political conditions (highly authorial, "capital-A" Architecture) and that which resists the world-as found (neo-Adornian disciplinarity). In order to make this distinction, we introduce a y-axis describing the degree of resistance or accommodation that motivates the work. We might also divide the construct of engagement according to the same accommodative/resistant pairing, discriminating between an accommodative (uncritical, "post-critical" or "projective" engagement, and a resistant (activist) engagement. We therefore cross-cut the engagement/autonomy dyad, producing a new accommodative/resistant pairing.

We might further distinguish between these accommodative and resistant modes by adding a second continuum along the x-axis that describes the worldliness or disciplinarity of the work. With the notion of "worldliness", I refer to the work's contact

with and contamination by the everyday; and by "disciplinarity", I mean the work's reliance on specific architectural knowledge and methodologies. The activist work, for example, might be categorized as worldly/resistant, as it is almost entirely embedded in quotidian practices outside the discipline, and it operates in a mode critical of the *status quo*. In contrast, a highly authorial, signature architecture might be labelled accommodative/disciplinary, as it often makes little claim to social reform and relies quite extensively on the architectural expertise of the author. It is worth noting that this second continuum along the x-axis also describes the question of time (Figure 7), in the case of architectures of resistance (*when* is this architecture presumed to affect change?), and the locus of agency (*who* drives production?) in the case of the architectures of accommodation.

This dual splitting allows us to replace the simple binary autonomy/engagement with a four-square matrix, in which the y-axis measures a "resistant-accommodative" continuum, and the x-axis records the "worldly-disciplinary" continuum (Figure 8). Quadrant 1 of this matrix thus describes a "worldly/accommodative" architecture; a non-oppositional and pragmatic approach that most closely resembles the "projective" or post-critical work described in Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's 2002 essay "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism".[14] In this quadrant we might locate the work of Rem Koolhaas/OMA and its various global spin-offs and unofficial franchisees, as well as the bulk of pragmatic architecture broadly speaking, both corporate and otherwise.

A "disciplinary/accommodative" architecture occupies Quadrant 2 of the matrix. Like the architecture in Quadrant 1, work within the "disciplinary/accommodative" quadrant adopts a largely uncritical attitude toward its broader socio-political context, but here, the architecture bears a clear authorial signature, most frequently through formal elaboration, but also through materiality, language, or other authorial marks. At some point in their careers most architects eventually inhabit Quadrant 2, if only fleetingly or accidentally, but figures such as Zaha Hadid, Santiago Calatrava, or Frank Gehry[15] provide the clearest and most sustained examples of architects whose production might fit within the broad category "Signature Work".

The third quadrant of the matrix captures work executed with a "disciplinary/resistant" approach. This work, like that of Quadrant 2, is deeply embedded in and dependent on the disciplinary tools of architecture, but it uses these tools to resist easy digestion and commodification in the marketplace. This is a difficult

architecture, a frequently academic architecture intended in large part to be consumed by other architects, or not at all. Here, under the label “Adornian Diffidence,” we might place the early work of either Peter Eisenman[16] or Aldo Rossi.

It is the fourth quadrant that contains the politically-engaged “activist” work described at the start of this paper. This work shares the “resistant” approach with the architecture of “Adornian Diffidence” but rather than retiring from the market and the world as found, an activist architecture engages immediately and without any special reverence for the traditional tools or methods of the architectural discipline. Frequently it is not architectural at all, or only incidentally so. If we begin to interrogate this quadrant a bit more insistently, the above matrix may help us to understand and to describe the current developments in activist architecture with somewhat greater precision. To be sure, this diagram oversimplifies the complexity of the matter, as basic system of taxonomy must inevitably do. I will later inject more specificity into the model. But through this initial act of prying open the constructs of autonomy and engagement, we arrive at a preliminary taxonomy that might help us understand the opportunities and threats associated with the activist mode. It is to this mode that I turn now.

3. ACTIONS AND ATMOSPHERES

In his 1952 essay “The American Action Painters,” art critic Harold Rosenberg discussed the emergence of a new mode of painting, one that in many ways resembled the current shift to activist architecture.[17] According to Rosenberg, this approach to painting no longer aimed to represent, express, or critique objects or phenomena. It served solely to register the actions of a given artist in a given moment. The result of this work, according to Rosenberg, was an ‘event’ more than a fixed composition: “The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind,” Rosenberg wrote, “he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.”[18]

For Rosenberg, this kind of painting would create an absolute overlap of the work of art and everyday life, with the painter´s daily existence becoming both subject and object of artistic production. Disciplinary skill, intent, or even aesthetic motivation did not enter in. The goal was to create an immediate action. The work of art would merely be the recording of that action.

Clement Greenberg, writing three years after Rosenberg, would see things somewhat differently. Looking at much the same body of work in his essay "American-Type Painting," Greenberg focused not on the emotional immediacy and biographical circumstances of the work, but instead on the way in which it represented a technical advance in the discipline of painting.[19] For Greenberg, the work of painters like Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko was important primarily because it kept the discipline of painting moving forward by challenging one of the last remaining 'expendable conventions' of painterly technique: the contrast in tonal values. As Greenberg described it, the work of Rothko, Clyfford Still, and Barnett Newman would eventually become so flat—and so large—that it would begin to create its own environment, and to create an "enveloping effect" for the viewer (Figure 9). Greenberg noted that this work thus created a reaction in the spectator that had more to do with "décor or environment" than with art as conventionally understood[20].

Greenberg does not necessarily condemn these painters for their turn toward the decorative and toward the creation of effect and environment, rather than a "pictorial" approach. Indeed, Greenberg concludes his essay with a surprising turn away from a narrowly defined disciplinarity in exchange for a much broader and elastic one: "what we now consider to be merely decorative," he writes, "may become capable of holding our eyes and moving us much as the easel picture does,"[21] noting also that the sensibilities awoken by Rothko, Still, and Newman may allow us to appreciate even Persian carpets "as pictures". Greenberg's analysis is thus quite a bit more complex than the mere defense of painterly technique and discipline specificity for which his name has become a shorthand reference. What may initially seem to be a defense of disciplinary purity is actually a call to erode or directly attack the remaining disciplinary conventions and a defense of the decorative and atmospheric over the tortured and demonstrative. Greenberg—habitual defender of disciplinary rigor and medium specificity—suggests that action may in fact lead to atmosphere, environment, and even to large-scale surface decoration, and that this atmosphere might in turn challenge the boundaries of painting itself, bringing it much closer to the everyday through disciplinary mastery.

Rosenberg, meanwhile, appreciates the pure, naïve technique of the action painter. He values the action in itself, probably more than the result. Rosenberg is untroubled by the anti-aesthetic or merely non-aesthetic attitude in his approach. In the preface to the second edition of his book *The Tradition of the New*, Rosenberg recounts

a critique that he had received from novelist and critic Mary McCarthy: “you cannot hang an event on the wall,” she admonished him, “only a picture.”[22] Rosenberg responds that for his mode of criticism, aesthetic judgment is less important than an evaluation of the author’s sincerity of purpose: “you must be able to recognize the difference between a genuine uprising and a simulated uprising,” he explains, “that is, one fabricated according to the revolutionary ‘craft’ by professionals who deliberately design it to resemble a spontaneous upheaval.”[23] It is, perhaps, the ease with which “professionals” can produce work formally identical to the “genuine uprising” that leads Rosenberg to argue that the work itself is less important than the ethic it embodies: “perhaps you cannot hang an event on the wall, only a picture,” he concludes. “But this is a problem for the picture more than it is for events.”[24]

I would suggest that much of the evaluation and execution of work in the activist vein has pursued a Rosenbergian logic, when a Greenbergian position such as I have discussed above might be better suited to help us to move forward and to broaden the range of actual physical responses to the world around us. That is, authors and critics working in and around the activist mode have focused more on what the work *does* than on what the work *is*. To engage in a close formal reading of tactical actions such as seed bombings or a temporary wading pool is, after all, unlikely to yield particularly satisfying results. Yet room remains for work and critique that engages both the immediate social context and the aesthetic or formal tools that distinguish the architect from the layperson, and architecture from that which is not. In the following section, I will use taxonomy to suggest three possible ways of working that might form part of such an approach.

4: A (SECOND) MATRIX MODEL

Greenberg’s emphasis on environment and atmosphere suggests that we might well add a further series of binary terms to the matrix outlined in Section 2 of this paper (Figure 8). The matrix as developed thus far classifies work according to its disciplinarity or worldliness, but it tells us little about the way this attitude is manifested in the work. Following Greenberg, I introduce the sub-axis “atmospheric/concrete” (Figure 10) to modify the general x-axis category “worldly,” thus adding a descriptor of how, exactly, this work engages the world; either through strategies of defined environments and atmospheres not necessarily linked to or defined by physical objects (“atmospheric”), or through discrete material artifacts, at the level of the object, the building, or the

infrastructural element ("concrete"). To the opposite end of the x-axis continuum, describing the general category "disciplinary," I add the sub-axis "form/technique" to describe the actual formal and compositional methods used to advance disciplinarity. For the purposes of this discussion, the term "form" describes disciplinary work based on the physical presence of an object, and "technique" describes a disciplinary architecture defined by methods and operations rather than by objects.

These sub-axes "atmospheric/concrete" and "form/technique" themselves form a continuum, because the "concrete/worldly" work, as it approaches the y-axis, becomes increasingly similar to the work described by the "form/disciplinarity" category; although motivations for the work might differ, production that we would place close to the y axis would tend to adopt somewhat similar formal approaches, with an emphasis on the physical artifacts of design, rather than operations or atmospheres. We could make a similar argument for the extremes along the x axis: as we move to the edges of the diagram along the x-axis, we also might also begin to loop around to the other extreme. That is, the "atmospheric/worldly" work, as it departs from the y-axis, to the far left, grows to resemble work at the extreme right edge of the "technique/disciplinary" quadrant, as both of these categories describe work in which the actual physical artifact is less important than the operations or processes involved in its design (in the case of the "technique/disciplinary" work) or the environment created (in the case of the "atmospheric/worldly" quadrant).

I have suggested in Section 2 that the y-axis might be moderated by time in the case of the resistant work, and that the accommodative work could be described as being either client-driven or authorial. These distinctions are included in Figure 7, but were eliminated from the development of the 4-square matrix (Figure 8), for the sake of parsimony. The greater specificity of the current matrix suggests that these categories may again be included. I have therefore added the sub-axis "deferred/immediate" in the lower half of the y-axis and "client-driven/authorial" in the upper quadrants. The "deferred/immediate" continuum thus describes work in the "resistant" mode, and it distinguishes between production that aims immediately to change the world-as-found, and work that hopes to effect that change in a hypothetical future moment. The "client-driven/authorial" continuum categorizes work within the "accommodative" quadrant. Here, the question of time is less important than is the question of agency: we distinguish "client-driven" work from that which is motivated primarily by authorial desire. It should be noted that what we describe here is not the locus of contractual

agency, but rather the primary engine of the design process; as this axis describes "accommodative" work, it is assumed that contractual agency lies with the client for both "client/driven" and "authorial" work.

The result is a sixteen-square matrix (Figure 11), defining a broad yet specific taxonomy of architectural approaches, many of them quite readily identifiable in practice, others sitting like empty spots on the periodic table, waiting for researchers to produce or discover what theory had long ago foreseen. While my primary interest here is to develop those empty spots, I will first describe the quadrants of the known architectural world, in order to provide framework for understanding both the existing and hypothetical modes of architectural making. Although my goal here is not to label the work of specific architects, I will name names. That is, I will provide examples of architects working in most of the below quadrants, but I will do so only as a means of illustration and explication of the diagram. The categories themselves are the true focus of the work. To the extent that parlor games (or parlors themselves, for that matter) exist anymore, the specific assignation of names to spots on the table might be well suited to that purpose. The examples I suggest here should be taken in that spirit.

Quadrants 1-4 (Figure 12) in this matrix describe with greater precision the "worldly/accommodative" work developed in Figure 8. To that broad "worldly/accommodative" categorization, we add two further modifiers. An "atmospheric/authorial" (Quadrant 1) architecture suggests minimalist, contingent work that might nevertheless be identified with an individual, authorial perspective. We might include in this category work such as SANAA's Glass Pavilion at the Toledo Museum of Art, or the domed plaza of Jean Nouvel's Louvre Abu Dhabi. Quadrant 2 describes a "concrete/authorial" approach within the "worldly/accommodative" category, and it describes a non-confrontational architecture defined in large part by the viewpoint and approach of the architect, and based on specific physical objects, rather than atmospheres or methods. Much architecture could be contained here, but the work of SHoP, post-2000 Herzog & de Meuron, OMA, or BIG might provide the clearest examples of the approach. Quadrants 3 and 4 describe a worldly-accommodative architecture driven in large part by the client. In Quadrant 3, we find "atmospheric/client-driven" work, which might describe temporary commercial installations such as shop windows, lightshows, and events. I would argue that most architecture produced today falls squarely within Quadrant 4, which captures the

"concrete/client-driven" approach. Such work responds primarily or solely to client needs through buildings or objects.

In Quadrants 5-8 (Figure 13), we find work that corresponds to the "disciplinary/accommodative" work as outlined earlier. Here, we can distinguish among four modes of "disciplinary/accommodative" production. Quadrant 5 describes a "formal-authorial" approach, one that closely resembles the "signature work" as defined in Section 2: here, we might place the work of Zaha Hadid, for example. It could be argued that the formal and gestural vocabulary of her later work was a translation and extension of some of the highly personal graphic experiments carried out in the early part of her career. The work is therefore both authorial and formal. We should distinguish this work of formal authority from the "technique-authorial" work of Quadrant 6. This work is based on and easily identifiable through the identity and perspective of the author, but this is made manifest through a highly personal method rather than through signature form. Here, I would suggest we include the work of architects such as Peter Zumthor or Rafael Moneo. Quadrant 7 is, like Quadrant 5, based on formal elaboration, but rather than deriving from authorial expression, this work is classified as "form/client-driven." That is, the formal innovation is many cases a response to client demands. We might classify the post-Guggenheim work of Frank Gehry within this quadrant, because this work is formally inventive, and in many cases, the formal expression is related quite closely or directly to programmatic demands articulated by the client. In Quadrant 8, we find work that could be classified as "technique/client-driven." This work is based on methods and operations, not authorial will, and is motivated out of service to the client. Here, I suggest we might place the work of large architectural organizations such as Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill or Perkins and Will, which have occasionally worked in a formalist mode, but which generally have emphasized a problem-solving approach in their service to clients.

The "disciplinary/resistant" quadrant, which in Figure 7 had been labelled "Adornian Diffidence," is here (Figure 14) broken down into four sub-quadrants (Quadrants 13-16), describing the immediacy or deferral of the resistance, and the basis of the work in form or in technique. Quadrant 13 describes work in a "form/immediate" vein. This label, which describes a disciplinary and resistant architecture based on expressive form, and intended to cause an immediate effect, could best be defined by much of the post-deconstruction agenda pursued at schools such as SCI-Arc. We could use the work of Thom Mayne, as a representative of a previous generation of this sort of

work, or of Hernán Díaz Alonso, et al., as representatives of the current. Work in the adjacent Quadrant 14 is somewhat similar, but relies on "technique" rather than "form." This "technique/immediate" category seems the best fit for parametric or algorithmic architecture, generally speaking, as it suggests a largely authorless system and is sometimes affiliated with a resistant attitude. Where this resistant attitude is absent in the parametric work (and this is indeed sometimes the case), it should rightly be classified just across the "accommodative/resistant" divide, in Quadrant 8. Quadrant 15 describes work within a "form/deferred" mode. Here, we refer to a formal work intended to bring about social change, but not immediately, or perhaps, not at all. Under this category, we might place the work of Elia Zenghelis, or the Italian strand of resistance running from Rossi through Aureli. Here, it should be noted, form is generally mute and elemental, rather than expressive or tortured. But the authors suggest that these intentionally normative formal expressions are important; form—however quiet it may be— is central to the resistance. In Quadrant 16, we find the work defined by the "technique-deferred" pairing. This is a resistant architecture based on operations, one that might best be described by Peter Eisenman's House II, or the later Eisenman projects of "artificial excavation."[25] This work resists easy commodification by turning to process, to operations. It is intentionally inscrutable to the uneducated eye.

The bottom left sector of the diagram (Figure 15) describes the "worldly-resistant" work. In Quadrant 10, we find the bulk of activist architecture I have described earlier. This production, executed in a "concrete/immediate" mode, aims immediately to change the world as found through discrete artifacts or choreographed actions. I have mentioned several examples of such work at the start of this paper. But is this the only mode of worldly and resistant production? What of the remaining three quadrants? A concrete/deferred architecture, which would inhabit Quadrant 12, suggests a politically motivated production of objects in the present, meant to effect change in an unknown future. Certainly such an architecture is possible, though for the moment, I can conceive of no existing way of working that might reasonably be placed here. It may be a source for novel work (assuming, as I most assuredly do not, that this kind of work is not already out there somewhere as I write), but this missing quadrant is of less interest to me than the other remaining blank spaces on the diagram, as it remains in the realm of the concrete.

It is in Quadrants 9 and 11 where I believe great potential for future architecture exists because we here find room for an atmospheric architecture of resistance. These

quadrants describe work that may use the disciplinary tools of the architect to create atmospheres as engrossing as the Rothko or Clyfford Still paintings that Greenberg describes, and that could be conceived to provoke action, resistance, or moments of heightened awareness. Such an architecture of atmosphere might seek to extend the work of Diller Scofidio + Renfro's (2002) temporary Blur Building (Figure 16), which used a network of high-pressure nozzles and weather sensors to construct a cloud of fog and white noise, inducing patrons to navigate a disorienting and defamiliarized internal promenade. Other examples of authored atmosphere can be found in the work of architect/performance artist Alex Schweder, who uses video projections, stage snow, and mist in works such as his (2014) *Friable Aperture* (Figure 17), or the 2009 work *Evaporative Buildings* (Figure 18), in which architectural elements and figures are rendered ethereal. The environmental engineering firm Transsolar has also produced compelling work in this vein, through their (2010) *Cloudscapes* installation (Figure 19) at the Venice Biennale, a collaboration with Tetsuo Kondo Architects, or their 2014 *Lightscapes* installation (Figure 20), also at the Venice Biennale, executed in collaboration with architect Anje Thierfelder. These projects use humidity as a building material, manipulating and modifying the air within the exhibition hall to create immersive spatial and visual effects, largely without conventional building materials.

The formal and technological devices deployed in the work I have described here have, however, largely been confined to the world of temporary exhibitions and installations, and for the most part have not been employed as part of the recent turn to direct architectural action, where performance has taken precedence over atmosphere, and immediate efficacy over highly-calibrated authorship. Given the climate of urgency in which much of the current wave of architectural activism has been conceived, this is perhaps understandable. Yet there is reason to suspect that a work of immersive atmosphere may, in the end, be capable of greater and more durable influence than work with more explicit and immediate aims. Walter Benjamin suggested that the didactic or propagandistic power of architecture was based primarily on the fact that the built environment, like film, could be apprehended by the viewer in a "state of distraction."[26] Benjamin argued that this "absent-minded" but critical position could ultimately be used to inject the political into the artistic, and to create new habits in the viewer. In many cases, politically-motivated architecture has lately shifted from the background position that Benjamin described to a foreground position that largely resists the "state of distraction."[27] As a result, I would argue that architects have insufficiently explored the

possibilities of resistance through immersive atmosphere. Atmospheres engage the senses but resist the spotlight. They form an environment, but the limits of that environment may not be immediately clear to the user. Like all architecture, atmospheres condition human interaction, but unlike most architecture, the fact that they do so may not be clear to those that find themselves “inside” it. Atmospheres avoid language, at least the languages we today recognize as such, yet it is precisely because they have the potential to communicate pre-linguistically to those initiated into architecture and to a broader constituency, that they might at last fulfil Colin Rowe’s trinity of architectural virtues: that is, an architecture of atmosphere might be “popular, intelligible, and profound.”[28]

I suggest that like the work of the action painters, the current shift to architectural action has the potential not only to produce focused episodes of transformation and resistance, but it also may lead us to consider other related modes of action, based not on abandoning disciplinary skill, but on an intense mastery of these skills; not on belabored form, but on skillfully crafted atmosphere. The gaps in this matrix suggest that further—and categorically different—work may still be possible within the “worldly/resistant” quadrant. That is to say, the activist turn is but one of the ways that the architect can engage, resist, and be in the world. This one of the many challenges before us. Being able to position that missing work, and to name it, may be a useful first step.

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(Includes abstract, references, captions, and endnotes.)

Illustrations:

Figure 1. Assemble, Folly for a Flyover, London, 2011. (Image ©Assemble.)

Figure 2. Todo Por La Praxis, Cinema Usera, Madrid, 2016. (Image ©Todo Por La Praxis.)

Figure 3. Raumlabor Berlin, Die Gärtnerei, Berlin, 2015. (Image ©Raumlabor Berlin.)

Figure 4. Izaskun Chinchilla, Renovation of Garcimuñoz Castle, Cuenca, Spain, 2016. (Image ©Imagen Subliminal.)

Figure 5. Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernández-Abascal, *2016 Global Architecture Political Compass* (2016).

Figure 6. Split of the autonomy/engagement dyad, according to degree of disciplinarity/worldliness and resistance/accommodation. (Diagram by author.)

Figure 7. Time and agency applied to Figure 6. (Diagram by author.)

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Figure 18. Alex Schweder, *Evaporative Buildings* (2009) (Image by Alex Schweder.)

Figure 19. Tetsuo Kondo and Transsolar, *Cloudscapes* (2010) (Image by Marco Zanta)

Figure 20. Anje Thierfelder and Transsolar, *Lightscapes* (2016) (Image by Transsolar)

[1] For an introduction to work of this type, see, for example, Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011) or Dan Pitera and Craig L. Wilkins, eds., *Activist Architecture: Philosophy and Practice of the Community Design Center* (Detroit: Detroit Collaborative Design Center, University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, 2015).

[2] For further elaboration on the distinction between these categories, see David Goodman, "Project and Action: On Making Immodest Proposals," *A+T* 39-40 (2012), pp. 236-249.

[3] Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, "Beyond Discourse: Notes on Spatial Agency," *Footprint* (Spring 2009): pp. 97-111. See also Heidi Sohn, Stavros Kousoulas and Gerhard Bruyns, "Commoning as Differentiated Publicness," *Footprint* (Spring 2015): pp. 1-8, who describe the advent of urban 'commoning' as a direct act of resistance to the current socioeconomic context.

[4] Nadia M. Anderson, "Public Interest Design as Praxis," *Journal of Architectural Education* 68, no. 1 (March 2014): pp. 16-27.

[5] See, for example, Goodman, "Project and Action". Isabelle Doucet and Kenny Cupers describe the validity of both architectural objects and theories as agents of change in their article "Agency in Architecture: Rethinking Criticality in Theory and Practice," *Footprint* (Spring 2009): 1-6. Doucet and Cupers suggest the possibility of an approach that integrates theory-based critique and object-based agency.

[6] Tahl Kaminer, "The Contradictions of Participatory Architecture and Empire," *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18:1 (2014): 31-37. Similar arguments appear in Maros Krivy and Tahl Kaminer, "Introduction: The Participatory Turn in Urbanism," *Footprint* (Autumn 2013): pp. 1-6.

[7] Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008): 83.Aureli echoes Roland Barthes's discussion of mythical speech and its ability to render ahistorical and inevitable the highly contingent current order. See Roland Barthes, "Myth Today" in *Mythologies*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972): pp. 109-159.

[8] For an example of the first posture, see Reinhold Martin "Critical of What?: Toward a Utopian Realism," *Harvard Design Magazine* 22 (Spring/Summer, 2005): 1-5; for the second posture, see Schneider and Till, "Beyond Discourse: Notes on Spatial Agency," *Footprint* (Spring 2009): pp. 97-111.

[9] See Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Perceptions and Judgments, Volume 1, 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986): 23-37; and Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann; trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002): pp. 225-261.

[10] For a discussion of the intersection of authorship and autonomy, see Sophia Psarra, Fani Kostourou, and Kimon Krenz, "Designed and Emergent Tectonics: Resituating Architectural Knowledge," *The Plan Journal* 0, no. 0, (May, 2016): pp. 15-32.

[11] Sydney Anderson, "Some Suggested Concepts for Improving Taxonomic Dialogue," *Systematic Zoology*, 23:1 (1974): 58-70.

[12] Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Well into the 21st Century: The Architectures of Post-Capitalism," *El Croquis* 187 (November, 2016): pp. 252-286.

[13] Scott Lash and Antoine Picon, in conversation with Kenny Cupers and Isabelle Ducet, "Agency and Architecture: How to Be Critical" *Footprint* 4 (Spring, 2009): pp. 7-19.

[14] Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism," *Perspecta* 33 (2002):pp. 72-77.

[15] Rem Koolhaas, anchor of the 'worldly-accommodative' quadrant, has at times worked in an authorial mode as well, in projects such as the Zeebrugge Ferry Terminal project or the CCTV Headquarters, for example.

[16] Later Eisenman projects, such as the Galican City of Culture, would likely be better placed in the 'Signature Work' category.

[17] Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *The Tradition of the New*. (New York: Di Capo, 1994), pp. 23-39.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Clement Greenberg, "American-Type Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals, Volume 3, 1950-195*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): pp. 217-236.

[20] Ibid. p. 232.

[21] Ibid. p. 235.

[22] Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, p. 3.

[23] Ibid. p. 4.

[24] Ibid. p. 5.

[25] See Jean-François Bédard, ed. *Cities of Artificial Excavation: The Work of Peter Eisenman, 1978-1988*. (New York: Rizzoli, 1994).

[26] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed., Harry Zohn, trans. (New York: Schocken, 1968): pp. 239-240.

[27] See, for example, the work displayed at the American Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Biennale.

[28] Colin Rowe, “Introduction to *Five Architects*” in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, Hays ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998): pp.74-83.