

Obituaries

The 40-Hour Work Week, Missing, Presumed Dead

by Sarah Small

The 40-Hour Work Week, last seen during the Eisenhower administration, was officially declared dead on Friday.

It is survived by the 80-Hour Work Week and the 0-Hour Work Week. A clearly shaken 0-Hour Work Week could only offer questions: "Can I send my resume for that position?" and "Do I still qualify for unemployment?" The 80-Hour Work Week was unavailable for comment.



Architecture Book, seen here in 2005, on vacation in St. Bart's with partner Buyer's Remorse.

Architecture Books, Dead of Over-Consumption

by Barbara Mau

"The Phaidon Atlas of 21st Century World Architecture" and "Architecture NOW!" were among the architecture books who died on Tuesday from a curious combination of obesity and malnutrition.

Witnesses saw a collection of architecture compilations enter a loft apartment carrying large boxes of Rem Koolhaas and several large Ray's Pizza boxes. The books apparently were binging themselves to the point of suicide. When discovered inside, the books were surrounded by vast mounds of trash hoarded from the late 1970s.

Those close to the deceased described them as "never letting go" and "not knowing when to quit."

The Architecture Couple, Died in Double-Murder Duel

by Monica Pathos

The Architecture Couple, made famous by their round glasses and a self-conscious selection of kitchenware, died Tuesday at a Museum of Modern Art gala honoring celebrity superstar architect Frank Gehry.

Envious of his debauched lifestyle as a swinging superstar and weary of hearing about his incredible sexual exploits with a revolving door of young companions and Thomas Krens, the Couple attended the museum's "Signature Sketch Signing Event" with plans to publicly murder Mr. Gehry. Each having successfully smuggled in a high-voltage cattle prod under their

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respective black turtle-necks, the Couple suddenly turned their devices on each other and fought to the death in front of a few hundred of New York's finest wealthy patrons. Witnesses recall hearing a few nearly incoherent slurs, including "You never respected my cat allergy!"

An inevitable offspring of the 80-Hour Work Week, the Architecture Couple first rose to prominence in the early 1990s. The Couple were thought to be planning a split well in advance of the foiled murder plot, citing irreconcilable differences, but were keeping the firm ME+U together to appease their own personal self-loathing.

The Architecture Couple is survived by The Bromance and the venerable Old Boys Club.

Architectural Education, Killed by Internet Video

by aldorossi2004

Architectural Education passed away this Friday from complications involving a Joshua Prince-Ramus TED Talk.

Those close to Architectural Education report that it first began falling into decline with the advent of YouTube tutorials, the iPad, self-taught bloggers and the over-educated but under-skilled.

The aforementioned TED Talk by Joshua Prince-Ramus has now become the motivational multimedia experience "It's Just That Easy." Prince-Ramus, played by Tom Cruise in a revival of his 1999 role in "Magnolia," is best known for awe-inspiring revelations like "Green buildings won't save the planet" and "Technology is too complicated to use or too difficult to maintain." This transformative experience is available at Wal-Mart in a 3-disc DVD or Blu-Ray format for a low price of \$19.99.

Architectural Education is survived by Wikipedia. Memorial services will be held at The Cooper Union.



Jeffrey Brown and Elise Jaffe, pictured above with Architectural Exhibition. They supported A.E.'s extended hospice stay to no avail. This last known photo was taken two days before A.E. was embalmed and put in the Museum of Modern Art collection.

Architectural Exhibition, 96, Atrophied After August History

by Will Prince

The Architectural Exhibition, long a culture-defining endeavor, died this year from a rare neurological disorder. It was 96.

The symptoms of the Architectural Exhibition's painful degenerative condition included memory loss, dementia, postural instability and slowness of movement. The last decade had seen the exhibition become obsessed with the more immaterial aspects of architecture, getting caught up in the politics and agency of practice without reconceptualizing the techniques of representation. The result was a denigrated exhibition that recycled historical techniques of representation, force-fitting them to works they don't suit.

The Architectural Exhibition had a distinguished history. From the seminal Modern Architecture: International Exhibition (assembled by Philip Johnson, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Alfred Barr) show in 1932 and the last great taxonomic exhibition, Deconstructivist Architecture (curated by Johnson and Mark Wigley) in 1988, to the monographic shows that kick-started a new generation in the 90s (Bernard Tschumi: Architecture and Event, Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture, Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio) and the series of survey shows that defined the late 90s and early 00s (Mood River, Intricacy, Folds, Blobs & Boxes, Tall Buildings and Nonstandard Architecture to name a few), the exhibition left a lasting imprint on architectural practice.

From its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, the Architectural Exhibition functioned as a performative act of situating the new, rising to a climax with the work of the Futurists in Milan in 1914 and the Constructivists in Moscow in 1921. The architectural exhibit reached middle age with the International Style exhibition, when modernism had advanced to such a degree that a survey could be undertaken, and the position of architecture curator was institutionalized in the persona of Philip Johnson. There, Johnson treated architectural representations as works of art, placing models on poor man's plinths or tables covered in white cloths and hanging drawings on the wall. Thus institutionalized, the exhibition became a means of historical research. Exhibits such as Machine Art, Built in the U.S.A. 1932-1944 and the 1947 Mies van der Rohe show reconsidered an architect's oeuvre, situated a movement or set out to identify parallel themes across disciplines.

The last heroic moment for that medium was the Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition in 1988, which served to crystallize a set of ideas opposed to pure form and bringing deserved attention to a group of architects who would define the discipline over the following decades.

Abandoning this heroic, epoch-defining condition, the Exhibition continued to thrive in its old age through monographic and survey shows. Decline began in the early 00s, as curatorial positions multiplied and the discipline become more dispersed. Even as curators of architecture had the opportunity to posit order, they instead retreated to the fringes.

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As the Exhibition’s condition became terminal, the heaviest blows were brought on by an inability to conceptualize or present architecture as the open (unstable) spatial practice that it has become; the focus centered on the niche-obsessed periphery. Barry Bergdoll, current Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design Department at Museum of Modern Art, called this a “reactive mode of exhibition,” (“In the Wake of Rising Currents” in *Log*, Fall 2010) where “the curator culls from contemporary or recent production what he or she admires and thinks deserves contextualization and wider publicity.” If, however, as Beatriz Colomina suggested in her editorial for the Leisure section of the **New City Reader**, print media in an age of instantaneous communication can only chronicle historical events rather than report breaking news, this model for the exhibit can only produce work that is even more stale. Shows like Home Delivery had an air of lateness about them; after all, we had seen the work in *Dwell* over the course of the decade.

The Architectural Exhibition is survived by the curator, who is continuing to multiply at an alarming rate. Rather than promoting architecture, curators of architecture seem to be fleeing it, presenting shows on fashion, cars and wine instead. In the end, the death of the architectural exhibit comes because we are all curators now. Not only are architects constantly asked to curate shows, but sites like Tumblr or FFFFOUND! make curation available for everyone, blurring the lines between producer, editor and curator.

Architectural Handwriting, Erased by Technology

by Nicholas de Monchaux

Architectural Handwriting, a noted style of manual calligraphy, died a quiet death in the late twentieth century.

The symptoms of its demise are just now becoming, sloppily, manifest. The cause of death was technology; ironically, also the parent of the deceased.

As recognized by the first, 1932, edition of John Wiley & Sons’ “Architectural Graphic Standards,” architectural lettering at the start of the twentieth century was not the geometric, angular type that would come to define the subsequent half-century of professional calligraphy. Rather, it was its predecessor, the serif face that, across previous centuries, come to define writing both on and about buildings: the writing of Trajan. Not Trajan’s own handwriting, but rather the stone-lettered inscription on the base of Trajan’s column in the Roman Forum. Built in A.D. 113 to commemorate the Emperor’s victory over the Dacian tribes in present-day Romania. While the content of the inscription is not in itself notable (“Senatus Populus,” etc.), its physical form has long been seen as an ideal of Roman typography. Forming the model for architectural supergraphics from the Renaissance onwards, a delineated version of the type was used as a standard for text and labels on the pigment-soaked presentation of the boards of the Academie des Beaux-Arts in Paris from the seventeenth century to the early 1900s.

For all of its stony permanence, however, Trajan’s inscription was itself a translation, from brush to stone. The text’s serifs remain the most prominent trace of this calligraphic origin, along with the long flourish of the tail of the “Q.” In the complex hierarchy of Roman stone-carvers, this last detail was also an indication of seniority; the only part of the typeface stepping outside of a geometric grid, its length was an indication of the experience, and status, of the inscribing craftsman.

Thus, the directive by “Graphic Standards” to render Trajan’s Roman type on the surface of the new “translucent linens” being used in architectural offices was less an excursion than a homecoming—across generations of scribes. The new focus on hand-drawing was itself driven by a new medium: the blueprint cyanotype, invented in 1841 and widespread in a newly professionalized architectural practice from the end of the century as a way to mechanize the production of drawings. Like the Roman scribis before them, the delineating architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were not rewarded for individuality but a strict, and rarely breached, uniformity. Revealing the origins of the word “identity” in the latin idem et idem, or “again and again,” theirs was a character repeated, slowly grinding a larger, institutional identity into the milky, vellum page. This identity would come to be signaled less by classical type and more by its newer, workaday cousin.

Written in 1928, Van Nostrand Reinhold’s “Architectural Drafting” recommends “Old Roman” letters as of “primary interest” to the architect. “They form the foundation,” the text affirms, “of all lettering.” However, the guide also introduces a more informal style of lettering, to be used “for notes or small scale titles.” Appearing also in 1932’s “Graphic Standards,” this type has, by the next edition of “Graphic Standards,” lost all trace of serifs and is newly termed “Engineering Lettering.” Like the radius of a ball-bearing or the gauge of steel, the square, sans-serif text was by 1946 the subject of its own memorandum from the American Standards Association (now ANSI) # Z 14.1-1946. By the 1956 “Graphic Standards,” all traces of the hand had disappeared in favor of the

Leroy Lettering system, which replaced the irregularities of a flesh-and-bone hand with an elaborate mechanical tracing system and collection of grooved templates for individual letter forms.

As with much of midcentury innovation, a fully mechanical typeface had been advocated, early on, by Le Corbusier. It “frees our eyes from the torture of the informal” read a 1924 opinion in *L’Esprit Nouveau*; “the geometry of machine type conforms to the natural function of the eye.” Yet, even as architectural handwriting gained its midcentury ascendance, its ubiquity marked the beginning of its inevitable disappearance. Just as a bible contains no text on grammar, 1970’s Sixth Edition of “Architectural Graphic Standards” was both the first to follow a “universal” system of organization—the Uniform construction index—as well as the first to confine a discussion of lettering to an ultimately deleted appendix. Yet even as the uniformity of hand-lettered type in 1970’s “Graphic Standards” speaks to the ubiqyity of hand-lettering in its time, the aspiration to technological, uniform building systems would soon lead to entirely new, digital media of architectural representation.

When it was released in 1982, AutoCAD was the first Computer-Aided Design and Drafting (CADD) software that did not need a shared mainframe to operate. Like its mainframe-based predecessors, however, AutoCAD borrowed its lettering from line-based templates like the Leroy, producing uniform characters out of single lines and segmented curves. While the technology of typeface display has changed, it is the current, universal ubiquity of CADD that led, inevitably and inexorably, to the death of the hand-crafted uniformity that was, for so many years, the architect’s handwriting.

Francis D.K Ching’s book “Architectural Graphics,” first published in 1975, was a direct reproduction of over 400 pages of hand-lettered lecture notes Ching had provided to his students at Ohio University, forwarded to Van Nostrand Reinhold by Forrest Wilson, the chair of Ching’s department. In subsequent editions, the exigencies of modern publishing led to the replacement of hand-lettering with a more traditional, serified typeface. Yet in the current, this humanist serified type—based on the humanist renaissance calligraphy in which Micheleangelo re-trained his own, vernacular hand in the 1500s—was replaced by a digital version of Ching’s original lettering, produced as the digital font Tekton by Adobe in 1989.

The font’s widespread availability has meant a visual proliferation of ostensibly “architectural” visual style, even as the typeface has found comparatively little use within mainstream architectural culture. The painfully precise informality of Tekton is perhaps matched only by a more (in)famous typeface, Comic Sans, introduced by Microsoft in 1994. Like Tekton, Comic Sans had its origins in the lettering derived for the draftsman’s use, in this case the version appropriated by the hand-lettering of pulp comic books from the 1930s onward. For all of its pedigree, however, the widespread derision for Comic Sans among design professionals led the BBC to ask in 2010, rhetorically, whether they “have ever found anything they loathe as much?”

As imagined in the *McSweeney’s* “short, imagined monologue,” “I’m Comic Sans, Asshole,” (2010) the font addresses designers directly: “Sorry I’m standing in the way of your minimalist Bauhaus-esque fascist snoozefest. Maybe sometime you should take off your black turtleneck, stop compulsively adjusting your Tumblr theme, and lighten the fuck up for once...”

Thus, beyond the disappearance of the manual design training which formed its foundation, the most important contributing factor to the death of architectural handwriting is the rapid, stunning reversal in its semiotic qualities. It is dead, more than anything else, because it has come to stand for the opposite of design.

It is against this background that architectural handwriting is remarkably, and ironically, survived by its parent, the Roman capitals of Trajan’s column. Suppressed by a century of modernism, the typeface, introduced by Adobe in digital form the same year as Tekton, has come to play a central role in contemporary culture, particularly movies. The “Film Posters Typeset in Trajan” Flickr pool alone contains several hundred examples, from “Apollo 13” to “Hannibal” to “Hotel Rwanda” (see http://www.flickr.com/groups/trajanfilmposter/pool). The posters’ chiseled serifs stand witness, in their monumental transience, to a strange and persistent continuity of culture. Less the engineered shock of the new, instead, a deeper novelty: the constant, opportunistic reinvention of the old.

Autostation©, Made Aggravating Architectural Software

by Penelope Cadet

Autostation© was liquidated this week, the end of a bankruptcy process launched after a hostile takeover attempt earlier this summer by Instaplan™, a new company that has merged drawing with gaming technologies, revolutionizing the architectural and engineering industry.

Last year, the company’s best product, AutoBAD, failed to perform after flawed upgrades and infected scripts collapsed the software. The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York (case re: 10-1497Z) set new intellectual property rights and attempted to halt Instaplan’s plans, but the CEO’s pride prevented a compromise. His Toll Brothers house burned down, which was later ruled arson.

At its height, Autostation sold more than 30 million copies.

Blog, 16, Tracked an Era of Human Vanity

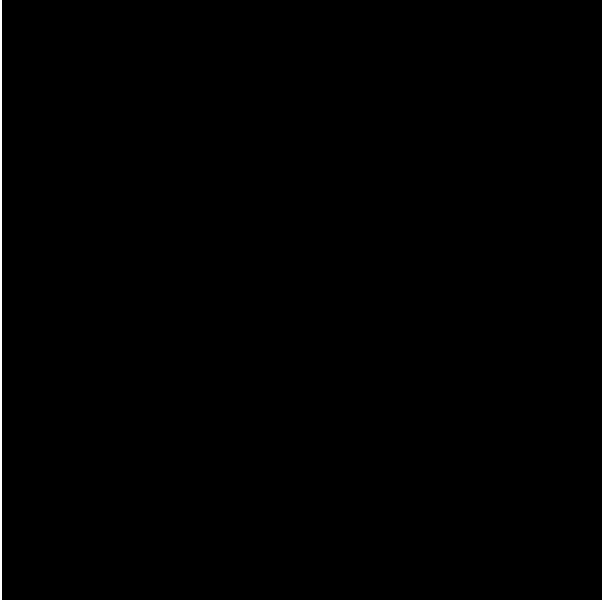
by Bryan Boyer

The blog died today after a long battle with logorrhea. It was 16.

In the beginning, it was the most banal form of hoarding: a basic diary of where one had been, with HTTP replacing geographic coordinates. The first “web logs” were simple thematic listings of personal interests and relevant homepages encountered during one’s time using the World Wide Web. In its youth, “blogging,” as it would come to be called after the word was coined in 1999, was a social behavior executed mostly by carbon-based life with all of the creative fragility of an endeavor inspired by human vanity.

At first humanity cherished these blogs for their ability to function as a limitless, if lopsided, memory of our collective existence. But soon the memory of the recent past had ballooned to such proportions as to overshadow the accumulated knowledge of eternity. Links, the currency of the blog, begot more links, until the ecology of the blogosphere reached a point of terminal fusion, consuming and sustaining itself in an endless parody of syndication across the silicon conduits of RSS and social media. Curation replaced creation as the logic of a newly minted online economy encouraged automated re-blogging and cross-posting in its desire to maximize CPM, collect eyeballs and cash out.

The blog is survived by its older and more free-spirited sibling, Web site.



A diptych of Calatrava’s most recent masterpiece, a 64-story tower in Hamburg, and a pair of nuzzling unicorns made of toothpicks.

Santiago Calatrava, 59, Architect, Engineer, Bird Enthusiast

by Annie Choi

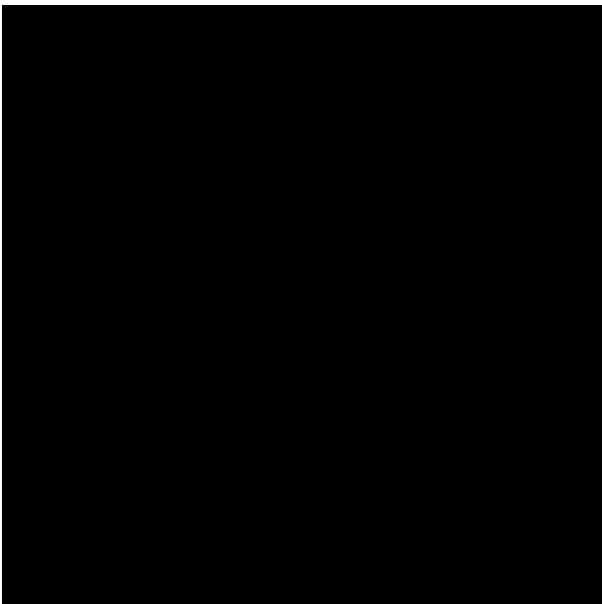
Renowned architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava was killed by doves last week. He was 59.

At a publicity event for the Chicago Spire last week, Calatrava released 2,000 doves into the city, representing the 2,000 feet of what will be the tallest building in North America. The doves briefly circled above and, in a shocking turn of events, swooped down and attacked the Valencian architect. A bleeding Calatrava was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he became the second person to die from dove-related injuries this year.

Investigators are unsure what caused the attack, but many present at the ceremony claimed that Calatrava was wearing a suit made entirely of breadcrumbs. “I’m pretty sure it was Prada,” claimed a bystander, who requested anonymity. “Definitely last year’s collection,” he added.

This is not the first time that the architect was the subject of an avian attack. In 2008, Calatrava sustained injuries during a news conference where he unveiled his proposed design for the new World Trade Center PATH station. To underscore his design, which evokes “a bird being released from a child’s hand,” Calatrava released a flock of birds during the event. He was quickly surrounded and maliciously pecked. Subsequently, the architect contracted several types of parasite because he had insisted on releasing pigeons to keep with the New York theme.

Calatrava was among the elite designers in the world, but the only one with a lifelong—and perhaps misguided—interest in both ornithology and literal metaphors. He leaves behind offices in Zürich, Paris, Valencia and New York City.



Olafur Eliasson, seen here sprinkling Evian water in front of the colored strobe lights and blowing your mind in 2001. Olafur’s guest pictured above was quoted saying, “It’s like the best science fair you’ve ever seen.”

Olafur Eliasson, 34, Evaporated Into A Strategized Career

by Theodor Podder

Olafur Eliasson, considered one of the most talented minds in contemporary art, was discovered today after his apparent evaporation in 2001. He was 34 at the time.

Until now, the art world had been spared a tragic and horrible secret: Olafur Eliasson is not Olafur Eliasson. It is now believed that he mysteriously disappeared during the installation of his groundbreaking first retrospective at ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2001. His assistants saw him entering his mirror-clad space, but soon after that, every trace of him was gone.

As with every inexplicable loss of a young genius, the experts and his dealers were in shock. They secretly agreed that his work was so crucial for healthy development of the contemporary art market that it was simply too big and important to lose. They pledged to fully support continuous work of his studio and hired a professional actor, who has represented Eliasson at openings and other major events since.

After Eliasson’s demise, his studio continued its work previously planned projects. The spectacular installation planned for the Tate Modern was on schedule for 2003 and a major retrospective of Eliasson’s work that would travel to San Francisco and New York was set for the end of the decade.

It seemed that physical absence of the artist made planning the trajectory of his career much easier. Eliasson left behind with a wide span of works and instructions executed in 1990s; these could be adapted, modified, transformed and developed into countless objects and installations. His dealers were left with only wonder at how such a deep well of creativity could be developed to its full potential.

Before the discovery of Eliasson today, his career had been plotted forward another four decades. After another traveling retrospective in 2015, Eliasson’s studio would have started an aggressive push into the field of interiors and product design—new lines of toys, furniture, garden sculptures and pavilions were to be introduced in February 2016. By 2018, Olafur Eliasson was to be a household name, rivaled only by giants like Picasso or Martha Stewart.

Eliasson’s love of architecture would step into foreground soon after 2018, following a short break in production to avoid over-saturation of the market. The studio planned a major expansion in 2019 to start developing two grand visions: “What-a-Nice-Weather” City in Iceland—a giant biosphere above which an artificial sun would have given light to the chosen inhabitants, who would have lived and moved in optical mazes, tranquil light-filled environments and hanging gardens—and artificial drifting islands near the Virgin Islands, which would shelter families of art collectors as they migrated through the world oceans. With construction scheduled to take more then twenty years, both gigantic projects were planned to open in the early 2040s.

In his later years, Eliasson was to be preoccupied with building a large inhabitable sculpture on Mars that was a geodesic portrait of himself, a small but unforgettable nod to Buckminster Fuller. As a strategic move, this last project would have remained unfinished, adding another mysterious twist to his career and leaving his dream for further generations of artists to explore.

The artist’s “death” was planned for February 13, 2049. Stamps of his geodesic portrait were to be issued a month after his death. To mark his contribution to the culture of the human race, his dealers were then to propose that all the major museums leave one exhibition space permanently empty starting on the day of Eliasson’s planned termination. One of the dealers also proposed to resurrect Eliasson immediately after his death, but it seems this idea was later rejected.

In any case, although he is no longer among us, it seems the work of Olafur Eliasson had the brightest future.

Fiction, Faked Death Gone Awry

by Filip Tejchman

A man climbs into the bedroom of a sleeping girl. Asleep in the other room, her brother is awoken by the sounds of his young sister resisting the assault. As the attacker enters the room, he tears through the window, leaving his t-shirt behind: the sole piece of evidence. Brother and sister hold each other in silence.

The following morning a news crew arrives and interviews the victim. Enraged, her brother begins an existential rant about poverty and economic isolation, ending with a warning to all in the neighborhood about the certainty of being raped. The rant is mass distributed via the Internet and adapted into a revolutionary anthem that is played throughout the world. Marching bands adapt the song, and its warning is played in front of thousands sitting under Friday night lights. The potential of this spectacle machine is not lost on the young man, who cashes in and moves his family to a new home, far outside the rapist’s hunting grounds. Once settled, he decides to return to school and pursue his life-long dream of opening a hair salon and performing in an autobiographical musical, which will also appear re-edited and auto-tuned on YouTube before being played by a high school marching band in Pasadena’s Rose Parade.

This is mostly true. Mostly.

Fiction, a means of storytelling used for millennia to address the human condition, has died. The cause of death was Reality. “Fiction,” Susan Sontag wrote, “is supposed to be ‘true.’” Developments in media and culture, however, rendered Fiction incapable of communicating truth.

This story and countless others like it were the death knell for Fiction, the moments at which Fiction and Reality became indiscernible. Compelled to gaze into the mirror, contemporary culture’s narcissism transitions from obsession and observation in a back-and-forth feedback cycle, whose shimmering effects make it difficult to separate reality TV from just television. Editing, re-mixing, auto-tuning and YouTube-ing make all recorded reality available for translation into Fiction.

In the wake of Fiction, the world is left with a realization of Marshall McLuhan’s “Global Village”—an alternate reality in which box office bombs are turned into comedies, fictional characters comment on current events and the news is stretched and squeezed to the beat. Instead of a single defining context there are multiple, floating in a virtual cloud of confused and interwoven media fragments drawn, like the structural threads of a dream, into superimposed and co-existent realities.

And with this alchemical turn, Fiction is dead. It was already very old, and we all kind of expected it to happen anyway.



President Barack Obama delivering his now famous “Jet Packs? Hell YES we can!” speech in December.

The Future, Consumed by Utopian Nostalgia

by Filip Tejchman

“This storm is what we call progress.”—Walter Benjamin

A wise man once said that we are forever condemned to build the futures of the past. Norman Foster’s recent urban project, Masdar in the UAE, dubbed the world’s first carbon-neutral city—the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow exported to the Middle East—cuts a rectangular swath through the desert near Abu Dhabi, a typically uninhabitable expanse of land that, because of its lack of fresh water, is only suitable for the nomadic cultures that historically occupied it. Never mind that bit, what’s important is that it is green, solar-powered, pedestrian-only and has a labyrinth of subterranean roads for robotic people movers. When Nicolai Ourousoff wrote about the Masdar development, he compared it to a gated community that piggy-backed on environmentalism for purely marketing purposes. Further, it is a concept recycled from Uncle Walt’s vision, but unlike it, swaps the original radial plan of EPCOT for a neocolonial Roman plan. In urbanistic terms, the Future was often conflated with Utopia, which Manfredo Tafuri described as something that

proposes to completely replace the existing city—an artificial and exurban island. The most often-cited contemporary examples hew to wildly divergent urban models, from Celebration, Florida—built in part with an investment from the Walt Disney Company—to the infamous Dubai. While one evokes the nostalgic sterility of twentieth-century Americana, the other is an ever expanding black hole of vice, pleasure and wealth, ringed by a temporary city of foreign workers and the foreign aid organizations that care for them—a hybrid of the horizontal suburbs and Fritz Lang’s “Metropolis.”

This mash-up parodies the script written by Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer and the Brazilian government in creating the new capital city of Brasilia in 1960. Located in the country’s center, Brasilia was a masterpiece of heroic Modernism—the hovering SuperQuadra and massive scale evoking Le Corbusier. Presaging Dubai, Brasilia was built by workers living in separate settlements just a short commute away. Over time these temporary worker-cities have accreted the qualities that constitute “real” cities, perhaps more so than their diva-like, centrally planned suzerain.

Masdar is perhaps the most newly minted version of a Utopia that mines the Past in order to sell an ever-lagging Future of today. The irony is that unlike the metropolis of the past, these new global cities store wealth and capital rather than generate it—part of a global chess game in which culture is exhibited rather than pollinated. There is no Future in a Present that is based on a financial end-game whose only goal is an immediate jackpot. The Future will receive mourners until amnesia sets in once again.

Google, 15, Inspired Users to Total Technological Reliance

by Joe Ringenberg

Google, Inc., an American multinational and publicly traded corporation, was dissolved this week. It was 15.

The Mountain View, California, company quickly established itself as a global leader in Internet search, cloud-computing and online advertising after its incorporation in 1998. Google’s dissolution comes as a shock to its millions of users, clients and investors who relied on the company’s email (Gmail™), search (Google.com™), advertising (AdWords™), online video (YouTube™), online publishing (Blogger™), browsing (Google Chrome™), photo-sharing (Picasa™), ethical reasoning (Google Moral Coder™), word-processing (Google Docs™), 3D modeling (Google SketchUp™), navigation (Google Maps™), existential identity construction (Google Me™) and mobile phone platform (Android™) services.

While Google counted its users in the millions and its market capitalization in the billions, public perception of the corporation was divided. Detractors criticized Google’s stance on privacy, copyright and censorship issues, as well as its corporate logo, which has been called “childish” and “a typographical embarrassment.”

Google supporters, on the other hand, elevated brand loyalty to a cult-like hybrid of programming jargon, messianic teology and Internet memes. To these believers, the corporation was a divine incarnation leading humankind toward a technological nirvana known as The Singularity, characterized by free wireless Internet in most major airports and state-of-the-art predictive advertising services. “Google only showed me ads for things it knew I needed,” one mourner tweeted. “Now who will tell me?”

While the events that surround Google’s demise remain shrouded in mystery, sources familiar with the issue have identified a minor clause in the corporate charter relating to Google’s motto, “Don’t Be Evil.” While generally thought to be a disingenuous attempt at populist folk-wisdom, the phrase is directly quoted in the clause with a stipulation that if Google should ever become evil, the charter would be revoked in its present state.

The condition was thought to be triggered by Google’s recent release of Google Statecraft™, described in a press release as “a revolutionary new app for legislation and voter management.” The tool was designed to use detailed profiles of individual citizens based on online identities and browsing histories to predict voting behavior and optimize policy construction. Used in conjunction with Google Constitution™, Google Statecraft™ allowed for the modification of legislation based on projected public opinion, enabling global democracies to bypass expensive elections and messy legislative branches. An internal algorithm identified this development as patently evil and automatically shut down Google’s online operations early Wednesday morning.

Global markets reacted to the death of Google with record losses, and Congress acted quickly to establish a federal department to respond to the disaster. The department immediately took control of Google’s servers, reinstating those services deemed necessary for national security including Gmail™, AdWords™ and YouTube™. With no physical location, it operates entirely online as the General Office Of Government & Legislative Enterprise, at www.g-o-o-g-l-e.gov.

Early Thursday morning, the office affirmed that its disaster-mitigation operations had stabilized, and it would soon pursue other projects in the name of public interest. At the top of the list is providing free wireless Internet in most major airports and state-of-the-art predictive advertising services.

Zaha Hadid— In Remembrance

by Sam Jacob

The very old may remember her. To the rest, I can assure you, she was really something in her time. Which was also my time, but not as much as it was her time.

Zaha. So famous she only needed one name, like a Brazilian footballer but for different reasons. One, she was a woman. Two, she was Iraqi. It may surprise you, but that was kind of shocking to architecture in the early days of the century, where architects were for the most part men from the West. Funny how things change. But as age has taught us, not only will everything pass, but also all will eventually invert, like burnt-out stars.

Zaha did something special for architecture. She made buildings that swooped and swirled, that seemed to be flows of matter held in suspended animation. Partly these were special because no one had ever built things like them. They seemed like impossible architecture made real. They looked like supersized versions of sculptures by those artists or parents or grandpar-ents had liked. You know, those sculptures that you can’t tell what they are supposed to be, cast in expensive metals. The kind of art that was so totally Art that it bored us rigid.

We were not so sure that the art our generation liked was actually art most of the time—that’s why we liked it. Certainly, we were not confident enough to imagine it blown up to an enor-mous scale. Thinking back, that’s probably why we asked her to build so many cultural buildings. They were buildings that looked like something we all instinctively agreed was capital-A Art. And that meant it could work as a kind of semiological umbrella bestowing the stamp of culture on anything inside it, which was of course important because it made our non-art art feel more like Art.

There’s something else, too. To understand Zaha, you need to understand a particular moment. You need to understand how important money was. Or rather, what money had become. And also what money had done to everything else—especially culture, and most of all, art.

Remember money? That stuff that stood in as a symbol of exchange, a way of abstracting value that had begun, so they told us, with primitive people exchanging seashells or some such. Well, by the turn of the century, this idea had become so abstract, so dematerialized, so far removed from stuff or things or actions that it had become supernatural. At one particular moment, the idea of money had become so effervescent that almost everyone became inebriated. Those quaintly named mechanisms of global capitalism, “markets,” went haywire. They became hyper-sophisticated, super-calibrated, cleverly geared systems whose logics supported ever-finer abstractions. They became machines for manufacturing value and growth in vapor-ous form, decoupled from substance.

Just as when we visit Versailles, we feel the vanity, excess and self-glorification of prerevolutionary France, or at Chartres, we feel the soaring, overbearing might and mysticism of medi-eval religion, to visit Zaha’s buildings today we can actually feel that vertiginous moment of unreality, that moment of ultimate liquidity. Her architecture stands as a record of these sensations long vanished. Through the swoosh of volumes, the cranked-out impossibility of structure, the lightheadedness of reflection and translucencies, through buildings that hardly touch the ground, stretched and elongated as though sucked into the jet stream, through seductive curves of overblown sensuality, we find the most permanent record of the heady liquid state of mind of millennial-abstract boom economics.

Remember Johnny Rotten walking off stage saying “Ever get the feeling you’ve been cheated?” Well, that’s what Zaha did, in a manner of speaking. I guess we should have known. Looking back, it was obvious that there was something fishy going on. What were all those references of Russian Con-structivists about? Why would you quote artists and architects working in the service of the Communist Revolution when all your work supported an ideologically opposite system? That Zaha merged these references with the effervescent sensations of late capitalism should have made it clear what she was up to. Revolution as absolute luxury!

It turned out that everything we had thought of as expres-sion was not about her, but about us. She was taking us through the looking glass to a place where up was down and black was white. She took us on a journey into the dark heart of our culture, giving us a lens through which we could have seen the early twenty-first century, if only we’d looked. It’s not her fault that we didn’t see, that we were distracted by the wrong things. Maybe she, like Rotten, gave up on her audience, all too full of admira-tion and enthusiasm, but for exactly the wrong reasons. She gave us what we deserved, and then left us to it. She showed us the truth, but all we could see reflected back was our own idiocy.

Idealism, 22, Snuffed Out Before a Hopeful Future

by Meredith Young

Idealism, a recent college graduate, died Monday morning after a long battle with IDP, a common degenerative disease. It was 22.

Treatment went largely unnoticed by the disease, and Ideal-ism was unable to recover. The official death certificate lists the death as a result of complications from IDP in combination with ADA, IPD, IBC, BIM, DIY, OSH, MLA, NWA, WCW, WWF, MMA, TNA, WTF, BBQ and NCARB. The death was confirmed by Ideal-ism’s appointed AIA mentor.

Incandescent Light Bulb, 208, Lit, Then Killed, The Planet

by TheIma Cruz

After an extended term on death row marked by impassioned appeals, Incandescent Light Bulb was executed last night for capital crimes committed over a 208-year period, including the depletion of the ozone layer and gross inefficiency.

The champion of Incandescent’s capture, arrest and ultimate demise was the pioneering LEED, tipping off authorities to Incan-descent’s hide-out in the basement of conservative talk-show host Glenn Beck.

To friends and family, Incandescent Light Bulb was “bright” and “full of warmth.” “I never suspected he was capable of such atrocities,” a former coworker remarked. “His presence just made you feel at home.” “He’s irreplaceable, simply irreplace-able,” his wife Deborah lamented, “I just don’t think things will ever be the same now that he’s gone.” Fluorescent Light Bulb has since moved in to assist Deborah with caring for LED, their son.

Incandescent Light Bulb is survived by his wife and child, nephew Halogen, elder brother Low-Pressure Sodium and father Candle.



The ICA (left) wearing shutter shades with Kanye West in 2007.

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Contemplative Space for Art

by Annie Choi

Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, died last week upon its conversion into the Poss Family Ford-Mazda-Volkswagen dealership.



Irony at the Soho Grand for BlaBlaBlog launch party, “the blog about blogs about blogs.”

Irony, Drove the Internet to New Heights

by Joe Ringenberg

A rhetorical device and literary technique as old as language itself, Irony died on December 31, 2010, from overuse and gen-eral fatigue.

Fueled by the emerging popularity of camp in the 1960s and the increasing sarcasm of the American teenager over the course of the twentieth century, irony came into prominence in the late 1990s. Following the events of September 11, 2001, irony was widely believed to have receded from public speech, but was quickly reintroduced by then-president George W. Bush, whose cheeky “Mission Accomplished” banner brought irony roaring back in the summer of 2003. Over the next seven years, irony reached a fever pitch with the expansion of the Internet and blogs, where it mixed with snark and disingenuousness, became wholly lost to wit and brought authenticity in public discourse to an all-time low.

Undeterred even by the sobering economic hardship that had plagued the country since late 2008, Irony achieved peak saturation in late 2010 before reaching its breaking point. The fateful moment of collapse came at a New Year’s Eve costume party; the invitation instructed guests to dress up as people who were too cool to dress up for a theme party. According to the host, the trouble started when the first guest arrived.

“Normally we only let in people who we think have a good enough costume, but this guy wasn’t dressed up at all. I couldn’t tell if he was trying too hard or if he really was too cool to dress up for a theme party. Maybe he had the best costume of all!” At this point he broke down and began to cry. “I don’t even know what’s good anymore,” he stammered.

Similar accounts have been reported across the country in what can only be described as a breakdown in the critical value structure that underlies irony. Having given up the ability to make decisive and genuine value statements, culture has lost any fixed point to which irony might refer. The result of this is a general malaise, though some are optimistic given that the only way we can go is up.

“We can’t make the same mistake for 2011,” the party plan-ner conceded, “but no one remembers what the alternative is. A come-as-you-are party? The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?”

Irony is survived by thoughtfulness and sincerity, however weak and beleaguered they might be.

Rem Koolhaas, 66, Killed in Shampoo Tragedy

by Bjarke Engalds

Architect Rem Koolhaas, famous for his ability to relate to the complex forces of the metropolis “like a surfer to the waves,” died last Sunday in a massive wipeout in the infinity wavepool in the sky lounge of the Burj Khalifa.

Authorities point to trace amounts of Origins, a mint sham-poo that stings the anus, found in the pool water as a possible cause of his distraction and eventual fall.

Koolhaas’ enduring legacy will undoubtedly be his pioneer-ing use of new materials in scaled model construction, a rich legacy that began with the controversial introduction of blue Styrofoam blocks, and his later masterstroke, the use of thick cut plexiglass strategically lit from below for dramatic effect.

Those that were closest to Koolhaas will remember a gentle, fun-loving man who had a passion for writing in his free time and vacationing in Africa. Friends will also take comfort that he spent his last moments doing what he loved most, carving bitchin’ foa-mies on top of the world’s largest skyscraper.

Daniel Libeskind, 64, Visionary Impaled by Own Genius

by Micro Megamind

Daniel Libeskind died abruptly Monday at an office team-build-ing retreat. Employees of Studio Daniel Libeskind failed to catch Mr. Libeskind during trust falls, disemboweling him on a regret-ably positioned scale model of his forthcoming Mall of America extension.

Libeskind leaves behind an impressive legacy of award-win-ning architecture, most notably the Jewish Museum (The German Architecture Prize), The Ascent at Roebling’s Bridge (CNBC’s Best High Rise Development of 2008), Westside Shopping and Leisure Centre (2010 Prime Property Award) and the Scrant-on Jewish Museum (Scranton Standard’s Best Bets of 2011). Recently, Libeskind’s meteoric success afforded him the freedom to pursue other ventures, such as his fragrance line SHARD and Charmin toilet paper’s “Libeskind Signature Series,” boasting a unique sketch from the architect on every square. SHARD will remain in distribution at K-Mart, a bestseller alongside Britney Spears’ Curious; the latter was discontinued due to abrasives discovered in the ink.

Luxury, Supplanted by Resurgent Value of Serious Play

by Filip Tejchman

“Take your pleasure seriously.”—Charles Eames

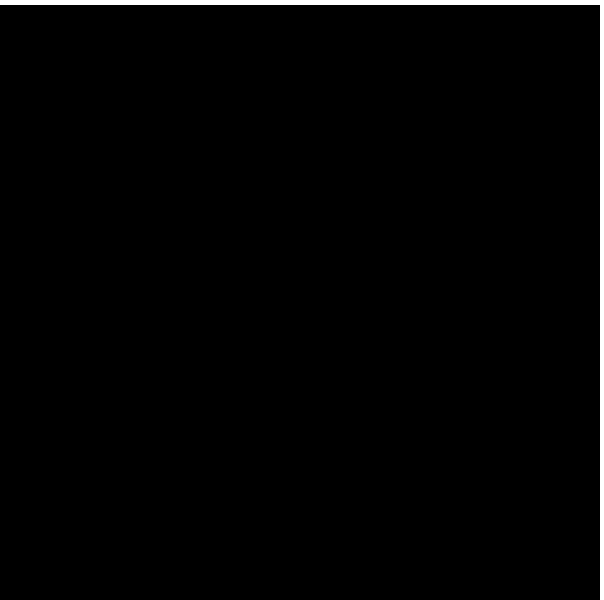
Luxury: a material object, service, etc., conducive to sumptuous living, usually a delicacy, elegance or refinement of living rather than a necessity.

Prior to closing, Fernan Adrià’s restaurant El Bulli was impos-sible to get into. It was the epicenter of molecular gastronomy, a movement that adapted advanced food production technology and techniques to the contemporary restaurant kitchen. Entry was only gained through a lottery that would reserve any available spot. That could leave as little as two weeks notice to get time off from work and purchase a plane ticket to Spain. Exclusive. Expen-sive. Indulgent. Luxurious? Your meal could include foams, jellies, gasses and crusts—food transformed and defamiliarized. It could also cost hundreds of dollars. But is this about money? Maybe. Of course, wealth does offer access to a larger range of exotic and transcendent experiences, but consider the list of activities pro-posed by Charles and Ray Eames that offer wealth without cash, ranging from teaching yourself a foreign language (Chinese), playing chess to studying mathematics.

Obviously, they didn’t have a problem with doing home-work—work and play intermingled as part of their professional and private lives. They took their pleasure seriously, and play was perhaps one of the most valuable experiences a person could enjoy. In 1958, the Eames were commissioned by the Indian gov-ernment to spend three months exploring the country and advise it in developing the design intelligence of the emerging Indian industrial sector. Their conclusive document, “The India Report,” outlined the important role and interchangeability of play in work and education.

Charles and Ray would certainly have been into food you could play with—imagine the movies they could make! In this sense, the food at El Bulli was less a hedonistic luxury than it was a very serious form of play that educated and extended the human experience, pushing the envelope of sensory capabil-ity and expanding the range of possible phenomena. For the Eames, an activity like learning a foreign language could also expand reality, opening new possibilities and giving the senses a greater range of content to graze from. This is evolution at the smallest scale, the rewriting and training of the mind in relation to an increasingly complex and abundant environment full of new experiences. So, in a way, playing with your food will make you evolve, but only if you take play seriously.

But what is the value of luxury relative to play? While the Eames saw play as being an integral part of the work-play-education triumvirate, at the moment the U.S. is attempting to kick-start spending in hopes of awakening the Invisible Hand and the trickle-down effects of luxury spending. What remains unsaid is that while we are certainly consumers, we are also producers and contributors to what is perhaps the most valued and coveted creative culture on the globe. Music, design, film, fashion: the world wants and needs what we generate, largely through playing around. In this sense, play is not a luxury but our most valuable economic and cultural necessity. And, while we can aim to spend, we could also invest in some serious play, El Bulli style. And so, good-bye Luxury: God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.



Greg Lynn pictured here, holding a Casio DG-20 keyboard, with Peter Eisenman singing a duet in 1989 at the ANWhatever conference.

Greg Lynn, 46, Used Blobs and Boats Until They Turned Against Him

by Jerry Kipnis

The architect Greg Lynn is presumed dead after his boat disap-peared somewhere in the Pacific Ocean last Thursday.

Lynn will be best remembered for coining the architectural term “Blob,” as well as such groundbreaking works as Embryo-logical House 1, Embryological House 7 and the inimitable Embryological House 314, which his detractors thought looked an awful lot like Embryological House 42.

Lynn will also be remembered for his substantial contribu-tion to the field of boat theory: “a boat hull does not change its shape when it changes its direction, obviously, but variable points of sail are incorporated into its surface. In this way, topol-ogy allows for not just the incorporation of a single moment but rather a multiplicity of vectors, and therefore, a multiplicity of times, in a single continuous surface.”

Authorities are still investigating the incident, but it is sus-pected that his boat, an assemblage of milled rubber duckies, failed to incorporate the vector of the massive tsunami recorded off the coast of California last week.

Manifesto, Murdered Along with Family

by Jonathan Solomon

Manifesto, one of the twentieth century’s most notorious dictators, expired along with his cruel and unobtainable mistress Utopia, in a blast at their compound in Paraguay this month. Also lost were the couple’s illegitimate son Ideology, sociopathic daughter Propaganda, and their beloved black miniature poodle Style.

The family had been living in various sites of exile (Elba, Formosa, Yale University) since the 1970s. After the closure of *Assemblage* magazine and the release of Form Z version 3.2 in the late 1990s, they rose to power again before seeking refuge in South America. In recent years they had been working closely with the partnership of Sustainability & Green, and there were rumors of a new collaboration. The cause of the explosion that took their lives is unknown.

Equally renowned for the mass-production of thought and the mass-delusions that crushed individual expression through-out the century, the four family members were nonetheless not uncommon figures on the international cultural and academic scenes. Manifesto, with one hand in mass murder and the other in architectural discourse, was a leading figure of the modern movement. Much loved even among those he oppressed, Mani-festo was second in infamy only to Utopia, who seduced the powerful and the intellectual alike with her promises of leisure and empowerment but only delivered despotism and boredom.

Their brood was no less formidable. Suave and charming despite a limp caused by congenital asymmetry and an occa-sional stutter, Ideology was educated at preparatory school in Switzerland before moving to the United States to take up a career in politics. He later was a successful producer of cable news. Sources friendly with the family say that he was being groomed to be his father’s successor.

With Style in tow, Propaganda was a frequent guest at design juries in architecture schools in the American northeast, while her parents preferred to operate through international biennales and design journals. Propaganda, who had always had an interest in the fine arts, was equally comfortable on both the right and left side of the political spectrum. A lifelong partner of her older brother—friends deny that the two were lovers—Propaganda was also a consort of the entertainment industry. In and out of rehab repeatedly, she carried on serial flings with academic publishing.

The family is survived by several estranged offspring: Kitsch, who Milan Kundera once called “the absolute denial of shit;” Camp, Susan Sontag’s playful and anti-serious “solvent of morality;” schizophrenic but ultimately effervescent Cheekiness, who Peter Sloterdijk has lauded as “brave, bold, lively, plucky, untamed, ardent” and Cliché, of whom little has yet been said but from whom great things are expected.

Mass-Customization, 10, Killed in Low-Cost Custom Drive-By

by Rambo Johnson

Mass-customization was fatally wounded after a drive-by shoot-ing in architecture firm SHoP’s new suburban development. It was 10.

The development, meant to offer an unique experience for all residents, ultimately failed due to the undesirable nature of individualized experience. Officially, SHoP refuses to comment on the matter, but an employee cornered while walking to his Prius said, “We used optimization to create individualization to streamline the customization of personalization and achieve normalization.”

A resident of the development who witnessed the violent end described the perpetrator as “difficult to describe—it was like every feature was unique.”

Mass-customization is survived by mass-unemployment and IKEA.

Thom Mayne, 66, Killed by Beam Under Duress

by Margo Crawford

Thom Mayne, Pritzker Prize-winning architect of 41 Cooper Square, died Wednesday when a disgruntled steel beam decoupled from the building and impaled the California resident while he huddled for warmth beneath the Astor Place Cube.

The beam, currently held by police, cited the back-breaking conditions of his employ under Mayne and years of aggressive manipulation as motive for the crime. The affair has prompted law-makers to reassess their stance on the working conditions of steel and concrete, particularly the contentious “Cantilever Clause,” which tacitly endorses a practice critics deem “decadent” and “totally unnecessary.”

Mayne leaves behind Morphosis, a successful architectural practice with numerous high profile projects both domestic and international. Morphosis first entered the public eye with the Diamond Ranch High School, a project whose complexity con-tinues to earn high praise for its successful provision of spaces where Advanced Placement students can hide from school bul-lies. In a public statement on Thursday, Morphosis announced that they plan to continue operations, saying they “will carry on Thom’s commitment to reshape society through the design of oddly shaped buildings.”

Meat as Material, Lived an Unpreserved Existence

by Emily Abruzzo

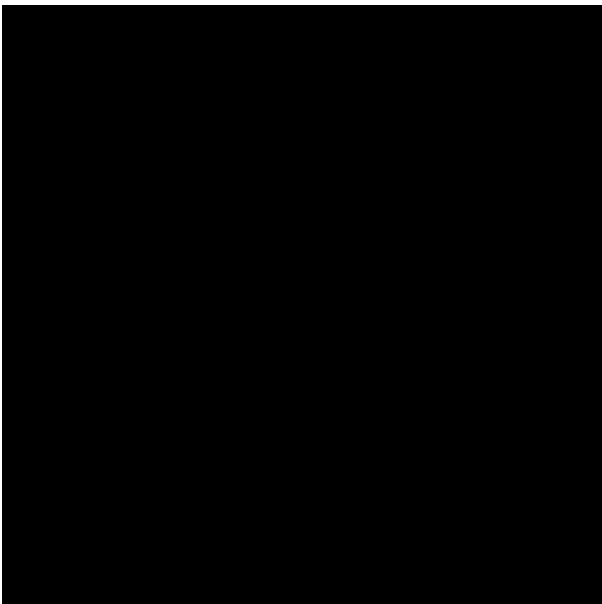
The use of meat in design died yesterday, leaving the world to turn to less fetid materials for its dresses and houses.

Multiple causes of death were given: inefficiency, unbeliev-ability and the expiration of novelty among them.

Once thought an invalid option for use as cover and clad-ding, designers began to suggest meat as a material for use in the making of both high fashion and architecture in the late 2000s. Reform1’s “In Vitro Meat Habitat” and Franc Fer-nandez’s meat dress for Lady Gaga—who also wore a meat bikini—are prime examples of this phenomenon.

That meat could be seen as clothing and cladding was con-sidered novel and innovative at the time of its introduction, even poetic in its resonance. Nonetheless, its detractors persisted. Issues of sustainability—a factor listed by some as an advantage of using meat—were cited, as was cruelty, not only to the ani-mals involved—though some designs suggest the meat was to be laboratory-grown—but also to starving people the world over. The olfactory sensations associated with the meat’s eventual rot, even in cases where the meat was to be somewhat preserved, posed a final, debilitating hurdle to the material’s acceptance.

Meat-as-material is survived by Vampire / Goth culture.



Minimalism, 38, Died Unnoticed

by Sam Jacob

Architectural Minimalism rose again from the ground this week. Still not dead, it is 38.

Of course, the undead usually don't get obitured. That's because the undead exist outside of those fundamental human frameworks of beginning and end, outside of the narrative arcs that we project onto the world around us. For the undead, there's no life support machine to turn off, no last words, no final curtain.

In myths, we can finish off the undead with silver bullets, a stake through the heart or by slicing their heads clean off. In real life though, the undead are harder to destroy. They drift on, unchecked through eternity like debris through space. But maybe, in the real world, an obituary might just be the thing to do it. Maybe an obituary is not just a catalogue of the slings and arrows of a particular life form. Maybe it could gain a little agency. Maybe, in some occult manner, an obituary could perform proactively.

So, we come here to bury Minimalism, despite its own protestations. Don't listen to its pleas as we throw handfuls of soil onto its grave. For all of us, even for Minimalism, scratching against the lid of its sublime onyx coffin down there, this is really for the best.

According to previous architectural obiturists, Modernism died at 3 p.m. on March 16, 1972, in St. Louis, with the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoue housing complex. But unnoticed at the time, something rose from the clouds of dust, a spectral architectural form. Minimalism was born—not alive, not dead—in this moment, a ghostly incarnation of one half of its genetic forbear just at the moment of death, like a soul leaving a corpse.

Minimalism sprung from the loins of an unlikely union. On one side of its heritage lies Modernism: The Big M, Continental Modernism, complete with revolutionary zeal and commitment to social progress, bearing its utopian dream and its belief that the very substance of architecture might be able to deliver this shining vision.

The other half of its DNA derives from a condition of totalized and singular aesthetic refinement—of high taste, of aesthetic rightness, of absolute disengagement with the world. A kind of nihilist perfection where things, rather than lives, are ordered, whose grand family tree stretches back through the ages. Its names have been legion, though we might call its secret constancy “Aesthetic.” Throughout time, its power has operated through slight of hand, its invisible maneuvers assimilating opposition and threat through deployment of the most despicable of all tactics: irresistible cold-hearted beauty.

That Minimalism should emerge from these progenitors is the kind of tragedy that would have resonated with the Greeks. Earlier in the century, Modernism had attempted to assassinate Aesthetic, to overthrow its grip on the throat of culture and society, on the hierarchies of power and economics. Minimalism then was born out of this troubled relationship: out of Aesthetic's anger at Modernism's murderous intent, like a child of Hera whose sole purpose was to enact matriarchal revenge.

Out of the dust of Pruitt-Igoue, out of the collapse of belief in architecture's social program, out of the dissolution of planning and the state, out of everything that Modernism had hoped for architecture—and the world—rose Minimalism. To look at it, you might be forgiven for mistaking it for its dead parent. It has the same eyes, the same frame, the same build. It is, as they say, the spit. This, of course, is part of its curse. Minimalism is condemned to reenact the aesthetics of Modernism cut free from politics and program. Its emptiness is a statement of victory of Aesthetics over everything else. Each iteration is a victory party, a dance on the grave of what will now never happen.

Minimalism is the undead form of Modernism, animated by Aesthetics. Like Ed Gein cavorting in suits made from the skin of his victims, Minimalism is a perverted and psychotic condition. It is there every time we look at something beautifully Modern. Its simplicity, its order, its calmness, its smoothness are displayed like the severed heads on Traitors' Gate: a beautiful warning to architecture. The real perversion? Architects willingly and joyfully enact this macabre ritual.

Though it's not really alive, it's all around us, multiplying with a fury. It's there in every bathroom ever designed by John Pawson—especially those fucking baths.

It's written huge as though it were real by David Chipperfield. It swirls around in the Conran Shop. Its shadow falls over the IKEAn mass dissemination of design. It's there whenever you see a shadow gap. It's there when critics type the word “elegant.” It haunts us all.

Minimalism then is the erection of false history, a zombie culture, a hollow laugh at the failure of architecture. A kind of anti-architecture, replaying Modernism's tropes to opposite ends. Not utopia, not social progress, not a better world, but an ultimate and mesmerizing nihilism.

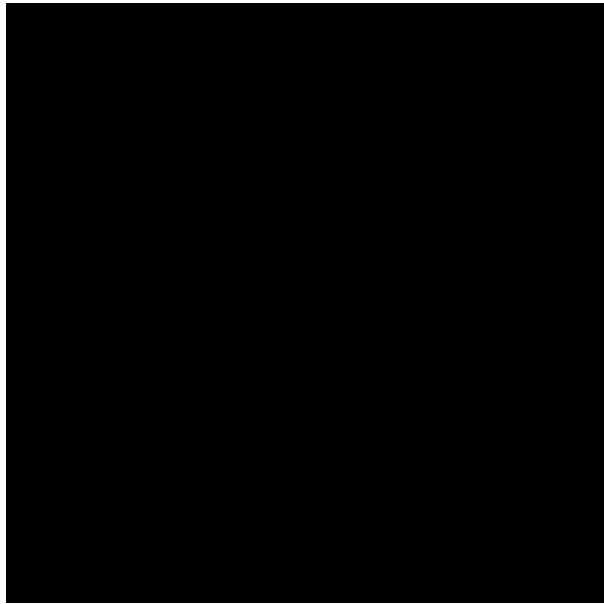
Like all the undead, we can suppose its only real desire is for death's release, for an end, for its animation by an external agent to cease. Which is where we started: an obituary for something that isn't dead, but was never alive, yet is everywhere, all the time. Maybe we should write obituaries where once we wrote manifestos.

The Plan, Spent Years Plotting from Above

by Filip Tejchman

(software x technology)/ADHD = Expert Systems (BIM.) = the Plan is dead...

When technology and software arrived at the ability to produce an instantly rotatable and transformable 3D form on the computer monitor, the Plan began to die a slow death, a progressive decline into oblivion. The Plan, which had dominated design and discourse throughout the twentieth century, was no longer part of the design process, relegated instead to being a simple place-holder—a receiver of notation rather than a generator. It will be missed.



Lens flare(s), sports cars and anachronistically dressed super-models console one another in a sun-streaked Gaussian haze surrounded by diffuse glow.

Renderings from China, 10, Passed with Little Fanfare

by Anda and Jenny French

Renderings from China, affectionately known to many as “RC,” died Thursday in a fatal digital crash, also claiming the lives of several characters from the animated film “Beowulf.” Rescuers tried to use the jaws of life to extract RC from the wreck but reported that her general uncanny photorealism impeded all attempts to resuscitate the aging star. Eyewitness reports confirm that, when touched, the body merely rasterized into a sea of glass, travertine and stainless steel pixels.

RC began life a decade ago in the offices of several notable global offices. In those days, what she lacked in resolution and ray tracing, she more than made up for with experimentation and originality. RC's career accelerated with high-speed Internet access as her range, once limited by file size and language, could effortlessly upgrade a project from its sketchy Rhino nascence to reality with a three-day turnaround and ZIP file of reference images.

RC led a happy life of distraction and duplicity, most notably known as the go-to actress in many commercial, institutional and residential productions. Friend to developers and politicians alike, RC never ceased in her mission to provide the public with a skewed view of reality, making even the most mercilessly value-engineered complexes appear supple and inviting. When asked to comment on RC's timely death, Joe Architect of J Architects reminisced, “what that woman could do with an unarticulated polysurface and a site plan was scary.”

In the last few years, RC's health shook public faith with a number of questionable appearances. Her appearances at both the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and in several private performances in the UAE revealed an artist who could no longer mask her architectural flaws with the thick liquid cover-up of one-off materiality and the glitzy distraction of lens flares.

It is perhaps best to remember RC for her constant optimism, rendering people only in their most well behaved states. Who can forget the children carrying balloons, businessmen hailing cabs, supermodels lounging poolside in multicultural groups and that one 80s-looking couple holding hands into the sunset? It can only be hoped that RC is now at peace, resting under that same blue and cloudless gradient sky she loved so much.

+Renfro, 46, Missing Again

by Liza Delear

+Renfro, 46, disappeared again last week. Following a cursory search cum long lunch at Dave & Buster's, authorities now presume him dead.

+Renfro was a New York architect and longtime collaborator of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio. To friends, he was an endearing man of many scarves, and to clients, a man of many scarf-like buildings. The sinuous surfaces of Eyebeam, Boston's ICA and the Brasserie were latent self portraits of the man whose couture was as consistent as his work.

While +Renfro's disappearance comes as a shock to some, those close to him knew it was only a matter of time before one of his vanishing acts persisted. In 2002, +Renfro was lost in the Blur Building for four days, a ghost in the mist, unprotected from the elements having long since discarded his Braincoat™.

In a press conference held Monday, his former firm announced that they would continue operations under the revised name Diller Scofidio - Renfro.

Kazuyo Sejima, 54, Architect, Loses Life to Minimalism

by Annie Choi

After a lifetime's exploration of lightness, materiality and transparency, Kazuyo Sejima finally made herself invisible. She was 54.

An intern reported that the architect was at her desk arranging blocks of clear acrylic when she exclaimed, “I have found it!” and then disappeared. Her current whereabouts are unknown, and search parties were called off after twenty consecutive days.

An official statement released by SANAA described Sejima's minimalist sensibilities and her innovative ways of limiting the variety of details and materials in their projects. “Unfortunately, one of the details she left out was how to bring her back,” stated partner Ryue Nishizawa. Investigators searched SANAA's offices and Sejima's Tokyo home to little success. Search dogs were also employed, but their efforts were unfruitful.

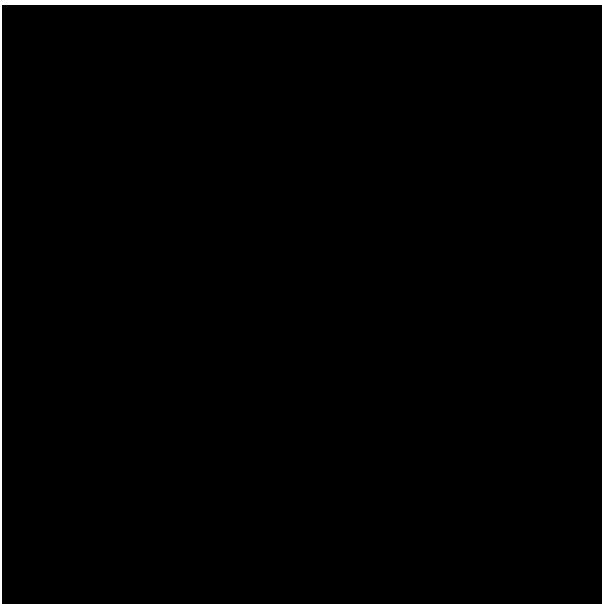
Interns and volunteers from a Tokyo architecture school utilized alternative methods to find the architect, including using a smoke machine and shooting paintballs haphazardly to draw out her form. One volunteer tried to entice her into visibility with freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies.

Sejima's official status filed with the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department is “missing” because the department does not accept “transparent” as a status.

Sustainability, Expired

by Rachel Farson

Sustainability died suddenly Monday evening. An autopsy ruled the death to be of natural causes.



TLO pictured with BFF WTF when they were studying together at the GSD.

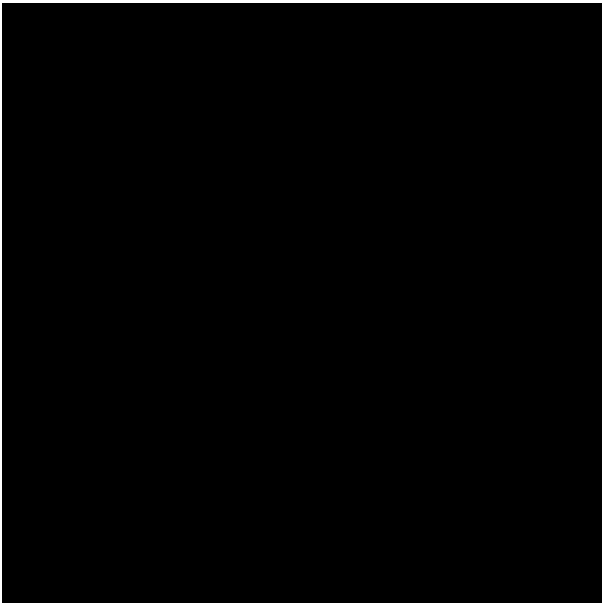
The Three-Letter Office, Beacon of Professionalism, Dissolved

by RIP

Yesterday, on the outskirts of Beijing, an anonymous looking blog announced the arrival of the final permutation of three-letter office names. Approximately 39 hours and 17 hits later, the office folded due to internal disputes over their icon selection. The website remains online.

ZZZ arrived with a familiar thud, in bold Helvetica, looking like something in-between a name and a logo, trying to be all things to everyone. Alongside the splashy launch of www.zzz-office.com, a website with the sheen of an office 100 times as large, the catchy vague acronym of nothing in particular announced the end of three-letter office names everywhere.

The reign of three-letter offices began during Late Modernism, was made ironic during post-modernism and then puttered out in the ensuing decades, unable to muster an ideological position. What at first seemed to represent collaborative corporate professionalism had devolved into something that could be created by any smarmy recent graduate with an Internet connection.



Bernard Tschumi's Scarf pictured in its last public appearance, around Bernard Tschumi's neck as he entered a Chelsea Starbucks.

Bernard Tschumi's Scarf, 66, Presumed Dead

by Annie Choi

Architect, writer and educator Bernard Tschumi lost his red scarf in Chelsea last Thursday.

“Of the dozens of red scarves I own, this one was my favorite,” said a heartbroken Tschumi. “It was 90% cashmere.” Experts believe the remaining 10% was Merino wool.

Utopia, 495, Made Nowhere A Better Non-Place

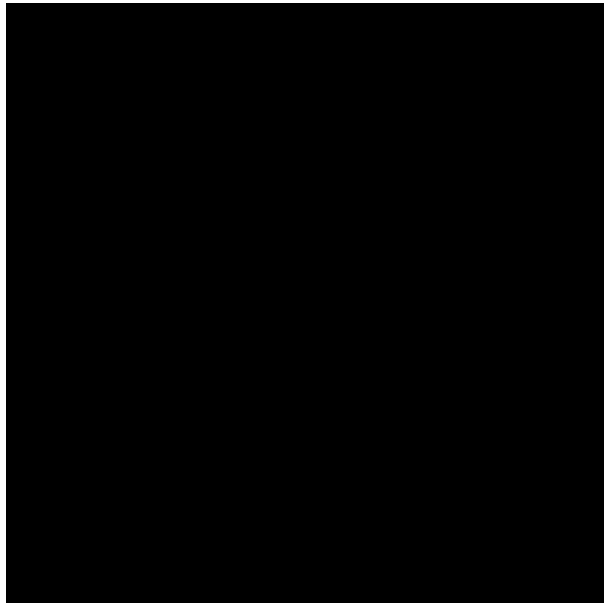
by Marrikka Trotter

Utopia, the venture communist and famously long-lived world traveler, was officially declared “presumed dead” after a prolonged international search yielded no sign of the elusive provocateur. He would have been 495.

The last scion of a prestigious Greek family that traced its lineage back to 380 BCE, Utopia had increasingly withdrawn from the public stage as of late. His last confirmed sighting in North America was in the mid-1970s, and even tentative identifications from Asia and South America have become extremely scarce.

Scholars of the family are quick to note that Utopia's impact and legacy only increased as his presence in the world diminished. “Utopia's fame will undoubtedly continue to grow in death,” a conference of professors noted in a statement. “We are only beginning to understand the true extent of his exploits in the eighteenth century, much less his more recent achievements.” Bereft of its most illustrious patron and imaginative instigator, architectural practice in particular finds itself unprepared for the loss. “As long as we could still hold out hope that Utopia would return we felt we could carry on in his absence. We are all still trying to reorient ourselves to this devastating new situation,” an architect remarked at a memorial service held for close friends and admirers within the profession and affiliated disciplines. “For instance,” he added, “it appears that without Utopia's real estate holdings, Architecture actually occupies minimal territory compared to strip malls. He will be extraordinarily missed.”

Other fields are taking the news even harder. Urban planning is reportedly considering disbanding, while several distinguished urban designers could be seen repeatedly shaking their heads and muttering, “Now what's the point?” during the service. The larger design community has come together to organize its own grief counseling sessions, symposia and memorial publications in response to the traumatic news.



Voronoi (holding red Solo cup) last seen at a graduate school party in 2002, the night before he left for China.

Voronoi Diagram, Presumed Dead, Now Really Dead

by Mark Forez

The Voronoi diagram, wanted for multiple accounts of cliché, was found dead this week in Melbourne, Australia, finally putting an end to the mystery surrounding its whereabouts.

The missing diagram, responsible for decomposing metric space in multiple countries through the determination of boundaries between specified discrete points, was found upturned in a road-side latrine. Despite considerable bloating and partial consumption by dingos, forensic experts report that the diagram showed years of fatigue, abuse and overexposure to the elements prior to death.

A friend of the diagram, who asked to remain anonymous, presented an eulogy at the funeral: “We used to use [Voronoi diagram] all the damn time. When I was a student, we all were using it. It was easy, just a few clicks and bam—instant cool. I felt like Spiderman. No one ever thought much about it.”

Donations to the Voronoi Memorial Foundation can be made via PayPal at <http://www.theverymany.com>.

The Young Professional, 35, Enjoyed Long Hours

by Debbie Facebo

The Young Professional, known for being obsessed with success and plagued with loneliness, died Friday of old age.

Correction: Peter Eisenman, Alive and Well

by Colin Rowe

In our recent, obituary for Peter Eisenman, we reported that the renowned educator and architect was killed in a murder-suicide involving architect Christopher Alexander. However, Eisenman is in fact alive and well.

Since his brief disappearance he has allegedly been wandering the streets of Vienna with Leon Krier, complaining about Josef Hoffman and looking for a decent slice of pizza. Mr. Alexander's whereabouts remain unknown.

Soon after the news of Peter Eisenman's death was reported, memorial events were organized around the country. The University of Phoenix Stadium scheduled honorary retractions of its grass field in memoriam of the architect. An all-night vigil filled The Wexner Center at The Ohio State University to capacity with mourners hoping to glimpse the master's apparition floating next to his infamous hanging column. “I was walking up that stair that intersects with that wall, and I suddenly had this eerie feeling...I knew then that he was there with us,” reported one student. In light of Eisenman's revised still-living status, it is clear that such a testimoniy was merely the vain hope of an impressionable student.

Upon learning of P.E.'s recent whereabouts, The Eisenman All Boys Choir's commemorative concert series, titled “The Presence of Absence,” has been cancelled.

When Eisenman was reached for comment, he said only, “Go <insert sports team name>!!”