

A B C D E F F G H I L M O P R S T U V W

Operative Dictionary

book #2 (*index cards*)

Appendix to PhD dissertation

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A

allowances

'Allowances have been made, even designed; the space of error is dimensioned and located within the drawing (and the building). The degree of tolerance appropriate not only to the materials and construction techniques involved, but also the site and economic conditions, is selected, and its allotted territory literally plotted into the working drawings. [...] The margin for error, itself another palisade, insulates the calculated from the incalculable. [...] matter enters architecture repressed, and thus fetishized [...].

Hughes, Francesca. "The Troping of Precision: Hooke's Needle and Sutherland's Window." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 33. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

A

anti form

'Recently, materials other than rigid industrial ones have begun to show up. [...] This involves a reconsideration of the use of tools in relation to material. In some cases these investigations move from the making of things to the making of material itself. Sometimes a direct manipulation of a given material without the use of any tool is made. In these cases considerations of gravity become as important as those of space. The focus on matter and gravity as means results in forms which were not projected in advance. Considerations of ordering are necessarily casual and imprecise and unemphasized. Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to the material. Chance is accepted and indeterminacy is implied since replacing will result in another configuration. Disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and orders for things is a positive assertion. It is part of the work's refusal to continue aestheticizing form by dealing with it as a prescribed end.'

A

approximation

The wall, once drawn with precisely judged approximation (decimeters for masonry, centimeters for wood, and millimeters for metal), is now drawn to a default setting of several decimal places [...]

tools

Hughes, Francesca. "The Troping of Precision: Hooke's Needle and Sutherland's Window"
In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 18–19.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

A

architecture

'architecture is our primary instrument in relating us with space and time, and giving these dimensions a human measure'

Juhani Pallasmaa, in *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*
(Chichester : Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Academy ; John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 17.

A

architecture

"The first entry in the Documents "critical dictionary", signed by Bataille, is "Architecture".

[...] architecture is another name for system itself, for the regulation of the plan.

[...] "Harmony, like the project, throws time into the outside: its principle is the repetition through which 'all is possible' is made eternal. The ideal is architecture, or sculpture, immobilizing harmony, guaranteeing the duration of motifs whose essence is the annulment of time".

Thus the dream of architecture, among other things, is to escape **entropy**.

A

architecture

'Dust' and the 'Formless' as proposed by Bataille indirectly expand the definition of architecture because they do not address the image of architecture or its edifice as building, but explore the space that architecture defines in open and dynamic terms.

Stoppani, Teresa. "Dust Revolutions. Dust, Informe, Architecture (Notes for a Reading of Dust in Bataille)." *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 4 (September 2007): 439.

A

assemblage

'[...] assemblage is a mode of ordering heterogeneous entities so that they work together for a certain time.

The English term 'assemblage' is the translation of the French original *agencement*. It captures well that an assemblage/agencement consists of multiple, heterogeneous parts linked together to form a whole – that an assemblage is relational. But the translation risks losing some connotations of *agencement*, especially that of an arrangement that creates agency [...]

For Deleuze and Guattari, there are thus no pre-determined hierarchies, and there is no single organising principle behind assemblages ('it is never filiations...these are not successions, lines of descent')

base materialism

'Most materialists, despite wanting to eliminate all spiritual entities, ended up describing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it out as specifically idealist. They have situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse types of facts, without realizing that in this way they have submitted to an obsession with an *ideal* form of matter, with a form which approaches closer than any other to that which matter *should be*.'

George Bataille, "Materialism," in *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, ed. Alastair Brotchie, trans. John Harman (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 58.

Published in 'Documents 1' (1929)

base materialism

Base materialism (of which the *informe* is the most concrete manifestation) has the job of de-class(ify)ing, which is to say, simultaneously lowering and liberating from all ontological prisons, from any "devoir être" (role model). It is principally a matter of de-classing matter, of extracting it from the philosophical clutches of classical materialism, which is nothing but idealism in disguise: [...] On the contrary, the formless matter that base materialism claims for itself resembles nothing, especially not what it should be, refusing to let itself be assimilated to any concept whatever, to any abstraction whatever. For base materialism, nature produces only unique monsters: there are no deviants in nature because there is nothing but deviation.[...]

base materialism

'The 'logic' of base materialism is that whatever is elevated or ideal is actually dependent on base matter, and that this dependence means that the purity of the ideal is contaminated. The dependence of the ideal or elevated (the 'high') on base matter (the 'low') and the contamination this produces is systematically denied by the ideal, which splits off base matter as whatever is disgusting, vile, sub-human, etc.[...] Base matter is an eternal reminder, and remainder, of all that threatens to drag down and ruin the ideal [...]

base materialism

'In that essay [The Big Toe, 1929] Bataille explained how the capacity for man to stand upright, and all that flows from this (knowledge, reason, tool use, humanity, etc.) is dependent on the ignominious base matter of the big toe. Despite man's dependence on the big toe for producing him as an erect being because he is standing, he then looks down on the base matter of his big toe as disgusting: 'But whatever the role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head, in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has his foot in the mud'.

Noys, Benjamin. "Georges Bataille's Base Materialism." *Cultural Values* 2, no. 4 (October 1998): 501

Bataille, Georges. "The Big Toe." In *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, edited and translated by Allan Stoekl, 20. *Theory and History of Literature*, v. 14. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

base materialism

[...] Bataille is not just reversing the hierarchical structure of high and low [...]. [...] base matter is what makes the very structure of the high/low opposition possible in the first place and what ruins it: without the base matter of the big toe we could not stand erect, and so we would be deprived of the high, ideal, etc., but because of this the high can never be as pure as it would desire. It is from the position of the high that base matter is rejected as the low, when in fact base matter is the origin of the high and remains to torment the high and bring it back down into the low. This places base matter into the position of being both high and low, accounting for the interdependence of the high and low by being what they share. Base matter also remains exterior to this opposition, as we can see in the example of the big toe it is neither high nor low, but in an unstable position [...] between the two, sliding between them and destabilising the opposition. [...] it is a force of disruption rather than a dialectical operator.

B**body**

'In the "Scienza Nuova," Vico further stressed the idea that the origin of human knowledge is in the human body. The likeness, the iconic metaphors taken from bodies, are used in "refined arts and recondite sciences" to signify "the operation of abstract minds"(1744: #404). As proof, Vico presented the fact that all languages have a great number of words for artificial and natural objects based on metaphors derived from the human body. Thus, the foot is used as a metaphor for end-piece, base, or foundation; the heart for center, core; the hands, a clock; an arm, the sea; teeth a rake, a saw, a comb; mouth for many different kinds of openings; eye for other kinds of openings; shoulder for hill or side of road; head for top or beginning. Vico made use of this observation to support one of the axioms of his "Scienza Nuova": "man makes himself measure of all things" (#120).'

cartesian

‘Vico divides the history of mankind into three stages. The first and the third are characterized by forms of barbarisms: the first is the stage of the “barbarism of the senses” (*la barbarie del senso*), the third is that of the “barbarism of intellect” (*la barbarie dell’intelletto*) or of “reflection.” The products of this latter stage are marked by a “reflective malice” (Vico 1744: #1106) that constructs the environment as “a Cartesian world, a world of scientific research, technology, and gadgets, which invades and conditions our lives.”¹ Cartesian technology provides a set of prescriptions and specifications for transforming the man-made environment - originally fashioned by poetic images - into prosaic visualizations.’

Frascati, Marco. "A 'Measure' in Architecture: A Medical-Architectural Theory by Simone Stratico, *Architettura Veneta*." RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, no. No. 9 (Spring 1985): 82.

¹. E. Gianturco, "Introduction" (in Vico 1708: English translation 1968).

C

cartesian

'In their twofold existence as excessively accurate visualizations and nebulous evasiveness, clouds, be they digital, artificial, or meteorological, defy the Cartesian logic of binaries: most notable, they have no clear interior or exterior, no beginning or end.'

Koerner, Natalie P. "Beyond Millions of Plans. A Geometry of Clouds." In *The Artful Plan: Architectural Drawing Reconfigured*, 1st ed., 175. Boston: Birkhäuser, 2020.

change

‘The problem with such models of constant flow is that by viewing time as a ceaseless dynamism, all times are rendered equally dramatic, equally laden with transformation. When Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould reinterpreted evolution as a matter of punctuated equilibria rather than constant but gradual change, this was no "static" theory of evolution, but one better equipped than its predecessors to pick out periods of crucial change.

To speak of "flows" rather than objects is actually a way of disempowering change by making it a matter of relatively arbitrary "cuts" in the flow rather than genuine articulations by reality itself.’

C

continuity

Not all changes are acceptable if an artwork is to remain being perceived as the same artwork. For an artwork's life to be prolonged, it needs continuity. The preservation - or better, the continuity of such artworks - involves the management of undesirable changes by inflicting other changes perceived as less harmful. Physical changes that are perceived as too big of a rupture - for example if the work deteriorates beyond a certain point or if its components are replaced at once instead of gradually - will break this chain of continuity. [...] [The artworks] changes have to be slow and gradual.

Saaze, Vivian van. "The Ethics and Politics of Documentation; On Continuity and Change in the Work of Robert Smithson." In Robert Smithson: Art in Continual Movement : a Contemporary Reading, edited by Anja Novak, Ingrid Comandeur, and Trudy van Riemsdijk-Zandee, 66. Amsterdam: Alauda Publ, 2012.

C

control

'Where "everything is under control," the world
no longer has anything to say to us [...]'

Rosa, Hartmut. "The Uncontrollability of the World." In *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 116. Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2020.

D

déclasser

'This proposed operation of *informe* relies on a particular interpretation of *déclasser*, a word in Bataille's critical dictionary article "Informe."

She [Krauss] interprets *déclasser* in her translation of Bataille's article as "to bring things *down*." Other interpretations, which incidentally Krauss does acknowledge but downplays, have a quite different emphasis.

Iain White in *Encyclopedia Acephalica* interprets *déclasser* as "*declassify*." The psychoanalyst Pierre Fédida interprets the word as "disorder." These alternative interpretations signify a quite different, less orderly, less structural sense of *informe*.'

D

destruction

[Destructions] creative potential often lies precisely in its incompleteness, in the lingering references to what is being decomposed or dismembered, or, more generally, in the vestiges and traces destruction leaves behind.

[...] destruction both separates and binds at one and the same time.

Spieker, Sven. "Introduction // The Uses of Destruction in Contemporary Art." In *Destruction*, edited by Sven Spieker, 14–23. Whitechapel : Documents of Contemporary Art. London : Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery : The MIT Press, 2017.

D

destruction

‘Destruction has always meant the change of an organized object into a relatively disorganized one, or the annihilation of the features which made it what it once was. Artistic creation has always meant a new **order**, the bringing into being of something new, or the translation of knowledge or idea into new **form**, with form always indicating a spatial object.’

destruction

Deeper, vaster than the laws of construction are the laws of destruction. But destruction and construction are related mechanisms. Nothing can be constructed without a prior stage of destruction.

[...]

Objects break down or are destroyed according to the internal laws of the materials that compose them: their destruction reveals the secret of their fundamental structure.

dialectical

[...] dialectical landscape is one that presents opposing viewpoints, not with the purpose of one perspective cancelling out the other, but with both views important within one place. To view the land as dialectic is not to see it as an either/or situation, but as inclusive, with the views interacting.

[...] Smithson spoke extensively of opposites:

We're back to a dialectical situation again. If you postulate time or what has been known as real time, which is simply duration - duration affects everything, temporality affects everything - yet, we're always somehow interested in that timeless moment that intersects with the time-filled. That hinges on a notion, too, of space. I guess I'm interested in how they overlap, not in excluding either one.

dialectical

“By establishing a coequivalence of object and event, a splash/cast piece represents a simultaneity of scatter and containment, two material extremes. In Smithson’s case this opposition expresses a “dialectical” relation of matter to form.

[...] Serra identifies the two elements—scatter and containment (or matter and form)—as possessing an almost primal significance to sculpture-making; he then binds them together in the service of a third—location—which, as an intensification of site, becomes a medium in and of itself.

displacement

"The related concept of *dépaysement*, meaning displacement or dis-orientation, informed the isolation, fragmentation, and close cropping often seen in Surrealist photographs. [...] According to Breton, such a break from an object's habitual environment enables it to enter into new relationships and generate new meanings.¹²¹"

Hauptman, Jodi, and Stephanie O'Rourke. "A Surrealist Fact." In *Object:Photo. Modern Photographs: The Thomas Walther Collection 1909-1949*, 3. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014.

¹²¹ André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 25.

D

dust

'Modernity's war against dust has been a long and exhausting struggle. Within the modern city suspicion of decay is unremitting. [...] 'Dust-traps' are pinpointed and expunged. [...] In these new environments dust must be kept permanently airborne, in eternal circulation. Dust cannot be destroyed, but it can be prevented from settling.'

D

dust

'As a "deposit of time," this substance also always implies a temporal dimension. In his treatise on the metaphysics of dust, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard describes the deformation of dust not as "a mere loss of forms," but rather as a dynamic formative process: "deformation as dynamism." Moreover, he locates dust "between a solid and a liquid," thus explaining the at once mobile and stable properties of the material.

D |

dust

'The storytellers have not realised that the Sleeping Beauty would have awoken covered in a thick layer of dust; nor have they envisaged the sinister spiders' webs that would have been torn apart at the first movement of her red tresses [...]'

Bataille, George. "Dust" In *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, edited by Alastair Brotchie, translated by John Harman, 42-43. London: Atlas Press, 1929.

D

dust

'Dust occupies and measures the distance between architecture's image and its physical realisation, the non-coincidence of its idea and representation, and construction and inhabitation. Dust brings to architecture that which is difficult to measure, control and represent: its constant change, decay and corruption, or, in other words, time - what conventional architectural representations do not see.'

Stoppani, Teresa. "Dust Revolutions. Dust, Informe, Architecture (Notes for a Reading of Dust in Bataille)." *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 4 (September 2007): 439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360701614714>.

D

dust

'One of the inscriptions of time (whose irreversibility is demonstrated by the law of entropy), dust is, semiologically speaking, an index. In this it is like photography, but its trace is of duration.'

Bois, Yve-Alain and Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou. "Entropy: Zone."
In *Formless: A User's Guide*, 226. New York: Zone Books, 1997.

dust

'Dust travels. [...] Even in apparent total stillness, dust moves with gravity, and grows.

Dust is form-less, it does not possess its own form, and it takes on that of its host, the nook in which it sits, the surface on which it is deposited. It is, in this sense, apparently passive. And yet, in this, it activates. In setting and settling, dust relieves. It relieves in the sense that it measures, increments and enhances set forms and surfaces while coating them; in covering and obliterating them it makes them more visible. [...]

Dust is also multi-form, in that its form changes and exchanges constantly. It changes its shape according to the form and the dynamics (air movements) of its environment. [...] Dust is open and it opens. Pervasive and omnipresent, it penetrates everywhere. It knows no interior and no exterior. It has no boundaries. It does not transgress; it invades and pervades.'

D

dust

'The irruption of dust in Sleeping Beauty's palace brings in it the informe, intended not as an absence of form, but as a performative process of form-making that knows no origin (type, plan, or model) but works with the given [...]. Bataille's architectural revolution is not the tabula rasa of Modernism that sweeps away the past or blankets over the existing. It is a movement of change that originates and erupts from within to subvert the established.'

D |

dust

'If for Bataille the project of architecture 'throws time into the outside', dust inscribes time and produces a trace of duration in the frozen palace, on and around the architecture of the coffin (tomb, monument, architecture), and perhaps even on its content (are we really sure that Sleeping Beauty is not getting a bit older, a bit less beautiful, in her sleep?). Dust turns the container of idealised perfection tomb or palace into a collector and instigator of that which is other, the *informe*: time, and with it memory and forgetting, waste and entropy. From here dust spreads contagiously to claim other forgotten, unused, unnamed spaces [...].'

D

dust

'Once, not so long ago, dust constituted the finest thing the human eye could see. In the form gold dust or pollen, as light filaments that covered the skin, or as individual particles that spun in the sunlight, dust was the most minuscule thing people encountered. [...] dust was an omnipresent boundary, in this case between the visible and the invisible. In advanced twentieth-century society, visible dust has been removed from the surface of most things, and the kingdom of dust has been opened to examination by scientific instruments. [...]

As with all that was once considered really small, dust has been redefined by a great twentieth-century revolution - a revolution of the minuscule.'

Amato, Joseph Anthony. "Little Things Mean a Lot."
In *Dust: A History of the Small and the Invisible*, I.
Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000.

D

dust

‘Throughout the ages, dust has been the first and most common measure of smallness. Dust is a result of the divisibility of matter. [...] Even the hardest materials erode and become dust. [...] Dust is everywhere because its source is everything.’

Amiato, Joseph Anthony. "Little Things Mean a Lot."
In *Dust: A History of the Small and the Invisible*, 3.
Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000.

D

dust

'Dust's ambiguous metaphorical place as both the most ordinary and the finest of things derived from its role as a frontier between the seen and unseen. Like skin, a tissue that stands between the interior and the exterior, dust separated what could be known by the senses and what lay beyond them. In this respect dust was like darkness: it formed a graduated and permeable screen between the realm of what was empirically known and the realm of the imagined.'

Amato, Joseph Anthony. "Of Times When Dust Was the Companion of All." In *Dust: A History of the Small and the Invisible*, 19-20. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000.

dust

'Long ago, dust was the common measure of our work with things: it indicated how much, with what, and how finely we worked. We made dust when we dug, sawed, drilled, snapped, filed, crushed, ground, polished, pulverized, and milled. We made dust fly when we broke trails, laid foundations, erected structures, built roads, and laid tracks. Human engines - from early windmills to coal-burning steam engines to contemporary nuclear reactors - discharge dusts that determine the character of regions.

Though there is no etymological connection between the words *dust* and *industry*, industrial societies created more, and more varied, dusts than had any previous society. [...] Armed with steel tools, dynamite, and bulldozers, industrial society transformed the earth, belching unprecedented amounts and varieties of dusts into the environment.'

D

dust

'Dust [...] belongs as much to air as to earth.'

Amato, Joseph Anthony. "Little Things Mean a Lot."
In *Dust: A History of the Small and the Invisible*, 1.
Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000.

E

élan vital

'[...] what *élan vital* does - its distinctive activity - is to increase the *instability* of material formations, to "insert some *indetermination* into matter. Indeterminate, *i.e.* unforeseeable, are the forms it creates in the course of its evolution" [...].'

Bennett, Jane. "Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism." In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 78-79. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

E

emergence

'If we reduce an object downward to its pieces, we can not explain emergence;
if we reduce it upward to its effects, we can not explain **change**.'

Harman, Graham. "Immaterialism." In *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*, 27. Malden, MA: Polity, 2016.

E

entropy

SKY: [...] In their grand masterplan schemes for the world, architects seem to find the "final solution" to all possible situations.

SMITHSON: They don't take those things into account. Architects tend to be idealists, and not dialecticians. I propose a dialectics of entropic change.

Alison Sky, "Entropy Made Visible (1973)," in Robert Smithson, *the Collected Writings*, ed. Jack D. Flam, *The Documents of Twentieth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

E

entropy

'[...] "entropy is a loaded term in Smithson's vocabulary. It customarily means decreasing organization and, along with that, loss of distinctiveness" But "Smithson's applies the idea to time... Basically, Smithson's idea of entropy concerns not only the deterioration of order, though he observes it avidly, 'but rather the clash of uncoordinated **orders** [...].'

E

entropy

'[...] the very concept of energy prevents us from drawing any concrete conclusions as energy transforms each conclusion into a new beginning and opens up new opportunities for thinking and acting. Each end contains both the nostalgia for what it lacks and also the promise of the novel and unforeseen.'

Stefano Rabolli Pansera, ed., *Beyond Entropy: When Energy Becomes Form* (London: AA Publications, 2011).

E

entropy

'[...] a degradation that leads to a continually increasing state of disorder and of nondifferentiation within matter [...].

Entropy is a negative movement: it presupposes an initial order and a deterioration of that order.'

E

entropy

Entropien er det, der gør, at vi ved, der er et før og et efter, og det, som giver tiden [i overskudslandskaberne] en retning, i modsætning til Disneyland eller det scenograferede rum, hvor tiden altid er den samme, og hvor forfaldet hele tiden afværges ved investering af ny energi.

E

entropy

'[Entropy] tells us that changes that are visible and heterogeneous will be more and more diluted into changes that are invisible and homogeneous, and that the instability to which we owe the richness and variety of the changes taking place in our solar system will gradually give way to the relative stability of elementary vibrations continually and perpetually repeated.'

Bergson, Henri. "Ideal Genesis of Matter." In *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, 243. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

E

erratic

'[...] the only reasonable science is one that refuses rigid systems in favor of a flexible discourse. Within Montaigne's skeptical perspective the structure of the encyclopedia is just as mobile as the subjects it treats. [...]

The path is erratic but testifies in its way to the fertility of nature, which produces not only a variety of things but also a variety of ideas that can endlessly take new turns.'

E

event

'One key problem with relational ontologies is that they have difficulty accounting for the difference between trivial incidents [...] and important ones [...].'

...[...] events are relatively rare amidst the pseudo-turbulent sea of trivial changes and modifications in which we are always immersed.

Graham Harman, "On Behalf of Form; The View from Archaeology and Architecture," in *Elements of Architecture: Assembling Archaeology, Atmosphere and the Performance of Building Spaces*, ed. Mikkel Bille and Tim Flohr Sorensen, *Archaeological Orientations* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 30–46.

E

evoking

'Yes, Beuys works with felt. Why doesn't he work with color? But people never think far enough ahead to say: well, if he is working with felt, perhaps he could thereby provoke a colorful world inside us? The phenomenon of complimentary colors is well known; if for instance I look into a red light and close my eyes, there's an afterimage and that's green. Or, the other way round, if I look at a green light, the after-image is red. People are very short-sighted when they argue that way, when they say: Beuys makes everything with felt, so he's trying to say something about the concentration camps. Nobody bothers to ask whether I might not be more interested in evoking a very colorful world as an anti-image inside people with the help of this element, felt. So it's a matter of evoking a lucid world, a clear, lucid, perhaps transcendently spiritual world through something which looks quite different, through an anti-image. One can only create after-images or anti-images by not doing something which is already there but by doing something which exists as an anti-image - always in an anti-image process. So it isn't right to say I'm interested in gray. That's not right. And I'm not interested in dirt either. I'm interested in a process which reaches much further.'

Beuys, Joseph, and Jörg Schellmann. In Joseph Beuys, the Multiples: Catalogue Raisonné of Multiples and Prints, 11. Munich; New York: Edition Schellmann, 1997.

exactitude

'[...] Giacomo Leopardi maintained that the more vague and imprecise language is, the more poetic it becomes. [...] Starting out from the original meaning of "wandering," the word vago still carries an idea of movement and mutability, which in Italian is associated both with uncertainty and indefiniteness and with gracefulness and pleasure.

To put my cult of exactitude to the proof, I will look back at those pages of the *Zibaldone* where Leopardi praises il vago.

[...]

What [Leopardi] requires is a highly exact and meticulous attention to the composition of each image, to the minute definition of details, to the choice of objects, to the lightning and the atmosphere, all in order to attain the desired degree of vagueness. Therefore Leopardi, whom I had chosen as the ideal opponent of my argument in favor of exactitude, turn out to be a decisive witness in its favor The poet of vagueness can only be the poet of exactitude, who is able to grasp the subtlest sensations with eyes and ears and quick, unerring hands.'

E

exterior

'For Formalist theory, even of the later phase, the definition of an exterior point of view, from which the author can observe and redescribe reality, is immediately linked to the device of *ostranenie*. Boris Uspensky's definition of the interior and exterior points becomes important here. Uspensky writes: "The external point of view, as a compositional device, draws its significance from its affiliation with the problem of *ostranenie* or estrangement. The essence of the phenomenon resides primarily in the use of a new or estranged view on a familiar thing ..." [...]'

Botz, Bornstein, Thorsten. "Tarkovsky's 'Logic of Dreams.'" In *Films and Dreams: Tarkovsky, Bergman, Sokurov, Kubrick, and Wong Kar-Wai*, 1. ed., 6-7. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Uspenskiĭ, B. A. "The Structural Isomorphism of Verbal and Visual Art." In *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, 131. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

F

familiarity

'In different ways [...] Boiffard's pictures all give us something we can recognise while simultaneously rendering that familiarity unstable. As Bataille's Critical Dictionary perversely refuses the possibility of definition, so Boiffard doesn't tell us what things mean, only how they appear (in a black-white photograph).'

F

focus

'Scarpa made a practice of visiting the building site during the night for verification with a flashlight, thereby controlling the execution and the expression of the details. In the normal daylight it would indeed be impossible to focus on details in such a selective manner. [...] The flashlight is a tool by which is achieved an analog of both the process of vision and the eye's movement in its perception field (with only one spot in focus and the eye darting around). [...] To single out the "expression of the fragments."

F

form

'The form of the object is that which hides midway between its material **substrate** and its concrete manifestation at any given moment in any given context.'

Graham Harman, "Materialism Is Not the Solution: On Matter, Form, and Mimesis," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, no. 47 (2014): 94-110.

F

form

'Matter endures, form is lost.'

'Matter is always seeking new form'

Pierre de Ronsard in: Michel Jeanneret, "Form and Force," in *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from Da Vinci to Montaigne*, Parallax (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 26.

F

form

'the very method we use to develop architectural proposals – orthographic drawing – describes only form, and relegates material to the empty spaces between the lines. The privileging of form is deeply embedded into our working practices, and material is rarely examined beyond its aesthetic or technological capacities to act as a servant to form.'

Lloyd Thomas, Katie. "Introduction: Architecture and Material Practice." In *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, 1–12. London ; New York: Routledge, 2007.

F

form

'But although Matta-Clark demonstrably attacked Modernism's valorisation of form - his 'building dissections' exceed both the architectural and artistic static object of Modernism - his work was no knee-jerk destruction of form. His work went beyond a contestation of form brought about by the revelation of stuff beneath the surface, where internal material could still be understood to make up, and therefore remain subordinate to, the three dimensions of form.'

Walker, Stephen. "Gordon Matta Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy" In *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, 44. London ; New York: Routledge, 2007.

F

form

'For Matta-Clark form was an activity rather than a static principle of any particular thing.[...] In response to frequent criticisms of Matta-Clark's work as being simply destructive, this reading stresses that his projects didn't pit the cultivated world against the natural, but invested energy to maintain them in relief against each other.'

Walker, Stephen. "Gordon Matta-Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy" In *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, 53. London ; New York: Routledge, 2007.

F

form

Matta-Clark's interest in the multi-faceted properties of matter can already be recognised to be at play in these small works, which drew attention to the enduring insubordination of matter, demonstrating that it never fully submits to the process of making by taking up the 'correct' form and location, and upsetting expectations that it remain inert once 'cultivated'.

Walker, Stephen. "Gordon Matta-Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy." In *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, 48. London ; New York: Routledge, 2007.

F

form

[Matta-Clark's] building dissections [...] effectively run this complete set of operations twice over: once from his own cutting and once from the repercussions of that cut, which exposed the secret, spontaneous and chaotic quality of the alien matter which must have been involved in the object's initial making and which continued to exist behind the apparently uniform, cultured façade of static form expected by established society.

Walker, Stephen. "Gordon Matta-Clark: Matter, Materiality, Entropy, Alchemy." In *Material Matters: Architecture and Material Practice*, 49. London ; New York: Routledge, 2007.

F

form

'Yet architecture lays claim to particular privilege in matters of 'form', because of its work in physically shaping the material objects and spaces that surround us - a claim that takes us straight away to the central problem of 'form', one that underlies its entire significance within Western thought. There is in 'form' an inherent ambiguity, between its meaning 'shape' on the one hand, and on the other 'idea' or 'essence': one describes the property of things as they are known to the senses, the other as they are known to the mind. In its appropriation of 'form', architecture has, according to one's point of view, either fallen victim to, or taken mischievous advantage of this inherent confusion. Much of what we shall have to say about 'form' concerns the working out, in the practice of an art concerned with making material objects, of the ambiguity between the two senses of the term.'

F

form

[Robert] Morris's new work, and that of the other artists illustrating his article, was made in a rectangular studio, to be shown in a rectangular gallery, reproduced in a rectangular magazine, in rectangular photographs, all aligned according to rectangular axes, for rectangular reading movements and rectangular thought patterns. [...] [Their work] function strictly in contrast to, or now and then in conflict with, their enframing spaces. Ruled lines and measurable corners in such spaces tell us how far, how big, how soft, how atmospheric, indeed, how "amorphous" an art work is within these lines and corners. Rectilinearity, by definition, is relational; and so long as we live in a world dominated by this and other part-to-whole geometrical figures, we cannot talk about form or non form *except as one type of form in relation to another (rectilinear) type.*

F

form

Neither function nor form is abandoned. Rather, form is reconceptualized as a condition conducive to certain outcomes, certain possibilities of activity and habitation. Form is an instigator of performances and responses, a frame that suggests rather than fixes [...].

Hays, K. Michael. "Introduction." In *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*, 1st ed., 3. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

F

formal

'[...] a practice of architecture in which the formal is increasingly valued over the material. The privileging of form over matter is deeply imbedded in the drawing practices of architects today. Since as early as Leon Battista Alberti's promotion of the architect as a draftsman of orthographic drawings*,* delineation has relegated materiality to a secondary role.'

Mindrup, Matthew. "Interrogating the Gap between the Material and Formal Imagination: An Introduction." In *The Material Imagination: Reveries on Architecture and Matter*, 2. London: Routledge, 2017.

F

form

*formless
How? How?

'[...] Bergson provides a new translation of *eidōs*, form:

After the explanations we have given above, we might, and perhaps we ought to, translate *eidōs*, by 'view' or rather by 'moment.' For *eidōs*, is the stable view taken of the instability of things: the quality, which is a moment of becoming; the *form*, which is a moment of evolution; the *essence*, which is the mean form above and below which the other forms are arranged as alterations of the mean [...]

Matta-Clark's project provide a reminder of what is involved in any ongoing challenge to the stability of 'form' as a category. Form cannot be reduced unproblematically to object-form but must also involve and maintain both the material and immaterial aspects of architecture.

[...] As Bergson's re-translation of *eidōs* suggests, this situation does not prevent architecture from being understood, but it does replace the traditional authority of static form with a contingent and composite version.'

F

form

'[...] we might, and perhaps we ought to, translate *eidōs*, by 'view' or rather by 'moment.' For *eidōs*, is the stable view taken of the instability of things: the *quality*, which is a moment of becoming; the *form*, which is a moment of evolution; the essence, which is the mean form above and below which the other forms are arranged as alterations of the mean'

Bergson, Henri. "Plato and Aristotle." In *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, 315. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

F**form**

'[...] 'form' is a concept that has outlived its usefulness. People talk *of* form all the time, but they rarely talk *about* it; as a term it has become frozen, no longer in active development, and with little curiosity as to what purpose it might serve. Ask this question, and it may lose some of its seeming naturalness and neutrality.'

F

form

'Architectural modernism adopted 'form' and made it its cardinal term for various reasons:

[...]

it gave to architects a description for that part of their work over which they held exclusive and unequivocal control.'

form

'[...] to speak *on* something imposes a form on it [...]. Form is the temptation of discourse to arrest itself, to fix on itself, to finish itself off by producing and appropriating its own end. Bataille's writing is antidiscursive (endlessly deforms and disguises itself, endlessly rids itself of form) [...].

'[...] Every one of Bataille's statements heralds the repetition that will erase it. From the moment of its formulation every statement is shaken by its disappearance. Nowhere does writing meet with the opportunity to conform itself. Never does it provide thought with a place to collect itself, for example, into a thesis that would be permanently shielded from its destructive productivity.'

F

form

[...] a field condition could be any formal or spatial matrix capable of unifying diverse elements while respecting the identity of each. Field configurations are loosely bound aggregates characterized by porosity and local interconnectivity. Overall shape and extent are highly fluid and less important than the internal relationships of parts, which determine the behavior of the field. Field conditions are bottom-up phenomena, defined not by overarching geometrical schemas but by intricate local connections. [...]

Form matters, but not so much the form of things as the forms *between* things.'

F

form

Like dust, the *informe* should be read here as a verb – to in-form, to give form to, to put oneself into a form, to find a form, but also to question it, escape it, modify it, etcetera. Incidentally – matter has a form, and it is in the *informe* that the dynamic dimension of its variation is included.

Stoppani, Teresa. "Dust Revolutions. Dust. Informe. Architecture (Notes for a Reading of Dust in Bataille)." *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 4 (September 2007): 443.

F

formal

Literal non form, like chaos, is quite an impossible condition to observe. In fact it is inconceivable. The structure of the cerebral cortex and all our biological functions permit us only patterned responses and thoughts of one kind or another. For cultural and personal reasons, we may prefer this pattern to that one – say a pile of shit to a series of cubes – but they are equally “formal,” equally analyzable.

Thus, Morris's pile of felt batting [...] is an arrangement of uniformly colored, uniformly toned pieces of similar material. Its loops and folds have about the same distribution of gentle curves and hairpin turns throughout. How much Morris caused the felt to assume these forms, and how much the felt simply arranged itself out of its own physical nature, does not alter its evident form. What matters here is that there is an observable theme-and-variation at work, occurring, however, in the absence of strict hierarchies as developed by the allover tradition of the last twenty years.

F

formless

'A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world [declassify], generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no right in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All our philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.'

Bataille, Georges. "Formless." In *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, edited and translated by Allan Stoekl, 31. *Theory and History of Literature*, v. 14. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

F

formless

The use of informe/formless can never be definitively justified in terms of artistic forms. For something to remain formless, it would have to stay outside the world of form, which is arguably impossible. This impossibility, though, can become the (non) location of formless through or across a work of art. Formless is, in any case, not the same as the idea of formlessness, but more of a process, one that does something with, or against form, rather than thinking itself outside form completely.

Crowley, Patrick, and Paul Hegarty, eds. "Formless 3. The Interminable Detour of Form: Art and Formless." In *Formless: Ways in and out of Form*, 188-89. *European Connections*, v. 11. Oxford : New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

F**formless**

'[formless] is not so much a stable motif to which we can refer, a symbolizable theme, a given quality, as it is a term allowing one to operate a declassification, in the double sense of lowering and of taxonomic disorder. Nothing in and of itself, the formless has only an operational existence: it is a performative [...]

F

formless

'[...] it is a mistake to think that 'formless' is the site or process of the loss of forms - rather it is a new way of looking at how form coalesces - a way that entails thinking the continual movement between something and nothing, form and lack of form.'

Hegarty, Paul. "Art and Aesthetics." In Georges Bataille, 143. *Core Cultural Theorist*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, 2000.

F

formless

'[...] there is no such thing as formless matter, but you are still interested in being able to distinguish between more and less organized **forms** as well as more and less stable forms.'

Harman, Graham. "Realism and Materialism." In *The Rise of Realism*, by Manuel De Landa and Graham Harman, 22. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2017.

F

formless

Within the text of Bataille's 'Informe [formless], forms are to be found: earthworm, spider, gob of spit [*crachat*]. Not only that, but they operate differently: the earthworm or spider are things which get crushed, and Bataille wants the 'idea' of informe/formless to be the same: it is a form, but for humans, it exists largely apart from us, and it gets destroyed (and destroys itself) when we come into contact with it. [...]

[W]hile a gob of spit is notionally free of a fixed form, due to its liquidity, a spider is definite and symmetrical. The fact that spit here is a specific 'thing' of spit - one gob - brings it closer to the spider, closer to some sort of form. On the other hand, we know that the spider is form-that-gets-crushed'. The key is in how far or near these things are to form, because they are not seen as form, as such, by Bataille.

F

formless

'Water is fascinating for its inconsistency. It infiltrates, mixes, clogs, vaporizes. Because it has no **form**, it can take on all forms.

[...] Water is a formless, bodiless force; like matter, it is a potential available for multiple uses that adapts to all molds and every imaginable movement.

[...] not only does [water] take all forms but it gives them.'

F

formless

[...] the emphasis of Bois and Krauss on the formless as *completely* formless supplies it paradoxically with a form. In different ways these are gestures of reduction, either locating the formless within a frame or locating it as what is always outside the frame. The impossibility of the subversive image is that it does not fit into the frame but spills over it. The formless is always *in-forme*, but it is never absorbed by that form.

F

formless

‘Wherever some notion of form operates as a limitation or constraint, formless seem to open up alternative possibilities, evoking an immense variety of processes and phenomena hovering at the limits of description and understanding [...].

[...] not only within architecture but in any field subject to formal hierarchies and norms [...].’

F

formless

[...] 'formless' too is a form, a way of encapsulating 'that which escapes form', so is trapped within the world of form, rather than being a resistance to it, or its inherent unravelling. [...] As with chaos mathematics, it is a mistake to think that 'formless' is the site or process of the loss of forms - rather it is a new way of looking at how form coalesces - a way that entails thinking the continual movement between something and nothing, form and lack of form. In, short, all form 'contains' *formlessness*, and the formless cannot be brought out.

In terms of Bataille's *œuvre*, the 'formless' occupies a space similar to that held by abjection. It is both an 'outside' and something permeating the 'inside' (of form, of identity, of solidity).

F

framing

'Surreality is, we could say, nature convulsed into a kind of writing. The special access that photography has to this experience its is privileged connection to the real. The manipulations then available to photography - what we have been calling doubling and spacing - appear to document these convulsions. The photographs are not interpretations of reality, decoding it, as in Heartfield's photomontages. They are presentations of that reality as configured, or coded, or written. The experience of nature as sign, or nature as representation, comes "naturally" then to photography. It extends, as well, to that domain most inherently photographic, which is that of the framing edge of the image experienced as cut or cropped. [...] what unites all surrealist production is precisely this experience of nature as representation, physical matter as writing.'

Krauss, Rosalind E. "Photographic Conditions of Surrealism." In *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 12. print., 113-15. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985.

geometry

The perception of the work in its state of suspended animation, arrested motion, does not give one calculatable truths like geometry, but a sense of a presence, an isolated time. The apparent potential for disorder for movement endows the structure with a quality outside of its physical or relational definition.

[...]

There is a difference between definite literal fixed relationships, i.e., joints, clips, gluing, welding, etc., and those which are provisional, non-fixed, "elastic." The former seem unnecessary and irrelevant and tend to function as interposed elements.'

geometry

'[...] the 'craft' of the architect is not building but drawing. The descriptive geometry we traditionally use did not so much enable communication between designer and builder, as is often commented upon, but produced that separation, and affiliated the design of buildings with the high-minded and ideal disciplines of mathematics and the pure sciences. In contemporary professional practice the split appears again in the tender package, where drawings describe form but language is used for the materials of building in notes on working drawings and in the specification.'

geometry

'For any piece of machinery, to be drawn to specs by an engineer, on one hand, or to remain functional without rusting and rotting away, on the other, requires us to accept two very different types of existence.

To exist as a part *inter partes* inside the isotopic space invented by the long history of geometry, still-life painting, and technical drawing is not at all the same as existing as an entity that has to resist decay and corruption. Obvious? Yes, of course—but then why do we so often act as if matter itself were made of parts that behave just like those of technical drawings, which live on indefinitely in a timeless, unchanging realm of geometry? Why [...] do we still take this view of technical artifacts so seriously—as if the ontological qualities of matter itself were the same as the ontological qualities of drawing and moving parts around in geometrical space?

geometry

'According to Alberti's theory, beauty and *concinnitas* - the structural congruity that Cicero deemed to be a law of nature - are the outcome of a mental process. Starting at the geometrical level, the resulting harmonic effect is transferred to all parts of the building at the material level. The strict separation between the *lineamenti*, the geometrical organization of the lines in the architect's mind [...] and the materiality of the external reality [...] corresponds with the perspective model that also brings together the mental and material worlds with the help of projection lines. "It is quite possible to project whole forms in the mind without any recourse to the material [...]", writes Alberti in the chapter about the lineaments.

[...]

Alberti's separation of the mental and material processes of building was taken further by Andrea Palladio who noticed that buildings tended to be more valued for their forms than their materials (*Le fabbriche si stimano più per la forma che per la materia*).

geometry

'For ancients, geometry was a purely static science. Figures were given to it at once, completely finished, like the Platonic Ideas. But the essence of the Cartesian geometry (although Descartes did not give it this form) was to regard every plane curve as described by the movement of a point on a movable straight line which is displaced, parallel to itself, along the axis of the abscissae - the displacement of the movable straight line being supposed to be uniform and the abscissa thus becoming representative of the time.

[...]

To substitute an equation for a figure consists, therefore, in seeing the actual position of the moving points in the tracing of the curve at any moment whatever, instead of regarding this tracing all at once, gathered up in the unique moment when the curve has reached its finished state.'

hierarchy

The fashion for plastic highlights an evolution in the myth of 'imitation' materials. It is well known that their use is historically bourgeois in origin (the first vestimentary pastiches date back to the rise of capitalism). But until now imitation materials have [...] belonged to the world of appearances, not to that of actual use; they aimed at reproducing cheaply the rarest substances, diamonds, silk, feathers, furs, silver, all the luxurious brilliance of the world. Plastic has climbed down, it is a household material. It is the first magical substance which consents to be prosaic. But it is precisely because this prosaic character is a triumphant reason for its existence: for the first time, artifice aims at something common, not rare. And as an immediate consequence, the age-old function of nature is modified: it is no longer the Idea, the pure Substance to be regained or imitated: an artificial Matter, more bountiful than all the natural deposits, is about to replace her, and to determine the very invention of forms. [...] The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all[...].

I
idealistic

'This is why the materialism of the recent past now looks so idealistic: it takes the idea of what things in themselves should be—that is, primary qualities—and then never stops gawking at the miracle that makes them “resemble” their **geometrical** reproduction in drawings.'

imagination

'All cartographers [in the sixteenth century] are faced with the same challenge: represent the unknown. [...] Whether they were drawing unexplored lands, fixing their positions, or naming the parts, the cosmographers constructed fictions. They elaborated possible models and, for lack of greater precision, pictured the world not as it is but as it could be. Though they were motivated by practical aims, subordinate to political and economic ends, they behaved like poets, who create verisimilitude to free themselves from the constraints of reality, and opened a space for their imagination and, simultaneously, for variations in the represented object. The world as conceived in their cartographic fictions is an unfinished world captured in the course of gestation, [...] unstable and flexible [...].'

imagination

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Jeanneret, Michel. "Earth Changes: Mobile Cartography" In *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from Da Vinci to Montaigne*, 77. Parallax. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

impurity

The first day it was my fate to be assigned the preparation of zinc sulphate: it should not have been too difficult; it was a matter of making an elementary stoichiometric calculation and attacking the zinc particles with previously diluted sulphuric acid [...]. [...]

[...] the so tender and delicate zinc, so yielding to acid which gulps it down in a single mouthful, behaves, however, in a very different fashion when it is very pure: then it obstinately resists the attack. One could draw from this two conflicting philosophical conclusions: the praise of purity, which protects from evil like a coat of mail; the praise of impurity, which gives rise to changes, in other words, to life. I discarded the first, disgustingly moralistic, and I lingered to consider the second, which I found more congenial. In order for the wheel to turn, for life to be lived, impurities are needed [...]. Dissension, diversity [...] are needed [...]. [...]

So take the solution of copper sulphate which is in the shelf of reagents, add a drop of it to your sulphuric acid, and you'll see the reaction begin: the zinc wakes up, it is covered with a white fur of hydrogen bubbles, and there we are, the enchantment has taken place [...].

index

'The sheltering arm of the spiral would increase the concentration of brine in the surrounding water, allowing for a higher rate of crystal deposition. It is fair to say that Smithson's Earthwork was built in explicit anticipation of its further seasoning by the lake; it was built, in short, in order to be salted.

[...]

Because it articulates a perpetual belatedness in relation to Smithson's own work, the salt at the jetty serves as a material index of the passage of time.'

index

'One of the inscriptions of time (whose irreversibility is demonstrated by the law of entropy), dust is, semiologically speaking, an index. In this it is like photography, but its trace is of duration. Duchamp put his finger on this indexical quality quite precisely, when he let dust accumulate in layers of differing thicknesses (and thus different durations) on his *Large Glass* (1915-23) in order to obtain degrees of transparency and of varied colors once a fixative was applied.'

I
infrathin

'In these [notes] [Duchamp] explored the elusive and ephemeral world of the very last lastness of things, that frail and final minimum before reality disappears completely.'

Matisse, Paul. "Introduction." In Marcel Duchamp, *Notes*, xv. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, 1980.

infrathin

'The possible implying /
the becoming - the passage from /
one to the other takes place /
in the infrathin.'

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 1." In Marcel Duchamp, Notes,
translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture
Georges Pompidou, 1980.

I
infrathin

'Infra thin separation between /
the **detonation** noise of a gun /
(very close) **and** the **apparition** of the bullet /
hole in the target - /
(maximum distance /
3 to 4 meters - [...]).'

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 12." In Marcel Duchamp, Notes,
translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture
Georges Pompidou, 1980.

I
infrathin

'Their understanding of transformation and potentiality redefined time, space, and dimension. [...] Duchamp and Beuys cleared the way for a transparent, razor-thin, undefined something that oscillated between concrete materialization and imagination - Duchamp referred to it as *infra-mince* (infra-thin) and Beuys associated it with the invisible. It is in these indefinable intermediate zones, in various stages of metamorphosis and processes of change, that a seminal potential emerges.'

Holzhey, Magdalena, Katharina Neuberger, and Kornelia Röder, eds. "Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, and the potential of art: A conversation between Magdalena Holzhey, Katharina Neuberger, and Kornelia Röder." In *Beuys & Duchamp: Artists of the future*, 30–31. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021.

I

infrathin

'[...] a neologism for the invisible [...], for the in-between in the razor-thin gap between dimensions, in the gap between things, between substances, between appearance and being, and between determinations of facts and analogies.

Graevenitz, Antje von. "Pregnant words and em. bediments: The language of the two philosopher-artists Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys." In *Beuys & Duchamp: Artists of the future*, edited by Magdalena Holzhey, Katharina Neuburger, and Kornelia Röder, 298. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021.

I
infrathin

'just touching.

While trying to place 1 plane surface / precisely on
another plane surface /
you pass through some **infra thin moments -'**

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 45." In Marcel Duchamp, Notes,
translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture
Georges Pompidou, 1980.

|
infrathin

'The difference /
(dimensional) between /
2 mass produced objects /
[from the / same mold] /
is an infra thin /
when the maximum (?) /
precision is /
obtained.'

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 18." In *Marcel Duchamp, Notes*, translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, 1980.

I
infrathin

'Infra-thin separation

2 forms cast in / the same mold (?) differ / from each other / by an
infra thin separative / amount -

All "identicals" as / identical as they may be, (and / the more identical
they are) / move toward this / infra thin separative / difference.

[...] there exists the crude conception / of déjà vu which leads from /
generic grouping / (2 trees, 2 boats) / to the most identical "castings"
/ It would be better / to try / to go / into the / infra thin / interval
which separates / 2 "identicals" than / to conveniently accept / the
verbal generalization / which makes / 2 twins look like 2 / drops of
water.

I
infrathin

'Sameness /
similarity /
The same (mass prod.) /
practical approximation of similarity.

In Time the same object is not the /
same after 1 second interval [...].'

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 7." In Marcel Duchamp, Notes,
translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture
Georges Pompidou, 1980.

I |
infrathin

'infrathin **separation** - [...]

Subway gates - The people /
who go through at the very last moment /
infra thin -

[...]

Velvet trousers - /
their whistling sound (in walking) by /
brushing of the 2 legs is an /
infra thin separation signaled / by sound. [...]

1

infrathin

'The warmth of a seat (which has just /
been left) is infra-thin'

Duchamp, Marcel. "Inframince, Note 4" In Marcel Duchamp, Notes,
translated by Paul Matisse. Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture
Georges Pompidou, 1980.

irruptive

'The incompleteness of the critical dictionary was a critique of the tendency of dictionaries to try to define all the significant words in a language by freezing their irruptive energies into stable meanings. [...]. Instead of being organised by meaning the critical dictionary was organised by the tasks of words, trying to release their irruptive energies. This release often involved a play between the critical dictionary entry for a word and its accompanying image. [...] Through the critical dictionary [Bataille] intervenes into the founding classifications that define the meaning of our world. The critical dictionary subverts these classifications by shifting from a word's meaning to its tasks and effects.'

[...] 'Like the dictionary, science divides up the world into discrete units, trying to impose a mathematical 'frock coat' on the world. Philosophy, on the other hand, tries to contain these forces within metaphysical wholes. What remains is the leftover, the remainder, which cannot be assimilated.'

interiority

'[...] one of the most normal and regular functions of the imagination, that is to say the function of miniaturization. [...] It is a postulate of the imagination that the things we dream never keep their dimensions and are not stabilized in any dimension. And reveries that are truly possessive, that *give* the object to us, are Lilliputian reveries. It is reveries that give us all the treasures of the interiority of things. A dialectical perspective does indeed open before us here, an inverted perspective that can be expressed in this paradoxical phrase: the interior of a small object is big.'

interiority

'If we understand "proper" ornament, as opposed to the more frivolous category of decoration, as an external manifestation of the internalized desires of an object, [...] the returning of ornament back from whence it came. Back into "the inside," not the interior of the building but the interiority of its intention, and also, quite literally, the interiority of the very walls themselves; back into the stuff of the wall, into that which represents matter itself.'

irregular

'Bataille's 'Les écarts de la nature', [...] is primarily a philosophical essay on the concept of form and its relation to the material world. [...] if one photographs, on one plate, a large number of pebbles of similar size but different shapes one after the other, one ends up with a composite form very close to a sphere. Bataille wants to undermine the idea that geometrical figures are ideal forms in any substantial sense, a regular geometrical form being, in his view, no more than a statistical average generated from a series of individual forms, each of which is irregular and, to the degree that it is, monstrous. [...] Rather than being normative, geometrical forms are, for him, degraded versions of un-geometrical forms. [...] In reducing the regular to the irregular, Bataille has the latter extirpate the former.'

L

line

'There is a way that Matta-Clark's cut drawings allegorize a principle common to the range of his more conventional graphic art, the liminality of form as erupting from the draftman's line. Throughout the better part of his drawings, Matta-Clark's art addresses itself to the undoing of stable forms, precisely through the registration of this line. In what follows, this is an activity characterized as "drawing in between."

[...] No doubt the cut line is not a graphic line, but its structural operations coincide seamlessly, if paradoxically, with the foundations of drawing as they have been classically formulated.

M

malfunction

'[...] hammers aren't exclusively for hammering. Apparent functioning is subtended by malfunctioning. There is no progress in evolution. At whatever temporal scale one looks, one won't find a level on which it all smooths out or makes perfect sense.

[...]

Mastery could superficially mean knowing how the tool functions so well that I don't have to think about it. [...] Yet mastery could also be about realizing that functioning is a special kind of malfunctioning to which I'm not attending enough. So mastery could be allowing things to malfunction.'

measurements

'We cannot insist too strongly that there is something artificial in the mathematical form of a physical law, and consequently in our scientific knowledge of things. Our standards of measurements are conventional, and, so to say, foreign to the intention of nature [...]

In a general way, *measuring* is a wholly human operation, which implies that we really or ideally superpose two objects one another a certain number of times. Nature did not dream of this superposition. It does not measure, nor does it count. Yet physics counts, measures, relates "quantitative" variations to one another to obtain laws, and it succeeds.

[...] One hypothesis only, therefore, remains plausible, namely, that the mathematical order is nothing positive, that it is the form toward which a certain *interruption* tends of itself, and that materiality consists precisely in an interruption of this kind.'

M

measure

'If you measure a table with a yardstick,
are you also measuring the yardstick?'

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. In *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*,
translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, 1174. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964.

M

measure

'Life "splays" itself out in new forms that are not even conceivable before they exist, says Bergson, and where they to be quantified and measured, it would already be too late, for life will have moved on.'

Bennett, Jane. "Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism"
In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 77.
Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

measurements

"The fact that both Duchamp and Beuys drew on scientific paradigms, used them artistically, and at the same time questioned them, shows how universal both protagonists assessed the role of art in experiencing and describing the world. [...] Both invented new systems of measurement, seemingly arbitrarily set or grounded in the logic of their own systems, and thus created, as it were, instructions for viewing reality differently.'

Holzhey, Magdalena. "Measuring the world." In Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, and the potential of art: A conversation between Magdalena Holzhey, Katharina Neuberger, and Kornelia Röder, edited by Magdalena Holzhey, Katharina Neuberger, and Kornelia Röder, 91-92. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021.

measurements

'In *Laws*, Plato distinguished two kinds of measurement, arithmetic, or absolute, and relative. The former plays its part in arts concerned with quantities, the latter, a qualitative standard, has a key role in decisions about what is fitting, opportune and desirable. [...] Perhaps diagrammatic is a better translation of his *skhéma*: a pattern or image that has been clearly set out, measured and sized, but also one that allows qualifications that render it particularly relevant to individual cases.'

measurements

'[...] refer to a standard measure, which can be understood as a symbol for the positivist measurability of the world. In this reference, they explicitly demonstrate the capacity (and necessity) of art to access the world in a freer and more creative way than the exact sciences do - a revolutionary act that questions the normative power of the platinum-iridium standard meter kept in Sèvres near Paris.'

order

‘When the child follows the father working at the carpenter’s bench or the mother at her sewing machine, the German Jewish philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin writes, it is not the finished products that the child is primarily interested in, but the *remnants* or “waste material”. The child’s attention is directed towards the wood shavings and scraps of fabric and threads that fall onto the floor, where they create a world of their own; an “underworld” having its own peculiar visual richness. This visual richness reminds us that the things belong to an order deprived of the logic of goal-oriented usefulness.’

0

order

*geometry

'Now, suppose that there are two species of order, and that these two orders are two contraries within one and the same genus. Suppose also that the idea of disorder arises in our mind whenever, seeking one of the two kinds of order, we find the other.

[...] the geometrical order and the vital order are accordingly confused together.'

ornament

'Without ornament architecture was losing a key tool for composition: focus and intensification within an undifferentiated field. Architecture was also losing a key strategy for concealing error at major low-tolerance junctions: wall to ceiling - the cornice, or wall to floor - the skirting board, ornament had been there all along to generously hide the botched joint, the misalignment of parts. Ornament, the site of concrete error, the cracks that open up in buildings, is also itself potentially the site of symbolic error, the perfect flaw. The stripping of these concealing vehicles, the skirting board and cornice, etc. (which Loos, among others, calls for and initiates), which became one of the hallmarks of modernism, marks architecture's sacrifice of one of its stalwart strategies for negotiating error and matter in the making of buildings.'

P

part

"Every part ... is equivalent in stress to every other part." [...] This is how Wittgenstein builds, this is how a (digital) camera sees, this is how a computer draws. [...] Every part must now be as precisely built as the trickiest bit - as the door handle, for example.'

Hughes, Francesca. "Error and Surface." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 242. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

particles

'Lucretius's *De rerum natura* is the first great poetic work in which knowledge of the world leads to a dissolution of the world's solidity and to a perception of that which is infinitely small and nimble and light. Lucretius wants to write the poem of matter, but he warns us from the start that the reality of matter is that it's made of invisible particles. He is the poet of physical concreteness, seen in its permanent, unchanging substance, but he begins by telling us that empty space is just as concrete as solid bodies. [...] The poetry of the invisible, the poetry of infinite unpredictable potentialities, even the poetry of nothingness, originate in this poet who has no doubts about the physical reality of the world.'

particles

'Clouds, be they digital, meteorological, or imaginary, exemplify what I call the meteorological mode: a spatiality of dispersal, a temporality of phasing and materiality of patterned particles. The cloud in all its manifestations - digital, meteorological, metaphorical - is unfathomable in its accuracy, its intangibility, and the continuous updates of its morphology.'

P

permeate

'Because it's eighty percent rock, it won't erode completely. It holds its shape but it's affected by the climate changes. In the late summer it will evaporate and the whole thing will develop salt [...] So I'm interested in something substantial enough that's permeate—perhaps permeate is a better word than permanent—in other words, something that can be permeated with change and different conditions.'

Roth, Moira. "Interview with Robert Smithson (1973)." In Robert Smithson, edited by Eugenie Tsai and Cornelia H. Butler, 92. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

phase spaces

'[...] a body-plan defines a space of possibilities [...] and this space has topological structure. The notion of the structure of a space of possibilities is crucial in **assemblage** theory given that, unlike properties, the capacities of an assemblage are not given, that is, they are merely possible when not exercised. But the set of possible capacities of an assemblage is not amorphous, however open-ended it may be, since different assemblages exhibit different sets of capacities.

The formal study of these possibility spaces is more advanced in physics and chemistry, where they are referred to as 'phase spaces'. Their structure is given by topological invariants called 'attractors', as well as by the dimensions of the space, dimensions that represent the 'degrees of freedom', or relevant ways of changing, of concrete physical or chemical dynamical systems.'

P

pillow

'The beams should be related, if at all possible; that is, they should be of the same type of timber, from the same forest, raised under the same climatic conditions, and felled on the same day, so that by having the same natural strength they will perform their function equally.'

'[...] As a pillow for the beams set down a layer of fern, which is a dry plant, or charcoal, or even better, the lees of oil mixed with olive stones.'

play

'[...] Cartesian concept of tolerance, an idea denying the traditional concept of *play*: [...] In rational design the idea of dimensional tolerance is required for fitting together the building elements. The architect in this case is the coordinator and the metric and anthropometric conventions are the critical guidelines and the limits of the process of construction.

[...] Antithetical to the notion of tolerance is the more traditional idea of *play*: the dimensional agreement among the building elements. It is the same structural device that allows doors to open or walls to settle. [...] play is an inherently critical activity that guides invention, whereas tolerance presents only one side (face) and establishes conventions with the intention of simplifying the process of construction.'

play

'Before tolerance, architects designed for play, or elbow room.

[...] Play describes space available for free movement. [...]

When [Sebastiano] Serlio notes that doors must be designed to accommodate the 'nature of wood to expand and contract with the damp or dry weather', he advocates designing for play.

[...]

Play is the acceptance of the need to allow for free action. [...]

While tolerance presumes perfection and begrudges error, play accepts approximation and accommodates error.'

play

'Boundaries are important aspects of a theory of play. The abstract concept of play is reminiscent of the freedom of childhood, but play of any sort has restrictions. Jacques Derrida explains the role of free play by introducing its boundaries; he writes that play is bound in two crucial sense:

[F]irst, the beginning of play is always necessarily connected to a foreproject, to a series of prejudgements that are at issue in the activity of play itself, that give an orientation to the play; and second, the result of play is a structure, a framework or order that has been confirmed by the play itself. [...]

[...] A soccer game would not be very interesting if the goal posts were removed. [...] A game, too restricting, has no movement of flexibility; consequently, the play loses interest, and it could be said it has no play. The architectural theorist Marco Frascari expresses this seizing up of play by the example of play versus tolerance in a joint.

[...]

To leave some play means to leave some vagueness.'

precarious

'In fact, however declarative the early work [of Serra] is about its materials and methods, it is also provisional about its results: "precarious" is a term that cropped up in the initial reviews. Sometimes the status of the pieces as objects (not to mention as art) was in doubt, as they did not always appear to be stable in substance or in structure.'

P

precision

'The fifteenth-century definition of precision here references abstraction, separation, cutting off: precision gained by losing, editing, simplifying. In first considering whether any instruction may ever be so exact as to be unambiguous, we might then also consider what is lost when we are precise.'

McVicar, Mhairi. "Defining Precision and Ambiguity." In *Precision in Architecture: Certainty, Ambiguity and Deviation*, 46. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

precision

[...] a production culture that now calculates and draws masonry walls with software designed to cut lenses or map brain tumors. [...] We ignore the false economy it exposes - the degree of precision employed far exceeds what is needed or could ever be enforced.

Hughes, Francesca. "False Economy: Precision and Error in Architecture (Introduction)." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 4-5. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

P

precision

[...] In modernity, the idea of precision becomes a moral imperative, a value in itself. Alexandre Koyré describes the modern world 'of exact measures' as a 'universe of precision'. Originally, 'precise' meant 'to cut short', but in the French Enlightenment it came to mean 'to determine exactly', while the association of measuring with exercising judgment dwindled.'

precision

'One of the more peculiar effects of the digitization of architectural production has been the now staple use of a degree of precision that is always redundant to the process of materialization.

[...] we draw brick walls (which we know will be built on muddy sites, by workers wearing thick gloves) to six decimal places [...].

[...] We ignore the false economy it exposes - the degree of precision employed far exceeds what is needed or could ever be enforced.

precision

'Scale rules are expected to be precise mathematical instruments. One can be precise (repetition of the same result) within any scale, but accuracy (proximity to the goal) increases with an increase in scale. Often the expectation of precision for a scale drawing is confused with the desire to have the building constructed accurately from the drawings.

process

As an artist whose work grew directly out of the near-religious devotion to process that arose in the 1960s, [Serra] said he still considered every step associated with his sculptures — from the models to the molten steel poured in a foundry in Siegen, Germany, to the long, complicated heavy-lifting finale — to be part of his art.

[...] “If you’re going to watch the process, watch it all the time, because it’s always bespeaking something that’s of interest” [...] X

process

'The notion of making, of course, defines an activity purely in terms of its capacity to yield a certain object, whereas weaving focuses on the character of the process by which that object comes into existence. To emphasise making is to regard the object as the expression of an idea; to emphasise weaving is to regard it as the embodiment of a rhythmic movement. Therefore to invert making and weaving is also to invert idea and movement, to see the movement as truly generative of the object rather than merely revelatory of an object that is already present, in an ideal, conceptual or virtual form, in advance of the process that discloses it. The more that objects are removed from the contexts of lifeactivity in which they are produced and used – the more they appear as static objects of disinterested contemplation (as in museums and galleries) – the more, too, the process disappears or is hidden behind the product, the finished object. Thus we are inclined to look for the meaning of the object in the idea it expresses rather than in the current of activity to which it properly and originally belongs.'

P

process

'I think what artists do is they invent strategies that allow themselves to see in a way they haven't seen before to extend their vision.

[...] they constantly come up with ways of informing themselves by inventing tools or techniques or processes that allow them to see into a material manifestation in the way that you would not if you dealt with standardised or academic ways of thinking.'

Serra, Richard. "Richard Serra: Tools & Strategies," Interview
(Jonathan Munar), *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, January 2013.

process

'the properties of materials are directly implicated in the form-generating process. It is therefore no longer possible to sustain the distinction between form and substance that, as we have seen, is so central to the standard view of making things. Finally, the templates, measures and rules of thumb of the artisan or craftsman no more add up to a design for the artefacts he produces than do genes constitute a blueprint for the organism. Like genes, they set the parameters of the process but do not prefigure the form.'

processes

In the 1960s minimalist artists as Donald Judd and Robert Morris attempted to eradicate any immaterial ideas which were hidden within a material. [...] According to the minimalists the work should not be protected and controlled by the methods of memory (preservation, museum) but anonymous and at the mercy of its surroundings. The illusion of a life supported by the psychological theories of empathy should also be abandoned. This is why these artists preferred such industrial surfaces as plywood or concrete rather than materials such as grained wood or veined stone which display growth, deposits, and organic processes. The "specific object (Judd) produced against this background should have a presence which is completely free of references except to itself. [...] At the end of the day anonymity and serial production also have to be recognized as qualities of this art.

processes

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R

relation

'[...] rather than thinking of [things] as produced in relations,
we may think of them as what makes relations possible.'

Olsen, Bjørnar. "In Defense of Things." In *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects*, 156-57. Archaeology in Society Series. Lanham [Md.]: AltaMira Press, 2010.

R**rigid**

[...] Venetian restorers had to confront major problems of consolidation in famous monumental buildings, and in their operations they often made use of a material that was now sanctioned even by restoration charters - reinforced concrete.

[...] its rigid structure is so diametrically antithetical to the 'softer' principles of Venetian building tradition. Unlike Venetian walls of brick and joists of wood and floors of polished terrazzo, iron and concrete do not give or move, and are therefore unable to absorb the shifting forces of the essentially unstable Venetian subsoil.

[...]

It creates problems for the remaining, original parts of the building at the same time as solving them.

seasoning

'Because it articulates a perpetual belatedness in relation to Smithson's own work, the salt at the jetty serves as a material index of the passage of time.'

[...]

'The paradox of seasoning, explains Derrida, is that it works both as a supplement - adding something else to the original food - and also an agent of recursive elevation. One adds seasoning to food in order to change it but also to heighten the food's original flavor, to give it, as Derrida says, "*still more of its own taste.*"

S

spacing

'[...] at the very boundary of the image the camera frame which crops or cuts the represented element out of reality-at-large can be seen as another example of spacing. Spacing is the indication of a break in the simultaneous experience of the real, a rupture that issues into sequence. Photographic cropping is *always* experienced as a rupture in the continuous fabric of reality. But surrealist photography puts enormous pressure on that frame to make it itself read as a sign - an empty sign it is true, but an integer in the calculus of meaning: a signifier of signification.'

specification

'Would it be possible, even in theory, for any design to specify the form of an organism or artefact completely? In his fascinating study of the design principles embodied in the construction of living organisms and manufactured artefacts, originally written as a textbook for students of engineering, Michael French (1988: 266–7) speculates on the question of just how much information would be needed to specify every aspect of the form of an organism. His conclusion is that the amount would be unimaginably large, far beyond what could be coded in the DNA of any known life-form. Nor is the situation any different with artefacts. True, even the greatest achievements of human engineering are no match for the most commonplace of organisms: thus the steam locomotive, as French wryly observes, 'is simplicity itself compared with the intricacies of the buttercup' (1988: 1). But then, no human design could approach the DNA of the genome in its informational content. Once again, a complete specification would apparently lie beyond the realms of possibility. In short, the forms of both organisms and artefacts seem to be significantly underdetermined by their underlying blueprints.'

S

standardisation

'In broader terms, standardization must itself be understood as a process that transforms the subject and not just the object. Standardization participates in shaping our thoughts and not just our things. Over the course of the twentieth century, it increased the designer's dependency on handbooks and manuals, which centralized and homogenized the production of architectural knowledge.'

S

surface

[...] it is at the surface, or to be more precise, at that strange cathexis of the surface of the building and the surface of the drawing, that we find the site of precision's most heightened, most fetishized elaboration.'

Hughes, Francesca. "Error and Surface." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 217. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

S

surface

[...] surface is where matter stops. [...]
It is a meeting ground.

Hughes, Francesca. "Error and Surface." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 224. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

S

surface

'I mean to suggest [...] that the forms of objects are not imposed from above but grow from the mutual involvement of people and materials in an environment. The surface of nature is thus an illusion: the blacksmith, carpenter or potter – just as much as the basket-maker – works from within the world, not upon it.'

Ingold, Tim. "On Weaving a Basket." In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, 347, 2011.

S

surface

Surface introuvable.

La perception d'une surface comme plane dépend de l'échelle d'observation. La représentation bi-dimensionnelle est conventionnelle. Dans toute surface se cache le relief de son matériau.

Surface not found.

The perception of a surface as plane depends on the scale of observation. The two-dimensional representation is conventional. In any surface hides the relief of its material.

T

thick

“The material world is lumpy, recalcitrant, and inconsistent. Connections come apart; parts wear out; things break. It is hard enough to build a single artifact that works in the prescribed manner, let alone coordinate diverse human interests in the hope that many thousands of these artifacts will operate as intended in diverse environments. In short, things are “thick.” ’

thick

'[...] *res extensa* is a way to draw technical parts side by side, those parts themselves do not assemble or gather or survive as if they were "in" *res extensa* or "made of" matter. Or, rather, we are now faced with two different definitions of "matter": one (the **idealist** one) in which the reproduction of the parts through **geometry** is confused with the reproduction of the parts themselves, and another in which those two pathways are clearly distinct. The first gives way to objects, the description of which is always thin; the second gives way to things [...] of thick description. Thin objects, on one hand, with an ideal definition of matter; thick things, on the other, with a material definition of matter [...].

This does not mean that reproduction through geometry is "abstract," "cold," and "dead" while reproduction through steel, brass, or wood is "concrete," "warm," and "alive," but simply that geometry is what allows engineers to draw and know the parts, while the parts themselves go their own ways and follow, so to speak, their own directions.'

x

T

tolerance

'Any error that exceeds the allocated margin for error and surfaces within the filters of architectural practice is designated as "material failure." Tolerance assigned to a material system or a drawing is exactly that: anything that falls outside of the range it specifies, any dimension that exceeds it, is not to be tolerated.'

Hughes, Francesca. "False Economy: Precision and Error in Architecture (Introduction)" In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 5. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

T

tolerance

'If you build in a tolerance in building construction, you are acknowledging that edges may not always be in the exact place where lines have officially been drawn. [...] A *harsh* or *rigorous* form of construction cannot vary to allow the presence of other components. An example of this is panel construction. A pre-made panel arrives on site, intended to abut another already in place.

Just like a party: two people get into conversation, and it becomes clear that, come what may, each is going to maintain their opinions, and the one person cannot be affected in any way by the other. If you are the host this puts you under enormous strain. You have to accommodate both persons. You have to be almost infinitely flexible, capable of being pulled between one side and the other without snapping. In this way, someone whose role should be incidental, merely a means of introducing two others, becomes overwhelmingly decisive. In this role as a flexible mastic joint, the host is subjected to an intolerable level of stress trying to keep two panels together. He does the constructional equivalent of retiring to the kitchen and getting drunk [...].

The very idea, basic to modern construction, that it is possible to establish a measurable, quantifiable dimension for tolerances seems questionable.'

T

tolerance

'The more a construction method is component based, and the more distinct and unadaptable its individual elements, the more tolerance, and a fear of failure leading to leaks, becomes a focus of concern. For it is at the point where most effort is made to defend the borders of a component, the junctions between the separate *forms* of absolutely defined parts, that a building is at its most vulnerable to that most *formless* of elements, water.

T

tolerance

'Allowances have been made, even designed; the space of error is dimensioned and located within the drawing (and the building). The degree of tolerance appropriate not only to the materials and construction techniques involved, but also the site and economic conditions, is selected, and its allotted territory literally plotted into the working drawings. [...] The margin for error, itself another palisade, insulates the calculated from the incalculable. [...] matter enters architecture repressed, and thus fetishized [...].

Hughes, Francesca. "The Troping of Precision: Hooke's Needle and Sutherland's Window." In *The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure, and the Misadventures of Precision*, 33. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.

T

tolerance

The concept of toleration is paradoxical: acknowledging a negative attitude toward something combined with restraint from acting in accord with that attitude. Under tolerance, we retain the myth of perfect precision, but must accept failure.

[...] in architectural dimensioning tolerance presumes perfection and begrudges error. While dimensions are given as exact, *'unfortunately, it is impossible to make anything to exact size.'* This language reveals the inner tension of toleration.

Giesecke, Frederick E. In *Technical Drawing*, 7th ed., 335.
New York: Macmillan, 1980.

Emmons, Paul. "Play of Scale." In *Drawing Imagining Building: Embodiment in Architectural Design Practices*, 196. New York: Routledge, 2019.

transformation

[...] plastic [...] is in essence the stuff of alchemy. [...] So, more than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation; as its everyday name indicates, it is ubiquity made visible. And it is this, in fact, which makes it a miraculous substance: a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature. Plastic remains impregnated throughout with this wonder: it is less a thing than the trace of a movement. [...] At the sight of each terminal form (suitcase, brush, car-body, toy, fabric, tube, basin or paper), the mind does not cease from considering the original matter as an enigma. This is because the quick-change artistry of plastic is absolute: it can become buckets as well as jewels. Hence a perpetual amazement, the reverie of man at the sight of the proliferating forms of matter, and the connections he detects between the singular of the origin and the plural of the effects. And this amazement is a pleasurable one, since the scope of the transformations gives man the measure of his power, and since the very itinerary of plastic gives him the euphoria of a prestigious free-wheeling through Nature. But the price to be paid for this success is that plastic, sublimated as movement, hardly exists as substance. [...] In the hierarchy of the major poetic substances, it figures as a disgraced material, lost between the effusiveness of rubber and the flat hardness of metal; it embodies none of the genuine produce of the mineral world: foam, fibres, strata.

U

uncannily

'[the images in Documents] genuinely *work*: destabilising, undermining and debunking. [...] objects are reproduced in close-up, at confusing scales; illustrations turn up uninvited in the wrong places; images act as spanners in the smooth workings of earnest, determined arguments, and echo uncannily in the spaces between unrelated ideas.'

Simon Baker, "Doctrines [The Appearance of Things]" in *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents*, MIT Press ed (London : Cambridge, Mass: Hayward Gallery : MIT Press, 2006), 36.

vagueness

'[...] these literary modernists [James, Woolf, Joyce, Eliot] saw vagueness not as a problem, but as a fundamental aspect of experience.'

[...]

More fundamentally, metaphor itself offers a structure for vagueness because it constantly defers contact with solid things-in-themselves.

vision

'Throughout Europe in the twenties and thirties, camera-seeing was exalted as a special form of vision: the New Vision [...]. [...] human eyesight was, simply, defective, weak, impotent. "Helmholtz," [...] "used to tell his pupils that if an optician were to succeed in making a human eye and brought it to him for his approval, he would be bound to say: 'This is a clumsy piece of work.' " But the invention of the camera has made up for this deficiency so that now "we may say that we see the world with different eyes."

These, of course, are camera-eyes. They see faster, sharper, at stranger angles, closer-to, microscopically, with a transposition of tonalities, with the penetration of X ray, and with access to the multiplication of images that makes possible the writing of association and memory. Camera-seeing is thus an extraordinary extension of normal vision, one that supplements the deficiencies of the naked eye. The camera covers and arms this nakedness, it acts as a kind of prosthesis, enlarging the capacity of the human body.

But in increasing the ways in which the world can be present to vision, the camera mediates that presence, gets between the viewer and the world, shapes reality according to *its* terms. Thus what supplements and enlarges human vision also supplants the viewer himself; the camera is the aid who comes to usurp.'

vision

“The will to look inside things makes vision *piercing* and *penetrating*. It turns vision into an act of violence. It detects the crevices, clefts, and cracks through which we can *violate the secret* of hidden things. [...] This is no passive curiosity that waits about for surprising sights to come along; rather, it is aggressive curiosity, curiosity that inspects, in the etymological sense of the word. This is the curiosity of children who break their toys in order to see what is inside.

‘[...] aiming to get away from all that is external in order to see *something* else, to see beyond and within, to escape, in short, the passivity of vision.’

'By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things - edibles, commodities, storms, metals - not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.'

'The idea of weak image in architecture seems to run parallel with the idea of 'weak force' in physics, as well as the weak processes of nature when compared to the use of excessive physical violence in our technological processes. [...] A distinct 'weakening' of the architectural image takes place through the processes of weathering and ruination. Erosion wipes away the layers of utility, rational logic and detail articulation, and pushes the structure into the realm of uselessness, nostalgia and melancholy. The language of matter takes over from the visual and formal effect, and the structure attains a heightened intimacy.'

'In accordance with Vattimo's notions, we can speak of a 'weak' or 'fragile' architecture, or perhaps, more precisely, of an 'architecture of weak structure and image', as opposed to an architecture of strong structure and image'. Whereas the latter desires to impress through an outstanding singular image and consistent articulation of form, the architecture of weak image is contextual and responsive. It is concerned with real sensory interaction instead of idealized and conceptual manifestations. This architecture grows and opens up, instead of the reverse process of closing down from the concept to the detail. [...] Because of the negative connotations of the word 'weak', we should, perhaps, use the notion 'fragile architecture'.'

'[*the concept of weakness*] proceeds following more incomplete, imperfect, disarticulated types of cognizance and transformation, which are more ductile and therefore able to absorb the new and confront the surprises and complexities that this produces.'

'Insofar as philosophy subscribes to the problematic identification between Being and language that hermeneutics elaborated after Heidegger, "weakness" is thus the indication of a "direction of the route," to quote Vattimo and Rovatti. The identification between Being and language, however, should not be regarded as a way of recuperating "the originary, true Being, which metaphysics lost" (Il pensiero, 9), but on the contrary as a way, if you will, of running into Being as well as of thinking Being, not in terms of globalization and totalization but in terms of an intimate fragmentariness. Being thus becomes a trace, a memory, a consumed and "weakened" piece of an incomplete puzzle that precisely because of its incompleteness is worthy of attention.'