

# Cryptic Delineation - oscillations between the infinite and the resolute

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*Cryptic Delineation* is a description of various modes of operation available and evident within the application of media-based design and their dual capacity to both inscribe and infer meaning in a multivalent set of conditions. If we look through the lens of popular culture, we find a blurry, translucence- a middle state, an in-between- where complexity, superimposition and ambiguity are attached to an acceptance of simultaneity and innuendo. This 'gray zone' may be a sign of indifference or more hopefully, an indication of greater tolerance- where diversity overlaps historical referents with readily acknowledged modern symbols. It legitimizes a logo-centric identity amongst a diverse cultural and socio-economic context. At the same time contemporary graphics seek to coax the individual to sort through the collection of both specific and generalized entities, translating and connoting a deeper set of interpretations. This freedom allows a multiple resonance- an interplay of words, images and ideas- light, color and context.

The inherent dichotomy inferred by the pairing of the words *cryptic* and *delineation*, is an intentional attempt to set into motion a set of oscillations which alternately imply and define the objectives of communication. While the first may obscure a reading, blurring the boundaries between representation and meaning - the latter attempts to generate balance with a more accessible legibility, by providing more direct linkages and associations. A refined specificity and exactitude alternate with a surreptitious journey through labyrinthine matrices.

"FOR ONE RELINQUISHES CONTROL IN ORDER TO JOIN THE LABYRINTH. INSIDE, ONE HAS SEEMINGLY INFINITE CHOICE, BUT PRACTICALLY NO WAY OUT."

– *Notes on the Labyrinth*, Norman M. Klein

## Oscillation 1

the language of contemporary identity  
*oscillation between the distinct and the collective*

brand	object and identification
imagery	collage and correlative innuendo
language	jargon and iterative communication
context	popular culture and information technology

Recent trends in advertising and promotion illustrate technology's vast capacity as a device for both collection and projection. Interrelated within specific contexts, it both responds to and generates identifying elements of cultural valuation, as-

piration, expression and expertise. The collection and dispersion of information, controlled and disseminated by ad executives, corporate enterprise, trend watchers and the entertainment industry, serve to develop specific social mentalities, and as well, offers them up for scrutinization and dissection.

It is the immediacy of technology which conjures comparative analysis - and may ultimately, juxtapose the conditions of the infinite against those of the resolute. It alludes to the cultural continuum in which and by which we are simultaneously influenced. We are encouraged to find a place of comfort, satisfaction and belonging amongst complex and ever-changing subtexts, sub-categories and sub-cultures. The conformist finds a place to settle in, rationalize and procure a position or stance while the non-conformist is able to straddle the threshold between accepted behavior and cutting-edge responses and adaptations.

Activating, storing, disseminating and generating- a three dimensional habitation of actual and virtual worlds- architecture may incorporate technologies which allow a more direct accessibility to information derived by the desire for individual translations within a collective consciousness. We are constantly evaluating and processing the glut of available information determining how and when to act or re-act. The appropriateness of which may be of the moment, sensual, emotional, meditative, even profound, catalyzing more mindful engagements between intuition and expression. As well, it may demand specific and immediate action, setting into motion preparations for future events, rationalized and concrete. In any case, the messages seep into our psyches to be stored, reformulated, and regenerated. The evolution of one distinct and individual response is directly related to the collective desire to create meaning and resolution wherever and whenever possible.

## Oscillation 2

meaning in a translucent environment  
*oscillation between the implied and the perceived*

translucency	multivalent	continuum
translation	ambiguity	temporal
interpretation	ethereal	frontal
innuendo	mutable	oblique
connection	permeable	undulate
distillation	attenuate	inference
projection	filter	flux

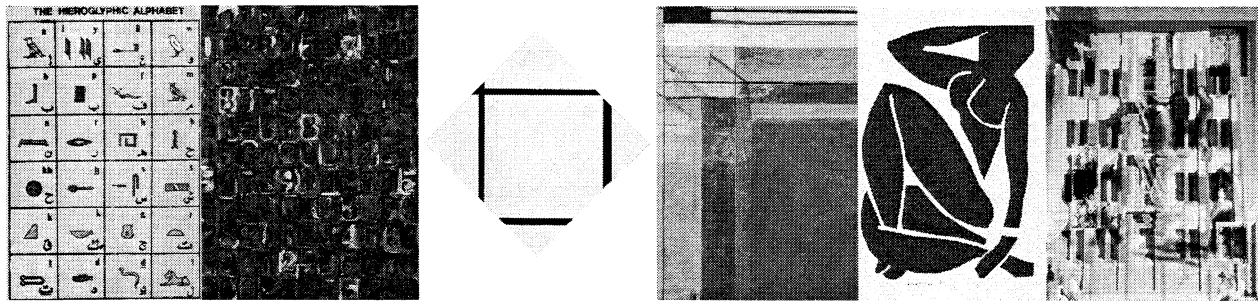


Fig. 1. cryptic delineation through systems and symbols (L to R): Egyptian Hieroglyphic Alphabet; Numbers in Color, Jasper Johns; Lozenge, Piet Mondrian; Ocean Park no. 79, Richard Diebenkorn; Blauer Akt I-IV, Henri Matisse; Inscriptions, Barbara Ambach.

Both specific and implied messages are broken down, diluted and reconstructed, through the filter of one's own perceptual vantagepoint. Generating opportunities for mutable conditions which alter the projection of experience, one becomes both receiver and transmitter. One's perceptions may be linked to psychological circumstances stemming from life's experience - determining connections between what the message intends and how it is then perceived. Meaning is constantly in a state of flux, undulating amongst variable translations.

Recent graphic tendencies prompt multiple readings, which attempt to be accessible to everyone, while defining no 'one'. Their flexibility reaches the broadest audience acknowledging generalized definitions of specific groups, genders and genres. Yet, they are detached and unable to make individual predilections for specific physical and/or psychic adaptations.

Work resulting from a series of media-based computer-aided design courses has demonstrated that a newly considered architectural territory may endeavor to seamlessly integrate the quest for knowledge and identity into a 'living construct'. In architecture we are looking for opportunities - as technology advances and becomes more wholly integrated into the building's materiality - to establish an accessibility - a knitting together - a weaving into - of both logic and serendipity. In this light, architecture has the opportunity to become an orienting devise, prompting a more complex and expansive code for identification and habitation.

"SO WE FIND THAT ON THE EDGE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY OUR TECHNOLOGICAL FASCINATION WITH COMPUTERS MERGES WITH OUR ARTISTIC CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF MULTI-VALENT ASSEMBLAGES IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL, THE COLLECTIVITY, AND THE DATA SET PLAY SEPARATE PARTS."

- Towards an Architecture of Our Times, Deborah Fausch

### Oscillation 3

way-finding / an emerging graphic conceptualization  
oscillation between stasis and momentum

environment	collection	pattern
index	navigation	network
manifold	inventory	system
matrix	direction	artifice
catalog	codification	symbol
store	limitation	strategy
context	definition	labyrinth
tableau	orientation	datum
path	association	sequence
terrain	procession	coordinate

The image and the message are no longer static but virtual, ever-present and oscillating along a continuum of uninterrupted cor-

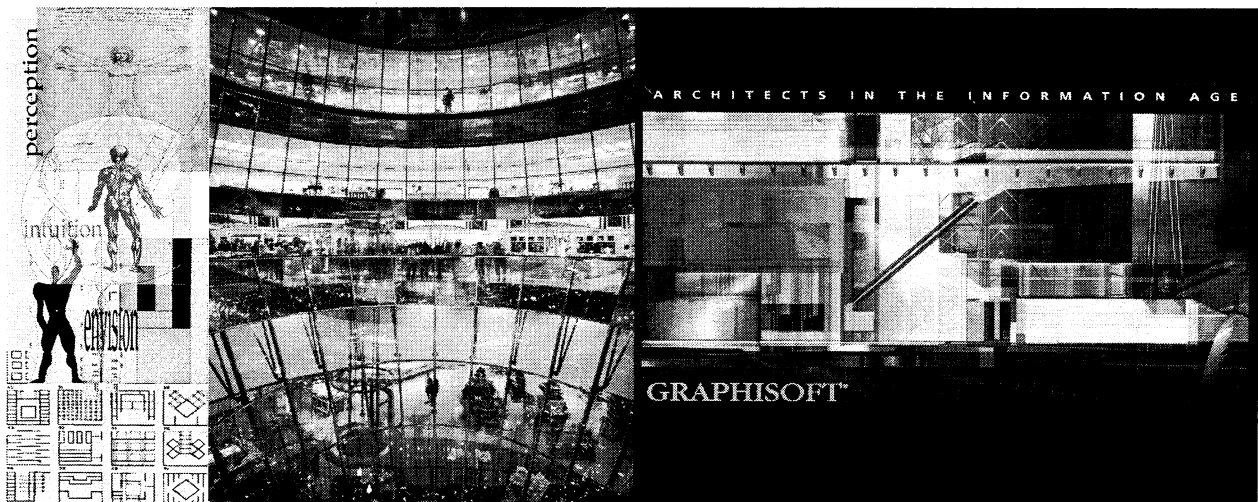


Fig. 2. cryptic delineation in the space of the 'body', 'architecture', and 'technology' (L to R): ACSA Nat'l Conf. Poster, Barbara Ambach; Gallerie Lafayette Dept. Store, Jean Nouvel; Graphisoft, Advertisement

relations. Rosiland Krauss in her article, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, devises a series of matrices, which both distinguish and align questions of difference in a 'sculptural field' between 'architecture' - 'not-architecture' and 'landscape' - 'not-landscape'.<sup>1</sup> The derivative expression of one bleeds into the other and their respective abilities to be categorized become increasingly entangled. Similarly, the gridded orientation of the Cartesian perspective and the oblique obfuscation of the Baroque anamorph have given way to- Gilles Deleuze's distinction between the 'map' and the 'rhizome'.<sup>2</sup>

"PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RHIZOME IS THAT IT ALWAYS HAS MULTIPLE ENTRYWAYS: IN THIS SENSE ... IT SOMETIMES MAINTAINS A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE LINE OF FLIGHT AS PASSAGEWAY AND STORAGE OR LIVING STRATA."

*Rhizome*, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari

The structure of the rhizome presumes infinite correlations where one may progress through associations, relationships and linkages - intuitively and spontaneously creating a journey. The end may be unattainable - the goal fleeting, as unintended discoveries reshape the original question and redefine newly emerging relationships.

One's perspective is skewed by the oscillation between a controlled undertaking and the loss of one's way - through a myriad of attenuated sequences and alliterations.

"...FILTERED THROUGH THE COMPUTER MATRIX, ALL REALITY BECOMES PATTERNS OF INFORMATION."

- *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, Michael Heim

Image and text, constantly transitioning in a state of flux, represent an openness to a newly three-dimensional conceptualization of space and habitation. The viewer is prompted to navigate amongst disparate elements making connections as necessary, rationalizing and adapting particular meaning through the interpretations of deeper individual mnemonic episodes.

Moments of stasis serve as points of reference along the path

of perpetual motion. The fleeting aspect of one's experience within a predetermined composition gives way to its inevitable temporality in which one may only gain stability for limited periods. The episodic nuance becomes one's lifeline to more permanent memories and impressions. In a parrying of advance and retreat one may relinquish control and on the other hand, allow oneself to flow without intention or rationality.

"... THE CONCEPT OF THE *ZEITGEIST* MIGHT BE REPLACED BY WALTER BENJAMIN'S NOTION OF THE *JETZTZEIT*, WHEREIN THE IMMEDIATE PRESENT - THIS MOMENT - IS UNDERSTOOD TO EXIST AS THE APOTHEOSIS OF A SERIES OF CONTINUOUSLY SHIFTING INSTANTS OF REVELATION, WHERE FRAGMENTS FROM RELEVANT PASTS ARE INCORPORATED INTO A PLAUSIBLE DEPICTION OF THE PRESENT."

- *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin

## Oscillation 4

the digital language / image and manipulation  
*oscillation between compression and expansion*

screen	compression
layering	expansion
assemblage	aggregation
complexity	multiplicity
transparency	legibility
simultaneity	juxtaposition
hierarchy	superimposition
immediacy	transition

The means of production through technology, materiality and the media in general are represented two-dimensionally. They exist on a screen, suggesting a translucency of meaning through the juxtaposition, layering and superimposing of dots, light and pigment. The homogenized effect is highly specialized and distinct, abolishing the notion of language as a grounding mechanism, a connective devise for cultural richness and depth. An environment in which we are both immersed as subject and divorced as creator determines new and increasingly specialized



Fig. 3. cryptic delineation through the complexity of images  
(L to R): *Ambassadors*, Hans Holbein; *Love Song*, Giorgio De Chirico; *Wild Strawberry Eclipse*, Robert Rauschenburg

vocabularies - verbal, visual and physical. They signify a generation associated with progress and change in a 'perpetual' continuum.

However, at the same time, and with limitless potency, this sort of graphic delineation enhances the potential for variable translation and interpretation in the third and fourth dimensions. Expanded from the tableau of the flat screen, alternative and multi-dimensional readings are continually regenerated and transformed through infinite correlation. The media's use of superimposition and simultaneity to capture the subtleties of inference and innuendo assumes a literacy and public acceptance of an ever more complex collage of message and context - alluding to occupation and experience beyond the limits of one's preconceptions, assumptions and expectations. Pressing through the veil of these compressed and expanded spatial manipulations, a specific place of origin becomes woven into an assemblage of layers, thresholds and interlocking spaces.

## Summary

Ultimately, the student's Architectural education will be enhanced by his/her ability to use in a sophisticated and state-of-the-art manner the elements and tools which we see and use in our everyday surroundings. The education and practice of architecture presents a unique set of challenges for which the Architect must be prepared to apply and represent a design process which inherently demands the integration of a variety of skills, talents and media. At the core of this integration is the necessity to communicate legibly and concisely with rigor ~ expression and clarity.

concept	interpretation
analysis	imagination
criticism	composition
visuality	rendering
drafting	modeling

Presently the education of Architects presumes that a certain level of proficiency in the adaptation of the Graphic Arts in Architecture will automatically occur over the course of study in the academic environment. It has become very obvious that the intensity and speed with which the technology and trends in the media world are continually advancing ~ requires that the Curriculum in the school of Architecture address with diligence and specificity the means by which it will not only keep up with but will become a harbinger for establishing intricate & innovative interrelationships between the Graphic and Architectural Arts.

## NOTES

- 1 Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Bay Press, 1983 - Rosiland Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, pp. 36-37
- 2 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, 1985, pp. 12-15

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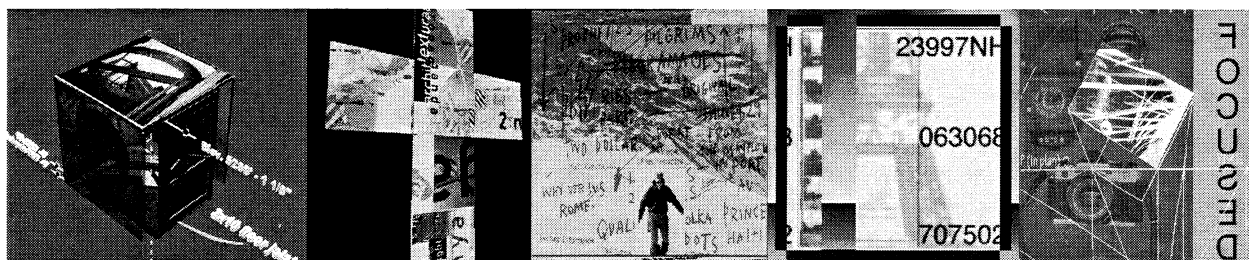


Fig. 4. *Identity Boxes*, created in a computer design studio entitled 'Make~Shift,' taught by assistant professor Barbara Ambach College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado @ Denver; Spring 1999  
(L to R): Mike Tangora, Oscar Escalera, Janny Chaiyavet, Shawn Mather, Dave Schwartz