Movement, Affect, Sensation

PARABLES FOR THE VIRTUAL

[...] It seems to be a widely held opinion that the abstractness of the digital space of topology contradicts the spatial reality of bodies and buildings. We do not live in non-Euclidean space, the objection goes. Why then are you foisting mutant geometries on us that don't correspond to anything real? Topological architecture is just too abstract. It can't connect to the body as we experience it. [...]

The Argument from Synesthesia

[...] Clinical synesthesia is when a hinge-dimension of experience, usually lost to active awareness in the sea change to adulthood, retains the ability to manifest itself perceptually. In synesthesia, other-sense dimensions become visible, as when sounds are seen as colors. This is not vision as it is thought of cognitively. It is more like other-sense operations at the hinge with vision, registered from its point of view. Synesthetic forms are dynamic. They are not mirrored in thought; they are literal perceptions. They are not reflected upon; they are experienced as events. [...]

What if topological architecture could find ways of extending the "diagrams" it designs into "biograms" inhabiting the finished product? What if it could find ways of embedding in the materiality of buildings open invitations for portentous events of individuating déjà vu? Might this be a way of continuing its topological process in its product?

To do this would require somehow integrating logics of perception and experience into the modeling. Processes like habit and memory would have to be taken into account. As would the reality of intensive movement. Ways of architecturally soliciting an ongoing eliciting of emergent forms-functions at the collective hinge of perception, hallucination, and cognition would have to be experimented with. Techniques would have to be found for overfilling experience. The methods would have to operate in a rigorously anexact way, respecting the positivity of the virtual's vagueness and the openness of its individual endings. Never prefiguring.

In a way, architecture could even surpass synesthetes like MP by finding ways of building-in nonvisual hypersurfaces. There is nothing wrong with color, light, and darkness. Rainbows of experience are good. But imagine the startling effects that might be achieved by using proprioception as the general plane of cross-referencing. Imagine how positively, qualitatively moving that would be. Practices of architecture allied with experimental art, like the "reversible destiny" architecture of Arakawa and Gins or the "relational" architecture of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, might have much to contribute. Technologies that can be twisted away from addressing preexisting forms and functions toward operating directly as *technologies of emergent experience* could be favored. Imagine if these were to become infrastructural to architectural engineering. What better place to start than with the much-touted "new media," approached not only as design tools but as architectural elements as basic as walls and windows? Could architecture build on the ability of digital technologies to connect and interfuse different spheres of activity on the same operational plane, to new effect? [...]

On "relational architecture," see Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Alzado Vectorial. Arquitectura Relacional No. 4/Vectorial Elevation. Relational Architecture No. 4* (Mexico City: National Council for Culture and the Arts, 2000). Take "relational" to mean "intensively cross-referencing disparate planes of experience."