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E.C.: Eliza Culea
N.L.: Nadine Labedade
A.L.: Aurélien Lemonier

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PREFACE

Translated from the French by Dafydd Roberts

The very name Frank Gehry conjures up the image of a contemporary architect known all over the world for his iconic projects, from his own home—which, from the beginning, dazzled such figures as Philip Johnson, the architect and former MoMA curator responsible for the International Style exhibition of 1932, and Charles Jencks, the writer and theorist of architectural postmodernism—to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1991–97), now seen as an emblematic instance of architecture's capacity to revive the surrounding economic fabric.

The Gehry Residence (1977–78, 1991–94) immediately communicated a sense of profound rupture, a fundamental and comprehensive reorganization of architectural language that brought with it a radical change in method. Yet Gehry was already an architect of almost 20 years' experience who had worked with André Remondet in France, and in the United States with Victor Gruen, inventor of the shopping mall and other urban innovations, gaining a solid grounding in urbanism that had brought him substantial commissions (condominium of 84 houses at Bixby Green, 1968–69) and had led to his work with the Rouse Company (Rouse Company Headquarters (1969–74) a pioneer of planned communities, for which he would design Santa Monica Place (1972–80).

It was his encounter with the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns that paved the way for the total reconfiguration of Gehry's architectural practice, allowing him to return to basic materials and to develop an architecture organized around the immediate apprehension of form and space (Danziger Residence, 1964; Davis Residence, 1968–72). It echoed not only Minimal Art, but also the Pop Art of a new generation of Californian artists that had crystallized around the Ferus Gallery (with Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Ruscha, Robert Irwin) and others such as those of Margo Leavin and Riko Mizuno, as well as the Gemini G.E.L. print studio set up by Elyse and Stanley Grinstein together with Sidney and Rosamund Felsen and Ken Tyler, whose premises Gehry would extend and remodel (1976–79).

While one can indeed draw connections between the architect's friends and a number of his projects—see, for instance, the direct relationship between the work of Larry Bell and Gehry's World Savings and Loan Association (1982)—the influence of artists such as Billy Al Bengston, Ed Moses, John Altoon, Ken Price, Chuck Arnoldi, Tony Berlant, and John Baldessari goes far beyond any aesthetic borrowing, serving rather to radically problematize the notion of architecture, thus prompting a patient reformulation of the ideas of architectural object and program, of the very distinction between public and private space.

From his radical interrogation of the self-identity of architectural form, penetrated through and through by its relationships to the urban environment, to his distinctive "assemblage" of the different elements of the program—a reference to Giorgio Morandi made particularly clear in

the Winton Guest House (1982–87)—that governs the design of the Norton Residence (1984), the Loyola Law School (1978–2003), and the Schnabel Residence (1986–89), Gehry has invented an architecture that still has its symbol in Claes Oldenburg's famous binoculars for the Chiat/Day Building (1985–91).

More than a simple retrospective, this exhibition at the Centre Pompidou is intended to retrace the gradual recomposition of the language and means of architecture through six thematic clusters, from the earliest development of the architectural grammar via the decisive research program represented by the decade of work on the Lewis Residence (1985–95)—exploring the tension, conflict, and interpenetration of forms made possible by the development of such CAD software as CATIA—to the dynamic fusion of masses, the transformation of architecture into movement that one sees in the Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989–2003) and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1991–97).

Bringing together a great number of original drawings and research models that allow one to follow the development of Gehry's work through almost 60 projects, the exhibition documents an investigation that is beyond comprehension in purely formal terms. The succession of projects should thus be seen as embodying a developing critique that throws an essential light on the most recent work, itself a forceful reassertion of Gehry's architectural singularity in buildings traversed by the complex and tumultuous pulse of the city. Now the topological play of the Hotel at Marqués de Riscal (1999–2006) and the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health (2005–10), with their interlacing of roof and facade, gives way in the IAC Building (2003–07) and 8 Spruce Street (Beekman Tower, 2003–11) to composite envelopes, to a new organicity in which the architecture is to be read in sequences, an architecture imbued, like that of the splendid Fondation Louis Vuitton (2005–14), with the conflictual flows of the city.

Following the earlier presentation of Gehry's European projects at the Centre Pompidou in 1992, this exhibition, curated by Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier—whose exceptional work I would like to acknowledge here—offers, for the first time in Europe, a comprehensive analysis of a remarkable architectural achievement, an analysis further enriched by this present work, certainly the most significant treatment of its subject yet to be published in French.

We are grateful to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in particular CEO and Wallis Annenberg, Director Michael Govan and Senior Curator of Modern Art Stephanie Barron for bringing this important exhibition to Gehry's hometown.

To conclude, it remains to me only to offer our deepest thanks to Frank Gehry and his firm, and to all those who in one way or another have helped make this tremendous project a reality.

Bernard Blistène

Director, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre de Création Industrielle



THE ORGANON OF FRANK GEHRY

FRÉDÉRIC MIGAYROU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY DAFYDD ROBERTS

"Now my method, though hard to practice, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain. But the mental operation which follows the act of sense I for the most part reject; and instead of it I open and lay out a new and certain path for the mind to proceed in, starting directly from the simple sensuous perception. The necessity of this was felt, no doubt, by those who attributed so much importance to logic, showing thereby that they were in search of helps for the understanding, and had no confidence in the native and spontaneous process of the mind. But this remedy comes too late to do any good, when the mind is already, through the daily intercourse and conversation of life, occupied with unsound doctrines and beset on all sides by vain imaginations."

Francis Bacon, preface to *The New Organon, or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature* (1620)

For Francis Bacon, the *New Organon* that he opposed to the dogmatic logic of the Scholastics called for a return to the observation of natural phenomena and the development of tools that allowed the organization of experience. The method was intended to produce, through a process of slow maturation, logical generalizations whose truth would have been demonstrated in the very process of their productions. This gradual generalization from individual cases, this *induction*, to use the philosophical term, might be said to have a parallel in Frank Gehry's method of work. For Gehry has always

sought to escape the dogmatism that have tempted his contemporaries—the dogmatism of modernism, of the Case Studies that were omnipresent in 1960s California, of the postmodernism that in the end returned to the same normativity, applying similarly abstract rules to architectural composition. While, in a series of major projects, his work has attained a form of universality—his works' being the very image of what is most contemporary in architecture—there have been few efforts to explicate an aesthetic and a language that have been elaborated over a period of 50 years, unaligned with any tendency or movement. Consideration of the architect's biography might offer certain clues, from his departure from Poland, to the years in Canada, to his settling in Los Angeles. Events in his personal life, too, can be invoked as an explanation, even to the point of seeing the famous Gehry Residence (1977–78, 1991–94) as an autobiographical manifesto, the generative matrix that imposes a distinctive stamp on not only the architecture, but the architect himself, Gehry's being both hero and author of this architectonic narrative. "In beginning with a commonly accepted type and ending up with a unique dwelling," says Kurt W. Forster, "the architect revisits the construction of identity in a manner no less powerful than when a pack of social clichés is torn to pieces."¹ Resolution of Freudian tensions between the house as a place of withdrawal, of an entirely Hegelian generative interiority, and the ostentatious display of paternal protection in the extravagance of the envelope: it is in the space in between these that the inversions and reversals that Gehry brings about occur, the plays on open and closed, public and private, the visible and

1. Kurt W. Forster, "Architectural Choreography," in Francesco Dal Co and Kurt W. Forster, *Frank O. Gehry: The Complete Works* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 16.



4. Thomas S. Hines, "Heavy Metal: The Education of F.O.G.," in Rosemarie Haag Bletter et al., *The Architecture of Frank Gehry* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 1986), 17.

5. Julia Meech: "Wright was deeply influenced by the expressive qualities of Japanese art but also turned his interest to advantage. Profiting from his reputation as an architect, he was a highly active dealer in ukiyo-e prints between his first visit in 1905 and 1922."

6. Mildred Friedman, "Fast Food," in Bletter et al. [see note 4], 89–90.

7. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Form and Function," *The Saturday Review* (December 14, 1935); reprinted in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Collected Writings, Volume 3, 1931–1939* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 187.

8. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1949), 97. Wright, who had been given a collection of drawings by Louis Sullivan, decided to pay tribute to him by writing this critical biography.

cruciform plan, one thinks of Harris's Wylie House (1948) with its projecting roof reaching out into the surrounding environment. The influence of Frank Lloyd Wright should be not underestimated, especially as regards layout and the furniture—the "Wrightian fantasies"⁴—that Gehry conceived for the army at Fort Benning (1955). Alongside something of Bernard Maybeck, whose First Church of Christ Scientist (1912) seems to have influenced the outline of the Kay Jewelers Stores (1963–65), Wright's mark can be seen in the very logic of Gehry's designs, in the organic distribution of spaces that imposes discontinuities in the roofing, whether flat (Hauser-Benson Health Resort, 1964) or in the form of simple slopes enlivened by breaks and changes of level (Kline Residence, 1964; Reception Center, Columbia, 1965). The influence of Wright, who had introduced a taste for things Japanese to Californian art and was himself a collector and dealer in Japanese prints,⁵ can be seen again in Gehry's design for the exhibition *Art Treasures from Japan* (1965) at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), done in collaboration with Greg Walsh, a great connoisseur of Japanese art and the architect's first partner. According to Mildred Friedman, "the character of the gallery was quite literally Japanized, but it was Japan with overtones of Wright that flowed naturally from Gehry's architecture of that time. Gehry's early work had been strongly influenced by Wright and though the decorative aspects of Wright's architecture have been eliminated from Gehry's built work, he has retained the asymmetrical plan and abiding concern with materials that are hallmarks of the Wrightian style."⁶

9. Claes Oldenburg, *Elephant Mask*, 1959 (destroyed), soaked newspaper on wire structure, latex paint, 121.9 x 88.9 x 68.6 cm, Claes Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio, New York. **10.** Frank Gehry, *A Study* (1999), maple, wood, and lead, 609.6 x 1219 x 762 cm, Gagolian Gallery, Beverly Hills (March 18–May 1, 1999). **11.** Claes Oldenburg and Anita Reuben at the show *The Street*, at the Reuben Gallery (May 6–19, 1960), photo by Charles Rapoport, Claes Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio, New York.

With Modernism in crisis, the question of the specificity of Californian architecture became urgent. A return to the sources of a Californian identity would animate architects such as Portman, paradoxical practitioner of corporate architecture, with whom Gehry collaborated. Portman invoked not only Wright, but also Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose *Nature* (1836) urged the restoration of the link between mankind and a transcendental nature, as well as Bruce Goff, who championed the heritage of Louis H. Sullivan and Wright. Faced with Sullivan's famous precept that "form ever follows function," Wright rejected any functionalist interpretation: "Louis Sullivan was a complete stranger to what one has sought to reduce him to as a precursor of functionalism, which could only be a distortion, either then or now."⁷ For Wright, form and function were one, just as they were in animals or in the plants that Sullivan had favored in his quest for motifs. "Use both the word organic and the word Nature in a deeper sense—essence instead of fact: say form and function are one. Form and idea then do become inseparable [...]. Organic architecture does prove the unity of structure and the unity of the nature of aesthetics with principle."⁸ Against any suggestion of the representation of natural forms, it was a question of



12. Robert Rauschenberg, *Small Turtle Bowl (Cardboard)*, 1971, with Leo Castelli's address, fragments of cardboard stapled onto card, 240 x 368.3 x 5.1 cm, Rauschenberg Foundation. **13.** Ed Moses, *ILL, 245 B*, 1971, resin and powdered pigment on canvas, 244 x 335.3 cm, Pomona College Museum of Art, collection of Steve and Debi Lebowitz.

discovering the essence, the intrinsic principles of a morphogenetics, of affirming the inner unity of any architectural project, and developing a distinctive mode of architectural composition or "writing" (*écriture*). One may thus formulate the principles of the organic architecture that first emerged in 1908 to be formalized only in 1939 with the publication of Wright's *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy*. Architecture must respect the essential characteristics of its materials, which have a value in themselves, in their nature, texture, and color, and which have to be related to a specific context, to an identifiable environment. The building is the expression of these materials, which determine the possibilities of form and the logic of design. In this process, ornament always emerges from the use of the material; it is never a superadded motif. Every project conceived in the interrelation of context and construction is specific to the site in which it is implanted. The architecture draws its qualities from the site, and, vice versa, the site is modulated by the architecture. For Wright, "No one noticed that we had a particularly beautiful site until the house was built. [...] When organic architecture is properly carried out no landscape is ever outraged by it but is always developed by it."⁹ While taking on board the Wrightian aesthetic example, Gehry, already involved in large-scale urban development during

his time with Gruen, sought to take into account the materiality of the context, especially urgent in Los Angeles, where the urban sprawl of the "carpet city" seemed to unroll without end. For Gehry, "The chaos of our cities, the randomness of our lives, the unpredictability of where you're going to be in ten years from now—all of those things are weighing on us, and yet there is a certain glimmer of control. If you act a certain way, and talk a certain way, you're going to draw certain forces to you."¹⁰ There thus emerges the temptation to naturalize the city and all its artifice, a reexamination that finds its model in territorial conquest, a naturalism that seeks to find new uses, new employments of the urban: "The architecture of a second-order naturalism cannot content itself with the constitution of new objects; it must at the same time take account of its anthropological significance."¹¹ The Danziger Studio represents in this respect a first break, its mute facade creating a *disruption* in relation to the commercial activity on Melrose Boulevard. The closedness of the two cubes of this minimalist object, the play on symmetry and the shifts of scale, create a disharmony, a silent response to the urban disorder that protects the private space. For the first time, Gehry left the structure and ventilation clearly visible, while the exterior was covered in an unpainted rough gray render. The architectural object has value in itself: it is an independent entity that is nonetheless connected to the environment in which it is located by the Wrightian logic of an architecture born of the material tensions of the context: "The Danziger Studio was a way of creating a controlled, marginal space amid the disorder of LA's urban environment.

9. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: Lund Humphries, 1939), reprinted in Wright, *Collected Writings*, [see note 7], 330.

10. Frank Gehry, interviewed in Ross Miller and Angela Ledgerwood, "New Again: Frank Gehry," *Interview Magazine*, January 1990.

11. Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Frank O. Gehry: Still Life," in *Frank Gehry, 1987–2003*, ed. Fernando Márquez Cecilia and Richard C. Levene, (Madrid: El Croquis, 2006), 16.

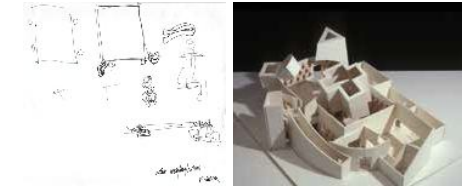
DANZIGER STUDIO / RESIDENCE



FAMILIAN RESIDENCE



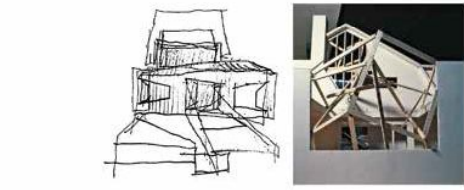
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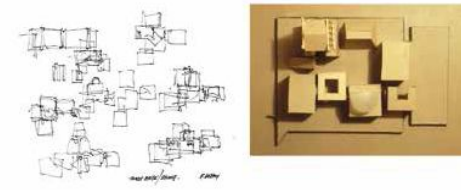
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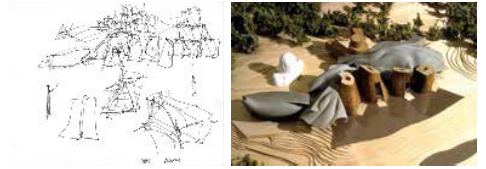
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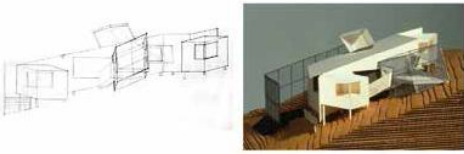
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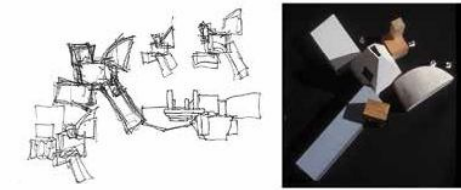
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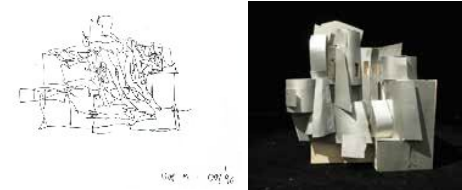
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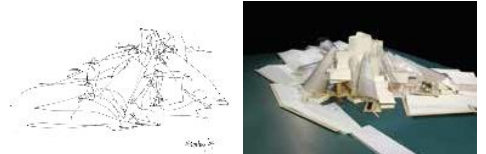
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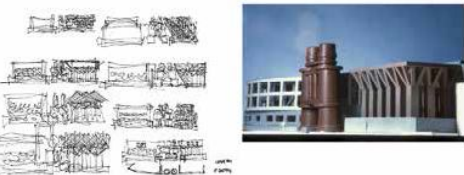
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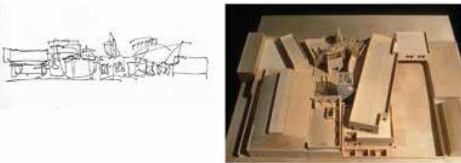
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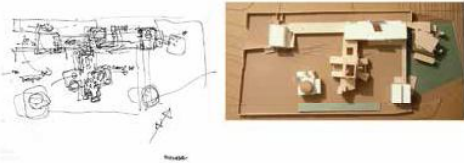
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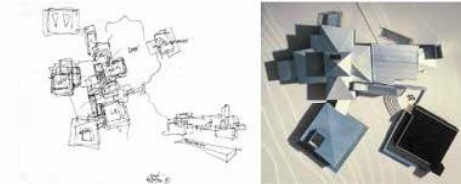
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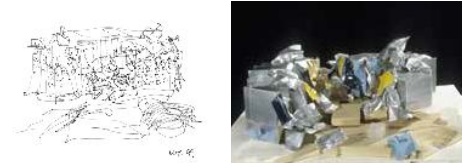
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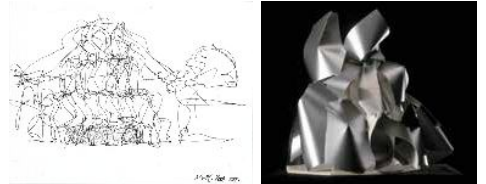
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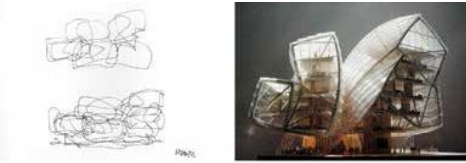
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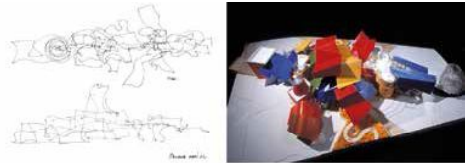
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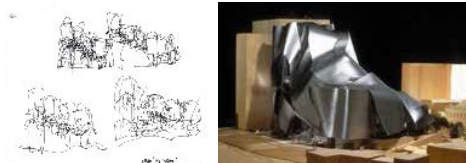
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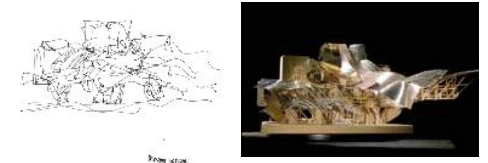
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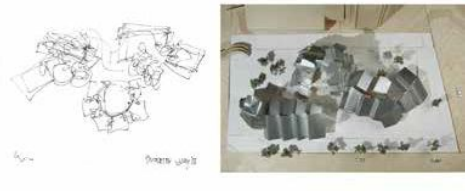
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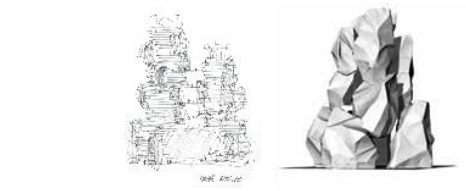
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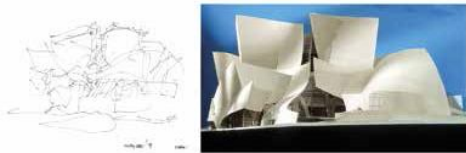
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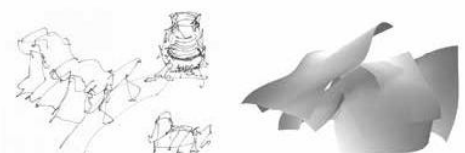
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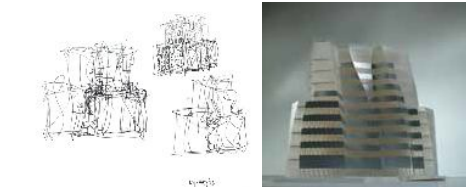
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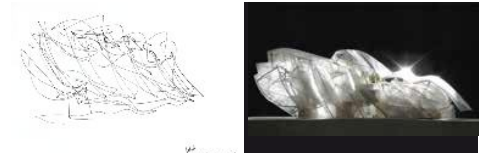
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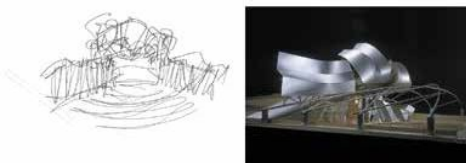
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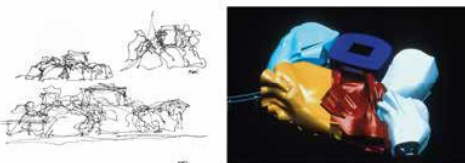
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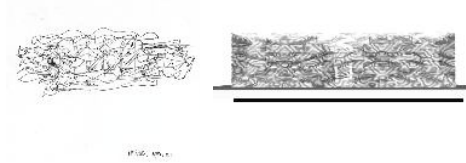
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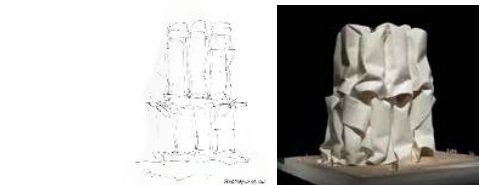
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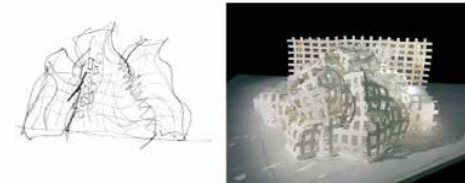
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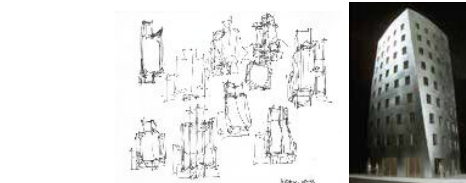
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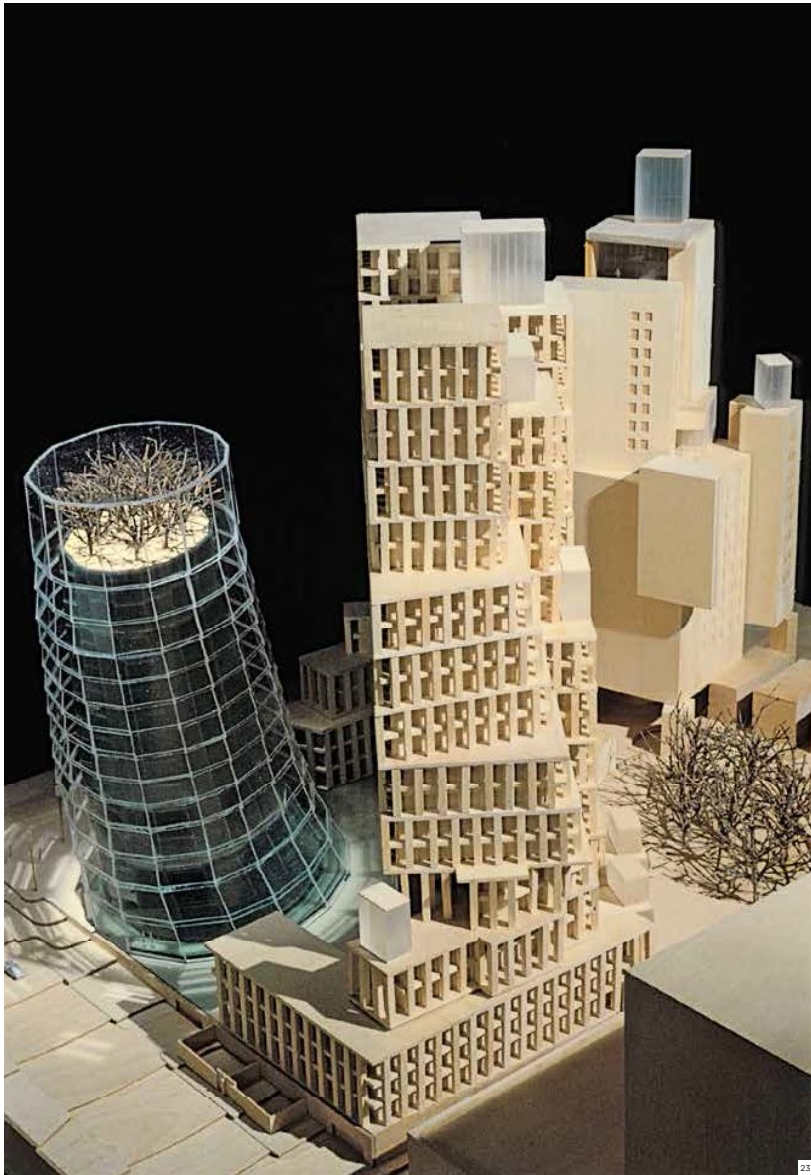


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DR CHAU CHAK WING BUILDING

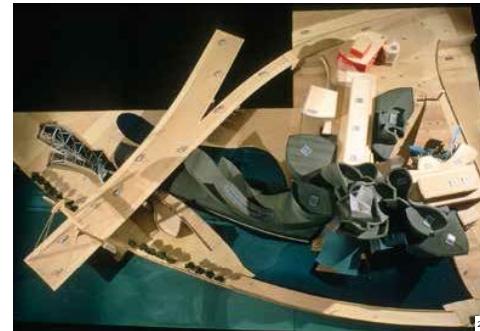




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23. Frank Gehry, Turtle Creek Development, Dallas, 1985–86, model 24. View of Cai Guo-Qiang's *Hanabi: Sparks of Inspiration* installation at the *Solaris Chronicles* group show, Atelier de Mécanique, Campus LUMA, Arles, France, 2014. Photography by Tweaklab 25. Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1991–97, model 26. Frank Gehry, Ray and Marta Stata Center, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999–2004, model



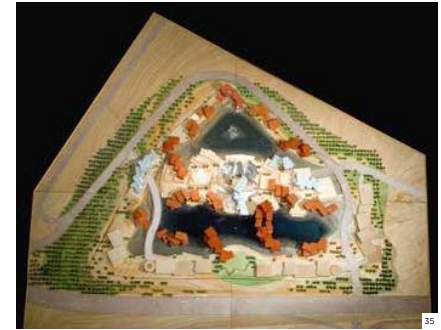
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Center [1998–2004] follows primarily the diagonal of the site. This choice is also materialized in elevation, or in section, as Gehry regularly uses the principle of terracing in which the heights of buildings are increased little by little as we advance into the site (for example, the project at Turtle Creek in Dallas), thus multiplying the perceived planes that are present from the foreground to the background. He also offsets the floor levels from one another. In doing so, the combined effect of these compositional choices, be it in section or in plan, plays off the conflicts between architectural volumes. Gehry's work on interstitial spaces combines the artistic effects of tension and attraction. Behind the growing complexity of his constructions, Gehry nevertheless seeks to reconstruct "harmonies" through the interaction of different volumes or through the staging of tensions, ruptures, impacts, or fractures in the urban fabric.

Yet these projects are works of mediation in the city, which might be the ultimate paradox; they are works of juncture, conclusion, and stitching. Gehry thus gave the name "Fred and Ginger" to the project for the Nationale-Nederlanden Building in Prague, referring to how the two buildings, like the bodies of dancers, begin to interact and, in movement, become one and the same. The jubilation and the tactile pleasure that Gehry seems to feel as he works on his models—on the elasticity and compression of the cardboard strips that he uses—are amplified onto an urban scale in the way that his buildings connect with their environment. In Prague, the "dancing towers" complete the row of buildings that stretch along the Vltava River, prolong the texture and the refinement of the Prague

32. Frank Gehry, Alameda Redevelopment, Mexico, 1993, model
33. Frank Gehry, MARTa Herford Museum, 1994–2001, model

Secession, and turn along the plaza that is articulated around the Jiráskův Bridge. In Düsseldorf, the unity of the three Neue Zollhof office buildings on the Rhine River [1994–99] is not achieved through the use of a single material but through the correspondence of plastic forms and the repetition of a single window model. The relationship between the river and the city is maintained by the voids left between the buildings, concentrating an attraction toward the waterway. We could find numerous other examples—for example, in Berlin or Paris or at the Ray and Maria Stata Center, which functions as a connecting element in the heart of the university campus.

Visibility and Situation

There is no rupture between reason and folly in Gehry's architecture, inasmuch as there is no set definition for that which is architectural order and what is not. The question of the limit, of what is inside or outside, seems foreign to the design process of his buildings: architecture blurs its own limits or absorbs them in order to constantly reinvent them. In this, his architecture is truly urban and contextual, and even more so because he does not rely on a preestablished urban morphology.

Each of his projects inscribes itself in an archaeology of the place, be it material, atmospheric, or subjective as well as social, economic, or political. Context goes beyond the simple form of the city to include the avail-

34. Frank Gehry, Sonderborg, Denmark, 2008, model
35. Frank Gehry, Lehi Master Plan, Utah, 2007, model

able economic and constructive resources as well as the dialogue with the client; all of these come together along the course of a project. The figure of the fish that Gehry proposed in the early 1980s is generic and has different meanings: first conceived as a critique of historicist postmodernism, it also offers a narrative function to architecture and references directly the family background of the architect. It was also the catalyst for the development of the CATIA software that notably made possible the construction of buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; it also allowed the idea of scaling to emerge as a constructive principle for cladding. This form also summarizes the relationship of the architectural object to its environment: it is about a shared physical presence, an interrelationship, outside of history but inseparably linking the living to its environment.

Without a doubt, the implication of Gehry's projects in terms of urbanism go beyond the simple creation of an "urban object," to reuse the terminology of Camillo Sitte. From the 1990s onward, his projects play strong roles in much deeper urban renewal projects for large European cities. They also have effects on complex political and social processes. The strategic process that led Gehry to convince the Guggenheim Foundation, directed by Thomas Krens, and the municipal authorities of Bilbao to question the initial choice of the site in favor of a place that had been until then only industrial wasteland is perhaps the best demonstration of the global process that Gehry seeks to initiate and real-

ize through his architecture. The moment that the museum project became the symbolic and economic instrument of the Basque capital's transformation, the building itself seemed to become the cornerstone of the redevelopment of the entire valley.³⁹ If the question that helps us to understand the architecture of Gehry is not that of identity but that of the singularities it updates, then his projects, all of which are of an urban nature, speak not only to what architecture could be as an object, but also to the nature of the place where a built artifact roots itself—in a geography, in a space and social time, in a materiality, and, in short, in a territory.

Whether in Bilbao, Düsseldorf, or Arles, Gehry's buildings are implanted in territories that were degraded and marked by the industrial crisis. As the filmmaker Pollack remarks, attention must be brought to the stories of inhabitants who are proud to have a building by Gehry in their city.⁴⁰ During the recent foundation stone laying ceremony for the Luma Foundation in Arles, the words addressed to the architect by the deputy mayor, who was once a railroad worker and had seen the machine shops of the site in full activity, could mean nothing else. To make the city possible, always.

39. See Coosje van Bruggen, *Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1997).
40. "If we don't have the right to use decoration, how can we humanize architecture?" declared Frank Gehry to Sydney Pollack. This remark by the architect invites us to consider the close ties between materialization and inscription in the work of Gehry, through the strong relationship between the applied arts, architecture, and urbanism.

Acknowledgments
We would like to thank David Nam, architect and partner at Gehry Partners, LLP, for several interviews about urbanism within the agency's projects (Los Angeles, February 2014). Let us also mention an undated, non published background paper by David Nam and Frank Gehry on urbanism: *Urban Design, 1863–2003*—that served as an important basis for this work.



INTERVIEW WITH FRANK GEHRY

AURÉLIEN LEMONIER, FRÉDÉRIC MIGAYROU
JUNE 29, 2014, FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON, PARIS



Frédéric Migayrou: My first question is, for me, an obsessive question, is the question of the origin; your origin, the origin of architecture, the origin of architecture in California. It's very difficult to speak about your work, through critical text, because mainly many critics are speaking about stories, anecdotes, not to ask or to question really the origin. What is the beginning? What was the beginning?

F. Gehry: When I was young, I sat with my grandfather and read the Talmud, so that's the Jewish part. The thing about the Talmud that's interesting is it's always questioning; "Why is it this? Why is it not this? Why is it this way? Why is it that way?" And so, from the beginning, it built in that kind of curiosity and the willingness to ask why; "Why not?" Those early days, I worked in his hardware store; he had a hardware store, and so I made pipes with the threads and we cut glass, and we had nails and putty, and I fixed clocks and all kinds of things. I always had this tactile reference of some kind. Very poor family so no chance for any kind of luxurious surroundings; it was always small rooms and shared with my sister, and my father and mother, and hardworking hours.

I think a work ethic that you're instilled with—not feeling entitled ever, even now here I don't feel entitled. I don't; it's built into my psyche. From the beginning, my father, even in his poverty he was generous; he would always make sure that whoever helped, he would give them a tip; he would take care of them. The house was always filled with people that needed help [laughter] even poor people, so there was that ... My mother worked in charities,

even when they weren't wealthy, so I think those models are instilled.

Architecture was by chance for me, because I didn't think to be an architect. In Canada, in high school, the books about professions, I looked at all of them, I tried everything, like a hat; I tried everything. The architecture school was the least exciting, in terms of the program, how they talked about buildings and so on. It didn't engage; I put the books away, so I never thought of it until California. When we got to California, in the late '40s, there was an explosion of tract houses and wood frame, and all around building, building, building, and they were building fast. They were cheap, fast, and it had its own aesthetic.

When I finally started in architecture, I used to go around and take pictures, of industrial buildings, and I would search out that, and looking at the environment always [see pp. 50–53]. From the beginning, I never liked the buildings, except if I saw Frank Lloyd Wright or Schindler, or something, of course, but the general environment wasn't very sophisticated. It was chaotic, it was unruly, so I don't know why, I started looking at the spaces between buildings, and I got really excited, then I could fantasize different profiles. Once I started doing that, I was pretty interested ...

F. Migayrou: It means that the architecture wasn't ...

F. Gehry: The architecture wasn't important.

F. Migayrou: ... not in the building, in the in-between?

F. Gehry: But by chance, not by design. I always talk about Cervantes because he says it all. Don Quixote

pretty much summarizes humanity then, now, and probably for the future.

F. Migayrou: On one side you kept in mind a very pragmatic approach, of architecture, but close to craft. On the other side, you were projected in the city, and immediately you began as an urbanist, to be honest, and your position is in between those two extreme tensions.

F. Gehry: [laughter] I mean, because of my background, because of where I came from and the ethic I grew up with, just doing buildings for rich people didn't interest me. It never did. I've always had trouble doing houses for wealthy people; I'm even having trouble doing a house for me [laughter]. I became interested in landscape through Garrett Eckbo, who became a really good friend; his kids used to come to our house, I stayed at his house. I did work with him, and there was a man named Simon Eisner, I think Simon Eisner, who was in city planning, and I found an interesting point of view there that you could do things, and that's why I went to work for Victor Gruen. The Gruen office was doing social housing, and I found that intriguing and interesting.

F. Migayrou: It seems an approach of the large-scale cities, and large-scale programs?

F. Gehry: Right. But I went to Harvard to study city planning, and it was a disaster [laughter]. City planning at Harvard—Josep Lluís Sert was in the architecture school in urban design, but he would never let me in because I was in city planning. He was really nasty about it; since he's not alive, I can say it now [laughter]. So city planning was government, economics, politics, all those things, and I liked it a lot. I liked it, but I was frustrated; I'd already gone through architecture school so I wanted to make buildings. All the projects in city planning were papers, that were supposed to be written so you could read them, I made these assignments into building projects and they didn't like me; they didn't like that.

Aurélien Lemonier: In the 1960s, when you started your own office, you did quite a large amount of housing projects.

F. Gehry: Yes, that was later.

A. Lemonier: But you worked for different developers at the time; how was your relationship with the Rouse company, for example?

F. Gehry: Well, Rouse was an idealist or he spoke

like one, but he was a business man, certainly. His tastes in architecture were, I guess, romantic; little cottages and things like that. He didn't understand contemporary art, but I was attracted to his humanism, his sense of making places and things. I did his headquarters building, which was very idealistic at the time. I was what we call a do-gooder.

F. Migayrou: It means that along twenty years you had an incredible practice, as a humanist, and even when you came to Paris, you worked for a famous architect, André Remondet, but you also met Robert Auzelle.

F. Gehry: I worked with Marc Biass, an architect and friend from Harvard, and he was doing work for Auzelle, through Ivan Jankovic.

F. Migayrou: The idea to create interrelation between buildings and the city was really the obsession. It is not well known that at this time you were an experimental humanist.

F. Gehry: No, probably not. That's in my DNA, but in reality you don't get projects with that when you start your own office and try to do that.

F. Migayrou: When you made Santa Monica Place, it's an enormous program, in the most important location in Santa Monica.

F. Gehry: But they didn't build what I wanted to do; they built the same old shopping center. I had a mixed use project with offices, hotel, and apartments facing the ocean, which was the design we won the competition with. Then the circumstances of the developer changed, Rouse had health problems—Jim himself, and then he couldn't help me fight for it, and his people weren't strong enough.

F. Migayrou: What is fascinating is at the same moment, all the doors of the commission were a little bit open, but you decided to work with artists, to go back to origins, to the first elements of the languages. You were interested by Minimalists, by Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns first, and after by the LA scene and you brought your language, your experimentations, in architecture to find new routes.

F. Gehry: Well, I think I was attracted to that because I didn't feel comfortable with the patterns that were being developed architecturally. I love Schindler, I loved what was going on, but I didn't want to copy it; I didn't want to do that. A serious part of the education here, I think, is the Asian influence in California, which was very powerful; in talking about

California architecture, it was more powerful than a lot of people understand. You see it in Greene and Greene, you see it in Frank Lloyd Wright, you see it in Maybeck and Esherick, in Harwell Hamilton Harris, which nobody talks about.

Then there was a whole group of young architects that came out of the school that were ahead of me; five years ahead, that were very Asia-focused. My first little buildings looked Japanese I think, because it was a language I understood, and it was relatable to the tracked house mentality; you could build those wooden structures.

F. Migayrou: You spoke about Schindler, and at a certain moment you began to make furniture with very poor materials, with wood. You spoke about Rauschenberg, and the idea of the cardboard in the work.

F. Gehry: Well, I think at Gruen's office they were Austrian, so the core of that aesthetic was Austrian, and it was perfection, and everything had to be perfect.

A. Lemonier: Vienna tradition?

F. Gehry: Vienna tradition. So I was trained with that. If I didn't make it perfect, the partner Rudi Blomfelt would send it back; he'd make me do it again. I loved him; he was my first real teacher, and so I did what he said. I learned that craft and when I left him, I couldn't have that kind of craftsmanship in my project. It wasn't available at the cost level that I was building, so I had to figure out what to do. Rauschenberg and Judd, and Carl Andre and all these guys, and John Chamberlain, were all doing things. They were using raw materials, poor workmanship. It looked like they were letting it happen, and I started to let things happen.

I watched the construction, I stopped them, I worked with stuff that an architect normally would make them do over again; I didn't. I went with the flow and could pretty much control it, because I knew what it was going to be, so I could manage it, predict it and work with it. Bilbao has that kind of detailing; it's not precious detailing, but it's carefully detailed; that's why we could build it so economically, because I worked with the available craft. I think I could be great in China right now, because they have rough craftsmanship; I'm dying to play with that.

F. Migayrou: You mean the nature of the city and the industrial materials there now?

F. Gehry: Maybe.

F. Migayrou: At this moment?

F. Gehry: Maybe it's like recognizing what Don Quixote does: it's crazy, but if you play with it, you can use it and make things, as Rauschenberg did with the combines.

A. Lemonier: It's a contextual way of doing?

F. Gehry: Well, it is. It's humanity; it's contextual as who we are, what we produce, what we make, when's normal. It's just a reality. The word contextual is interesting, as you put it, but it's a reality context, so it's ephemeral. It's not contextual, in the sense that "This building is this, and you make it respond to that." It's a bigger picture, contextual.

A. Lemonier: To show context as well, to human beings?

F. Gehry: Right, exactly. So it's more ephemeral, it's bigger.

A. Lemonier: For you, it relates to art as well as architecture, so it's together, I mean?

F. Gehry: Well, it's accepting this is a reality, and these are the people that I'm going to have to work with, how do I make that into something special? How do I take that reality, and make it a positive? It's like jujitsu; when I was at high school, I studied jujitsu; I actually did. The idea of jujitsu is you use the force of your opponent to flip them and win.

F. Migayrou: But at this moment, curiously, you gave you another origin, your own house became immediately an iconic house, and all the rules you organized became evident for many people, even for Philip Johnson, the great modernist, who was very ...

F. Gehry: It's crazy, isn't it?

F. Migayrou: Yes. You invented your origin, and people forgot that you had 25 years of work before that, and it appears as a birth.

F. Gehry: Right. That was strange to me, very strange, and I kept saying, "Well, I've already done lots of work, what are you talking about?" Because I was in complete control of the house, I had \$40,000 or \$50,000 to work with. I had to do it with that budget. The best way to describe it is when you cook a pot that I'm a cook—but when you cook you put the ingredients in, as you go, and then wham, it's done. It felt like that.

F. Migayrou: Immediately, you built this house, and with it a new identity; a house that was more than a house, it was a new complexity.

F. Gehry: Maybe.

A. Lemonier: Could you explain this idea of the one-

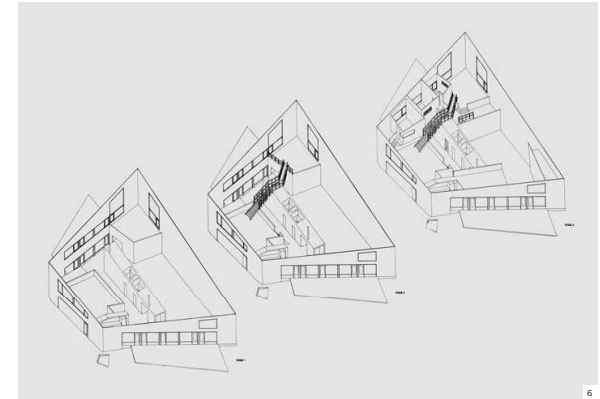
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DAVIS STUDIO / RESIDENCE

MALIBU, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES
1968-72



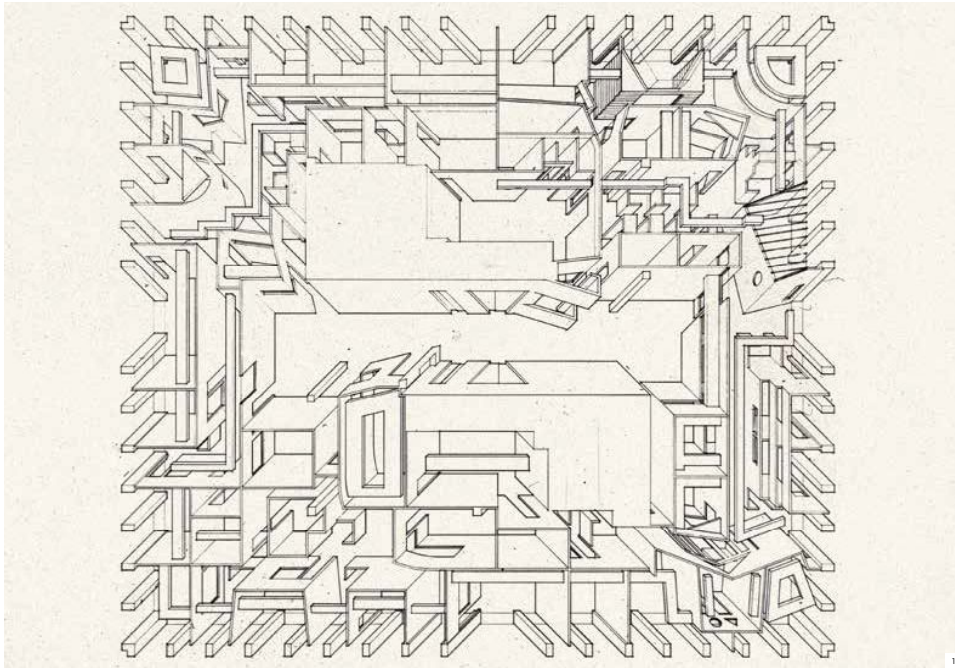
In 1968, Ron Davis, a well-known West Coast contemporary abstract painter, sees the diagonally-tilted roof of a hay barn in corrugated metal designed by Gehry for the O'Neill ranch in San Juan Capistrano. The subtle inscription of the distorted shape in the surrounding landscape resonates for Davis, as his own work consists of manipulating perspectives and planes of color. Soon after, he commissions the architect for the design of his residence and studio, situated on a similar 14 km² site in the hills of Malibu. The conception phases are marked by a close collaboration between the two, gradually deforming a singular, container-like shape in relation to the surrounding landscape, as if it were a cube seen from a two-point perspective. The final design emerges as a typical American balloon-frame structure clad once again in corrugated steel, with sharply convergent vertical and horizontal planes, and openings framing views to both the hills and the ocean. Inside this protective shell lay an immense 450 m² interior space, "a big barn [to] play with" [Paul Goldberger, "Studied Slapdash," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1976], with functions separated by a central bathroom-spine. On one side, we find the kitchen and a garage, on the other, the living room and Davis's studio, while two loft spaces above serve as bedrooms. Delivered empty to the artist, Davis adjusts in time to his new environment, changing the initial use of spaces as his canvases grow larger. Gehry will return twice to amend the interior design, in light of the occupants' developing needs, through additional partitions and the insertion of an elevated staircase that acts as a bridge between different parts of the house. The large interior volume and a crawl space under the floor, allowing the flexibility of the mechanical and electrical systems, meant that additional building inside the shell never caused the alteration of the initial structure. **E.C.**



1. View of a study model, ca. 1968 2. Interior view of the staircase 3. General exterior view 4. South elevation, May 1971 5. Construction site view of the balloon-frame skeleton, ca. 1969 6. Axonometric views of the project phases between 1968-72

BERGER, KAHN, SHAFTON & MOSS LAW OFFICES

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES
1977-78



Set in a new office building, Gehry's project for the interior design of a law firm spreads out across an entire floor of over 1,400 m². The scheme treats the existent building as a protective shell, using up the entire horizontal and vertical space available. This maximized interior volume is then transformed into an intricate tissue of architectural objects housing offices on the periphery and lounges, conference rooms, and a library in the center, all connected through tight and intricate pathways. The objects are then treated as if they were "buildings" and the pathways as "streets," making the entire office seem like a community or a village, featuring interior strip windows and portholes, a reception area fitted with park benches, a profusion of plants, and an interior skylight. Most of walls are made of standard drywall construction and are predominately

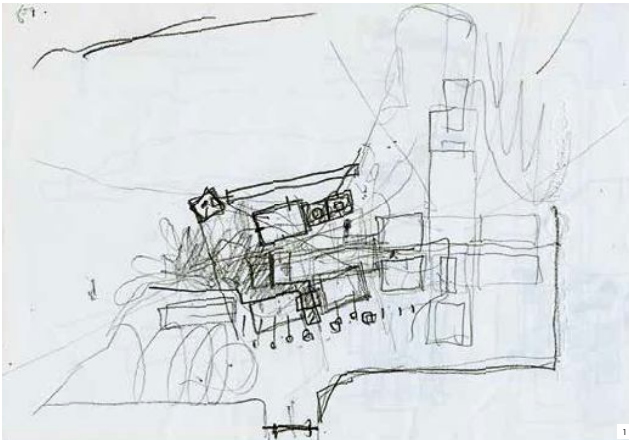
white, ensuring a reflectance of the indirect lighting coming from the inverted fluorescent fixtures above. Together with glazed passages, a continuity of light is thus ensured throughout the office. In contrast to this general neutral scheme, significant variations in the forms and materials of the offices for the attorneys are in direct relationship to each person's individual personality, such as a log cabin for the outdoorsman or an interpretation of a ship's bridge for the sailor. The seemingly whimsical composition is further reflected in the zigzagging ductwork present throughout the floor. **E.C.**

1. Aerial axonometric projection 2-4. Interior views of the offices

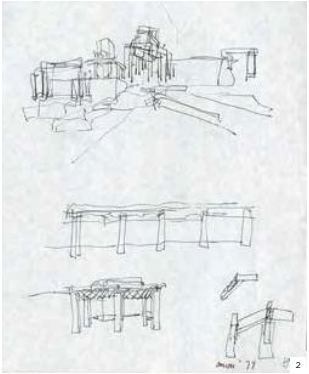


SMITH RESIDENCE

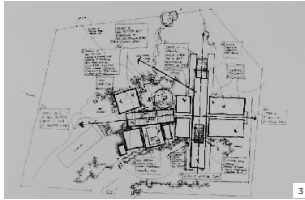
BRENTWOOD, LOS ANGELES, UNITED STATES
1981 (NOT BUILT)



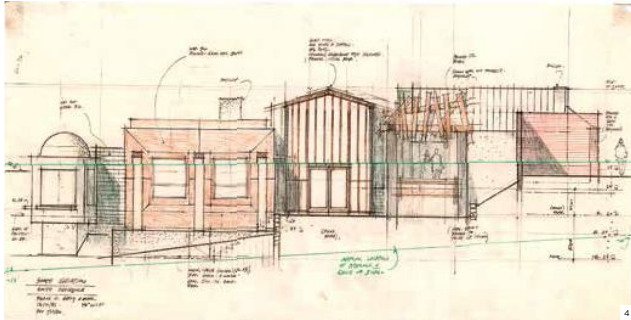
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"What people do not perceive is that I do not destroy order, rather, I reinvent it." In 1981, Gehry was engaged by the new owners of the Steeves House, his first completed work (1959). Its original state differs greatly from this house with a cross-shaped plan of controlled uniformity, with which Gehry was following in the footsteps of Frank Lloyd Wright. In the continuity of his previous projects and seeking to capture the complexity of the built context, the architect proposed to extend one of the two wings into a cluster of heterogeneous pavilions. To do this, Gehry took up the original axial composition, twice distorted the existing perspective, and linked it with a new branched system, which he adapted to the incline of the terrain. The architect designed a high, glassed-in volume, a sort of nave, which serves both as the spatial and visual connection between the two ensembles; a pivotal place, it contains the new entry and the common areas. To the east, Gehry installed the kitchen, as well as a washroom, whose wall extends outside to form a pergola. To the west, the master bedroom is laid out along a colonnade in two cubes whose wood panels with articulated joints recall Gehry's furniture designs. These volumes, which the sketch represents as characteristic typological elements—huts, temples, or turrets—are conceived of as spatially and materially independent, and simply juxtaposed. The Bel Air Fine Arts Commission failed to approve the design for the addition, claiming that it didn't look like a house, and the project was ultimately abandoned in favor of another architect's conventional design, E.C.-P.



5



6



7

1. Site plan sketch, graphite on paper, 19.1 x 25.5 cm 2. Volume study, ink on paper, 26.7 x 20.3 cm 3. Plan design sketch 4. South elevation 5-7. Study model, wood, balsa, Plexiglas, and wire mesh, 63.5 x 203.2 x 132 cm

SCHNABEL RESIDENCE

BRENTWOOD, LOS ANGELES, UNITED STATES
1986–89

The Schnabel Residence is an emanation of the Tract House (1982); the owner knew about this old project because she had made the model for it. Four years later, she commissioned a house from Gehry that followed the same principles: a composition of distinct elements framing a courtyard. But the importance of the program—composed of numerous bedrooms, an independent studio, and a washroom—led Gehry to distribute the six volumes comprising the house over the entire terrain. The main volume rises at the center of this domestic landscape, which is designed to open up views from the living spaces and to isolate the master bedroom, placed below, next to a pond dug out on the north side of the lot. The apparent informality of the composition reveals a U-shaped layout. The central space is delimited by the circulations running along or crossing the landscaped events: from the garage opening onto the street to the east, these follow the colonnade leading to the building that contains

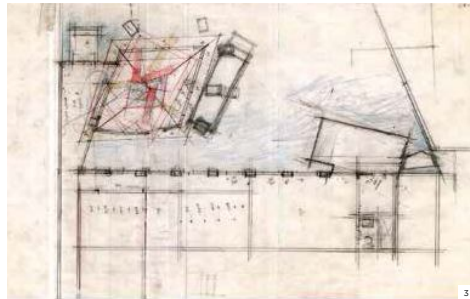
the kitchen, whereas on the south side, the path separates from the vegetation and borders a pond that leads to the independent studio; these two lines are joined below, by a hollow volume running along the pond, which in addition to its function as a retaining wall, contains the washrooms and storage areas at the back of a mostly glassed-in corridor. This principle of expansion is also applied to the scale of each of the buildings; pushed from within by the force of the interior spaces, it is as if the skins have been stretched outward. Fractures appear; the plaster panels open to reveal the framework, a number of alcoves break up the areas of the walls and the roof, which is raised to contain bays that inundate the interior with light from skylights. The bellicose or archaic profiles of some features, like the monolithic sunbreakers of operations dissecting the architectural material. E.C.-P.



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2



3

1. View of a study model 2. View of the final model 3. Design sketch of the main bedroom volume, graphite and crayon on tracing paper, 42 x 63.5 cm 4. Exterior view of the main bedroom volume 5. View of the central volume housing the entry, the living room, and the library 6. Interior view of the central volume



4



5



6



TENSION-CONFLICT
1990-2000

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY GAMMON SHARPLEY

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY BY CATEGORIES

COMPILED BY ELIZA CULEA AND FRÉDÉRIC MIGAYROU,
WITH THE COLLABORATION OF MILENA CRESPO AND
CAMILLE LESOEUF

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