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FRANK GEHRY

FIRST MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE IN EUROPE

8 OCTOBER 2014 – 26 JANUARY 2015

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**Centre
Pompidou**

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GALERIE SUD, LEVEL 1

30 september 2014



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Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center
for Brain Health, 2005-2010
(executed)
Las Vegas, Nevada (detail)
Photo: Iwan Bann

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PRESS RELEASE

FRANK GEHRY

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GALERIE SUD, LEVEL 1

For the first time in Europe, the Centre Pompidou is to present a comprehensive retrospective of the work of Frank Gehry, one of the great figures of contemporary architecture.

Known all over the world for his buildings, many of which have attained iconic status, Frank Gehry has revolutionised architecture's aesthetics, its social and cultural role, and its relationship to the city.

It was in Los Angeles, in the early 1960s, that Gehry opened his own office as an architect. There he engaged with the California art scene, becoming friends with artists such as Ed Ruscha, Richard Serra, Claes Oldenburg, Larry Bell, and Ron Davis. His encounter with the works of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns would open the way to a transformation of his practice as an architect, for which his own, now world-famous, house at Santa Monica would serve as a manifesto.

Frank Gehry's work has since then been based on the interrogation of architecture's means of expression, a process that has brought with it new methods of design and a new approach to materials, with for example the use of such "poor" materials as cardboard, sheet steel and industrial wire mesh.

As postmodernisms triumphed, Gehry for his part escaped them. He explained himself in a now famous dialogue with director Sydney Pollack who made a biographical film about the architect in 2005 (Sketches of Frank Gehry – screened as part of the exhibition). "How do you make architecture human?" ; "How do you find a second wind after industrial collapse?". Such questions run through Gehry's work, through both the architecture and the urban vision so intimately associated with it. He is indeed as much an urbanist as he is an architect, the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, offering one of the most spectacular demonstrations of this – an iconic example of architecture's capacity to revive the surrounding economic fabric.

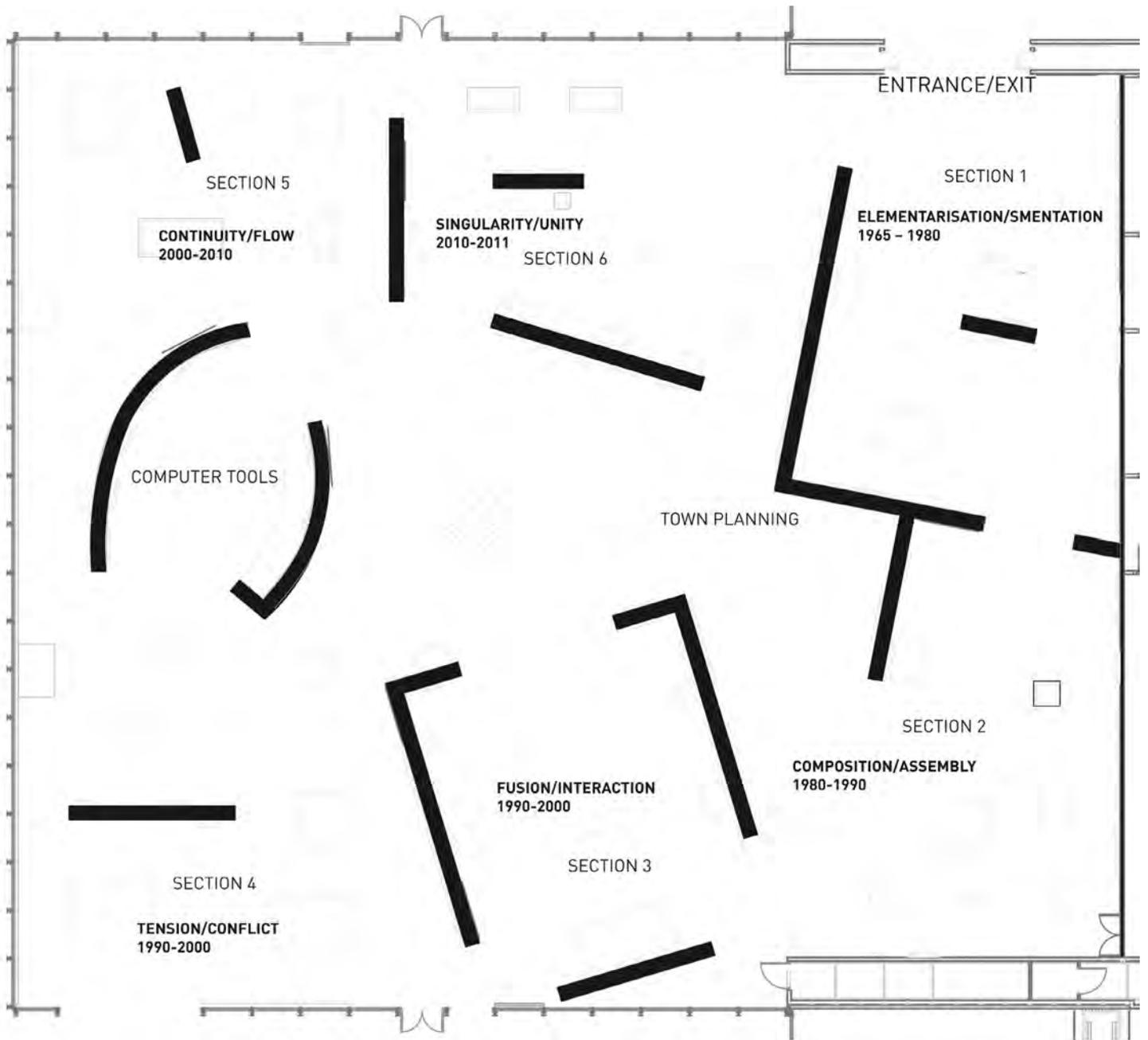
Following an earlier presentation of Frank Gehry's work at the Centre Pompidou in 1992, this retrospective offers a global survey of his work. It describes the development of his formal and architectural language through the different periods into which his career may be divided, from the 1960s to the present. This is done through some 60 major projects, among them the Vitra Design Museum in Germany (1989), the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1997), the Walt Disney Concert Hall (2003) and the Beekman Tower in New York (2011).

No other exhibition has ever assembled so many projects – with 225 drawings, 67 models and supporting documentation – to offer a reading of this highly distinctive architectural language. Elaborated in close co-operation with Frank Gehry Partners, the design of the exhibition is organised around two key themes: urbanism and the development of new systems of digital design and fabrication. The exhibition opens at a time when Frank Gehry has been very active in France. After building the American Center in Paris in the 1990s, he has returned in force with two major projects: a start was made on the Fondation Luma at Arles only a few months ago, while the end of October will see the opening of his most recent building, the masterly Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

To accompany the exhibition, Éditions du Centre Pompidou will publish an exhaustive, 260-page catalogue, edited by curators Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier, the most authoritative work on Gehry yet to be published in French. With an exclusive interview with Frank Gehry and essays by art historians and architectural critics Marie-Ange Brayer, Gwenaël Delhumeau, Eliza Culea and Andrew Witt - its 600 illustrations present 60 of Gehry's most outstanding projects, built or unbuilt, through sketches, drawings, plans, elevations and photographs.



2. EXHIBITION MAP



2. EXHIBITION CIRCUIT

The exhibition provides a comprehensive overview of Frank Gehry's work through around 60 major projects, divided into six sections retracing the various stages of his career. The presentation ends with two thematic sections, "town planning" and "computer tools". The development of the American architect's visual, architectural and artistic language can be followed through a selection of original documents, including 225 drawings and 67 models.

SECTION 1 – ELEMENTARISATION/SEGMENTATION: 1965 - 1980

In 1962, Frank Gehry created his own agency in Santa Monica. Drawing on his considerable knowledge of the construction world, he carried out numerous projects for property developers, industrialists and town planning agencies. At the same time, commissions for private houses and artists enabled him to experiment with the place of architecture in the Californian landscape. He began to build up an architectural language based on the object's relationship with its environment, the use of economical industrial materials (galvanised wire netting, sheet metal, stucco, cardboard and asphalt) and a new approach to traditional construction methods in wood. Meanwhile, in formal terms, he segmented and decomposed the elementary geometrical aspects of the building. Each design, explicitly critical in respect of functionalism, thus explored the relationships between "closed/covered", "open space/closed space" and "visible/hidden", together with the continuity between wall and roof. From the minimalist volumes of Louis Danziger's studio (1964) to the illusionist geometries in the house for Ron Davis (1968-1972), Gehry increasingly explored an experimental field, including for the extension of his own house in Santa Monica (1977-1978), which condensed the critical scope of his work and led to his international recognition in the early Eighties.

Spiller Residence, 1979-1980, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches)

The Spiller House is divided into two lots: a duplex rental apartment on the street, and the four-storey owner's residence at the back. This volumetric composition optimises views of the Pacific Ocean. The two buildings are separated by a courtyard. Their façades are in corrugated metal, an inexpensive industrial material. The severity of this cladding is softened by a bow window and a glass roof, which allow the openwork structure to be seen.

Gunther Residence, 1978 (not built), Malibu, California, USA (sketches)

This holiday home was one of a series of three houses commissioned from Gehry, on the cliffs of Malibu. In this very steep protected site, a construction on stilts would have accommodated the plot's difference in height without damaging the environment. The particularity of this project lies in the assembly of white stucco cubic volumes and wire mesh sunscreens. Experimenting with this ordinary, disregarded material, Gehry creates shaded zones while preserving the view of the ocean.

Wagner Residence, 1978 (not built), Malibu, California, USA (sketches and model)

A family home and office, this project was to have been built on a steep slope in the hills of Malibu. To ensure structural stability and avoid disrupting the surrounding ecosystem, Gehry decided to raise the entire house on stilts. The three levels in series follow the topography of the hill, while the use of inclined planes parallel to the slope creates the sense that there could be a landslide at any moment.

Mid-Atlantic Toyota Distributors, 1976-1978, Glen Burnie, Maryland, USA (sketches)

Frederick R. Weisman, the manager of the Toyota franchise, asked Gehry to redesign the offices. Taking a concrete warehouse as his starting point, the architect introduced movement into the exterior façade with three overhangs in corrugated metal. The interior contained landscaped offices, reflecting the owner's desire to integrate references to his Japanese culture. The angular partitioning of the offices and the wire mesh mounted in panels evoked a landscape (that of Japan's Inland Sea) and defined the open area in spatial terms.

Danziger Studio/Residence, 1964, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches)

The house and studio of graphic artist Lou Danziger are located in a district of Hollywood close to the numerous printers' workshops. The two separate buildings are slightly set back from the street, and are out of line with each other. This layout made it possible to include an inner garden, onto which the private areas opened. Its proximity to the noisy Melrose Boulevard determined the use of a blind urban façade, whose elementary geometry was emphasised by the materiality of the grey stucco.

Davis Studio/Residence, 1968-1972, Malibu, California, USA (sketches)

The design of this house arose from a close collaboration between Frank Gehry and its owner, the painter Ron Davis. Designed according to a perspective in keeping with the landscape, the prismatic form of the building was determined by its surroundings. The architecture reflected the painter's personal work on perspective. Built using traditional methods based on a wooden frame, the house was subsequently modified twice by Gehry to redesign the interior layout for the artist.

Gemini G.E.L. Gallery, 1976-1979, Los Angeles, California, USA (relevé)

An art book publishing house on Melrose Avenue, near the Danziger Studio, the Gemini G.E.L. Gallery tasked Frank Gehry with redesigning the existing building and creating a 465 m² extension. The new building, a simple white box, contrasted with the existing structures in dark grey stucco. The balloon frame appears from time to time behind the glass roofs, giving the whole unit the feel of an unfinished building. For the first time, Gehry separated the structure of the building from those of the circulation areas (stairways and entrance hall).

Familian Residence, 1978 (not built), Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

Presented at the "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition (1988, Museum of Modern Art), this project contributed to the assertion of a new modernity. A cubic volume (reception rooms) was placed obliquely to another rectangular volume (bedrooms), creating tension between the different elements of the project. Unity was provided by the uniform treatment of the façades, interspersed with bridges and glass roofs. The windows were carved directly into the white stucco facings, making the balloon frame visible as part of a "brut" aesthetic.

Gehry Residence, 1977-1978, 1991-1994, Santa Monica, California, USA (sketches and model)

Gehry designed his own house, starting from an existing building with typical American suburban architecture, by drawing on the visual imagination of Californian suburbs. The extension takes the form of an envelope surrounding the original house – which was left untouched – on three sides. The ground floor was entirely reorganised: two bedrooms and a large living room were retained within the limits of the pre-existing structure, while the kitchen and dining room were located in the new part of the house. On the first floor, the original interior layout was left intact, but the extension roof included large terraces. Poor materials such as corrugated metal, wire mesh and untreated plywood were used. A genuinely autobiographical object, this house became an icon, and marked the beginning of Gehry's international acclaim.

SECTION 2 – COMPOSITION/ASSEMBLY: 1980-1990

Beyond any aesthetic application, Gehry's closeness to the California art scene contributed to his profound questioning of architecture: a patient reinvention of the idea of the architectural object, and the assembly of complex projects.

An appropriation of the «one-room building» concept put forward by architect and theorist Philip Johnson marked his style in the early Eighties. The designs he produced were based on the separation of the functional elements, and accentuated their heterogeneousness. The intuitions he explored with each new project involved opening architecture up to confrontational correspondences between various entities, bringing in new influences through its interactions with the city, and recomposing projects using autonomous units.

First challenging the identity of the architectural form, then redefining the assembly of projects' different

parts, Gehry invented an architectural style based on interrelation, as symbolised by Claes Oldenburg's famous binoculars for the Chiat Day advertising agency (1985-1991, Santa Monica).

Winton Guest House, 1982-1987, Wayzata, Minnesota, USA. Transferred to Owatonna, Minnesota, USA (sketches and model)

The Wintons, who were both collectors, called on Gehry to build a guesthouse immediately next to their residence, designed by Philip Johnson. Gehry provided contrast to the orthogonal framework of this house with simple, compact abstract forms. Structured according to a centrifugal and dynamic composition, each element preserved its independence and distinct materiality. The treatment of the finishings emphasised the abstraction of the whole unit, designed as an artistic installation in its own right.

Sirmai-Peterson Residence, 1983-1988, Thousand Oaks, California, USA (sketches and model)

This building marked a change in Gehry's approach to the individual house. Here, while still working on the fragmentation of the project into "autonomous rooms", he explores the substantial integration of functions and links between the different parts. The residence is laid out in three distinct volumes beside an artificial lake. The main building contains the living areas, while the bedrooms are set apart in side pavilions, rather like peninsulas, linked to the main body of the house by pontoons.

Edgemar Development, 1984-1988, Santa Monica, California, USA (sketch and model)

Founded in 1984, the Santa Monica Museum of Art asked Frank Gehry to design a former dairy site, in order to house the institution and its commercial areas. The factory was converted to host the museum, and new buildings were created for shops, cinema, a café, and so on. On the street side, these took the appearance of autonomous volumes that brightened up the urban complexity of the district. Their layout and curved volumes guided visitors to the heart of the open block, and then on to the exhibition gallery.

Chiat/Day Building, 1985-1991, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

The headquarters of this advertising agency was created in collaboration with the artistic duo Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen. As well as the conventional office areas, the pair of binoculars serving as the entrance gives a spatial and symbolic identity to the building. It is a direct citation of a sculpture made by Oldenburg for the performance of "Il Corso del Coltello" (1985) in Venice, in which Gehry had participated.

Schnabel Residence, 1986-1989, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches)

Directly inspired by the Tract House, which the Schnabels were familiar with, this villa uses the same principles of composition. The programmatic elements are dotted around the entire plot, and capitalise on the hilly Californian landscape. Each volume has a particular form and materiality, and a specific architectural character. The apparent disorganisation in fact reveals a space thought out according to perspectives and vanishing points, setting off the buildings to advantage, like found objects.

California Aerospace Museum and Theatre, 1982-1984, Los Angeles, USA (model)

This building was the first public commission and the first museum designed by Gehry. The State of California wanted to establish a powerful architectural element in Exposition Park, then being redesigned for the 1984 Olympic Games. It consists of three distinct volumes, with the museum entrance placed at the intersection. Visitors are welcomed by an aeroplane poised in mid-flight fixed to the façade: a sign symbolising the conquest of space.

Indiana Avenue Houses, 1979-1981, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

With this small construction project, Gehry strongly densified the plot in this residential district of Venice. His second strategy was to make each artist's studio independent through its volume and texture (tarmac, wood and stucco), while each contained elements typical of local Thirties architecture (a staircase, fireplace and plate glass window). The exterior, featuring intaglio work in the material, can be seen from the inside.

House for a Filmmaker, 1979-1981, Santa Monica, California, USA (sketches and model)

Gehry decided to break up this project over the sloping site above the Santa Monica Canyon. The rooms within the house become individual entities without any continuity in the construction, with the garage in red plywood, the living room in concrete, and the master bedroom surmounted with a roof terrace. Movement becomes the mode for “the inhabited” in a performative architecture integrating mobile devices.

Wosk Residence, 1981-1984, Beverly Hills, California, USA (sketches and model)

Here Gehry renovated a four-storey building, creating a duplex for the artist Miriam Wosk on the roof. The lower floors form a pedestal for this apartment consisting of juxtaposed volumes in bright colours. In contrast to the House for a Filmmaker, this division does not arise from a fragmentation of the building so much as the modulation of a continuous internal space, revealing the functional differentiations. The interior was designed in collaboration with the artist, who provided the tiled decoration with coloured motifs.

Smith Residence, 1981 (not built), Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

Robert and Joanne Smith commissioned Gehry to extend one of his first designs (Steeves House, 1959), with a cruciform layout. Here he proposed extending the longitudinal axis with a series of heterogeneous pavilions. To break up the order of his initial work, he thought up a ramified system in keeping with the sloping terrain. The juxtaposed volumes are independent in terms of space and material. A glazed volume joins the original building to its extension, and houses the new entrance.

Tract House, 1982 (not built) (sketches and model)

The Tract House project led Gehry to explore the fragmentation of the domestic space. Starting from a standardised system of a square divided into nine, Gehry juxtaposed a series of independent constructions with various colourful geometries. The model makes it easier to understand this method of spatial organisation. The layout of the elements reveals its critical position with regard to the monotony and uniformity of the American suburb.

Norton House, 1982-1984, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

Facing the Pacific Ocean on the edge of a beach, Norton House is built on two levels, with a separate writer’s study in a white cabin. This cabin is similar to the lifeguard stations found all along the coast. Its positioning within the layout is central to the project: this is also emphasised by the standard height of the house, its sober, anonymous street façade and the use of vernacular materials.

SECTION 3 – FUSION/INTERACTION, 1990-2000

Conscious of the limitations of an aesthetic of aggregation and assembly, even if it was now emancipated from the doctrines championed by the rationalist school or by a post-modernism borrowed from “Pop” culture, Gehry sought to revive a principle of unity and continuity between the architectural object and its environment. In this respect, his designs for the Lewis Residence (1985-1995) and the Vitra Design Museum (1987-1989) were major experiments, transfiguring the question of form to invent new principles of architectural style, and create an organic unity. The use of wax-impregnated fabric for the Lewis Residence models, in order to capture the dynamic movement of drapery, again asserted the interaction between structure, material, envelope and ornament.

At a time when Gehry was exploring the potential of new forms of computer-assisted modelling, the new building information instruments he developed enabled him to produce a genuine architecture of continuity, where walls and roofs became huge “sails” – an envelope produced using a single material – fusing together the split-up volumes of an initially fragmented project. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1991-1997) is one of the most exemplary demonstrations of this.

EMR Communication and Technology Centre, 1991-1995, Bad Öynhausen, Germany (sketches and model)

The electrical distribution company EMR asked Gehry to design a building that demonstrated low power consumption. Taking account of the nearby residential environment, Gehry divided the project into a unit of diversified forms laid out around an atrium. As well as natural lighting systems and ventilation wells, Gehry integrated a series of cutting-edge energy-saving techniques such as triple glazing, solar panels and a solar water-heater.

Frederick R. Weisman Art and Teaching Museum, 1990-1993, 2000-2011, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA (sketches and model)

Commissioned by Frederick R. Weisman, this 3,800 m² museum is dedicated to the art collection of the University of Minnesota. Lying on the shores of the Mississippi, the building is spread out on four levels, with the third, reached by a footbridge, housing the collections.

The main façade, facing the river, is a symbolic gateway to the city. In mirror-finish stainless steel, its materiality contrasts with the other sides in brick, designed to make the building blend more with its environment.

Vitra Design Museum, 1987-1989, Weil-am-Rhein, Germany (model)

After a fire destroyed the majority of its factories, the furniture manufacturer Vitra decided to rebuild its industrial site as an architectural campus. It commissioned Gehry to create a museum to exhibit its collection. The architect's first project in Europe, the building is laid out as different volumes slotting into each other, producing a twisted geometry.

In complete contrast, the exhibition areas are designed as simple rectangular spaces, creating a neutral environment suitable for presenting chairs.

Campus Novartis, Gehry Building, 2003-2009, Basel, Switzerland (model)

This commission was part of the pharmaceutical group Novartis's project for renewing its infrastructures. With an area of 19,500 m², this is laid out as five sequenced levels around a central atrium to facilitate exchanges and occasions for meeting. The concepts of openness and transparency are enhanced by the use of glass in the façades. The use of renewable energy devices and the creation of a buffer zone between the air-conditioned areas and the glass shell illustrate the group's commitment to environmental responsibility.

Der Neue Zollhof, 1994-1999, Düsseldorf, Germany (sketches and model)

Here Gehry decided to break up the 28,000 m² of office space into three separate entities. The spaces left between the buildings provided views of the river from the town, while maintaining the relationship between the two. Unity was provided not through the use of a single material (the facings consisted of white stucco facings and steel and brick panels), but through the correspondence of visual forms and a repeated window model.

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 1991-1997, Bilbao, Spain (sketches and model)

When faced with an industrial crisis, the capital of the Basque Country decided to energise the region through the creation of a new cultural institution. Gehry persuaded the city council and the Guggenheim Foundation to set up the museum in an industrial wasteland just below a motorway bridge. The complex geometry of the curved orthogonal volumes served as the project's trademark, while integrating the adjacent environment into its composition. The façade facing the river is covered with fine titanium plaques; on the south side, Spanish limestone creates a dialogue with the town.

Lewis Residence, 1989-1995 (not built), Lyndhurst, Ohio, USA (sketches and model)

For the design of his house, Peter B. Lewis encouraged Gehry to venture ever further with his explorations. His initial ideas involved an accumulation of architectural objects, evoking the stylistic vocabulary of other projects, before moving towards the interpenetration of more fluid forms, coupled with the use of unexpected materials. Proposals and "fallow" periods followed on from each other during a decade of intense artistic reflection and collaboration, which finally bore fruit in later projects.

SECTION 4 – TENSION/CONFLICT, 1990-2000

Gehry's work on interstitial spaces combined visual effects of tension and attraction. The architect staged contradictions and abrupt changes in the urban fabric, and created the effect of rifts, clashes and even conflict between the different volumes of a building. Behind the growing complexity of his constructions, Gehry nonetheless sought to re-establish harmonies. For example, in Prague, he called the Nationale Nederlanden building (1992-1996) «Fred and Ginger», indicating that the two bodies of the building were a single entity in movement, just like the dancers' bodies in relation to each other. His work on elasticity, compression and the actual conflict between the constructive elements (masonry, glazing, roofing, etc.), and the interaction of materials with each other were ultimately designed to play a connecting role in a complex urban fabric. Frank Gehry has always been opposed to the inert, fixed identity of the sculptural object. His quest for an architectural space where the interstices between buildings intensify the city's energy, with its movement and flows, found one of its most powerful expressions in the Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989-2003) in Los Angeles.

Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1999 (not built), Washington, D.C., Washington, USA (sketches and model)

The Corcoran Gallery of Art – Washington's oldest museum – called on Gehry for a renovation and extension project. Halfway between dialogue and confrontation, the powerfully undulating stainless steel façades contrast with the order and symmetry of the 19th century building's stone façades.

The new monumental entrance structured by intertwining metal leaves leads to the art and design school, while the exhibition galleries remain in the existing building.

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, 2006 (in progress), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (sketches and model)

Just off the capital, Saadiyat Island houses a huge urban project that includes the Louvre and Guggenheim museums. The latter, covering over 30,000 m², consists of accumulated parallelepipeds and translucent cones with varying slopes and heights, directly inspired by the local wind towers. In the centre, an atrium with a glass roof serves as a convergence point for the exhibition galleries.

MARTa Herford Museum, 1998-2005, Herford, Germany (sketches and model)

The Museum of Applied Arts in Herford is built on the site of a former textile factory. Gehry's extension is based on two approaches: a box in brick masonry, and metal sails for the roofing. The undulating roofs evoke the nearby river, while the red brick reflects the local building tradition, creating an interaction between the museum and its environment.

Museobio, 2000- (in progress), Panama, Panama (sketches and model)

A venue for exhibitions, conservation and education, this museum is dedicated to the geological and ecological history of Panama. The architectural project was partly determined by the content of the rooms, planned from the very beginning. The building is designed to emphasise the wealth of tropical biodiversity. Numerous folded, fragmented roofs and the use of lively colours express the dynamic energy of a museum in a new genre. The exhibition galleries gravitate around a central atrium, a public place open to everyone.

Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance – Centre for Human Dignity. Project of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, 2000-2003 (not built), Jerusalem, Israel (sketches and model)

The aim of this project, located in the very heart of Jerusalem, was to express the idea of unity, respect and tolerance between peoples through architecture. With this in mind, seven volumes, differentiated in terms of material (bluish-silver titanium, golden Jerusalem stone, steel and glass) and form, are linked together through a system of internal and external connections.

The Peter B. Lewis Science Library, 2002-2008, Princeton, New Jersey, USA (sketches and model)

The Lewis Library brings together all the University of Princeton collections, irrespective of field, in a single place, and houses reading rooms, laboratories and research institutes. The library's overall silhouette is structured by a tower rising above the lower buildings. The assertive geometries of the volumes are mingled with a varied use of materials (brick, steel, glass and stucco).



Ray and Maria Stata Centre for Computer Information and Intelligence Sciences, 1998-2004, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA (sketches and model)

A building dedicated to scientific research, this commission was part of a restructuring plan for part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus. Here the architecture functions as a “connector” within the campus, fostering collaboration between researchers from different disciplines. The ground plan is mainly structured by the open-air amphitheatre in the heart of the island. Everything here is based on the principles of flexibility, exemplified through strongly individualised volumes in the façade.

Walt Disney Concert Hall, 1989-2003, Los Angeles, California, USA (sketches and model)

A cultural institution mainly financed by Walt Disney’s widow Lilian, the building is located in downtown Los Angeles. Its position, following the diagonal of the site, breaks the orthogonality of the block, providing multiple points of view and structuring the entrance to the concert hall. The search for an exceptional acoustic and the requirement of an orchestra in the middle of the audience determined the formal layout of the concert hall, one of the most famous in the world.

SECTION 5 – CONTINUITY/FLOW, 2000-2010

Now he had acquired mastery in producing complex interstitial spaces, Gehry began to reduce them, exploring new spatial forms engendered by continuous envelopes.

With the MARTa Herford Museum (1998-2005) and the Richard B. Fisher Centre for the Performing Arts (1997-2003), he superimposed the roofing elements, which seemed to become independent; with the Marquès de Riscal Hotel (1999-2006), he multiplied them in a luxuriant combination of metallic ribbons; with the DZ Bank (1995-2001) and the Lou Ruvo clinic (2005-2010), he created dramatic continuity in the roofing surfaces. These geometrical games with the envelope of the building produced compositions whose infinite complexity pushed the very ideas of façade, roof and conventional points of reference in relation to the building's verticality to the point where they disappeared. Through the flexibility permitted by digital simulation, making it possible to fuse the constructive structure of the building with its envelope, the notion of ornament was then transferred to the skin itself. Thus the interpenetration of volumes and their fluidity produced an architecture free of all conventions: an organic, living architecture buoyed up by the complex flows of the city.

DZ Bank Building, 1995-2001, Berlin, Germany (sketches and model)

Simultaneously the headquarters of the business bank DZ Bank and a luxury residential unit, this building close to the Brandenburg Gate was Gehry's first project in Berlin. The highly discreet external façades blend into the surrounding urban environment, while the interior expresses a completely different world in terms of material and form. The offices are organised around an interior courtyard, which houses a spectacular conference hall. Its form is an expansion of the horse's head idea first introduced by Gehry in the Lewis Residence.

Experience Music Project, 1995-2000, Seattle, Washington, USA (sketches and model)

In the native city of legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix, Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, initiated the building of a venue devoted to rock culture and popular North American music. The building pays homage to the musician by drawing on his rhythmical and melodic vocabulary – the amplification and distortion of sound, improvisation, and so on. Six volumes with distinctive forms and metal envelopes are laid out as an extensive and dynamic building, which incorporates the monorail linking the park to the city.

The Richard B. Fisher Centre for the Performing Arts at Bard College, 1997-2003, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, USA (sketch and model)

Lying in the Hudson Valley, this performing venue was designed in line with the contracting authority's wish to set up a powerful relationship with the natural landscape. The sky's variations in light are reflected in the rippling metal awnings that cover the building, seeming to make it one with its environment. The Centre has two concert halls, one hexagonal, the other rectangular, which dictate the overall forms of the building.

Marqués de Riscal Hotel, 1999-2006, Elciego, Spain (sketches and model)

Built in one of the oldest vineyards in Rioja, this hotel complex is part of a project for revitalising tourism in the Basque Country. Above the barrels and wine cellars of the vineyard, a spectacular sunscreen composed of around 20 awnings in titanium and steel surmount the cubic volumes with their stone facings. Despite the strong contrast of the building with the countryside. The use of pale sandstone associates it with the materiality of the site and the traditional village close by.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion + the BP Pedestrian Bridge, 1999-2004, Chicago, Illinois, USA (model)

Gehry was tasked with building an open-air music pavilion in the heart of the Millennium Park to accommodate 11,000 people – a typology he had already worked with several times before. The stage is bordered by curved metal awnings and extended by a steel trellis forming an open-air arch 183 metres long above the auditorium. A winding bridge crosses the motorway close by and acts as a noise barrier to the stage. The architecture fosters the optimum propagation of sound, while expressing the idea of energy and movement intrinsic to music.

Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Centre for Brain Health Project, 2005-2010, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA (sketches and model)

Gehry joined forces with the philanthropist and patron Larry Ruvo to design a centre specialising in neurodegenerative diseases in a new district of Las Vegas. On the north side, an irregular pile of cubic volumes in concrete on four levels generates a façade with multiple stepped-back elements; on the south side, the volumes are covered by a self-supporting stainless steel envelope, whose curved windows follow the twists and turns of the metal. The external dynamic is echoed in the interior of the building, where the curved walls avoid any hint of traditional medical connotations.

Samsung Museum of Modern Art, 1997 (not built), Seoul, South Korea (sketches and model)

Samsung invited Gehry to come up with a design for a modern art museum, lying next to a historic architectural complex containing two palaces and the Royal residence. On an L-shaped plot, the architecture of the 15,000 m² building deploys a rising spiral emerging from the ground floor up to the height of the adjacent building. A profiled metal envelope in the form of a horse's head, acting as both roof and façade, encompasses this underlying structure and facilitates transitions between the different heights.

Quanzhou Museum of Contemporary art (QMoCA), 2012- (in progress), Quanzhou, China (sketches and model)

This contemporary art museum is central to a renovation project for a former industrial district in a cultural and commercial zone. The building resonates with the city's past and present. Its height is determined by the nearby pagodas, while the red titanium envelope echoes traditional brickwork. Meanwhile, the complex forms are based on the work of the contemporary artist Cai Guo-Qiang, and seek to capture the energy and tension preceding the explosion of his fireworks.

SECTION 6 – SINGULARITY/UNITY, 2010-2015

Now with a patiently-forged architectural language at his fingertips, Gehry could apply his critical strategy to his own work and once more question the identity of the architectural object. The Üstra Office Building (1995-2001), a parallelepiped with a slight twist, was the first to address this problem, one explored in greater depth by the IAC Building (2003-2007) and 8 Spruce Street in New York (2003-2011). The morphologically complex façade of this tower resonates with the vibrations of Manhattan, achieving icon status. Here, as with the Louis Vuitton Foundation built in the Bois de Boulogne in Paris (2005 – 2014), the architecture enters into movement, constructing a kind of syncopation through the many different ways it can be looked at, with an equal number of experiences, all blending with the unity of the building. While the question that Gehry settles here is no longer the object's identity so much as its singularity, his projects – all urban – not only tell us what architecture could be; they also enlighten us as to the place where the constructed artefact is rooted: a geography, a space and a landscape; a social time and a materiality – in short, a territory.

Üstra Office Building, 1995-2001, Hannover, Germany (sketches and models)

The office tower of the German public transport company Üstra is part of the project for a new-look Steintor Square. Standing on the corner of a block, the geometry of the nine-story tower is given dynamic energy through a twist. The successive rotation of the floor levels preserves the regular division of the building, expressed solely through the alignment of the windows. A five-floor component clad in dark blue stainless steel mediates the height difference between the adjacent buildings and the new edifice.

IAC building, 2003-2007, New York, New York, USA (sketches and model)

The headquarters of the company InterActiveCorp (IAC) rises up in the Manhattan skyline, close to the banks of the Hudson River, towards which the building turns its main façade. The building's whiteness is achieved through the mix of fine ceramic particles and the glass panels of the façade. This opaque mass is striated by zones of non-tinted glass, like horizon lines. The façade, cut into facets which seem to billow in the wind, and the set-back upper part give the unit a boat-like feel, in harmony with its environment.

The Luma Foundation/Parc des Ateliers, 2007- (in progress), Arles, France (sketches and model)

The Luma Foundation is building a tower dedicated to contemporary creation in the middle of the Parc des Ateliers in Arles, a railway wasteland used for artist events. The aim is to revitalise this industrial heritage by energising it with distinctly contemporary architecture. The tower is an architectural version in metal of a mountainous massif in the Alpilles. The variations in the rock are formalised by piled up aluminium foam modules punctuated by glazed orthogonal volumes.

Santa Monica Mixed-Use Development, 2008- (in progress), Santa Monica, California, USA (model)

In the heart of the Santa Monica district on Ocean Boulevard, Gehry has designed a complex to house shops and apartments. On an L-shaped plot, he has designed two independent sequences, creating a relationship in direct contrast with the street: four small buildings and a tower, whose base takes up most of the plot. Gehry uses a series of stepped-back levels to integrate the project more harmoniously with the surrounding buildings, which are not very high. The ascending diagonals create concave zones which catch the light and sculpt the façade.

Sonderborg Kunsthalle, 2010, Sonderborg, Denmark (sketches and models)

Dedicated to contemporary creation, the future Kunsthalle is part of the cultural requalification of the former industrial port in Sonderborg. At this stage of the project, the entire edifice seems to be covered with heavy drapery. The choice of brick (reflecting local expertise) and the use of cutting-edge technologies place this architecture at the crossroads of tradition and constructive innovation.

8 Spruce Street (Beekman Tower), 2003-2011, New York, New York, USA (sketches and model)

The slender profile of Beekman Tower dominates Manhattan with its 76 floors, split up into a series of landings. Apart from its height, it stands out in the urban landscape through its façade. The curving anodised aluminium bands composing the curtain wall catch the light, bringing it to life with silvery reflections. This modulation of the main façade contributes to the building's diversity, because the folds created by the rippling façade give a singular character to each of the tower's 900 apartments.

National Art Museum of China Competition (NAMOC), 2010-2012 (not built), Beijing, People's Republic of China (sketches and model)

For this competition, the architect proposed a simple, compact volume contained within a double skin. This consists of glass modules treated as "translucent stone", evoking the precious quality and translucency of jade. Inside, nine distinct geometric volumes, each lit with a light well, spread out independently of the structure.

Monaco Competition, 2007 (not built), Principality of Monaco (model)

The Principality of Monaco invited five groupings of promoters and architects to design a maritime urban project of around 6 ha. Frank Gehry competed with Christian de Portzamparc and Rem Koolhaas. Echoing the verticality and density of Monaco's urban fabric, Gehry proposed three towers rising above a low level district. Their general morphology results from a combination of the envelope's crumpled surface with the simplicity of the volumes; the architecture is compressed and dilated like the undulating hills of its surroundings.

National Art Museum of Andorra, 2007 (not built), Principality of Andorra (models)

In 2007, Andorra, staged a competition (subsequently cancelled) for the construction of a museum with a strong architectural identity, in view of revitalising the Principality. Gehry dreamed up an 80-metre tower – the only high building in the city centre. Its expanded aluminium modules compose a dark, rugged, primitive mineral form. This pure, telluric component stands out from its urban context, blending with the neighbouring peaks of the Pyrenees.

Dr Chau Chak Wing Building, 2009- (in progress), Sydney, Australia (sketches and model)

With the research and teaching venue for the Sydney University of Technology, Gehry has designed a building with two faces. The brick façade on the street is divided into modules of five levels similar

to small independent buildings, while the rear façade consists of large glass panels. This heterogeneous envelope contains various types of spaces, with floor plans adapted to the external forms. The work on division and integration is driven by the desire to encourage a transdisciplinary approach.

Louis Vuitton Foundation, 2005-2014 (inauguration on 27 October), Paris, France (sketches and model)

The Louis Vuitton Foundation dedicated to contemporary art has found a home in the Bois de Boulogne. In line with the specifications (10 exhibition galleries), Gehry has broken down the various elements of the project into parallelepipedic blocks. The building alternates full volumes and interstitial spaces in an envelope composed of 3,600 glass panels forming twelve huge glass “sails”. Each panel is curved in a different way to give life to an airy, light-filled building, which harmonises with the landscape of the 19th century park.

TOWN PLANNING

Nationale-Nederlanden Building, 1992-1996, Prague, Czech Republic (sketches and models)

The Dutch insurance company ING commissioned Vlado Milunic and Frank Gehry to build an office block. From the initial sketches emerged the idea of the building whose corner features two towers with curved profiles, side by side. Frank Gehry nicknamed the project “Fred and Ginger”, signifying that the two buildings, like the dancers’ bodies, interact with each other and form a single entity through their movements. The “dancing towers” complete the row of buildings stretching along the river, and mediate with the surrounding area.

Loyola Law School, 1978-2003, Los Angeles, California, USA (model)

For the Loyola Law School, Frank Gehry designed a new layout for its campus, divided into six phases to be built in gradual succession. The architect dotted the different elements all over the campus, giving it an apparent disorganisation emphasised by the varied aspect of the buildings. A simple typological vocabulary was used to reinterpret the classic monumentality desired by the University. In this way, Gehry adapted the solemn character of the institution to its environment.

Turtle Creek Development, 1986 (not built), Dallas, Texas, USA (model)

The development plan for a sector in the Turtle Creek district was a mixed project: a hotel, offices, an apartment block and ten townhouses, laid out around gardens. The idea was to play around with the scales of the buildings, and create a heterogeneous quality through the forms and materials. Intermediary spaces preserve the intimacy of the domestic spheres; the apartment block stands in the middle of the plot, while the town houses are set apart behind a closed garden. The office tower has a glass curtain façade.

Brooklyn Atlantic Yards Masterplan, 2003-2008, Brooklyn, New York, USA

A series of buildings with around 30 floors created the new face of this as yet little built-up district, juggling with the scales of the offices, apartments and shops. The positioning of the buildings and the creation of a pedestrian circuit in the centre of the plot strips produced a hierarchy in the circulating areas, and variety in the public zones. Leisure facilities were planned to enhance the attractiveness of the district.

Alameda Redevelopment, 1993, Mexico City, Mexico (sketches)

Lying alongside the Alameda Park, the project was simultaneously a densification and a refurbishment of an abandoned zone in Mexico’s historic district. Three office towers occupy the centre of the blocks, while smaller constructions create urban façades on the avenues. Three teams of architects (Frank Gehry, Ricardo Legoretta and Skidmore Orwins & Merrill) were each tasked with designing one of the three towers and their immediate environment.

Central Business District, 1981 (study), Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA (model)

Frank Gehry and a team of students produced this project on the initiative of the American Institute of Architects of Michigan. The urban restructuring was based on the landscaped development of two existing basins. Their centrality structured the commercial and shopping sector on the one hand, and a residential district on the other. The heterogeneity of the project emphasised Gehry's positioning: to produce as much diversity as possible within the city. Here, monumental, narrative objects like the fish boosted this critical position with regard to the zoning.

COMPUTER TOOLS

Computer tools made their appearance in Frank Gehry's agency at the end of the Eighties. But Gehry began to experiment with digital design more seriously with the Lewis House project (1985-1995, not built). In 1992, he used Dassault Systèmes' CATIA aeronautics software to produce surfaces with complex curves. The digital 3-D model generated by CATIA then became the sole source of information for the entire project: a link between the architect, client, trades and companies involved. In 2002, Gehry Technologies implemented its own software: Digital Project. For Gehry, this restored the architect to the heart of the design and production process. More than a tool, digital constantly nourished Frank Gehry's exploratory method of working, enabling a permanent interaction between physical and virtual forms, and opening the architectural approach out to an unprecedented complexity.

FILM

"Sketches by Frank Gehry"

Sound film, color, 2006

Directed by Sydney Pollack

Original soundtrack: Sorman & Nystrom

Photography/Video Directors: Sydney Pollack, Ultan Guilfoyle

Production: Mirage Enterprises and Thirteen/Wnet, New York's American Master and LM Media GmbH

Distribution: Pathé Distribution, France

From 8 October to 3 November 2014, to accompany this retrospective, the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information is presenting a selection of documents on Frank Gehry, which can be found in the Art and Literature section of the BPI. Admission free.

CONVERSATION WITH FRANK GEHRY

Interview with Frank Gehry, June 29, 2014, at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris
Interview by Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier

From the catalogue

F. Migayrou- What is the beginning? What was the beginning?



Frank Gehry
©Philippe Migeat,
Centre Pompidou

F. Gehry- When I was young, [...] I worked in my grandfather's 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. [...] Architecture was by chance for me, because I didn't think to be an architect. [...] 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, I didn't like... 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 [...] Once I started doing that, I was pretty interested. [...]

FM- 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 completely your language, your experimentations, in architecture to find new routes.

FG- 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, I think, is the Asia influence in California, which was very powerful; more powerful than a lot of people understand, in talking about California architecture. [...] My first little buildings looked like... I was a Japanese architect, I think, because it was a language understood, and accessible to the tracked house mentality; you could build those wooden structures. [...]

FM- [...] you began to make furniture with very poor materials, with wood. [...] Using Wright's terms, could we talk about the naturalisation of the city, in reference to using materials as they are?

FG- Maybe it's like recognising 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?

FG- 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. [...] 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. The idea of jujitsu is you use the other guys to flip it and win. [...]

AL- Could you explain this idea of the one room building, which is just at the same time than your house; it's a very strong concept.

FG- Well, that was Phillip Johnston. [...] He gave a talk, and I'm not sure I was present at the talk; I think I read it later, and it talked about the one room building. I was trying to figure out how to get to the essence, like my painter friends; what does Jasper think about when he makes his first gesture? The clarity, the purity, of that moment and it's difficult in architecture. When Phillip gave that speech, I said, "Ah ha; that's it." The one room building could be anything, because it just has to keep the rain out, but there's no complexity in it, functionally, that makes it do something. That's why churches are just one beautiful space, and it's an essence, so then I thought... That's when I did that little house, the village

houses, where I put them together, because I didn't have much work and I wanted to do as many one room buildings I could. [...]

FM- Loyola became the first big programme, to experiment this idea, at the larger scale?

FG- Loyola Law School; it was interesting because the Loyola University campus is a beautiful campus, up on a hill, overlooking the ocean. The law school was an orphan, in downtown LA. [...] They had a very tight budget; they didn't have a lot of money, and I talked to them about their aspirations. They, of course, wanted to be a domain campus, but they couldn't. They had to have a safe compound; they had to have some way to close it. They wanted an identity, they were searching for an identity, which is logical; they didn't want to look like the orphan. The first building that was built for them, the library, made everything worse because it wasn't very good, and it's out of scale and not very friendly. So I talked to them, about the law, and what were the important things, and just by coincidence, I visited Rome, the Forum and the Temple of Castor and Pollux which I'd known but having seen it, I realised how little you needed to make a statement about the law. It didn't take much, two or three columns and a little lintel. [...]

FM- But your first experimentation with computer... [...] Your way to draw has become so iconic now [...] what is your process?

FG- The drawings are more, for me, about continuity, so it makes the whole... It tries to finish it all, in like an action, it's done ; I like that idea of continuity, but complete and then ambiguous, if you can. A few other things thrown in for fun. [...] So once I knew that this technology could do what it did, I realised that once the rest of the world understands, it's going to be ubiquitous, and once that happens, people are going to design on the computer. They're not going to sketch, they're not going to make models; they're going to design directly, so I wanted to try it. [...] I had the guy that knew what-I didn't know how to use it. He sat beside me, I made a maquette with fabric. [...] And then we put that in the computer. I hated the image on the computer; the computer image is lifeless, cold, horrible. I manipulated those shapes with him; I said, "Move this here," I was pointing to the screen; I was almost drawing on the screen for him and he followed; he was really good technically. Keeping the image from your brain, into the thing, it was very... I don't know how to say it. It was like having your tooth drilled with no Novocain; it was hurtful, it hurt. I couldn't do it and I ran out of the room, and they said I stayed in for 3.4 minutes; somebody timed how long I could stay there, but the horse's head came from that.

FM- At this moment, you just invented the idea of generative computation? [...]

FG- Right. Now, what happens is the world, according to Cervantes, ultimately screws it up, so what is an amazing tool for an architect has become a crutch and people are using it, and allowing the computer to design the shapes. Each software has a signature, like if you use my software, you can recognise it. [...] Now, this comes back to my drawing, so my drawing has complexity. I can make a drawing like that, a simple stroke. There is more power in taking the computer, and getting it to a smaller scale, where you can do more fine things. Once you get it to there, to a smaller scale, you can make the big scale, but you have more freedom. In other words, you use the computer for your own creativity; you don't let the computer be the creator; I don't know how else to explain that. [...]

FM- It was really effective when you crossed both programmes you realised at that period, Disney and Guggenheim, the manipulation of the computer disappeared a little bit because of course it was computer assisted, but the singularity of the buildings was preserved.

FG- Yes, but I think I still rely on the model technique for building because it's direct my hand to the thing. I don't build the models, but it's more direct. I work with my colleagues, and in a way it's more personal. When you put it only in the machine- and now you can put in a machine, and you can push a button and you get a 3D model, a 3D print; it's totally impersonal and scary. [...]

FM- From the assemblage to the fusion of elements, to the complexity of a little bit chaotic idea of architecture, now you want to go back to singularity. [...] You go back to typologies, very complex because they integrate this complexity, like the Beekman Tower. [...] How has it happened now, this idea to question the identity of the building again? [...]

FG- Well, I think it depends on the scale. [...] The models are all there, in the high rise towers; everything has been done, everything has been thought of, everything has been modeled and built around the world; they all look alike. What was missing, for me, in New York was a tower that wasn't a copy, wasn't a historic copy, but first of all it said "New York." If you see the building, you'd know it's a New York building. I was talking to the Woolworth building, which is an icon that's precious, as it were. [...]

Whatever decoration the Woolworth building has, I was trying to talk to that, but not make it decoration; make it something that was useful to the building, so the bay window became an interesting idea for me. I thought a lot about it; I was looking for an essence, because you can't afford to make... I mean, people do crazy things with towers, but I was looking for an essence, I was looking for one thing, one move, I was looking at the Woolworth building, nineteenth century decoration and the scale of it, I was talking to that. I was talking to the breaks that New York tradition has, and I was going to use the trick, or whatever you call it, of the bay window. [...] I was thinking of Bernini, I was looking at Santa Teresa, and those beautiful folds. They're very architectural, I mean, Michelangelo's is soft folds, and Bernini is a little edgier. I did a little sketch, and I had a young girl from Princeton, who was a student in the office, and I asked her if she knew the difference between Bernini folds or Borromini, she said, "Yes." I said, "Make these lines with Bernini folds," and she made a little maquette and it did it; it worked and that's what we built. [...]

FM- It's a way to have a complete new idea of history, because you're quoting Borromini or Bernini, and mainly from mannerism to baroque, against the traditional idea of perspective, it's a kind of permanent critical history. You changed completely all the disciplines of architecture, engineering... [...]

FG- Well, I hope it's good [*laughter*]. I think you go back to reading the Talmud for me, it's "why does it have to be that way?" So I look at history, I try to understand what the artist was thinking, why they did what they did, how did that happen. [...] That's what I look for in history, what are the human touches, what happened because of the technology that was there, and then try to say, "We've got new technology, we've got new things, how do we not lose that," because that's human; that thinking. [...]

4. BIOGRAPHY

Chronology

1929- Born in Toronto, Canada.

1947- Gehry moves with his family to Los Angeles, California.

1954- He receives his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Southern California in 1954, then studies City Planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

He proceeds to join different architectural practices in Los Angeles, such as Pereira and Luckman Associates and Victor Gruen.

1961- Frank Gehry moves to Paris and works at André Rémondet's practice.

1962- Back in California, he starts his own architectural practice in Santa Monica (now Gehry Partners, LLP)

End of the 1970s- "Gehry House", his Santa Monica property, built using a variety of materials as well as interweaving and juxtapositions, becomes a demonstration of his architectural style. At the same time, he begins reflecting on a series of cardboard furniture called *Experimental Edges*.

1978- The Los Angeles *Loyola Law School* project is born. Gehry will gradually develop the project over several years.

1989- Frank Gehry is awarded the prestigious *Pritzker Architecture Prize*. He inaugurates the *Vitra International Furniture Manufacturing Facility* and *Design Museum* in Weil-am-Rhein, Germany (1987-1989).

1991- *Frank O. Gehry : Projets en Europe*, exhibition presented by the Centre Pompidou.

1992- He is named the recipient of the *Praemium Imperiale* Award. He begins the construction of the *Nationale-Nederlanden Building* in Prague (1992-1996).

1993- Inauguration of the *Frederick R. Weisman Art and teaching Museum* in Minneapolis (1991-1993).

1997- Inauguration of the *Musée Guggenheim* in Bilbao, Spain (1991-1997), he becomes world renowned.

2001- The *Guggenheim Museum* in New York dedicates a retrospective to Gehry called *Frank Gehry, Architect*.

2003- Inauguration of the *Walt Disney Concert Hall* in Los Angeles, which becomes one of the city's most iconic buildings.

2005- Director Sidney Pollack makes "Esquisses", a biographical documentary retracing the architect's work through his greatest achievements.

2006- Frank Gehry begins working on the *Musée Guggenheim Abu Dhabi* (work in progress).

2007- The *Fondation LUMA* construction starts in Arles, France.

2008- Frank Gehry receives the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the Venice Biennale.

2011- Inauguration of the *8 Spruce Street Tower* in New York, which becomes one of the city's emblems.

October, 2014- the *Fondation Louis Vuitton* will be inaugurated in Paris.

International Awards

His work has earned Frank Gehry several of the most significant awards in the architectural field. He was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in 1974, and his buildings have received over one hundred national and regional A.I.A. awards.

In 1977, Frank Gehry is named recipient of the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In 1989, he is awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize, honoring his “significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.”

In 1992, he receives the *Wolf Prize in Art* (Architecture) from the Wolf Foundation. In the same year, he is named the recipient of the *Praemium Imperiale Award* by the Japan Art Association to “honor outstanding contributions to the development, popularization, and progress of the arts.”

In 1994, he becomes the first recipient of the *Dorothy and Lillian Gish Award* for lifetime contribution to the arts. In the same year, he is bestowed with the title of Academician by the *National Academy of Design*.

In 1998, he is named an Honorary Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts. In the same year, he receives the National Medal of Arts, and he becomes the first recipient of the Friedrich Kiesler Prize.

In 1999, Frank Gehry receives the Lotos Medal of Merit from the Lotos Club, and he receives the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects.

In 2000, Frank Gehry receives the Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects, and he receives the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from *Americans for the Arts*.

In 2002, Frank Gehry receives the Gold Medal for Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Frank Gehry is named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1987, a trustee of the American Academy in Rome in 1989, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1991.

In 2003, Frank Gehry is inducted into the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and he is designated as a *Companion to the Order of Canada*.

In 2005 Frank Gehry receives the Ordre National de Legion d’honneur Chevalier from the French Government.

In 2006 he is a first year inductee into the California Hall of Fame.

In 2008, Frank Gehry receives the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the Venice Biennale.

In 2010, Frank Gehry receives the John Singleton Copley Award from the American Associates of the Royal Academy Trust, and he receives the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art Award in New York.

In 2014, Frank Gehry receives the Prince of Asturias Award for the Arts.

Frank Gehry has received honorary doctoral degrees from Occidental College, Whittier College, the California College of Arts and Crafts, the Technical University of Nova Scotia, the Rhode Island School of Design, the California Institute of Arts, the Southern California Institute of Architecture, the Otis Art Institute at the Parsons School of Design, the University of Toronto, the University of Southern California, Yale University, Harvard University, the University of Edinburgh, Case Western Reserve and Princeton University.

Frank Gehry has held teaching positions at some of the world’s most prestigious institutions including Harvard University, University of Southern California, University of California Los Angeles, Sci-Arc, University of Toronto, Columbia University, the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, and at Yale University where he still teaches today.

PRODUCTIONS

His notable projects include:

- The *Guggenheim Museum* in Bilbao, Spain
- The *Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum* Expansion at the University of Minnesota
- The *Nationale-Nederlanden Building* in Prague
- The *DZ Bank Building* in Berlin
- The *Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts* at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
- Maggie's Centre*, a cancer patient center in Dundee, Scotland
- The *Walt Disney Concert Hall* in Los Angeles, California
- The *Jay Pritzker Pavilion and BP Bridge in Millennium Park* in Chicago, Illinois
- The *Hotel Marques de Riscal* in El Ciego, Spain
- The *Transformation Art Gallery of Ontario* in Toronto, Ontario
- The *Peter B. Lewis Science Library* in Princeton, New Jersey
- The *Lou Ruvo Brain Institute* in Las Vegas, Nevada
- The *Ohr O'Keefe Museum* in Biloxi, Mississippi
- The *New Campus for New World Symphony* in Miami, Florida
- The *Eight Spruce Street* Residential Tower in New York City
- The *Opus* Residential Tower in Hong Kong
- The *Signature Theatre* in New York City
- The *House for the Make it Right Foundation* in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Works in progress:

- The *Guggenheim* in Abu Dhabi
- The *LUMA Foundation* in Arles, France
- The *Divan Orchestra* in Berlin
- The *Eisenhower Memorial* in Washington, D.C.
- The *King Street Development* in Toronto, Ontario
- The *Philadelphia Museum of Art* in Philadelphia
- The *Q-MOCA* in Quanzhou, China
- The *West Campus* for Facebook in Menlo Park, California

6. TEXTS FROM THE CATALOGUE

The Organon of Frank Gehry

Frédéric Migayrou

Translated from 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 organisation of experience. The method was intended to produce, through a process of slow maturation, logical generalisations whose truth would have been demonstrated in the very process of their productions. This gradual generalisation 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 Sixties California, of the Postmodernism that in the end returned to the same normativity, applying similarly abstract rules to architectural composition. While, in series of major projects, his work has attained to a form of universality—his work 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 in explanation, even to the point of seeing the famous Gehry Residence (1977-1978, 1991-1994) as an autobiographical manifesto, the generative matrix that imposes a distinctive stamp not only to the architecture but on the architect himself, Frank Gehry being both hero and author of this architectonic narrative. “In beginning with a commonly accepted type and ending 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 disassembled.”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 there occur the inversions and reversals that Gehry brings about, the plays on open and closed, public and private, the visible and the hidden, form and the formless, the object and the assemblage, this way of making the building a focal point on which there converge two conceptions of history, a locus of conflict between the old house, memory and history, and the new of an avant-gardism that comes to destroy. The Gehry Residence remains the point of convergence of the two dimensions that have animated the architect's researches: the practicality and efficiency characteristic of professional practice on the one hand and a desire for experiment that tests the limits of the discipline on the other. With some justification, some would seek to understand the coherence of the architect's work as a whole on the basis of this house, which constitutes a programme in miniature. Yet Frank Gehry's career had begun twenty years earlier with the Steeves Residence (1958-1959) and the establishment of his own office in 1962. The man who had collaborated with landscape designer Hideo Sasaki, with architects John Portman, Richard Aeck and Andrew Steiner, with Pereira & Luckman on Los Angeles Airport, and also with Victor Gruen, inventor of the shopping mall and pioneer of urban design—first for a year in 1953, and then as project leader from 1958 to 1960—who had worked in Paris for André Remondet in 1961,

and also with urban planner Robert Auzelle, was already possessed of a substantial body of skills, honed in the development and realisation of some 80 projects, many involving urban design. With such programmes behind him as the 10,000 m² of residential accommodation at the Kenmore Apartments (1963-1964), a development of 84 detached houses at Bixby Green, (1968-1969), a 15,000 m² office building for the Rouse Company Headquarters (1969-1974), the renovation of the Hollywood Bowl (1970-1982), a 60,000 m² mall at Santa Monica Place, (1972-1980), the Atrium of the Rudge and Guenzel Building (1974-1976), and the 15-story residential building Harper House (1976), the architect Frank Gehry was already, at the turn of the Eighties, an experienced builder and urban designer who had mastered every aspect of the profession. And the most fascinating aspect of his work, indeed, has to be the patient elaboration of a process of *unlearning* that no doubt began with Danziger Studio / Residence (1964) and which would gradually come to overturn the languages and the practices, indeed the whole process, of architectural and urban design. In architecture, each one of the elements employed (from plane space to geometry, from form to material, from structure to the presuppositions of harmony or composition) would be subjected to radical experiment. In this, Gehry was reconnecting with the immanence of cognition, the ingenuity (in the sense of the freedom conferred by *ingenuus*) proper to the artists he mixed with, finding it possible to recompose an expression, to transfigure norms and codes. One can detect in the corpus of his work the different phases of a critical redeployment of the languages of architecture that lays the basis for a new practice, defining the fundamentals that will ground an original methodology and aesthetic.

The Anatomy of Composition

Whatever approach is adopted, interpretations of Frank Gehry's work always return to questions of origin. From family history to tales of apprenticeship, from the fascination with everyday materials to a craft-like practice of architectural modelling, consideration of the development of the work, of the emergence of new logics of creation, ends up in the investigation of biographical, historical and contextual sources, seemingly taking the form of an ontological quest. Gehry's discovery of architecture and his encounter with Raphael Soriano on the site where the latter was building a house for Glen Lukens—Gehry's teacher of ceramics at the University of Southern California (USC)—certainly mark a break. Given his student's evident fascination, Lukens offered to support an application for admission to the School of Architecture. "[Soriano] was directing construction with great authority. I was terribly moved by this image. I found myself intrigued with the work of Soriano and the idea of architecture. I think it was Glen's hunch that would happen".² It would however be excessive, on the basis of this encounter alone, to locate Frank Gehry's starting point somewhere in the wake of the transition from the International Style to what would emerge, through the Case Study Houses, as California Modern. Even if the relations of inside and outside, of open and closed, and the associated mobility of separations would all retain their importance, Gehry would recognise himself neither in the declared Modernism of Richard Neutra, nor in the formalism of the ultralight metal frames of Ralph Rapson, Pierre Koenig or Craig Ellwood, too marked by functionalism and standardisation. Esther McCoy, author of the programmatic *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962*, stressed that the Case Study houses, still under the influence of Thirties Modernism, "were an idealized mirror of an age in which an emerging pragmatism veiled Rooseveltian idealism. [...] By 1962 it had become clear that the battle for housing had been won by the developers".³ At the USC School of Architecture, Gehry would enlarge his knowledge of the Californian architectural scene. It was then that he met Julius Shulman and came across Garrett Eckbo's work on landscape, as well as that of Gregory Ain whose Mar Vista Housing (1947-1948) would influence the design of Bixby Green (1968-1969). But it the greatest influence on him must certainly have been Harwell Hamilton Harris, whose approach to materials and to the building's relationship to the site was informed by Arts & Crafts, by the work of Greene & Greene, and above all by that of Frank Lloyd Wright, who had championed open plan and continuity in the articulation of spaces. Looking at the Steeves Residence and its Wright-inspired 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 Church of Christ Scientist (1912) seems to have influenced the outline of the Kay Jewelers Stores (1963-1965),

Wright's mark can be seen in the very logic of Gehry's designs, in the organic distribution of spaces that imposes discontinuities on 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 the taste for the Japanese to California and was himself a collector and dealer in Japanese prints,⁵ can be seen again in Gehry's design for the exhibition "Art Treasures of 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 Frank Lloyd 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 the built work, he has retained the asymmetrical plan and the abiding concern for materials that are the hallmark of the Wrightian style".⁶

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 John 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 Frank Lloyd Wright. Faced with Louis 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 favoured in his quest for motifs. "Use both the word organic and the word Nature in deeper 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 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". One may thus formulate the principles of the organic architecture that first emerged in 1908 to be formalised 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 colour, and which have to be related to a specific context, to an identifiable environment. The building is necessarily 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 super-added 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 it was 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 naturalise the city and all its artifice, a flattening 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 façade 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, Frank Gehry left the structure and the organisation of the spaces clearly visible, while the exterior was covered in an unpainted rough grey

render. The architectural object has value in itself: it is an independent entity that is nonetheless connected to the environment in which 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. When I did it, everyone was surprised, but I realised afterwards that neglecting the possibility of interfacing with the city was restrictive."¹²

The Delineation of the Composite

The implantation of an architectural object in a singular context became the guiding thread of an investigation that can be illustrated through Gehry's work with the Rouse Company, notably for the new town of Columbia, Maryland, which saw the building of the Merriweather-Post Pavilion (1966-1967) and then the Public Safety Building (1967-1968). To combat the oppressive scale of the big city, developer James Rouse—inventor of the "business park" and Victor Gruen's client for a number of shopping malls—had recruited a team of urban planners, sociologists and teachers to advise on the framework for his "planned communities", the new towns that were intended as "a global response to the aspirations of a free society".¹³ In seeking integration with the site, Gehry was attentive to the geometry of the roofs: a suspended trapezoidal structure for the Merriweather-Post Pavilion (and later for the Concord Performing Arts Center, 1973-1976), a roof standing clear of the mass for the Public Safety Building. Transforming the way the buildings are seen in relation to the site, this illusionism became more marked in the O'Neill Hay Barn (1968), "the first project in which Gehry intensively explored a non-orthogonal geometry and played with the expressive and illusionistic possibilities of distorted perspectives".¹⁴ To further promote integration into the site, Gehry lightened the whole construction, the corrugated steel panels creating, in envelope fashion, a continuity between walls and roof, a principle carried further in the Davis Studio/Residence (1968-1972). Designing an exhibition at the LACMA in 1968 for Billy Al Bengston, a Pop artist who worked with recycled materials and screenprinted logos on sheet metal, Gehry covered the walls with corrugated steel panel, a material he would later use in many of his projects.

Gehry met and became friends with the artists of the Ferus Gallery, among them Larry Bell, Ed Ruscha, Ken Price, Robert Irwin, Ed Moses and Billy Al Bengston. At the time, a new art scene was emerging in L.A., influenced first by the hybrid materiality of Rauschenberg's *Combine Paintings* and the complex textures of Jasper Johns's *Flags* and *Maps*, and then by the emerging Pop Art movement. This was such a dynamic artistic community that the LACMA organised a vast survey show, "a scene of utter, madcap camaraderie between the Museum and the artistic community",¹⁵ featuring, among others, Ed Ruscha, Tony Berland, Craig Kauffman, John Baldessari, John Altoon and Claes Oldenburg, all artists who would leave their mark on Gehry's work. This relationship to art, and to these artists in particular, would lead him to consider in depth the ontological problems of the status of the architectural object and of its physical identity within the context. His encounter with Ron Davis prompted a fruitful dialogue which ended in the literal "pictorialisation" of architectural volume. An open box, perspective is disaggregated to be reconfigured in a form that is endlessly recomposed from different points of view onto the site. While Ron Davis in his resin-based paintings explored questions of geometrical illusion, Gehry conferred on them a full reality: "The shift from orthogonal to perspectival came from Ron Davis because he was doing paintings that were about perspectival constructions. I was fascinated by the fact that he could draw but he could not make them; he could not turn them into three-dimensional objects."¹⁶

Gehry then made drawing itself a design tool, constantly re-examining the tension between graphic composition and the translation of this spatial analytics into built volume. Here again one sees an organic conception of space that calls to mind Rudolf M. Schindler, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright: "The house of the future is a symphony of 'space forms'—each room a necessary and unavoidable part of the whole".¹⁷ The space is constituted of abstract planes that organise separations, openings and even furniture into a whole, an open ensemble comparable to the De Stijl compositions. In his article "Care of the Body: Shelter or Playground",¹⁸ Schindler describes a dynamic continuity of space in which the play of interrelations reinforces the presence of the body. Stefanos Polyzoides: "Space architecture considered the void as being a positive, mouldable medium, the raw material for place-making inside and outside buildings. Schindler belonged to a minoritarian modern position that resisted the conception of space as an abstract, featureless medium. [...]. It was the volumetric definition of interiors that

generated the images, the plasticity and the material qualities of [...] his buildings.”¹⁹ The many sketches of exploded cubes and the exploration of the interlacing of spatial dimensions that then inspired Gehry’s work recall Theo Van Doesburg’s tesseracts, and more distantly the explorations of hyperspace and of the fourth dimension through which Claude Bragdon hoped to be able to “trace individualities on the plan”. Bragdon, another disciple of Louis Sullivan’s, “translated the theory of n-dimensional space into a set of techniques for using mathematics, ‘the universal solvent of all forms’, to generate beautiful patterns fully abstracted from nature’s visible forms”.²⁰ Frank Gehry’s drawings do not construct forms, they distribute the elements of space. Line becomes an instrument of separation, distinction. The line is a continuous delimitation of the dimensions of the space; it is a delineation—etymologically a *delineatio*, a drawing or sketch—a fundamental aspect of Gehry’s work that has prompted in many people a mystique of the sketch, the sketch that reveals the almost ontological role that continuous line plays for the architect.²¹ Gehry then raises up these lines into volumes that divide up the space in accordance with vectors of tension which, as can be seen in the case of Mid-Atlantic Toyota (1976-1978), undo the whole system of separations and openings in favour of another continuity. The forms of the city (façades, roofs, etc.) reappear as shadows cast on the interior of the building, producing an effect the reverse of that of the doubled façade of Santa Monica Place, where the interior seems to extend into the exterior, into the void. The drawing becomes an anaglyph, the line splitting to create parallaxes that unsettle the elements of the architectural composition, fracturing the volume, the window openings traversing the walls as improbable bow-windows (Gemini G.E.L. Gallery, 1976-1979), tipping the roofs over into violent projections (Cabrillo Marine Museum, 1977-1979), doubling the volumes and the internal walls (Wagner Residence, 1978; Gunther Residence, 1978). Entirely subordinated to the unity of the line, the motif recovers its juridical status as motive, as justification for these negative compositions. The architecture fragments, without ever becoming collage or assemblage. In this rejection of all Postmodern temptations, the architecture becomes composite without ever combining heterogeneous elements: there is a unity in complexity. Esther da Costa Meyer: “The contours dissolve in a haze of overlapping lines that keep the forms slightly out of focus, slipping from the spectator’s grasp. In his wish to avoid massive structures that dwarf their surroundings, the architect often resorts to an archipelago of smaller buildings around an equivocal center that resists stasis.”²²

Morphologies of Tension

For Frank Gehry, the line orders and disposes, creating permanence, a gesture determining a space within a context. In this one can see his encounter with the work of the artists of the Mizuno gallery, who themselves transformed the pictorial into a sculptural materialisation, turning line into an architectonic element: Ed Moses, who, having started with architectural perspectives (*Gladys McBean*, 1953), had finally reduced drawing to the imprint of cord trapped in a resin maze (*ILL 245 B*, 1971), or Chuck Arnoldi, who transformed the canvas into a meshwork of sticks (*Sticks*, 1972), each a frozen gesture, a phrase, a somewhat violent expression of the exhaustion not only of pictorial but also of architectural space. Gehry adopted the principle for his façade on the *Strada Novissima* at the 1st International Architecture Exhibition (“La presenza del passato”), held at Venice in 1980. With the *World Savings and Loan Association* (1982) Gehry explored the reduction of the façade to trompe-l’œil, an almost literal translation of works by Larry Bell (*Untitled*, 1962 ; *A Wisp of the Girl She Used to Be*, 1963). The almost phenomenological reduction of the whole vocabulary of construction through the thorough re-examination of architectural terms reveals the influence of Minimalist Donald Judd in Gehry’s insistence on a cognitive approach to space and a redefinition of the object in terms of its physical, material status: it has to be “specific, aggressive and powerful”. “The use of three dimensions isn’t the use of a given form. [...]. A few of the more general aspects may persist, such as the work’s being like an object or being specific, but other characteristics are bound to develop. Since its range is so wide, three-dimensional work will probably divide into a number of forms. [...] Materials vary greatly and are simply materials [...]. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also, they are usually aggressive. There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material.”²³ Beyond the simple interest in “poor” materials displayed by Junk Art, ordinary, everyday, industrially produced materials (wire mesh, corrugated sheet, cardboard) facilitate the bringing out of new spatial interrelations, enabling the space to be determined from the start by perception. The use of cardboard in the *Easy Edges Cardboard Furniture* (1969-1973), recalling

the low-grade plywood used by Schindler (*Beata Inaya* chair, 1948), brings about another relationship to the body, in continuity with the internal space. The mesh that covers the whole façade of Santa Monica Place (1972-1980) becomes a permanent feature in Gehry's repertoire of materials, almost a signature. He uses it in particular to modify the morphology of his buildings (Shoreline Aquatic Park Pavilions, 1975; Wagner Residence, 1978; Gunther Residence, 1978). Even if one may cite the earlier endeavours of Gordon Drake (David Presley House, 1946) and Albert Frey (Frey Residence, 1953), who had begun to investigate the relations between material and context, Gehry went past any naturalist conception to take up the repertoire of industrial products. "I did a number of buildings with wire mesh. I wasn't happy. I thought it was anti-social, anti-human. [...]. Then, feeling mad, I began to think, and I realised that the mesh is just a fabric. It was convention, and what was done with it, that made it undesirable".²⁴ If the Gehry Residence (1977-1978) has become an iconic work, it is because it brings together all the elements of the glossary patiently elaborated by Frank Gehry in order to redefine the terms of his architectural logic. The old house acts as a referent which the architect overlays with a new outer wall that perturbs and reorganises the spaces, openings and functions of the whole. Corrugated sheet, wire mesh, the critical reinterpretation of balloon frame construction, the dispersion of programme elements, the breaching of the planes, the geometrical deformation of the volumes: the house is simultaneously construction and deconstruction, assemblage and dissemination; it displaces the very meaning of its territorial inscription to abandon itself to the urban dynamics. "With this house," writes Germano Celant, "architecture opens up to a series of dialectical conjectures. [...] The visual and spatial dismemberment that is born of the encounter between the old and the new nuclei suggest a continuous conflict. And, in fact, if architecture is not to become moribund, it must promote the continual semination and dissemination of pieces and parts that are born, grow, change, and interact endlessly."²⁵ The destructuring of the architectural object would reach a climax in the Familian Residence (1977-1978), for which Gehry pushed further than ever his researches on an analytics of the cube: lines of tension organise the two volumes, multiplying breaches and geometrical distortions to the point of creating a sense of mobility, of complete openness to the environment. Essential to any understanding of the Spiller Residence (1979-1980), the Familian Residence can be seen as a manifesto for a destructured architecture. The model shown at the "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1988 revealed the similarities between Gehry's geometric analyses—notably those involved in the conception Davis Residence (1968-1972)—and those of such members of the New York Five as Peter Eisenman in House III (1962-1971) and John Hejduk in the Diamond House (1963-1967). It is nonetheless difficult to reconcile Gehry's critical organicism with the purely linguistic and later consciously structuralist approach of the New York architects. Francesco Dal Co: "The similarities are [...] evident if we compare [...] the designs of Eisenman and Hejduk with those of Gehry, because all three makes use of the rotation of the axes in order to emphasize the formal independence of the structural cage [...]. There is no trace [...] in Gehry's work of the rarefied, selective, formalistic use of linguistic instruments that is a common platform [...] for the New York architects, whose "objects" display a poetics of nostalgia not immune to evocative excess."²⁶ It is the very notion of line, of drawing, that distinguishes between these two architectural cultures, one still dominated by an ontology of inscription, of the scriptural, while Gehry's delineations establish lines of tension that exceed the architectural object: they are the instruments of a dissemination that will open that object to the urban. Organised at the Pacific Design Center in 1976, an exhibition on the L.A. Twelve—Gehry being the leading innovator among them—marked the distance taken from the East Coast. The report in the *Architectural Record* opens with a photograph of a major highway, thus emblematising the group's shared concern: to work towards a city without limits.²⁷ To open architecture up, to confront it with its relations to a multiplicity of entities, to hybridize it through its interactions with the city, and to reconfigure the programme in accordance with a distribution of independent elements—this was Gehry's vision as he sketched out the Jung Institute (1976). Composed of five independent buildings, it prefigures the complex urban plan of the Loyola Law School (1978-2003): "I used small-scale projects to test my ideas on an urban scale," Gehry says, "I was interested in the still lifes of Giorgio Morandi which represented for me a kind of model of the city [...]. I was obsessed with the idea of shattering the coherence of my earliest projects, largely based on the spatial continuity of Frank Lloyd Wright. I broke the building up into cells, each of which was supposed to look independent, as if were a village."²⁸ Through the dispersion of the built elements, Gehry would

insist on the unity of the programme, the unity of image that he wished to confer on the School. Still in development, the Loyola Law School is the experimental matrix of an architecture that finds expression through correlations, anastomoses, ligatures and variations of scale and form between buildings. Gehry says it over and over: with a rapid pencil line he defines the architectural space as that which exists between buildings, there where the energy of the city, in its circulation and its flows, can pass: "The architecture is the play between the spaces. [...] when I was much younger I went out and photographed the spaces between buildings. It interested me that a building itself could be pretty banal, but if you juxtaposed it with something else you could create an ensemble that was more interesting. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."²⁹ There thus followed a succession of projects whose morphology was shaped by a complexity of forms, such as can be seen in the Indiana Avenue Houses (1979-1981), the House for a Filmmaker (1979-1981) and the Tract House (1982), this last, unbuilt, giving each element an independent narrative value and confronting amongst themselves the semantic values of the different components of the project. The same principle can be seen in the "lifeguard station" of the Norton Residence (1982-1984) and in the Winton Guest House (1982-1987)—where one will find a reference to Giorgio Morandi—which deploys a geometrical vocabulary to develop a series of units of different colours and materials, cannibalising those of the principal residence built by Philip Johnson in 1954. Gehry blurred irrecoverably the boundaries between architectural object, village and community, changing scale in accordance with programme, whether university building (Information and Computer Science/Engineering Center, 1983-1988), hospital (Yale Psychiatric Institute, 1985-1989), detached house (Sirmai-Peterson Residence, 1983-1988; Schnabel Residence, 1986-1989), or even city neighbourhood, as in the Edgemar Development (1984-1988), which organises a group of formally diverse buildings around three towers rising above a small open space. The introduction of citations and micro-narratives creates a deceptive resemblance to an architecture of assemblage that interrogates the European forms of the city, as in Charles Moore's Kresge College (1974) or Piazza d'Italia (1978), or stands, with Robert Venturi, for an eclecticism that affords glimpses of "associations from past experience. Such elements may be carefully chosen or thoughtfully adapted from existing vocabularies."³⁰ There is no postmodernism in Frank Gehry. Those figurative elements that suggest it function precisely as comments on Postmodern practices of citation: the milk can for a kitchen (Camp Good Times, 1984-1985), the copper-clad orthogonal structure recalling a Greek temple (Herman Miller Western Regional Facility, 1985-1989), a pair of binoculars morphed into a Palladian pediment (Chiat\Day Building, 1985-1991).

The Organicity of the Singular

Conscious of the ambiguity of an aesthetic of aggregation and assemblage, of the historicism represented at that time by the Italian Neo-Rationalists and by the pop-imbued Postmodernism praised by Charles Jencks, Gehry would seek, with the symbolic appearance of the figure of the fish (Fishdance Restaurant, 1986-1987; Golden Fish, 1992), to recover Wright's organic unity, redefining the structural function of the continuous at the heart of an architectural language based on dissemination: "It was a kind of comment on postmodernism [...] The fish was kind of a joke over all these references to the past. Everybody was quoting these old classical buildings, so I decided to quote something five hundred million years older than mankind."³¹ » Organic metaphors had first been deployed to describe the critical and destructive aspects of his projects: "IN Gehry's surgery he wrenches joints until the body shatters. [...]. He then cuts through even these elements, breaks them, messes them up [...]."³² But Gehry himself would take up this surgical metaphor, swapping his pencil for a knife when playing Frankie P. Toronto in the performance *Il Corso del Coltello* conceived by Claes Oldenburg for the Venice Biennale of 1986. This character, "a barber from Venice, California," himself stands for the architect, wearing a costume decorated with architectural fragments and wielding his blade to carve out urban forms, to reduce to its component parts—like some Butcher Ding of Chuang Tsu—the inert body of the city. That was how Germano Celant described Frank Gehry and "his theory of 'disorganized order' in architecture derived from the cutting and slicing effects of a Swiss Army knife".³³ It was a matter not so much of destroying as of separating, of bringing to light the relations that overdetermine the architectural object, material connections, indeed, but also the whole mesh of meaningful symbolic interrelations between materials, forms and uses. For Coosje Van Bruggen, "the relationships between the pieces—which are sculptural, stressing the negative spaces—unfold as you walk past them.

Emphases shift, it's more open-ended, more engaging, because you have to think about it more".³⁴ The knife frees the pencil. There then begins an intense graphic labour in which drawing articulates these negative spaces do as to develop the organicity of the object, which, as model succeeds model, eventually takes form. The two phases of the Vitra Design Museum (1987-1989) and the designs for the Lewis Residence (1985-1995) can be understood as the laboratory for a transfiguration of forms that takes the conflictual and chaotic aspect of Gehry's work to an extreme to propose a new morphogenetics. In the Lewis Residence, the architect used waxed cloth to fix the dynamics of movement. This introduction of fabric as structural principle connects on the one hand to the teachings of Gottfried Semper (*Der Stil*, 1860-1863), who advocated an interaction of structure, material and ornament, and on the other to the history of drapery to be read in the painting of Bellini, Giotto and Botticelli and the sculpture of Claus Sluter.³⁵ The domain of history seems one again to be opened up, almost as a history in negative, from the Baroque, resonant of Bernini, Borromini and Bibiena, to the Expressionism of Erich Mendelsohn. This notion of drapery finds condensed expression in a generic figure, the horse's head that is interposed between the two interior facades of the DZ Bank (1995-2001) on Berlin's Pariser Platz, which recall Wright's Larkin Building (1904-1906). According to Irving Lavin, "At Berlin, the skull became a veritable think-tank, a gigantic, preternatural brain-casing".³⁶ One is reminded of Ernst Gombrich's celebrated essay in which the hobby horse is the allegory used to define iconology, art as representation. Archetypes of this new typology of the organic, the fish (Vila Olímpica, 1989-1962), the snake and the horse's head are the precursors of the morphogenetic modelling in computer-aided design, the transformation of the physical into the digital model that would mark a radical turn in Gehry's work. "The embedded information of the shape informs the mathematics of the surfaces directly through the digital model. The digital model provides a kind of material (tactile) feedback. The surfaces become intelligent."³⁷ Thanks to these tools of generic simulation, there would develop a true architecture of continuity in which walls and roofs are transformed into vast, swelling canopies, notably in the overlapping projects of the Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989-2003) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1991-1997). Informed by researches begun during work on the Lewis Residence, the composition preserves the distinction between programme elements—which nonetheless adjoin—creating a sense of tension, of a confrontation between elements, of an ongoing subduction; the image of *subductio*, the hauling of boats up onto the beach, serving very well as a metaphor for the realisation of Guggenheim Bilbao. The realisation of these two projects once again suggested the notion of a sculptural architecture, one that Gehry himself rejects, while the post-Adornian sycophants who follow Georg Lukács in hunting down formalism and subjectivism, a modernism exacerbated by digital technology, were only to ready to argue that "this vision of expression and freedom is oppressive because Gehry does indeed design out of the 'cultural logic' of advanced capitalism, with its language of risk-taking and spectacle-effects".³⁸ Frank Gehry, however, was perhaps the first architect to have understood that the understanding of rationality inherited from the Enlightenment and with it the critical readings of negative dialectics had become inadequate to grasping the consequences of the widespread mathematization of the stochastic brought about by the generalisation of computation. Gehry has always rejected the inert identity of the sculptural object; discussing the Ray and Maria Stata Center (1998-2004) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology he said: "I think of this in terms of controlled chaos. I always relate it to democracy. Democracy is pluralism, the collision of ideas. [...]. You have the same building, essentially one building, and it looks like ten buildings. If you look at the connection between the parts—where each "bottle" touches the next—it looks like one building, but there are ten."³⁹ The whole ensemble of constructive elements is subordinated to the continuous lines that traverse them: the undulant curves of the Nationale-Nederlanden Building (1992-1996), accentuating the effect of the interstitial spaces; the flow effect that preserves the dynamics of the overall morphogenesis so that the fish does not become an inert body, a prison (*Folly: The Prison Project*, 1983). This fusion of all the elements brought about by the lines of force running through the entirety of each project prompts a reconsideration of the identity of each elements, which has to be conceived, and then produced, in accordance with a "non-standard" logic. There emerges the idea of an interpenetration of interior and exterior that one sees in the Experience Music Project (1995-2000) and the Peter B. Lewis Building (1997-2002), which pushes the Wrightian organicist project to its limits. Reference to Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1919-1933) is inevitable—a parable of "modes of perception [in the city] [which] follow a syncopated rhythm

and are stimulated by increasingly partial, fragmentary perspectives"⁴⁰—but evokes the suspect notion of a sculptural architecture. One might equally think of other projects, of Giovanni Michelucci's Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole (1960-1964) or Gottfried Böhm's Nevigeser Wallfahrtsdom (1968), which both sought to create a spatial continuity of their interiors. The total flexibility of digital simulation paradoxically permits the fusion of structure with envelope, generating wide sweeps of surface. Ingeborg M. Rucker: "The notion of ornament has shifted to the skin itself, the markedly ectoplasmic character of the building shifting the idea of structure from inside to outside."⁴¹ If in the MARTa Herford Museum (1998-2005), the roof elements all become independent sheets, in other projects they become true components: interlocking canopies at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College (1997-2003), appearing in the facade at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion (1999-2004). Gehry would furthermore continue the same line of thought in the Biomuseo (2000-in construction), where the separate sections are multiplied to produce a mosaic of colours, and the Hotel at Marqués de Riscal (1999-2006), whose front becomes an efflorescence of metallic ribbon. Yet armed with his mastery of the substructures that are interstitial spaces, Gehry has now begun to insist on them less, exploiting new forms of space emergent from contiguity, as can be seen in the assemblage of three buildings in the Neue Zollhof (1994-1999), the fusion of facades and roofs into a complex knot at the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health (2005-2010), but also in the interpenetration of volumes in projects for the Sonderborgh Kunsthalle (2010) and for the Dr Chau Chak Wing Building at UTS Sydney (2009-in construction), a principle that will find its most complete expression in the intersecting glass volumes of Gehry's building for the Novartis Campus (2003-2009). The circle seems to be closing. The architect who had sought to put his entire practice into question so as to produce work that was properly his own had seemed close to the currents of radical architecture. He had succeeded in identifying the premises of a negative architecture, one that could prompt the comment that "The image that Gehry is trying to communicate in his house communicates to us the kind of dangerous contamination that could infect normal society [...]. The determination to inject something fresh"—something far from the dozy inattention of an America that cared for nothing but money and food.⁴² Once possessed of his language patiently developed, Gehry could turn his critical strategy onto his own work to pose once again the question of the architectural object, the question of identity that lay at the origin of his distinctive approach. The ÜSTRA Office Building (1995-2001), an office tower turned parallelepiped by a gentle twist, inaugurates this new problematic of the object, further explored in the IAC Building (2003-2007) and above all in the 8 Spruce Street (Beekman Tower) (2003-2011), the morphological complexity of whose façade so echoes to the thrum of New York as to have become emblematic. The architecture then enters into movement, reconstructing the syncopated multiplicity of views that one might have on it as so many perspectives no longer distinguishable from the unity of the building itself. In this, Gehry reverses the decomposition of movement effected by Etienne-Jules Marey in his petrifying into sculpture the successive phases of a seagull's flight (*Vol de mouettes*, 1887), reconstructing architecture as a series of events, a zooscope in which it seems to come to life. One is reminded of the examples that Gehry himself evokes: the Parthenon frieze, the Elgin marbles, the *Panchmukha Bhairava*—that representation of Shiva in which he appears five-visaged and many-armed—or Claus Sluter's series of weeping figures at the Chartreuse de Champmol. All Gehry's architecture, indeed, can be understood in terms of the intimate proximity between buildings embodied as a true kinematics and the dynamics of the gesture which, at the moment of conception, in the process of drawing, articulates and distributes the moments of the architectural sequence. Gehry has pushed the sketching process as far as it will go, so far as to deny drawing any right of inscription, so allowing the emergence of architectural object in all its singularity. His plans for the National Art Museum of China (2012-in construction) and the Luma Fondation / Parc des Ateliers (2007-in construction) exemplify this unprecedented form of architecture, directly informed by its context. Wrightian organicity has metamorphosed into a new body of thought, an *organon* in Aristotle's sense, with its analytics, its topics, its categories, its rhetoric and its poetics—a tool that allows the organisation, the embodiment,

of architecture. *Organon* but also *organ* (Walt Disney Concert Hall, 1989–2003), instrument which symbolize all the games tones. *Delineare*, “to construct with a line”: an art that has perhaps reached an acme of sorts in the Fondation Louis Vuitton (2005–2014), where the shifting indeterminacy of cloud of glass unfolds a complexity of cells and capillaries that organises a space born of the interlacing lines of its first graphic elaboration: “I wanted to create a sense of the ephemeral. My first drawing showed this fluid line in movement. The building has to be dreamlike.”⁴³

1. Kurt W. Forster, “Architectural Choreography”, in Francesco Dal Co and Kurt W. Forster, *Frank O. Gehry: The Complete Works* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), p. 16.
2. Frank Gehry, cited in Wolfgang Wagener, *Raphael Soriano* (London: Phaidon, 2002), p. 49.
3. Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945–1962* (Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977, p. 4–5, preface to the second edition.
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), p. 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.” *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art of Japan: The Architect’s Other Passion* (New York: Japan Society and Harry N. Abrams, 2001), p. 21.
6. Mildred Friedman, “Fast Food”, in Bletter et al., *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*, pp. 89–90.
7. Frank Lloyd Wright, “Form and Function”, *The Saturday Review*, 14 December 1935; reprinted in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Collected Writings*, t. III, 1931–1939 (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), p. 187.
8. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1949), p. 99. Wright, who had been given a collection of drawings by Louis Sullivan, decided to pay tribute to him by writing this critical biography.
9. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: Lund Humphries, 1939), reprinted in Wright, *Collected Writings*, p. 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 Fernando Márquez Cecilia and Richard C. Levene, eds, *Frank Gehry, 1987–2003* (Madrid: El Croquis, 2006), p. 16.
12. Frank Gehry in Alejandro Zaera-Polo, “Conversation with Frank Gehry”, in Márquez Cecilia and Levene, eds, *Frank Gehry 1987–2003... op. cit.*, p. 10.
13. “Merriweather-Post Pavilion, Columbia, Maryland”, in Dal Co and Forster, *Frank O. Gehry... op. cit.*, p. 84.
14. “O’Neill Hay Barn”, in Dal Co and Forster, *Frank O. Gehry... op. cit.*, p. 91.
15. S. J. Diamond, “Should We Set Fire to the Art Museum?”, *Los Angeles Magazine*, March 1968.
16. Frank Gehry cited in Zaera-Polo, “Frank. O. Gehry: Still Life”, p. 19.
17. Rudolf M. Schindler, “Furniture and the Modern House”, *The Architect and the Engineer*, December 1935, p. 22.
18. Rudolf M. Schindler, “Care of the Body: Shelter or Playground”, *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May 1926.
19. Stefanos Polyzoides, “Space Architecture Inside Out”, in Lionel March and Judith Sheine, eds, *R.M. Schindler: Composition and Construction* (London; Berlin: Academy Editions; Ernst & Sohn, 1993), p. 198.
20. Jonathan Massey, *Crystal and Arabesque: Claude Bragdon, Ornament and Modern Architecture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), p. 143.
21. See on this not only Sydney Pollack’s important film, *Sketches of Frank Gehry* (2006), but also Horst Bredekamp, “Frank Gehry and the Art of Drawing”, in Mark Rappolt and Robert Volette, eds, *Gehry Draws* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 12. Bredekamp too insists on this ontological function of the line: “Gehry’s successive versions isolate or incorporate the most fundamental lines (*Grundlinie*). Thus it is that Gehry constructs the tension between the blank page, the first mark, and the lines that follow.”
22. Esther da Costa Meyer, *Frank Gehry: On Line*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 55.
23. Donald Judd, “Specific Objects”, *Art Yearbook* 8, 1965; reprinted in Judd, *Complete Writings, 1959–1975* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 184–187.
24. Frank Gehry cited in Zaera-Polo, “Frank. O. Gehry: Still Life”, p. 16.
25. Germano Celant, “Reflections on Frank Gehry” in Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, eds, *Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 10.
26. Fernando Dal Co, “The World Turned Upside-Down: The Tortoise Flies and the Hare Threatens the Lion”, in Dal Co and Forster, *Frank O. Gehry*, p. 45.
27. N. Charles Slert and James R. Harter, eds, *12 Los Angeles Architects* (Pomona, CA: Cal Poly, 1978). On the exhibition see “And then There Were 12... The Los Angeles 12”, *Architectural Record*, August 1976. There would follow numerous publications on the newly distinctive character of California architecture: David Gebhard and Susan King, *A View of California 1960–1976* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1976); *The California Condition: A Pregnant Architecture* (San Diego, CA: La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 1982); Institute of Urban Studies, *California Counterpoint: New West Coast Architecture 1982* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982); Barbara Goldstein and Peter Cook, *Los Angeles Now* (London: Architectural Association, 1983).
28. Frank Gehry cited in Zaera-Polo, “Frank. O. Gehry: Still Life”, p. 26.
29. Frank Gehry in Barbara Isenberg, *Conversations with Frank Gehry* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), p. 6.
30. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), p. 129.
31. Frank Gehry cited in Zaera-Polo, “Frank. O. Gehry: Still Life”, p. 33.
32. Celant, “Reflections on Frank Gehry”, p. 6.
33. Germano Celant, “Frankie P. Toronto”, in Celant, ed., *Il Corso del Coltello/The Course of the Knife: Claes Oldenburg, Coosje van Bruggen, Frank O. Gehry* (New York: Rizzoli, 1978), p. 108.
34. Frank Gehry, cited in Coosje Van Bruggen, “Waiting for Dr. Coltello”, in Celant, ed., *Il Corso del Costello*, p. 67.
35. In developing this draped approach Frank Gehry explained that “the fish confirmed [him] in [his] vision of how to set architecture in motion.” After he cut off the fish’s head and the tail for the “pavillon d’exposition” at the Walker Art Center, fabric became a crucial architectural element. Gehry discusses the artists who nourished his vision at that time in Mildred S. Friedman, “The Reluctant Master”, *Gehry Talks: Architecture + Process* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999), p. 11.
36. Irving Lavin, “Going for the Baroque: Frank Gehry and the Post-Modern Drapery Fold”, in Márquez Cecilia and Levene, eds, *Frank Gehry 1987–2003*, p. 45.
37. Bruce Lindsay, *Digital Gehry: Material Resistance, Digital Construction*, (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2001), p. 74.
38. Hal Foster, “Why All the Hoopla?”, *London Review of Books*, 23 August 2001, p. 26.
39. Frank Gehry in Nancy E. Joyce, *Building Stata* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. xiii.
40. Dal Co, “The World Turned Upside-Down”, p. 40.
41. Ingeborg M. Rocker, “Architectures of the Digital Realm: Experimentations by Peter Eisenman and Frank O. Gehry”, in *Die Realität des Imaginären. Architektur und das digitale Bild*, 10 Internationales Bauhaus Kolloquium (Weimar: Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2008), p. 258.
42. Luciano Rubino, *Frank O. Gehry Special* (Rome: Edizioni Kappa, 1984), p. 95.
43. Frank Gehry, interviewed in *Le Figaro*, 1 June 2012.

THE PROMISE OF CITIES

Aurélien Lemonnier

Translated from French by Andrew McClure

**« Your eye starts to make pictures and you edit and you find beauty out there. We're commentators on that beauty, on what is around us. That's all we're able to do. And this other thing called "design" is a sort of forced attitude – the values are all wrong. It demands things to be made of fancy, not reality. »
Frank Gehry, 1985¹**

The architecture of Frank Gehry suggests a territorial approach. Questioned during different interviews as to what it means to have begun his career in California and, specifically, in Los Angeles, Frank Gehry evokes essentially a place of opportunity where everything can occur rapidly². And how can we understand this territory of possibilities from which Frank Gehry, as an architect, addresses us? How can we comprehend this part of the territory of the American West where a cultural and economic conquest takes place and never seems to conclude³?

Perhaps we could refer to the testimony of Reyner Banham who, in the mid-1960's, travelled across California and produced a description of Los Angeles that is a mix between a travel journal and a critical essay⁴. At a moment when postmodernism was structured precisely around these American cities that seemed to embody, more than any other cities, the paradigm of a society of consumption, Los Angeles was a key meeting place for architects⁵. It was a city in which mobility glorified the "rights of the individual" intensely and the automobile was the instrument of this liberty. The myth is still present today: "The car becomes a symbol of a way of understanding society and individual's relation to it."⁶ What makes Los Angeles a "radical" city is precisely the intensity of the field of possibilities, a field whose symbol is a freedom of mobility that simultaneously shapes the image of the city and the territorial physiognomy⁷. This definition—whose naivety has already been criticized⁸—nevertheless allows us to describe the relationship between continuous infrastructural networks and the fragmentation of districts, old towns, and also different social groups. The definition is possible because this urban domain expresses a shattering of these "communities," these "sanctuaries," that were crystalized in the 1970's and immersed in the incessant vehicular flow that carved through the topography of uncountable single-family houses.

The four "ecologies" that could characterize the Californian territory constitute the native environment for Frank Gehry's professional practice. The first represents the beach culture of the Pacific; the second, that of the hills, is made up of "narrow, tortuous residential roads serving precipitous house-plots that often back up directly on unimproved wilderness;" the third is the highway—the *freeways*; and as for the fourth, it is "the plain"—"the great service feeding and supplying the foothills and the beaches." However, these four landscapes do not hold the same importance, neither in the description that Reyner Banham gives them, nor in the career of Frank Gehry. The ecology of beaches and that of the plains combine to form a more essential whole: "From the desert to the plains, from the plains to the beach, and from the beach to the sea, it's the same flatness"¹⁰. And it is on the plain in its different forms (sea, beach, desert) that Frank Gehry contributes to the more recent pages of Los Angeles' history and legend.

The multiplicity of shattered communities; the network of vehicular roads that lacerate the territory; the uncentered scattering of ordinary buildings, billboards, and detritus that are assembled in an indifferent disorder and that vilify Frank Lloyd Wright uncompromisingly¹²—these are all a part of the placeless plains that Frank Gehry has been traversing for more than sixty years. Whether in Santa Monica or Venice Beach¹³ where he built houses giving him international recognition, the New Mexico desert where he built a recreational center on the Indian reserve of Cochiti Lake (1973), the foothills of the Sierra Nevada where the warehouses of Herman Miller are located (Rocklin, 1987-1989) along with the housing units for the Bixby Ranch Company (Garden Grove, California, 1969) and the Santa Monica Place Shopping Center (1972-1980), the outskirts of downtown L.A. where the Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989-2003) emerged, or more recently the Santa Monica seafront where an office building will be built, the California plain is most assuredly the native environment for the architecture of Frank Gehry.

Yet, this plain is a territory whose identity is an open slate. Banham called them the “plains of ID,” making a clear reference to Freudian theory. His use of this notion which is central, even metaphorical, to psychoanalysis corresponds with the strong, intuitive feeling that the plain is associated with “the originating, instinctive center of the personality, where two strong forces are in conflict—the force of life and the force death.” Thus, the plain would be “this place that is flatly essential, isotropic, and undifferentiated, where contradictions are abolished.¹⁴” The plain and this idea of a permanent renewal create a climate in which anything is possible and beyond regulatory values. From then on, Los Angeles came to embody the paradigm of the absence of standards, stability, rules, and regulations. And architecture was thus confronted with the impossibility of identifying an urban structure (an “urban super-ego,” to reuse the metaphor)—a context on which to be grounded, supported, or consolidated. Architecture was confronted with the need to formalize itself in this unstable and isotopic environment, to ground itself within a reality that was essentially mobile and ephemeral. More than anyone, Frank Gehry has a sharp awareness of the ephemeral and the perishable and a certain sense of obsolescence that refers undoubtedly more to the idea of smoldering than to that of consumption¹⁵. In order to understand the relationship between the work of Frank Gehry, the city, and the territory, it is undoubtedly necessary to keep in mind the ecology of the plain, a metaphor and embodiment of the “perishable” and of the incessant movement of transformation. The architecture of Frank Gehry, positioned as a “commentator of modern life,” truly suggests a momentum and the trajectory of a promise: the promise of a city.

Renovation and “Renewal”

At the end of the 1940’s, the journal *Art and Architecture*, founded by John Entenza, became an echo-chamber for the tensions that were running through architectural debate in California. The description and the analysis of urbanization immediately following the Second World War—that of the urban plains that Richard Neutra did not hesitate to characterize as “planetary¹⁶”—was one of the three editorial axes of the journal. While the *case studies* program, which was supported and published by the journal, was just beginning to establish itself, the conflicts and concerns of an urbanity that seemed uncontrollable were hidden behind the image of a content America whose symbol was the fully-equipped house, nestled on the hill. From the very first issues, one could read strong warnings about the urban condition, for example that of Francis Voilich: “It is simply the total disintegration of form, space and structure in urban patterns. Our cities are characterized by a condition of obsolescence and disorder which produce only negative aesthetics.¹⁷” It is not the incompatibility of the urban structure with the conditions of modern life that presents the danger here (as was strongly argued by the European functionalists that were engaged in reconstruction), but the proliferation and obsolescence of “individual objects” whose multiplication reflects no other logic than that of the unprecedented economic and industrial development enveloping the west coast of the United States, from San Francisco to Los Angeles. This analysis was developed and regularly described in detail in the columns of the journal, up to the mid-1950’s, by writers such as Simon Eisner, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, or the landscape architect Garrett Eckbo.

Despite the importance of these urban issues, Frank Gehry remembers the disappointment that he felt regarding the debates that took place in the architecture school at USC (University of South California) and at Harvard as well, where he completed his urban planning studies in 1956¹⁸. Perhaps it was a narrowing of the architectural debate around an orthodox functionalism that was closed in upon itself, the symptoms of which one can sense in the journal *Art & Architecture* and which coexisted with the difficulty engaging in political debate on a larger scale, as characterized by the rise of McCarthyism¹⁹. Garrett Eckbo escapes this assessment by Frank Gehry (the friendship between the two men had influential effects, the architect often recalls), precisely because he devoted himself to the conception of public space. In the first issues of *Art & Architecture*, Eckbo described landscape architecture by this short programmatic definition: “The design of that which lies between your house and your neighbor’s.²⁰” Later, Eckbo would redefine landscape design as an intermediary scale between man and earth: “The function of landscape design is more than the direct design of outdoor space. In the larger sense, it is the continuous establishment of relations between man and the land, tying

in those hills and valleys and road panoramas which are beyond design, through designed elements which establish a scale relation between each individual human and the large landscape, placing them so that the individual gets a maximum experience from the relationship”²¹. It is clearly landscape architecture’s capacity to create relationships that encourages Frank Gehry to integrate it into his own architecture, from his early works to his latest, indescribable belvedere that is being constructing in the Bois de Boulogne, Paris, for the Louis Vuitton Foundation (2005-2014).

It is noteworthy that Frank Gehry launched his career in the office of Victor Gruen, another immigrant (a Viennese), to whom it is associated the invention of the commercial mall²². Gruen analyzed the contradictions of the Californian city, only to denounce them and organize operational strategies to contain them. The project to which he devoted himself was a fight against the self-destruction of the city and against what he called “subcityscape,” a suburban landscape that was unremarkable and lacking in qualities. From the post-war years of the Second World War up to the 1960’s, Gruen united social humanism with economic pragmatism, placing him at the forefront of urbanism and urban regulations. The outcome of his studies was the shopping center. The shopping center, as conceived by Gruen, was defined as the opposite of a “temple of consumption”; it was instead a “modern agora.” Seen in this light, the public space of the mall is “generated” by the local community in order to limit the excess of consumption and uncontrolled development of commerce. It is both a territorial regulator and a social regulator, and it is with this in mind that Gruen invented a new typology in the post-war years. The shopping centers of Milliron and Fresno are prototypes in that they integrate the unprecedented growth acceleration of the post-war years. “We do not think,” explained Victor Gruen, “that the mall in and of itself is the only solution. The revitalization of a city cannot be obtained by a process of subtraction, for example by eliminating vehicular roads in a portion of the city, but rather by a process of addition of existing qualities that are necessary in order to reinforce the dynamism and the diversity that an urban center must have. The objective of city-planning efforts should be to eliminate the frictions and disturbances that in the past have constituted a hindrance to communication between people and a hindrance to the capacity for movement. It is only by undoing the confusion that has arisen from the intertwining of automobiles, buses, trucks, and inhabitants, ‘all fighting for space on the same surface,’ that we can create the conditions for a better urban structure.”²³

Beginning in the 1950’s, Gruen developed a series of projects in which he applied the socio-economic principles that supported his theoretical position. In 1954, he organized an exhibition entitled “Shopping Center of Tomorrow,” in which he presented the major principles of his urban proposals. Published in 1954 in *Art & Architecture*, Gruen introduced his ideas in these terms: “The shopping center of tomorrow will be more than its name implies... a center for shopping. The shopping center of tomorrow will, besides performing its commercial function, fill the vacuum created by the absence of social, cultural and civic crystallization points in our vast suburban areas.” The Southdale Shopping Center (Minneapolis, 1954) best exemplifies Gruen’s concepts; for this very project, Frank Gehry drew some of the presentation perspectives that aimed to show clearly the layout of the commercial spaces that opened onto public plazas, which were accessed via long galleries.

Recognizing that a conflict in a society of consumption and mass production had now matured, and summoning the operational concepts used for the redevelopment of inner cities, controlled urban expansion also began to integrate the concept of the “planned community”²⁴. This concept proposed to reconcile the scale of the individual with the massive material and economic conditions that correspond to the generalization of urban society; the scale of the individual would thus be enabled to support collective sociability. To reflect on the links between the freedom of the individual and the collective, between the economic and the symbolic, between the city and its territory, between mobility and urbanity... this is, in a sense, the analytical framework that Gehry obtains in these early years that draw to a close with the conception of the Clifton Springs Holiday Resort (1960).

With a sharp awareness of these social issues and the potential commissions that he could receive in this domain (contextually different but perhaps not so distant from what he might have observed

in France while working in the office of André Remondet and later in the office of Robert Auzelle and Ivan Jankovic²⁵), Frank Gehry created his own studio in Santa Monica in 1962 with C. Gregory Walsh, Junior, whom he had met in school. His first projects were real estate developments most notably for the Bixby Ranch Company, which experimented with him on a new construction typology for economical housing. Other projects included the 54-unit apartment complex of Kenmore (Los Angeles, 1963-1964) and, slightly later, the luxury residential neighborhood of Hollydot Park (Colorado, 1971-1973). On a larger scale, the commissions that Frank Gehry undertook were urban renewal studies. These included, for example, the study of the neighborhood surrounding the Vernon-Central Station that was commissioned by the urbanism office of Los Angeles (1970), or that of city of Hermosa Beach that was battling the desertion of their downtown during off-peak tourist season (1967). The general urban principles adopted by Frank Gehry are formulated around two major ideas: first, the management of the flow of vehicular traffic which he separates from pedestrian traffic (Frank Gehry also proposes different slab-construction strategies that allow for the resolution of problems concerning access and parking); the second principle is programmatic diversity and the search for a balance between housing, office spaces, and retail spaces.

The architectural and urban strategies implemented for cities that were becoming impoverished and no longer seemed capable of retaining their middle class were most notably applied to the urban renewal project for the industrial city of Kalamazoo, situated between Chicago and Detroit (Michigan, 1981). The new landscapes surrounding the urban area's two existing water basins aimed specifically to improve the attractiveness of the downtown. The basins are located centrally, with a commercial and retail sector on one side and, facing them on the other side, a residential neighborhood placed on stepped terraces above parking infrastructure. The heterogeneity of the project brings to light Gehry's position as an urban planner that defends the need to produce as much diversity as possible in the city and, by doing so, he affirms an explicitly critical position towards zoning.

These strategies are consistently present in Gehry's work²⁶. He experimented with their effectiveness in his work for the Rouse Company, an experienced real estate developer that specialized in the construction of shopping centers, in particular with Victor Gruen, and that contributed to the construction of the "planned community" of Columbia, Maryland. A rapid series of projects stemmed from his collaboration with the company, notably in the city of Columbia with the design of the open-air theater (Merriweather-Post Pavilion, 1966-1967), several community buildings (Reception Center, 1965-1967, and the Public Safety Building, 1967-1968), as well as the headquarters of the Rouse Company (1969-1974). Their collaboration concluded in Los Angeles with the construction of the Santa Monica Place Shopping Center (1972-1980). From the 1990's onwards, Gehry was confronted with new types of inner city deterioration as a result of the industrial crisis. In Europe, this was the case with Bilbao (1991-1997); in the United States, this was the case with the redevelopment of the Brooklyn Atlantic Yards (New York, 2003-2008) or the Grand Avenue in Los Angeles (2005).

Context and Materiality

Frank Gehry willingly recognizes the humanist, or even idealist, commitment of the Rouse Company and he emphasizes the solid understanding of financial, legal, and constructive methodologies in architecture that these commercial projects brought him during the first twenty years of his office's activity. And yet he still looked elsewhere: towards another city at the margins of Los Angeles, a place near Santa Monica that evoked the image of a singular, industrial territory.

The photographs that Frank Gehry takes at the beginning of the 1970's show the industrialization of a territory whose traces he follows with fascination (see p. 50 to 53). Objects rather than constructions, seemingly marginal and without geographical origin, profoundly express the territory. It is neither the heroic freeways nor the parking lots that hold the attention of Frank Gehry, but rather the mundane constructions that are rapidly built and that utilize primarily the commonplace, industrial technique of the "balloon frame structure." These industrial zones—we are at the end of the 1960's or perhaps at the beginning of the 1970's—are photographed by Frank Gehry, or rather captured on the fly, sometimes without even leaving his vehicle. The conserved snapshots of these "wanderings" underline

a material or even formal vocabulary: the relationship of a side enclosure to a covering, the mass of a masonry wall to the void of a framed roof structure, the relationship of an object to its almost-natural environment, or the interstitial spaces between various technical equipment. These buildings are not, strictly speaking, spectacular; instead they are ordinary, built economically and efficiently. They include metal-frame structures, overhead cranes, silos, warehouses stocked with construction materials, quarries near hillsides, cement factories, power stations (perhaps in Segundo, several hundred meters from the Pacific Ocean); in short, anything that powerfully constitutes, without emphasis or expression but with pragmatism, the resources of architecture and buildings.

These resources are both material and territorial. Although mundane, they seem contextual to the eyes of Frank Gehry²⁷. This attraction to the industrial “character” of Santa Monica or Culver City is shared by a generation of architects and artists who move to these “towns” at the beginning of the 1970’s, away from the illusory isolation of the Californian villas. If we believe the testimony of a certain Craig Hodgetts²⁸, for example, Santa Monica embodied a form of authenticity up until the end of the 1980’s, an integration into the American landscape, that was neither that of the desert and of mythical origin, nor that of the city of power, nor that which was frequented by the world of film, nor that which was derived from a fascination for the ostentatious signs of the society of consumption²⁹. The innovative use of chain-link fencing, galvanized steel components, corrugated metal, asphalt, plaster, or cardboard was understood to be a critical interpretation of a production system that had arrived at a saturation point. It was also the desire “to work within that artificial naturalism, in which primary materials are already secondary, industrially produced.”³⁰

Emerging from the ground, the raw materials that Gehry photographs recall, of course, those used for houses in 1960’s and 1970’s, and in particular the materiality of his own house in Santa Monica³¹. These unpublished photographs are a testimony to the fact that, in his own process, these materials fit into a local environment that is vulgar and indigenous, a sort of industrial vernacular, “the architecture of a secondary naturalism,” to use the words of Alejandro Zaera-Polo. These photographs are an appropriation of the territory that Frank Gehry roots his architecture in. These snapshots are therefore not simple anecdotes in the sense that they undoubtedly constitute an aspect of the process that Frank Gehry has developed in his architectural practice, with incredible power and constant honesty. His work is located intentionally at the margins of the city—the suburbs, the outskirts, a whole made up of fragments—as much as at the margins of two large and dominant ideological systems, one that advances methodically but slowly—rationalism—and the other that has gotten carried away with itself—postmodernism. Frank Gehry keeps his distance from both, precisely because he opposes a “culturizing” fiction of architecture.

While American architects of the 1970’s flirted, sometimes dangerously, with simulacrum, Frank Gehry is therefore able to escape it. The path that he follows is indeed diametrically opposed to that of the New York Five, who seem to lose themselves in a world whose language reflects only its own codes of enunciation, or to a postmodernism such as initiated by Venturi and Scott Brown that transforms, perhaps reluctantly, pop culture into an ambiguous fetish. It is perhaps here that the understanding of the process of Frank Gehry resonates with the Marxist political critique of sociologist Frederic Jameson³². Frank Gehry does indeed decide to escape, out of necessity. He clearly has in mind the limits of a uniquely theoretical approach to architecture as well as the limits of the populism that would soon be associated with the projects of architects such as John Portman, Cesar Pelli, or Charles Moore. It was a narrow escape, he confides to Sydney Pollack while recalling a visit to his house by Matt DeVito, president of the Rouse Company to his house, several days after the opening of the Santa Monica Place Shopping Center. Taken aback by the inconceivable contrast between the aesthetics of the house and those of the shopping mall that he had just completed, Matt DeVito advised the architect to abandon his work for developers. In the interview, Gehry explains to the filmmaker that he decided to follow his client’s advice. One could ask if Frank Gehry instead decided to work on superimposing these two universes, that of real estate development and that of architectural creation and experimentation.

In-Between Space and Intense Void

The configurations that Gehry uses in most of his individual house projects, from the small real estate operation that he realizes for Chuck Arnoldi and Laddie Dill (1979-1981)³⁴ to the Winton Guest House (1982-1987), from the Norton House (1982-1984) to the House for a Filmmaker (1979-1981), are all based on the disassociation of functional elements. This, as Germano Celant explains³⁵, produces a *hortus conclusus*, the space of “an osmosis between the microcosm and the macrocosm,” a space between the interior and the exterior, the big and the small, the material and the symbolic.

Each project is like a paraphrase of the city, each building appears as a sum of independent and contrasted parts. This strategy, tested on single family houses, was simultaneously implemented on public institutional projects. Gehry’s project for the Loyola Law School (1978-2003) is often presented as the culmination of this phase of his work. Situated in a rundown neighborhood in Los Angeles³⁶, the program consisted of creating a university campus capable of taking advantage of the spatial conditions of the site, previously an old, unused parking lot. While respecting an economy of means, he aimed to produce a diversity of autonomous architectural events (a church, a reception hall, a conference hall linked to a long building of classrooms) in a vast courtyard open onto Olympic Boulevard. Blurring the limit between the buildings of the campus and those of the surrounding neighborhood, Frank Gehry sought to intensify the spatial relationships between the architectural objects so as to create surprising organizations of space.

Frank Gehry contests the paradigm of centrality and establishes an “urban text” that prioritizes ambiguity, ambivalence, and scenography effects. The Loyola project thus materializes an “organized disorder” that Frank Gehry sometimes connects with the “natural” development of the city: “The way I perceive urban experiences is in fragmentary form, which I try to express in the combination of more or less unrelated objects, which have a fundamental but not obvious relationship.³⁷” The form of such a project could be seen as a contemporary interpretation of the village; in other words, a modality of urban production that rejects homogeneity with the aim of celebrating the diversity of a collection of “found objects.” The Camp Good Times project, although it was not realized, pushes this logic to an almost literal form. Beyond the very successful collaboration with Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, the collection of buildings that compose the project allow us to understand of how Frank Gehry transforms the architectural concept of the “one-room building” into a methodology for urbanism. It is to Philip Johnson that Gehry owes his understanding of this architectural concept. Johnson formulates it by starting with an analysis of what the essence of historical architectural monuments is, from the Parthenon to the gothic cathedrals to the Ronchamp Chapel by Le Corbusier. If the “one-room building” is truly the essence of architecture, the application of this concept to urbanism allows for the integration of a multiplicity of monofunctional buildings. It also makes it possible to avoid the effects of monumentality, to vary scale, and authorizes ultimately the creation of a narrative out of the different parts of the ensemble³⁸. The cardinal urban strategy used by Frank Gehry is based on the decomposition and reassembly of elementary functional units of the program. This intensifies the experience of reassembly around the void of public space. Whether for his single-family houses or for some of his later public projects, the site plan and the relationship between the autonomous buildings produce an intensification of the void that links them rather than separates them. As described by the concept of the “one-room building” or by the metaphor of the village, the material out of which Gehry makes forms is as much the in-between space as it is the solid construction itself. Regardless of the classification adopted for Gehry’s work, all of the urban projects that he realizes aim to control, or even contain, this void.

The use of chain-link fencing, first in his own house in Santa Monica, then for the Santa Monica Place Mall or the Cabrillo Marine Museum (1979-1980) is a first strategy. It is not simply about the creative use of an industrial product but also about the conception of a constructive instrument that gives value to interstitial spaces. It enables the implementation of a geometry that produces visual permeability for the building within its environment and spatially draws a nearly virtual extension of the built volume. Gehry’s use of chain-link addressed the contradictions in how society perceives the built landscape and construction materials. Despite the ubiquity of its application, chain-link was considered an “ugly”

material when utilized in its conventional form. Through personal experiences he learned that this banal material- deemed unsightly when used as a barrier, became miraculously invisible within the context of wealth. Gehry relates an occasion when he was at a luxurious home with the owner of the property. After hearing the owner's comments on the ugliness of chain-link, Gehry brought it to his attention that his tennis court was bound by the same material and that it was all a matter of conventions of perception.

The opening, by use of an almost forceful stretching of the city block, is a second strategy. This was implemented in the Edgemar Development (1984-1988), the Chiat/Day Office (1985-1991), and the unbuilt project for Angel's Place (1980) and later developed on a larger scale in neighborhood renewal projects including Turtle Creek in Dallas (1985-1986), the Alameda in Mexico (1993), and more recent projects including the Brooklyn Atlantic Yards (2003-2008). Gehry utilizes the morphological motif of the gap as a cut in the urban fabric: a recess, an incision, a production of in-between space. It is precisely this "divide," this in-between space, that Frank Gehry was photographing at the beginning of the 1970's in the industrial zones of Los Angeles.

Formally, this principle entails precise compositional choices. First and foremost, a frontal composition and symmetry are almost systematically abandoned in favor of a tangential organization of the circulation axes or the approaches to the building. The perception that we have of the building is therefore structured by a succession of planes, allowing each of his projects to seemingly build its own context. Secondly, the site plans reveal an almost recurring implantation of the built volumes along the diagonal of the site, as we can observe in the photographs taken of Frank Gehry's models. From this point of view, the Walt Disney Concert Hall is demonstrative. Even though the project underwent numerous modifications between the first competition sketches in 1988 and the final version ten years later, the building's implantation on the diagonal remains consistent. Various other examples illustrate this: the site plan of the Yale Psychiatric Institute (New Haven, 1985-1989) implies that Gehry seeks through all means, no matter how subtle they are, to break the orthogonality of the site; the project for the Carré d'Art in Nîmes (1984) has a rupture of symmetry; the entry to the American Center of Paris (1988-1994), now the French Cinémathèque, is placed on the corner of the site; and more recently, the implantation of the Ray and Maria Stata 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. Frank Gehry's work on interstitial spaces combines the artistic effects of tension and attraction. Behind the growing complexity of his constructions, Frank 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. Frank 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 Frank 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 Secession, and turn along the plaza that is articulated around the Jiráskův Bridge. In Dusseldorf, the unity of the three Der Neue Zollhof office buildings on the Rhine River (1994-1999) 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 towards 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 that which is not. The question of the limit, of that which is inside or outside, seems foreign to the design process of Frank Gehry's 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 pre-established 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 available 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 Frank Gehry proposed in the early 1980's 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 which notably made possible the construction of buildings such as the Bilbao Art Museum; 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 Frank 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 1990's onwards, his projects play strong roles in much deeper urban renewal processes 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 Frank Gehry seeks to initiate and realize 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 valley³⁹. If the question that helps us to understand the architecture of Frank Gehry is not that of identity but that of the singularities that 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, Dusseldorf, or Arles, Frank Gehry's buildings are implanted in territories that were degraded and marked by the industrial crisis. As the filmmaker Sydney Pollack remarks, attention must be brought to the stories of inhabitants that are proud to have a building by Frank Gehry in their city⁴⁰. During the recent ground-breaking 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.

1. Frank Gehry interviewed by C. Souker King, "Getting Tough with economics," *Designer West* 6/12, p. 150-151, cited by Germano Celant in "Reflections on Frank Gehry", *Frank Gehry Buildings and Projects*, New York, Rizzoli, 1985, p. 5.

2. See Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Conversation with Frank Gehry," *El Croquis*, 1995, no 74/75, p. 6

3. Here we cite, as an example, the project in progress for the headquarters of Facebook in Menlo Park, California.

4. Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles. The Architecture of Four Ecologies* [1971], Oakland: University of California Press, 2009.

5. See, in particular "AD Go West," *Architectural Design*, vol. 43, no 9, 1973.

6. Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects*, Cambridge (Mass.), The MIT Press, 2004, p. 255.

7. See in particular the analysis of Nigel Whitely in *Reyner Banham, Historian of the Immediate Future*, Cambridge (Mass.), The MIT Press, 2007, p. 227.

8. See, for example, the critique by Peter Plagens, "Los Angeles, the Ecology of Evil," *Artforum*, vol. 11, no 4, December 1972, p. 67-76.

9. See Bernard Tschumi, "Sanctuaries," "AD Go West," *op. cit.*, p. 575-590.

10. This is what Luc Baboulet proposes in the afterword of the French translation of Banham's text. He notes that, "incidentally, the French language suggests what the English language does not—that the two words *plaine* (plain) and *plage* (beach) have the same linguistic root." See "La gloire du banal," in R. Banham, *Los Angeles. L'architecture des quatre écologies*, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

11. "Everything contributes here to make the plain the first "ecology," as it explains, conditions, and resumes the three others simultaneously. But it is also

- the mythical terrain of America as a vast expanse of availabilities.... The plain is, to the letter, the fundamental 'ecology.' It is the base on which all of Reyner Banham's things—hills, houses, towers, freeways—liberate themselves and freely move around." R. Banham, *Los Angeles. L'architecture des quatre écologies*, op. cit.
12. We note here the apocryphal phrase of Frank Lloyd Wright, "Everything loose will land in Los Angeles." This phrase was also recently used as the title of an exhibition at the MAK, which presented the relationship between art and architecture, in Los Angeles during the 1970's. See Sylvia Lavin, Kimberly Meyer, *Everything Loose Will Land*, cat. exp., Vienna, MAK – Center for Art and Architecture, 2013.
 13. It was on Venice Beach in 1980 that Frank Gehry and the group of architects called the L.A. Twelve were photographed by Ave Pildas. "It was a cool, windy day. I first posed the group in a line stretched across the sand, with a lot of distance between each subject. This solution was to accommodate the unease and tension that resulted from the clash of ego... Things loosened up and some camaraderie developed. The last shots reveal Fred Fisher, Coy Howard and Craig Hodgetts alternately attempting to tackle Frank Gehry or pay homage to him." Stephen Phillips (dir.), *L.A. [Ten]*, Interview of Los Angeles Architecture 1970s-1990s, Zurich, Lars Müller Publisher, 2014, p. 6.
 14. R. Branham, *Los Angeles...*, op. cit.
 15. See Gwenaél Delhumeau « Territoires », p. 228 of this catalogue.
 16. Richard Neutra, « Comments on Planetary Reconstruction », *Art & Architecture*, no 61, December 1944, p. 20-22.
 17. Francis Voilich, « The Esthetics of City and Region », *Art & Architecture*, June 1945, p. 25.
 18. It is with the support of Garrett Eckbo and Simon Eisner that Frank Gehry was admitted to Harvard; see Barbara Isenberg, *Conversations with Frank Gehry*, New York, Knopf, 2009, p. 23.
 19. "Then I met some teachers who started to give me positive feedback. Not for my architecture as much for my thinking. You know I was a Jewish liberal so I hung out with the political crowd – this was during the McCarthy era. I was into politics heavy. We were dealing with social structures in cities political science. I attracted attention because I was one of the few people in the whole school who even thought about such things, besides a few of the teachers. Most of the kids didn't want to hear about that." Excerpt from Bill Lacy, Susan deMenil, *Angels and Franciscans*, New York, Rizzoli, 1992, p. 9-10
 20. Garrett Eckbo, « Landscape Architecture », *Art & Architecture*, no 62, October 1945, p. 40.
 21. Garrett Eckbo, *Landscape for Living*, New York, Architectural Record with Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1950, p. 6.
 22. See Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker, Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
 23. Victor Gruen, « Fresno Mall », *Art & Architecture*, April 1948, p.12- 13.
 24. This concept was already 50 years old when Victor Gruen began to work on it. See Victor Gruen, "Planned Community," *Art & Architecture*, January 1960, p. 22-23. See also the article by Esther Mc Coy, "Victor Gruen", *Art & Architecture*, June 1954, p. 14-19, in which there is a description of the urban model's polycentric representation, as proposed by Victor Gruen.
 25. While in the office of these two architects and urban planners, who are also the authors of *L'Encyclopédie de l'urbanisme* (Vincent & Fréal, Paris, 1952-1968), Frank Gehry worked on the Vélizy-Villacoublay urban project. He conserved some of the sketches that he made, which can now be found in his archives.
 26. Frank Gehry had had, incidentally, the occasion to formalize these principles beginning in 1964, as he was preparing an exhibition for the 1964 New York World Fair. See Frank Gehry, « The Challenge of our cities », reedited in *Frank Gehry Buildings and Projects*, Rizzoli, New York, 1985, p28-29.
 27. Regarding the Cabrillo Marine Museum, Frank Gehry says, "The site was a parking lot. The fort above is a chain-link fencing, industrial-type building and big water tanks. In front are a large ships and many industrial buildings. I'm a very traditional architect in a sense that I am interested in context."
 28. See Olivier Boissière, « Ten Californian Architects », *Domus*, no 604, 1980, p. 17-31.
 29. See Stephen Phillis, Wim de Wit and Christopher Alexander, *L.A. [Ten]*, Interview of Los Angeles Architecture 1970s-1990s, op. cit., p. 162-186.
 30. Alejandro Zaera-Polo, *El Croquis*, November 1990, p. 10.
 31. This functions as a *mise en abyme* for the cycle of production-consumption-recycling that would come to constitute a possible future ecology in the development of capitalist industry.
 32. One must go back to Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1991, in order to study his relationship to postmodern Californian architecture and in particular the critique that Jameson constructs, starting with the hotel Bonaventure by John Portman (1976, Downtown L.A.). For a history of Californian architecture in the 1970's, see *Los Angeles and the L.A. School: Postmodernism and Urban Studies*, and Wim de Wit, Christopher James Alexander, *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940-1990*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2013.
 33. Sydney Pollack, *Sketches of Frank Gehry*, 2006. The film debuted at the 2006 Festival of Cannes.
 34. The photographs taken in 1981 by Tim Street-Porter show clearly the neighborhood environment and that Frank Gehry triples the density of the built volumes.
 35. Germano Celant, « Reflections on Frank Gehry », op. cit., p. 4-15.
 36. Gehry recalls also that the site of the Loyola Law School is several blocks from his first house, where he lived in the early 1950's.
 37. Citation by Frank Gehry from Coosje Van Bruggen, "Leaps into the Unknown," in *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center/New York, Rizzoli, 1986, p. 140.
 38. "It [the one-room building] breaks down the scale. It humanizes without resorting to decoration, so individual pieces can be very tough and industrial even. The architecture is the play between the spaces," Barbara Isenberg, *Conversation with Frank Gehry*, op. cit., p. 6.
 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 Frank Gehry, through the strong relationship between the applied arts, architecture, and urbanism.

7. PARTNER

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Frank Gehry
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Chiat\Day Agency, 1985-1991 (built)
Main Street, Venice, California
Photo: Grant Mudford



Vitra International Furniture Manufacturing Facility and Design Museum, 1987-1989 (built)
Weil-am-Rhein, Germany
Photo: Thomas Mayer



Walt Disney Concert Hall, 1989-2003 (built)
Los Angeles, California
©Gehry Partners, LLP



Frederick R. Weisman Art and Teaching Museum, 1990-1993, 2000-2011 (built)
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Photo: Don F. Wong



Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, 1991-1997 (built)
Bilbao, Spain
Photo: Philippe Migeat, Centre Pompidou



Nationale-Nederlanden Building, 1992-1996 (built)
Prague, Czech Republic
©Gehry Partners, LLP



DZ Bank Building, 1995-2001 (built)
Berlin, Germany
Photo: Roland Halbe



Marqués de Riscal Hotel, 1999-2006 (built)
Alava, Spain
Photo: Thomas Mayer



Jay Pritzker Pavilion, 1999-2004 (built)
Chicago, Illinois
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Biomuseo, 2000 (in progress)
Panama, Panama
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8 Spruce Street, 2003-2011 (built)
Manhattan, New York
©Gehry Partners, LLP



Model of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, 2006 – (in progress)
United Arab Emirates
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Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Centre for Brain Health, 2005-2010 (built)
Las Vegas, Nevada (detail)
Photo: Iwan Bann

9. USEFUL INFORMATION

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Centre Pompidou
75191 Paris cedex 04
telephone
00 33 (0)1 44 78 12 33
métro
Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau

Opening

Exhibition open 11 am – 9 pm
every day except Tuesday

Admission

€11-13€ depending on time
concessions €9-10€
Valid the same day
for the Musée National d'Art
Moderne and all exhibitions
Free admission for members
of the Centre Pompidou
(holders of the annual pass)

Print your ticket at home
www.centrepompidou.fr

AT THE SAME TIME IN THE CENTRE

MARCEL DUCHAMP LA PEINTURE, MÊME.

24 SEPTEMBER 2014 - 5 JANUARY 2015
press officer
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PRIX MARCEL DUCHAMP 2013 - Latifa Echakhch

8 OCTOBER 2014 - 26 JANUARY 2015
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ROBERT DELAUNAY

Rythmes sans fin

15 OCTOBER 2014 - 12 JANUARY 2015
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MODERNITÉS PLURIELLES

1905 - 1980

23 OCTOBER 2013 - 26 JANUARY 2015
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UNE HISTOIRE.

ART, ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN DE 1980 À AUJOURD'HUI

FROM 2 JULY 2014
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assistant director, musée national
d'art moderne; head of architecture
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