The uncanny and the Architecture of Deconstruction

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Abstract (E): This article shows how an understanding of the uncanny may be crucial to an understanding of contemporary deconstructionist architecture. Projects and buildings by Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Coop Himmelblau and Daniel Libeskind are analysed in order to reveal how contemporary architecture makes use of the uncanny, on the one hand, to criticise traditional architectural narratives, and on the other hand, to express the core of our postmodern condition.

Abstract (F): Cet article se propose de montrer qu’une bonne compréhension de l’« unheimlich » est capitale pour toute approche sérieuse de l’architecture « déconstructionniste » contemporaine. Nous analysons les projets mais aussi les réalisations d’architectes comme Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Coop Himmelblau et Daniel Libeskind, afin de montrer que leur travail recourt à la notion d’« unheimlich », d’abord afin de critiquer l’architecture traditionnelle, ensuite afin d’exprimer les idées de base de la condition post-moderne.

Keywords: deconstruction, architecture, Tschumi, Libeskind, Himmelblau, Eisenman.

Introduction

"[W]e don’t want architecture to exclude everything that is disquieting. We want architecture to have more ... Architecture should be cavernous, fiery, smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate, colorful, obscene, voluptuous, dreamy, alluring, repelling, wet, dry and throbbing." (Himmelblau 1988: 95)

This programmatic paragraph written by Wolf D. Prix and Helmut Swiczinky, founders of the Austrian architectural cooperative Himmelblau, articulates a preference for an aesthetics of architecture that is disquieting rather than reassuring. At the time of writing in 1988, Coop Himmelblau was not the sole prophet of a destabilising, wanton form of architecture. In the early 1980s already, a number of architects had begun to question the Vitruvian prepositions that underlie traditional well-made "anthropocentric" architecture. These include, next to Coop Himmelblau, Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas and Daniel Libeskind. These architects were catalogued under the header of deconstruction, a term that not merely emphasises their familiarity with Jacques Derrida’s thinking, or under the header of deconstructivism, but also stresses this new generation’s oppositional relationship to early twentieth-century Russian Constructivism.

As Anthony Vidler argues in The Architectural Uncanny (1992), some of these architects have been inspired by the uncanny in their efforts to incite discomfort and unease. In this article I will analyse projects of four contemporary architects (Tschumi, Eisenman, Himmelblau and Libeskind) from the viewpoint of the uncanny. This,
of course, does not imply that the appearance of the uncanny in architectural discourse is an exclusively contemporary phenomenon. On the contrary: in the cultural history of architectural representation, three moments can be discerned in which the uncanny manifests itself. The first signs of an awareness of the uncanny in the context of architecture appeared in the late eighteenth century. Short stories by Edgar Allen Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann often thematised the contrast between a safe and homely place and the intrusion of a weird and alien presence. A second period in which architecture was linked to the uncanny was the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the city turned into a metropolis. This evolution had serious psychological consequences described by, among others, Baudelaire and Zola. The individual felt estranged in the metropolitan mass, estranged in all possible connotations of the word. The uncanny manifested itself in phenomena like agoraphobia and claustrophobia, as Vidler explains in his most recent book *Warped Space* (2000). In the arts, historical avant-garde movements tried to transfer the modern feeling of the uncanny to their public using techniques of defamiliarisation.

After the appearance of the uncanny in romanticism and in the modern period, a third, postmodern version of the architectural uncanny came into being in the 1960s. This resurgence was probably due to influential Lacanian and Derridean rereadings of Freud. The postmodern form of the uncanny can be found in literature, where William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is one of the classic examples, but also and especially in film, where popular directors like Wim Wenders and David Lynch are often referred to. From the 1970s onwards, architectural projects were developed that were closely related to forms of the postmodern uncanny in other disciplines. In many cases, these projects were designed by architects who were gathered under the header of deconstruction in the 1980s. Not only Coop Himmelblau, but also Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman and a bunch of others expressed both in their programmatic texts and in their building projects the need for an architecture of "discomfort and the unbalancing of expectations" (Tschumi 1977: 214). Some members of this new generation, especially Tschumi and Eisenman, explicitly drew on Derrida's philosophy and worked together with him in specific projects, as Tschumi did for his design of Parc de la Villette in Paris. Others, like Frank Gehry and Coop Himmelblau, minimised or denied the link with the French thinker of deconstruction. Broadbent (1991: 80) therefore distinguishes between Derridean and non-Derridean deconstruction. Still, the two groups are united by their urge to express in their work a kind of "objective correlative" (as T.S. Eliot would call it) of the contemporary uncanny.

1. Bernard Tschumi

One of the most renowned architectural projects of the 1990s must be Bernard Tschumi's design for the Parc de la Villette in Paris. In 1982, the French government offered a prize to fill up an empty spot in the Parisian landscape. The year after, Bernard Tschumi's design was selected from the contributions. Agreeing to an invitation by the architect himself, Derrida in 1985 commented on the project in his article "Points de Folie - Maintenant Architecture", thus guaranteeing Tschumi's success.
Tschumi destroyed the nineteenth-century notion of a park as a place where one forgets the city. Instead, he produced an "urban park" (Tschumi on [http://www.tschumi.com/Villette.htm](http://www.tschumi.com/Villette.htm)) for the twenty-first century. This park meant a radical break with tradition as the architect moved drastically away from modernist functionalism. Yet, Tschumi's "folies" and "cases vides", red cubicles standing at a regular distance from each other throughout the park (see fig. 1), often formally remind us of Melnikov's or Tatlin's Russian Constructivism. On the level of contents, however, Tschumi's designs couldn't be further away from modernist utopian thought that saw geometry as a means to adapt the world we live in to new technological evolutions. Russian Constructivists believed that geometry could function as an idealistic therapy, that it would guarantee happiness, harmony and health among the people. The formal references to constructivism in the Parc de la Villette should therefore be understood as a subversion of that philosophy by its very repetition. The idea of repetition as a means of differentiation echoes Derrida's concept of iterability.

**The pleasure of superimposition**

In a 1987 article, Tschumi formulated his revealing idea of pleasure in architecture: "[m]y pleasure has never surfaced in looking at buildings, at the 'great works' of the history or present of architecture, but rather in dismantling them" (Tschumi 1987: 116). The Parc de la Villette design thus leaves behind all functionalist and therapeutic nostalgia and is governed only by the "pleasure principle" (Vidler 1992: 103) of the architect himself. In this particular project, that principle manifests itself in the superimposition of three different ordering systems (see fig. 3). A first layer consists of a system of points. A grid is drawn over the
whole site. Every 120 metres, the horizontal and vertical lines cross. Tschumi calls those crossings "points". On each point, a "folie" or folly is built, a three-storey red cube measuring 10 x 10 x 10 metres that can be used for any activity. These buildings have no pre-programmed function and may be used as an exposition hall, as a café or as any other public space. Therefore, the cubes are also referred to as "cases vides", empty huts. But although every single folie is conceived of as a cube of 10 by 10 by 10, no single cubicle is exactly the same as any other in the park. Some folies have cylindrical or triangular forms attached to them; others lack walls or are turned on their sides. In that way, Tschumi wants to investigate the often-ambiguous relationship between norm and deviation. Here again the idea is taken up that repetition may function as a means to establish contrast and difference. This first layer of points should allocate space to what Tschumi calls "point-like activities" (http://www.tschumi.com), specific activities that take place within the concentrated space of a folie.

The second layer, the layer of lines, is superimposed on the grid and establishes a space for "linear activities". "Linear activities" describes the pedestrian traffic that crosses the park in several possible ways. The centre of this linear layer is formed by two axes, the North-South coordinate and the East-West coordinate, which link up the four entrances to the park (a coordinate can be seen on fig. 2). Apart from straight axes, the layer consists of erratic, undulating lines meandering through the landscape. At this point, Vidler says, Tschumi remains indebted to traditional park design. For the straight axis was a common feature of Classicist park design (think of the Versailles gardens) and the undulating line that leads flaneurs past most charming sights was characteristic of Romantic parks and gardens. But again the reference to tradition is merely formal. One should not forget that Tschumi found pleasure in dismantling tradition. Tschumi's axes and pathways do not possess the same controlling, authoritarian function they did possess in traditional parks. They no longer limit a certain domain, they no longer link up a series of meaningful sights, they are no more and no less than: alternative tracks through the park. Whoever is looking for monuments or historical significance on his walk, for narrative coherence, in short, will have to leave the park unsatisfied. The "unbalancing of expectations" has become reality. The passer-by is forced to abandon his search for meaning and to surrender to the game of arbitrariness and chance in which the architect puts him.

The third ordering system that is put on top of the previous two is the layer of surfaces. These surfaces provide room for all activities that need large horizontal strips of land, like sports, games, and markets.

**Releasing the repressed**

The superimposition of these three layers allows for some form of interaction between three autonomous systems. Principles of chance and juxtaposition generate interference and clashes
between the systems. The result of this "superimposition", as Tschumi calls it, is, according to Mark Wigley, a "series of ambiguous intersections between systems [...] in which the status of ideal forms and traditional composition is challenged. Ideas of purity, perfection, and order, become sources of impurity, imperfection, and disorder" (Wigley in Broadbent 1991: 17). It is at this point that we can return to Schelling's statements on the uncanny as that which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 1955: 225). The inherent purity of the geometrical system evokes a feeling of rational control and stability. If things turn out differently, then, and the juxtaposition of several "pure" systems gives way to impurity, the geometric system's rational control over that which "ought to have remained secret", weakens. The repressed leaves its enclosed habitat and thus provokes in us an uncanny feeling. In the case of Tschumi's Parc de la Villette, the uncanny does not function as a physical motif that threatens the bodily integrity of passers-by, but rather as a theoretical concept that helps to undermine and - indeed - deconstruct traditional humanist and functionalist architectural discourses.

2. Peter Eisenman

Something similar can be found in the work of Peter Eisenman, one of the most theoretically oriented deconstructionist architects. At least as important as his architectural projects are the programmatic texts accompanying them. Lots of his writings bear the traces of canonised poststructuralist thought like Derrida's or Deleuze and Guattari's. The works of Derrida did not only influence Eisenman; he actually worked together with the French philosopher (thanks to the mediation of Tschumi). This resulted in a collaboration on the Choral Work-project that was embedded in Tschumi's Parc de la Villette. Eisenman made a design for the site and with Derrida he wrote the accompanying article "L'Oeuvre Chorale" (Derrida & Eisenman 1987).

In the early days of his career Peter Eisenman searched for a purely syntactic architecture in which he tried to do away with all semantics. His design for a set of houses from that period shows the will to structure form and space in such a way that "a set of formal relationships" (Eisenman 1975: 16) is produced. Somewhat later he introduced the term "post-functionalism" in architectural discourse, a term that would inspire the entire deconstructionist movement and Bernard Tschumi in particular.

From the 1980s onwards, the post-structuralist notions of trace and palimpsest come to play a bigger role in Eisenman's projects. The site at which a building is to be constructed is never a tabula rasa, but has a history that haunts the spot, like a spectre. This is what, in accordance with Derrida's concept of the spectral (Derrida 1994), could be called the "spectrality" of the site. It manifests itself in the traces, the relics of a certain past that stays alive on any site. According to Eisenman, the architect should acknowledge these traces and integrate them into the architectural whole. Utopian modernism, that wanted to leave the past behind and to construct buildings like signs on a blank page, indulged in a naïve humanist idealism Eisenman wants to do away with once and for all.

The architect as archaeologist

But how can one pay attention to the actual traces present in a place? A clarifying example can be found in Eisenman's entry for a competition on a housing project near Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, a competition that was won by Rem Koolhaas whose project has afterwards been executed. Eisenman's unrealised project included more than the original assignment, a housing block next to the
Berlin Wall. Eisenman wanted to raise an entire city block against the Wall that would incorporate the existing buildings in the new project. Around that block, an underground park was designed that was to be called the “City of Excavations”. By constructing a park below ground level the architect hoped to discover archaeological relics of the old city. Still, no relics that explicitly referred to the city’s history were found, but that did not seem to bother Eisenman. The essential point was not that “real” archaeological objects could be shown, but rather that the project emphasised and drew the people's attention to the site as a pool boiling with history. That is why the City of Excavations was planned to contain a part of a wall that would serve as a merely hypothetical reconstruction of a nineteenth-century rampart.

It is quite easy to understand the uncanny character of the City of Excavations. In psychoanalysis, the underground often functions as a metaphor or a substitute for the subconscious. In the same way the psychoanalytical method is often compared to the archaeological as a kind of “digging for meaning”. Eisenman descends to the repressed in order to reveal or to produce what had to remain hidden in humanist and functionalist architecture: the site's past history.

At the same time the descent into earth, a motif that returns in Eisenman’s project for Cannareggio in Venice, is endowed with a very uncanny kind of quality. It resembles the way to the crypt, which was a topos of nineteenth-century uncanny experiences. The descent to the City of Excavations reminds of the descent into a tomb, a pre-eminently uncanny place. We don't have to read Freud to know that “many people experience the feeling [of the uncanny] in the highest degree in relation to death” (Freud 1955: 241).

The architect as geologist

Architecture, however, need not go underground in order to evoke feelings of defamiliarisation, destabilisation and disorientation. The mere sight of many deconstructionist buildings suffices to bewilder the spectator. The brutal, threatening, splintered forms of deconstruction stand out against the geometrical forms of modernism and classicism and the pompous elegance of baroque and rococo. In his efforts to tear architecture loose from the benumbing trance of tradition, Eisenman wants to create buildings and places “with the possibility of looking back at the subject” (Eisenman 1992: 21). The architect may realise this possibility by means of a technical instrument Eisenman calls “folding”. In his design for the Emory Center of the Arts (see fig. 4), that is still under construction now, Eisenman used folded forms for the first time. Peculiar about these forms, says Eisenman, is that, apart from an effective dimension, they also possess an affective spatial dimension. The formal folds of the Emory Center remind of what Marcel Duchamp called a “geological landscape” (Duchamp in Vidler 1992: 140) and are easily associated with strata in the earth’s crust. The most influential female deconstructionist architect Zaha Hadid also creates geological landscapes in her projects. Especially in her project for The Peak in Hong Kong (see fig. 5),
she simulates a tectonics of earth layers using different materials. The result bears resemblance to the earth's crust burst open or an apocalyptic landscape after an earthquake. Eisenman and Hadid's techniques of folding and tectonics evoke a prehistoric landscape that must have been a motherland for Cro-Magnon man. For contemporary mankind however, such a panorama has entirely lost its homely connotations. In these architectural projects the ambiguous relationship between the homely and the uncanny becomes clear, it becomes clear that “Unheimlich is in some way or another a sub-species of heimlich” as Freud (1955: 226 - italics in original text) puts it.

Techniques of tectonics and folding are deconstructions of what Broadbent (1991: 85) calls “plate construction”. There is, however, another form of deconstruction that often gives rise to uncanny effects - or rather, affects - namely deconstruction of what Broadbent (ibid.) calls "frame construction". These deconstructions burst the traditional geometric forms of the skeleton and replace them by chaotic, polygonal forms. Good illustrations of what could be called “frame deconstruction” can be found in the designs of the Austrian Coop Himmelblau.

3. Coop Himmelblau

Just like Tschumi, Eisenman and other deconstructionist architects, Coop Himmelblau tries to take the theoretical and practical stance of antihumanism. They do so by re-emphasising the bodily experiential aspect of architecture. Of course, the deconstructionist notion of the body bears very little similarity to its anthropocentric counterpart. Where the body in the latter tradition was conceived of as a source of unity and harmony, Himmelblau c.s. perceives it as an instance of fragmentation, disruption and disintegration. This idea is transmitted to the spectator or to the visitor of the building as well. Standing in front of a building of Himmelblau's, we feel like we are "placed under threat", as Vidler says. The building's architectural body seems to be injured and thus threatens the physical integrity we believe to possess.

Architecture's animals

Himmelblau's well-known rooftop remodelling in Vienna (see fig. 6, 7) must be one of the most body-threatening buildings constructed so far.
A chaotic and irregular explosion of lines, it is a very helpful illustration of what may be understood under frame deconstruction. It appears like the building’s intestines want to free themselves from the geometrical yoke of the old building. The terms in which Mark Wigley (in Broadbent 1991: 22) describes this construction should not be misunderstood: the normal form of the roof has been mutilated by a “writhing, disruptive animal breaking through its corner”. Yet, what Wigley thinks to be “particularly disquieting” (ibid.) is that it seems like this unleashed form has always been latently present in the geometry of the old roof itself. The architect has, as it were, released that latent form. In our discussion of Eisenman’s City of Excavations we already pointed out the link between the archaeologist and the psychoanalyst. In Himmelblau’s rooftop remodelling the architect himself dresses in psychoanalytic guise. The architect puts the old geometrical structures on the sofa and allows the latent forms, repressed by some geometrical repression mechanism, to rise up to consciousness again. Does this return of the repressed give rise to a certain hue of the uncanny? It probably does.

The missing limb

But there is another way in which Himmelblau’s rooftop remodelling can be linked to the uncanny. Any building can be compared to the human body. Actually, architectural humanism since Vitruvius has held such an anthropomorphic view. A building’s proportions and compositions were modelled on the “ideal” - “idealised” may be nearer the truth - proportions of the human body. A commonly known illustration of this view is Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing of a man whose navel is the centre of a circle and a square construed around his body. Even Le Corbusier’s utopian modernism still clings to this view. In 1942 Le Corbusier developed the Modulor-scale, a proportion scale for buildings that was mainly based on human proportions. Hence, the great modern(ist) buildings of the International Style were still indebted to the human body as far as their composition and proportions are concerned.

If the pure geometric forms of, say, the villa Savoye represent the human body in one way or another, then Himmelblau’s deconstructed geometry represents a mutilated, handicapped, fragmented body. Himmelblau’s model for the Malibu Open House project (see fig. 9) might clarify this point. By means of plate and frame deconstruction the Austrian group of architects designs a house that is reminiscent of an igloo or a wigwam. Of capital importance here is the fact that the building does not possess a façade; the front side of the house is completely open, revealing the interior.
In the theory that regards a building as a human body, the façade is often compared to the face. Confronted with such a faceless body, the spectator-subject begins to fear the loss of his own face by way of projection. As Freud argues, feelings of the uncanny often rely on the return of infantile complexes of which the castration complex is the most crucial. From the analysis of myths and dreams, Freud learned that loss of limbs often functions as a substitute for loss of the sex. The eyes, and with it, the head, are privileged substitutes as they are the parts of the body that observe the (sexual) difference. The sight of a building without a façade, like Himmelblau’s Open House or James Stirling’s Stuttgart Staatsgalerie (see http://www.stgt.com/stuttgart/statgaler.htm), produces that form of the uncanny that has to do with the repression of the castration complex.

4. Daniel Libeskind

The body of Daniel Libeskind’s extension to the Jewish Museum in Berlin does not really lack limbs. However, it should be noted that the skin surrounding the body looks mutilated. The outer walls of the building are made of enormous zinc plates that are at some points ripped open, as if they were scratched or scarred skins. The building has no clearly defined form, it looks like a straight line that is interrupted and changes direction at some points. Libeskind himself claims that such a form represents a deconstructed Cross of David.

Traumatic history

This extension’s architecture expresses one of the most physically oriented types of the uncanny. As a kind of compelling memory, the building tries to transfer feelings of disorientation and displacement to its public. Some corridors get increasingly narrow; others simply come to a dead end. Some staircases, too, fail to fulfil their primary function and lead to a blind wall. In his design, Libeskind strongly emphasises the museum’s historically preservative function. But not in the way traditional museum functions, which stores within its walls some cultural inheritance for posterity. Rather, the Berlin Jewish Museum should function as an active memory in everyday Berlin consciousness. Libeskind says he had three main ideas in mind when he was designing this building:

“first, the impossibility of understanding the history of Berlin without understanding the enormous intellectual, economic and cultural contribution made by its Jewish citizens; second, the necessity to integrate the meaning of the Holocaust, both ph[y]sically and spiritually, into the consciousness and memory of the city of Berlin;
third, that only through acknowledging and incorporating this erasure and void of Berlin's Jewish life can the history of Berlin and Europe have a human future.” (Daniel Libeskind at http://www.jmberlin.be/jmb_en.htm)

The Jewish Museum functions as a reverse repression mechanism, as a mechanism of liberation that should make sure that the Holocaust never disappears from collective Berlinian and western memory. Just like Eisenman's City of Excavations (which, quite significantly, was to be located in the same city), it stresses the historical imperative in architecture. Both spiritually and physically, Libeskind wants to render the persecution and emigration of the Jews present. Quite paradoxically, he does so by materialising absence. Essential to the Jewish Museum is the void, a large and empty space that visitors have to cross by means of bridges in order to get to the other side of the museum. The first room the visitors enter when accessing the museum is part of that void, which partly also extends underground. We have already pointed out the uncanny consequences of underground architecture and its references to tombs and crypts in the context of Eisenman's City of Excavations. From that void at the museum’s entrance, three paths depart. The first path leads up to the exposition halls. The second path leads the visitors to the Holocaust void, where the cruelty of the Holocaust is expressed by the materialisation of emptiness. The third path symbolises the Jews' exile and emigration from Germany. It leads out of the building towards the E.T.A. Hoffmann-garden, hardly a coincidental reference to the writer of stories like “The Sandman” and "Councillor Krespel", which pre-eminently thematise the uncanny.

The building as experience

In the Jewish Museum, the uncanny manifests itself in the form of a physical and phenomenological "architectural experience", a form that has been convincingly described in Vidler's most recent book:

"(...) when confronted by the withdrawn exteriors and disturbing interiors of the Jewish Museum (...) we find ourselves in a phenomenological world in which both Heidegger and Sartre would find themselves, if not exactly 'at home' (for that was not their preferred place), certainly in bodily and mental crisis, with any trite classical homologies between the body and the building upset by unstable axes, walls and skins torn, ripped and dangerously slashed, rooms empty of content and with uncertain or no exits or entrances. What Heidegger liked to call 'falling into' the uncanny, and what for Sartre was the dangerous instrumentality of objects in the world as they threatened the body and its extensions, is for Libeskind the stuff of architectural experience." (Vidler 2000: 238)

In its close connection to the Second World War trauma, to its conditions of diaspora and displacement, of homelessness and hopelessness, Libeskind's Jewish Museum is illustrative of the twentieth-century uncanny. Vidler argues that “the uncanny might be understood as a response to the real shock of the modern” (Vidler 1992: 9). A response to a war trauma that first occurred after the First World War, returned like a spectre after the Second World War and since then never again disappeared from contemporary imagination. "The uncanny," Vidler goes on, "has found its way as a place to think of the two 'postwars' after 1919 and 1945" (ibid.). Libeskind's deconstructionist building can therefore be read as an expression of an uncanny Polarerlebnis in which the whole world took part, an experience that, according to the architect, should not be forgotten by present and future generations.

5. Suggestions for further research
Of course, the relationship between architecture and the uncanny could focus on many other topics apart from the deconstructionist projects treated above. Other studies may want to concentrate on postmodern business districts, in which every building looks exactly like the other and in which the unsuspecting pedestrian loses all sense of orientation. The mirror glass of late-capitalist giant-like skyscrapers gives us the feeling of being haunted by our own two-dimensional double. These district hardly exude an air of homeliness.

The technological aspect of the architectural uncanny, in which computer architecture becomes nearly as important as normal architecture, could be studied further as well. In order to tackle very briefly the repercussions of the electronic and information society on our notions of nostalgia and homeliness, I conclude this article by quoting Vidler:

"The illusionistic virtuosity needed in order [...] to experience homesickness at the same time as staying at home is now technologically supplied". (Vidler 1992: 163)

We are bound to inhabit disquieting times.

**Relevant websites**

Bernard Tschumi: [http://www.tschumi.com](http://www.tschumi.com)

Zaha Hadid: [http://www.zaha-hadid.com](http://www.zaha-hadid.com)

Coop Himmelblau: [http://www.coophimmelblau.at](http://www.coophimmelblau.at)

Jewish Museum Berlin: [http://www.jmberlin.de](http://www.jmberlin.de)

**Bibliography**


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In deconstructive thought, to echo Vidler above, the uncanny lurks behind the unstable links between signifier and signified; the relationship with the signified is constantly deferred, and it is impossible to arrive at a final term. Freud traces the etymology of heimlich and demonstrates how the meaning develops an ambivalence, and eventually coincides with its opposite, the unheimlich. The homely/unhomely from where the uncanny erupts has naturally provided a focus for architectural theory. Wigley, "The Domestication of the House: Deconstruction After Architecture", in P Brunette and D Wills (eds), Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture, Cambridge, 1994. Any architectural deconstructivism requires the existence of a particular archetypal construction, a strongly-established conventional expectation to play flexibly against.[9] The design of Frank Gehry’s own Santa Monica residence, (from 1978), has been cited as a prototypical deconstructivist building. Image and Narrative “The Uncanny and the architecture of Deconstruction Retrieved April, 2006. Venturi, Robert (1966). Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, The Museum of Modern Art Press, New York.