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Edited by Aurélien Lemonier and Frédéric Migayrou

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FOREWORD

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and Frank O. Gehry have an extensive history together, dating back to 1965 and his first exhibition designs for the then-newly opened museum, which are emblematic of two of his long-standing interests. His design for an exhibition featuring the work of Billy Al Bengston—a provocative contextual re-creation of Bengston’s studio—revealed his ongoing engagement with contemporary art and artists. And the design he created for an installation of Japanese art curated by George Kuwayama revealed the breadth of his knowledge and curiosity about historical and non-Western subjects.

Gehry’s remarkable collaboration with LACMA curator Stephanie Barron began in 1980 with his design for the exhibition *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910–1930*. He and Barron have since worked together on several more exhibitions over the last 30 years, including *German Expressionist Sculpture*, *Degenerate Art* and *Exiles and Émigrés*, as well as, more recently, *Ken Price Sculpture* and *Calder and Abstraction*. In each instance, Gehry has shown himself to be exquisitely sensitive to the art on display, complementing but never overshadowing artworks with his design elements.

I have admired and appreciated Gehry, his architecture, and his creative process up close, having worked with him on the design for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. My visits to his studio, then in Santa Monica, taught me much about architecture and the city of Los Angeles—and, eventually, drew me to LACMA. Buildings like the Loyola Law School, California Aerospace Museum at the California Science Center, and, of course, Disney Hall have become synonymous with Los Angeles for the rest of the world.

This important retrospective of Gehry’s own work, so ably conceived and organized by Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier for the Centre Pompidou, represents an important milestone in an already groundbreaking career. It is a great pleasure to adapt the exhibition for presentation to a Los Angeles audience. Gehry is one of this city’s true cultural icons, and this retrospective offers an opportunity for those who have grown up alongside him to reflect on the development of his work, and for younger generations to understand how one of the great architectural minds developed.

By presenting sketches and models—of built and unbuilt projects—together with documentation of completed buildings, the exhibition shows the evolution of his thinking. Tracing the arc of his remarkable career, it becomes evident that Gehry’s work of recent decades has taken on a new vigor and unleashed some of his most creative thinking and expression—much like the later work of Titian, Rembrandt, and Picasso.

I thank our senior curator of modern art, Stephanie Barron, who worked with Lauren Bergman and Zoe Kahr to spearhead this retrospective for LACMA. Her long-standing friendship and working relationship with Frank have produced some of the museum’s most memorable exhibitions. At Gehry Partners, LLP, we are deeply grateful to partner David Nam, partner Meaghan Lloyd, and Joyce Shin for their tremendous efforts in bringing this project to fruition. Most importantly, we thank Frank for being receptive to our desire to present this show in his hometown.

Michael Govan
CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

FOREWORD

Translated from the French by Dafydd Roberts

Frank Gehry has revolutionized contemporary architecture, from its most innovative methods of design and construction to its aesthetics, its imbrication with the urban, and its social role.

This was already clear to Dominique Bozo, president of the Centre Pompidou between 1991 and 1993, when in 1991 he programmed one of the very earliest exhibitions on Gehry's work. This was when the architect was realizing his first projects in Europe, the Vitra Design Museum near Basel, soon to be followed by the American Center in Paris, whose building is home today to the Cinémathèque Française. His very distinctive architecture was already then the expression of an explicit critique of functionalism on the one hand and postmodernism on the other, with Gehry emancipating himself from the weighty dogmatism of both in a process of uncompromising and uninhibited architectural invention that developed and illustrated a new conception of contemporary architecture.

Over the last twenty years, Frank Gehry has created a entire series of iconic buildings, of which the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is the most flamboyant example. As well as representing an incredibly bold artistic gesture, it revolutionized the relationship between contemporary art and its public, as Piano and Rogers's building for the Centre Pompidou had done two decades before.

Curated by Frédéric Migayrou, assistant director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne responsible for architecture and design, and Aurélien Lemonier, curator at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, this monographic exhibition offers visitors a new and comprehensive reading of Gehry's work, from the earliest experiments in Los Angeles in the 1960s to the most recent of his constructions. Here, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Frank Gehry and his team for their wholehearted support and the essential contribution they have made to the project.

This exhibition opens at a time when Frank Gehry is particularly active in this country. A few months ago, the foundation stone was laid for the Luma Foundation / Parc des Ateliers in Arles, and a few more weeks will see the opening of the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, clearly one of the architect's masterpieces. In staging the retrospective just now, we were by the same gesture seeking to express our support for architectural innovation in France, and we are very pleased, as the time comes to discover this extraordinary building, no doubt destined to take its place among the architectural glories of Paris, to be able to make some contribution toward understanding and appreciating one of the great architects of this century.

Alain Seban

Chairman, Director & CEO Centre Pompidou

PREFACE

Translated from the French by Dafydd Roberts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bernard Blistène

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



THE ORGANON OF FRANK GEHRY

FRÉDÉRIC MIGAYROU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY DAFYDD ROBERTS

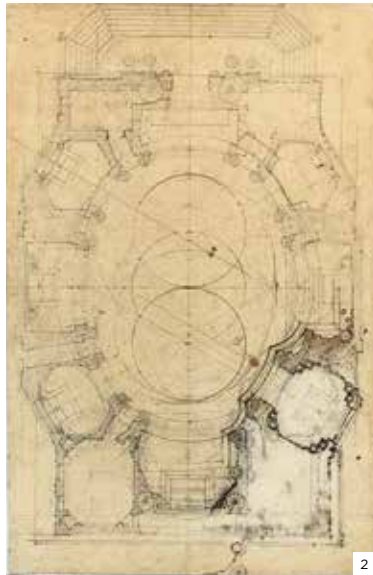
“Now my method, though hard to practice, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain. But the mental operation which follows the act of sense I for the most part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

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

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

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

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



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, an avantgardism that comes to destroy.

The Gehry Residence remains the point of convergence of the two dimensions that have animated the architect's research: the practical efficiency characteristic of professional practice on the one hand and a desire for experimentation that tests the limits of the discipline on the other. With a degree of justification, some would rightly seek to understand the coherence of the architect's work as a whole on the basis of this house, which constitutes a program in miniature. Yet Gehry's career had begun twenty years earlier with the Steeves Residence (1958–59) 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 manager from 1958 to 1960—who had worked in Paris for André Remondet in 1961, and also with urban planner Robert Auzelle, already possessed a substantial body of skills, honed in the development and realization of some 80 projects, many involving urban design. With such programs behind him as the 10,000 m² of residential accommodation at the Kenmore Apartments (1963–64), a development of 84 detached houses at Bixby Green (1968–69), a 15,000-m² office building for the Rouse Company

1. Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 1989–2003, Los Angeles, view of the organ **2.** Francesco Borromini, Sant'Eustachio, new building project, ca. 1642, pencil, pen and ink, 42.5 x 27.5 cm, Albertina, Vienna **3.** Louis Sullivan, Ornamental Study, April 13, 1885, with annotations by Frank Lloyd Wright, pencil on paper, 27.5 x 17.6 cm, Louis Sullivan Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York **4.** Frank Lloyd Wright, elevation for Aline Barnsdall House, Beverly Hills, 1923, pencil on paper, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Headquarters (1969–74), the renovation of the Hollywood Bowl (1970–82), a 60,000-m² mall at Santa Monica Place (1972–80), the Atrium of the Rudge and Guenzel Building (1974–76), and the 15-story residential building Harper House (1976), the architect Gehry was already, at the turn of the 1980s, an experienced builder and urban designer who had mastered every aspect of the profession. And the most fascinating aspect of his work 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, essentially the entire process of the architectural and urban design. In architecture, each 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



5. Raphael S. Soriano, Glen Lukens House, Los Angeles, 1940, Julius Shulman photography archive © J. Paul Getty Trust **6.** Albert Frey, House I, Palm Springs, 1953, Julius Shulman photography archive © J. Paul Getty Trust **7.** Harwell Hamilton Harris, The Wylie House, California, 1948, carriage door, photo by Fred Dapprich, The Alexander Architectural Archive, The University of Texas Libraries, Austin **8.** Frank Gehry, Steeves House, Los Angeles, 1960, Julius Shulman photography archive © J. Paul Getty Trust

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 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 modeling, 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 turning point. 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 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 recognize 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 standardization. Esther McCoy, author of the programmatic *Case Study Houses, 1945–1962*, stressed that the Case Study Houses, still under the influence of 1930s 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 landscape work, as well as that of Gregory Ain, whose Mar Vista Housing (1947–48) would influence the design of Bixby Green (1968–69). But the greatest influence on him must certainly have been Harwell Hamilton Harris, whose approach to materials and to a building's relationship to its site was informed by Arts & Crafts, by the work of Greene & Greene, and above all by that of Frank Lloyd Wright, who had championed an open plan and continuity in the articulation of spaces. Looking at the Steeves Residence and its Wright-inspired

2. Frank Gehry, cited in Wolfgang Wagener, *Raphael Soriano* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 49.

3. Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945–1962* (Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977), 4–5, preface to the 2nd 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), 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), 21.

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

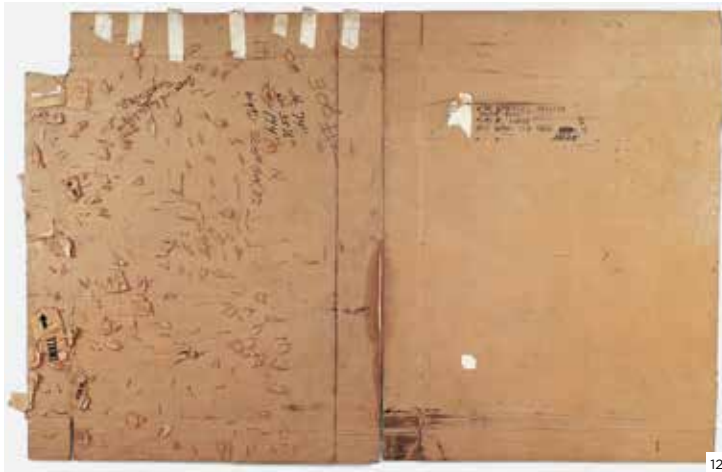
7. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Form and Function," *The Saturday Review* (December 14, 1935); reprinted in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Collected Writings, Volume 3, 1931–1939* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 187.

8. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1949), 99. Wright, who had been given a collection of drawings by Louis Sullivan, decided to pay tribute to him by writing this critical biography.

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

9. Claes Oldenburg, *Elephant Mask*, 1959 (destroyed), soaked newspaper on wire structure, latex paint, 121.9 x 88.9 x 68.6 cm, Claes Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio, New York **10**. Frank Gehry, *A Study* (1999), maple, wood, and lead, 609.6 x 1,219 x 762 cm, Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills (March 18–May 1, 1999) **11**. Claes Oldenburg and Anita Reuben at the show *The Street*, at the Reuben Gallery (May 6–19, 1960), photo by Charles Rapoport, Claes Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio, New York

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



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



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

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

9. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: Lund Humphries, 1939), reprinted in Wright, *Collected Writings*, [see note 7], 330.
10. Frank Gehry, interviewed in Ross Miller and Angela Ledgerwood, "New Again: Frank Gehry," *Interview Magazine*, January 1990.
11. Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Frank O. Gehry: Still Life," in *Frank Gehry, 1987–2003*, ed. Fernando Márquez Cecilia and Richard C. Levene, (Madrid: El Croquis, 2006), 16.



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12. Frank Gehry, in Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Conversation with Frank Gehry," in Márquez Cecilia and Levene (see note 11), 10.

13. "Merriweather Post Pavilion, Columbia, Maryland," in Dal Co and Forster, *Frank O. Gehry* (see note 1), 84.

14. "O'Neill Hay Barn," in Dal Co and Forster, *Frank O. Gehry* (see note 1), 91.

15. S. J. Diamond, "Should We Set Fire to the Art Museum?," *Los Angeles Magazine*, March 1968.

When I did it, everyone was surprised, but I realized afterward 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, where the Merriweather-Post Pavilion (1966–67) and then the Public Safety Building (1967–68) were built. 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 comprehensive 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, 1973–76), 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 built work in which Gehry explored a strong non-orthogonal geometry and played with the illusionistic and expressive possibilities of distorted perspectives."¹⁴ To further promote integration into the site, Gehry lightened the whole construction, the corrugated steel panels, creating a continuity, like an

14. Billy Al Bengston, *JW Screen*, 1966, silkscreen painting on aluminum, 60.3 x 55.9 cm, collection of the artist 15. View of the installation at the *Billy Al Bengston* exhibition, scenography by Frank Gehry, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, (November 26, 1968–January 12, 1969)

envelope, between walls and roof, a principle carried further in the Davis Studio/Residence (1968–72). Designing an exhibition at the LACMA in 1968 for Billy Al Bengston, a Pop artist who worked with recycled materials and screen-printed 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 Bengston. At the time, a new art scene was emerging in LA, 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 organized a vast survey show, "a scene of utter, madcap camaraderie between the Museum and the artistic community,"¹⁵ featuring, among others, Ruscha, Berlant, Craig Kauffman, Baldessari, John Altoon, and 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 that ended in the literal "pictorialization" of architectural volume. An open



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16. Frank Gehry, Mid-Atlantic Toyota, 1976–78, Glen Burnie, Maryland, view of the office interior **17.** Frank Gehry, Davis Studio / Residence, 1968–72, Malibu, interior view of the footbridge stairway **18.** Robert Morris, Green Gallery, New York, 1964, installation with *Slab*, 1962, *Corner Beam*, 1964, *Floor Piece*, 1964, *Untitled*, 1964, *Corner Piece*, 1964, painted plywood, various dimensions, courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

box, perspective is disaggregated to be reconfigured in a form that is endlessly recomposed from different points of view onto the site. While 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 reexamining the tension between graphic composition and the translation of spatial analytics into built volume. Here, again, one sees an organic conception of space that calls to mind Rudolf M. Schindler, a disciple of Wright's: "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 organize 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, moldable 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 Gehry's drawings do not construct forms, they distribute the elements of space. The stroke of the pen 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 these lines into volumes that divide the space in accordance with vectors of tension that, as can be seen in the case of Mid-Atlantic Toyota (1976–78), undo the whole system of separations and openings in favor of another continuity. The forms of the city (facades,

16. Frank Gehry, cited in Zaera-Polo, "Frank. O. Gehry: Still Life" [see note 11], p. 19.

17. Rudolph M. Schindler, "Furniture and the Modern House," *Architect and Engineer* (December 1935): 22.

18. Rudolph M. Schindler, "Care of the Body: Shelter or Playground," *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine*, May 2, 1926.

19. Stefanos Polyzoides, "Space Architecture Inside Out," in R. M. Schindler: *Composition and Construction*, ed. Lionel March and Judith Sheine (London: Academy Editions/Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1993), 198.

20. Jonathan Massey, *Crystal and Arabesque: Claude Bragdon, Ornament and Modern Architecture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 143.