"Other" Spaces and "Others"

MARY McLEOD

One of the primary preoccupations of contemporary architectural theory is the concept of "other" or "otherness." Members of the so-called neo-avant garde – architects and critics frequently affiliated with publications such as *ANY* and *Assemblage* and with architecture schools such as Princeton, Columbia, Sci Arc, and the Architectural Association – advocate the creation of a *new* architecture that is somehow totally "other." While these individuals repeatedly decry utopianism and the morality of form, they promote novelty and marginality as instruments of political subversion and cultural transgression. The spoken and unspoken assumption is that "different" is good, that "otherness" is automatically an improvement over the status quo.

This tendency is most clearly evident among so-called deconstructivist architects and critics, who advocate strategies such as disruption, violation, and break as a means of dismantling architectural forms and creating a new architecture that is somehow "other." Previously, I have raised questions about the limits of linguistic analogies inherent in deconstructivist theory and its equation of formal change with political change.[1] In this paper I would like to turn instead to another strain in contemporary architectural theory that also emphasizes, indeed validates, "otherness." This alternative view is articulated by a diverse group of architects and theorists, such as Anthony Vidler, Aaron Betsky, Catherine Ingraham, and Stanley Allen, who have been influenced by Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia."[2] They also often endorse deconstructivist architecture (and what might be considered historical precedents, such as Piranesi's Carceri or Campo Marzio), but they

embrace its colliding, fragmentated forms as embodiments of Foucault's more politicized concept of heterotopia, or "other" spaces.[3] Here the notion of "other" refers to that which is both formally and socially "other." Difference is a function of different locations and distributions of power, as well as of formal or textual inversion. "Other" therefore encompasses physical and social arenas outside of or marginal to our daily life.

Foucault gives his most complete discussion of heterotopia in his essay "Des Espaces autres," a lecture he delivered at a French architectural research institute in 1967 and which was not published in English until 1985.[4] Since it was written as a lecture, it lacks Foucault's usual rigor; his argument seems loose, almost conflicted at times, as if he were groping for examples. But it is also his most comprehensive discussion of physical space,[5] and its very looseness may be one of the reasons for its influence in recent architectural discourse.

In this essay Foucault distinguishes heterotopias from imaginary spaces – utopias – and from everyday landscapes. He proposes that certain unusual, or out-of-the-ordinary, places – the museum, the prison, the hospital, the cemetery, the theater, the church, the carnival, the vacation village, the barracks, the brothel, the place of sexual initiation, the colony – provide our most acute perceptions of the social order (figs. 1–6). These perceptions might derive either from a quality of disorder and multiplicity, as in the brothel, or from a kind of compensation, a laboratory-like perfection, as in the colony, which exposes the messy, ill-constructed nature of everyday reality. Many of the spaces cited, such as the prison or asylum, are exactly the arenas that Foucault condemns in his institutional studies for their insidious control and policing of the body. In this essay, however, his tone is neutral or even laudatory of those "other" spaces. Foucault suggests that these heterotopic environments, by breaking with the banality of everyday existence and by granting us insight into our condition, are both privileged and politically charged. He asserts that they "suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relationships" that they designate.[6]

What are explicitly omitted from his list of "other" spaces, however, are the residence, the workplace, the street, the shopping center, and the more mundane areas of everyday leisure, such as playgrounds, parks,

FIG. 1
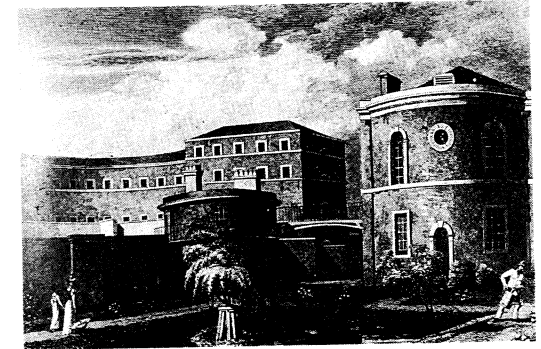Thomas Wright. Kirkdale House of Correction, near Liverpool. 1821–22

FIG. 2
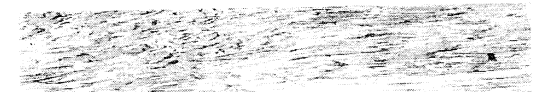Libéral Bruand. Hôtel des Invalides (a hostel for wounded soldiers), Paris. 1670–77

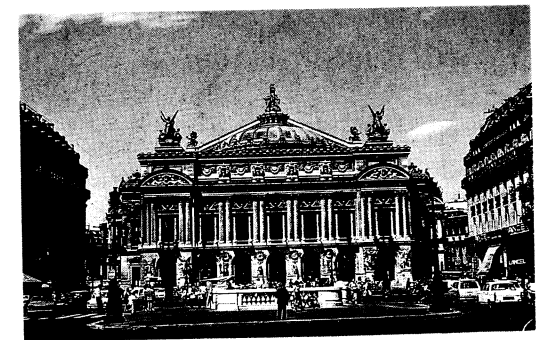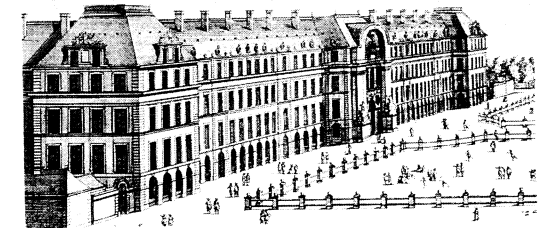**FIG. 3**
Charles Garnier. Opéra, Paris. 1861–75

FIG. 4

E. Angelou. Prostitute in a French brothel during the Belle Epoque. Stereoscopic photograph, ca. 1900

FIG. 5

John James Burnett (for Imperial War Graves Commission). British Military Cemetery, Jerusalem. 1919–27

FIG. 6

Albert Laprade. Central axis of Parc Lyautey (now Parc de la Ligue Arabe), Casablanca. 1915. Foucault writes of heterotopias: "On the one hand they perform the task of creating a space of illusion that reveals how all of real space is more illusory, all the locations within which life is fragmented. On the other, they have the function of forming another place, as perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged as ours is disordered, ill-conceived, and in a sketchy state. . . . Brothels and colonies, here are two extreme types of heterotopia"

FIG. 7

Mom's house, Wheaton, Maryland. 1951. For Foucault, the house is an "arrangement of rest" and thus not a heterotopia

sporting fields, restaurants, and so on (fig. 7). (Cinemas, paradoxically, are both excluded and included as heterotopias.) Indeed, in his emphasis on isolated institutions – monuments, asylums, or pleasure houses – he forsakes all the messy, in-between urban spaces that might be considered literally heterotopic. For most American architecture critics, the political ambiguity and two-sided nature of Foucault's notion of heterotopia (its diversity or its extreme control) has been ignored. Following Foucault's brief commentary in *The Order of Things,* they interpret the concept simply as incongruous juxtaposition – exemplified by Borges's Chinese encyclopedia or Lautréamont's pairing of the umbrella and the operating table [7] – all too frequently equating Foucault's notion of "otherness" with Derrida's concept of *différance*. With a kind of postmodern ease, critics have often created, themselves, a heterotopic tableau of theories seeking to undermine order. [8]

Foucault's conception of "other" stands apart from Lacanian and Derridean models in that it suggests actual places, in actual moments in time. It acknowledges that power is not simply an issue of language. And this insistence on seeing institutions and practices in political and social terms has been welcomed by many feminist theorists. Yet one of the most striking aspects of Foucault's notion of heterotopia is how the idea of "other," in its emphasis on rupture, seems to exclude the traditional arenas of women and children – two of the groups that most rightly deserve (if by now one can abide the term's universalizing effect) the label "other." Women are admitted in his discussion primarily as sex objects – in the brothel, in the motel rented by the hour. (And what might be even harder for most working mothers to accept with a straight face is his exclusion of the house as a heterotopia on the grounds that it is a "place of rest.") Foucault seems to have an unconscious disdain for sites of everyday life such as the home, the public park, and the department store that have been provinces where women have found not only oppression but also some degree of comfort, security, autonomy, and even freedom. In fact, Foucault and some of his architecture-critic followers (most notably, Mike Davis) display an almost callous disregard for the needs of the less powerful – older people, the handicapped, the sick – who are more likely to seek security, comfort, and the pleasures of

everyday life than to pursue the thrills of transgression and break. In applauding the rest home, for instance, as a microcosm of insight, Foucault never considers it from the eyes of the resident. Knowledge *is* the privilege of the powerful.

Another major, and all too obvious, problem is the exclusion of minorities, the third world, and, indeed, most non-Western culture from Foucault's discussions of "other" and, by extension, from criticism written by his architect-followers. One of the most paradoxical aspects of Foucault's notion of heterotopia is his example of the colony. Although since World War II the concept of "other" has had a powerful influence on third-world political and cultural theorists (from Frantz Fanon to Edward Said [9]), Foucault himself never attempts to see the colony through the eyes of the colonized, just as in his earlier institutional studies he avoids the prisoner's viewpoint in his rejection of a certain experiential analysis. In poststructuralist philosophy and literary criticism, a major claim for political validity is the notion of dismantling European logocentrism. Yet despite this embrace of the "other" in some of its theoretical sources, contemporary theory in architecture, echoing the unconscious biases of Foucault, appears to posit a notion of the "other" that is solely a question of Western dismantling of Western conventions for a Western audience. In other words, "others" are "the other" of a white Western male cultural elite. Instead of asking what is the avant-garde's desire for "other," architects and theorists might better ask what are the desires of those multiple "others" – actual, flesh-and-blood "others"? Difference is experienced differently, at different times, in different cultures, by different people. The point is not just to recognize difference, but all kinds of difference.

Thus far, this argument about the exclusion of "others" in the concept of the "other" has been limited to theoretical propositions that have at best – perhaps fortunately – only marginal relation to the architecture admired by advocates of heterotopia (above all, the designs of Frank Gehry, Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, and Daniel Libeskind [10]). And by no means is the negative tone of these remarks meant to disparage the incredible aesthetic energy and invention of many of these designs. What is disturbing is the link between theory and the architectural

culture surrounding this theory. In the United States the focus on transgression in contemporary architecture circles seems to have contributed to a whole atmosphere of machismo and exclusion. One is reminded how often avant-gardism is a more polite label for the concerns of angry young men, sometimes graying young men. All too frequently lecture series and symposia have at best a token representation of women – and no African-American or non-Western architects except perhaps from Japan. One of the most telling examples was the first Anyone conference, staged at the Getty Center at immense expense. A conference supposedly about the multiplicity, diversity, and fluidity of identity had, in a list of some twenty-five speakers, only two women; the rest were American (white), European (white), and Japanese men.[11] In fairness, it should be noted that this exclusionary attitude is not the sole province of the deconstructivist architects or poststructuralist theorists. American and European postmodernists and proponents of regionalism are equally blind to the issues of the non-Western world. Most recently, the same charge might be brought against the "Deleuzean de-form" nexus, despite its rhetoric of continuity and inclusion.[12]

These blatant social exclusions, under the mantle of a discourse that celebrates the "other" and "difference," raise the issue of whether contemporary theorists and deconstructivist architects have focused too exclusively on formal subversion and negation as a mode of practice. Undoubtedly, the difficult political climate of the past fifteen years and the economic recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s have contributed to the profession's hermeticism (namely, its rejection of constructive political strategies and institutional engagement), but the consequences of this retreat are now all too clear. Are there other formal and social options – options beyond transgression and nostalgia, deconstructivism and historicist postmodernism – that might embrace the desires and needs of those outside the avant-garde?

The seduction and power of the work of Foucault and Derrida, and their very dominance in American academic intellectual life, may have encouraged architects and theorists to leave unexplored another position linking space and power: the notion of "everyday life" developed by

Henri Lefebvre from the 1930s through the 1970s (a peculiar synthesis of Surrealist and Marxist ideas), and which Michel de Certeau gave a somewhat more particularist, and less Marxist, cast shortly thereafter.[13] Both theorists not only analyze the tyranny and controls that have imposed themselves on "everyday" life; they also explore the freedoms, joys, and diversity – what de Certeau describes as "the network of antidiscipline" – within everyday life. In other words, their concern is not simply to depict the power of disciplinary technology, but also to reveal how society resists being reduced to it – not just in the unusual or removed places but in the most ordinary as well. And here they place an emphasis on consumption, without seeing it as solely a negative force, as some leftists have, but also as an arena of freedom, choice, creativity, and invention.

De Certeau, who dedicated his seminal work *The Practice of Everyday Life* to the "ordinary man," is strangely silent on the issue of women (except for one female *flâneur* in his chapter "Walking the City"). Lefebvre, however, despite moments of infuriating sexism and disturbingly essentialist rhetoric, seems to have an acute understanding of the role of the everyday in woman's experience and how consumption has been both her demon and liberator, offering her an arena of action that grants her entry into and power in the public sphere. This argument has been further developed by a number of contemporary feminist theorists, including Janet Wolff, Elizabeth Wilson, Anne Friedberg, and Kristen Ross.[14] What these critics share, despite their many differences, is an emphasis on pleasure, the intensification of sensory impressions, and the positive excesses of consumption as experiences that counter the webs of control and monotony in daily life. Here "other" refers not only to what is outside everyday life – the events characterized by rupture, schism, difference – but also to what is contained, and *potentially* contained, within it. In short, their emphasis is populist, not avant-garde. They articulate a desire to bring experience and enrichment to many, not simply to jolt those few who have the textual or architectural sophistication to comprehend that a new formal break has been initiated. Certainly, these two goals need not be mutually exclusive.

1. Mary McLeod, "Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Post-modernism to Deconstructivism," *Assemblage* 8 (February 1989), 23–55.

2. See Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992); Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection: Architecture and the Fragmentation of the Modern* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); Catherine Ingraham, "Utopia/Heterotopia," course description of class given at Columbia University in 1989, and "Deconstruction III," in Andreas Papadakis, ed., *Architectural Design* (London: Academy Editions, 1994); and Stanley Allen, "Piranesi's Campo Marzio: An Experimental Design," *Assemblage* 10 (December 1989), 71–109. Other individuals who have been influenced by Foucault's notion of heterotopia include architects Diana Agrest and Demetri Porphyrios, and geographer Edward Soja. See Diana Agrest, "The City as the Place of Representation," *Design Quarterly* 113–14 (1980), reprinted in *Architecture from Without* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 109–27; Demetri Porphyrios, *Sources of Modern Eclecticism: Studies of Alvar Aalto* (London: Academy Editions, 1982); and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989). Although Vidler does not specifically mention the notion of heterotopia in his book *The Architectural Uncanny,* he cites Foucault on numerous occasions and adopts David Carroll's notion of "paraesthetics," which is indebted to Foucault. See David Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (New York: Methuen, 1987). In several publications, Manfredo Tafuri also alludes sympathetically to Foucault's notion of heterotopia, and Tafuri's interpretation of Piranesi's work as encapsulating the crisis of capitalism reveals certain parallels with Foucault's claims for heterotopic environments. See especially Manfredo Tafuri, "'The Wicked Architect': G. B. Piranesi, Heterotopia, and the Voyage," in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s,* trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). The complexity of Tafuri's project of ideological demystification and its multiplicity of intellectual sources, however, separate Tafuri's interest in Foucault from the instrumental applications of many architecture critics.

3. For most architecture critics who are adherents of Foucault's heterotopia, this does not preclude an endorsement of Derridean precepts. The Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo also uses the notion of heterotopia, though in a different manner from Foucault. For Vattimo heterotopia alludes to the plurality of norms that distinguishes late-modern art (since the 1960s) from modern art. See Gianni Vattimo, "From Utopia to Heterotopia," in *Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 62–75. The writings of Vattimo have been influential in European architectural debate, but they have had little impact on American architectural theory.

4. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture Culture 1943–1968: A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 420–26. The paper was first delivered at the Centre d'études architecturales, Paris, in March 1967. A brief account of its publishing history is given in Ockman, 419.

5. Despite Foucault's interest in institutions and his insistent use of spatial metaphors, discussions of physical urban space such as cities, streets, and parks are rare in his work. The philosopher Henri Lefebvre charged, probably legitimately, that Foucault was more concerned with a metaphorical notion of space – "mental space" – than with lived space, "the space of people who deal with material things." See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991; original French ed., 1974), 3–4. Besides his paper "Des Espaces autres," Foucault's most concrete discussions of physical space can be found in interviews, which occurred in the last decade of his life. See, for instance, "Questions on Geography" (1976) and "The Eye of Power" (1977), in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); "Space, Knowledge, and Power" (1982), in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); and, especially, "An Ethics of Pleasure," in Sylvere Lotringer, ed., *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989), 257–77. In the last interview, Foucault distinguishes architects from doctors, priests, psychiatrists, and prison wardens, claiming that the architect does not exercise (or serve as a vehicle of) as much power as the other professionals. Again Foucault's own class status and power emerge when he states, "After all, the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house he built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control" (267). Surely, few occupants of public housing projects or nursing homes could or would make the same statement.

6. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 421–22.

7. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (New

York: Vintage Books, 1970), xv–xx. Foucault does not cite the poet le Comte de Lautréamont (pseud. of Isidore Ducasse) by name but rather alludes to the novelist Raymond Roussel, a favorite of the Surrealists. For examples of architects' use of Foucault's Preface to *The Order of Things,* see Porphyrios, 1–4; Allen, 77; and Georges Teyssot, "Heterotopias and the History of Spaces," *A+U* (October 1980), 80–100.

8. This is especially notable in Ingraham's and Allen's work. My objective, however, is not to expound on the distinctions between Foucault's and Derrida's versions of poststructuralism in terms of architecture. Nor is this the opportunity to expand on the philosophical differences raised by the meanings of the word *other,* namely the differences between Sartre's reworking of a Hegelian other in existentialism and Lacan's notions of split subjectivity and linguistic drift. Though certainly significant in philosophical and literary discourse, these distinctions, for better or worse, are typically blurred in architectural theory. For a concise historical account of "the problem of other," see Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy,* trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 1–38. For a discussion of the notion of the "other" and its relation to gender and colonial/postcolonial theory in the context of architecture, see Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney, "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles," *Assemblage* 13 (December 1990), esp. 54–56.

9. Recently, postcolonial critics such as Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak have challenged the manichaeism or binary logic implicit in Fanon's and Said's understanding of colonial identity. See especially Homi K. Bhabha's essay "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) for a critique of phenomenology's opposition between subject and object – and its extension into the discourse of colonialism as a rigid division between colonizer and colonized.

10. Certainly, La Villette and the Wexner Center, the two iconic built projects most cited by poststructuralist architectural theorists, are enjoyed by women and children as much as men, with the possible exception of the predominantly female staff at the Wexner, who are squeezed into extremely tight quarters.

11. One of the women, Maria Nordman, limited her remarks to a request that the windows be opened to let in light and that the method of seating be decentralized. She chose to sit in the audience during her presentation. See the conference publication, *Anyone* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 198–99. A third woman, Cynthia Davidson, the editor of *Anyone,* might arguably be included, although this publication does not include a short biographical statement for her, as it does for the speakers. Subsequent *ANY* events have included more women, perhaps in response to public outrage, although minority architects have yet to be involved. Perhaps even more scandalous is the track record of the evening lecture series at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, an institution that prides itself on being avant-garde. Not once in the past six years has the semester series included more than two women speakers (most have featured only one), and there have been no African-American speakers.

12. It can be argued that decidedly masculine assumptions underlie this new current in architectural theory, which seems to have its greatest energy in New York and almost exclusively among men. While Deleuze and Guattari reject the bipolarity latent in much Derridean thought, their "becoming – animal, becoming – women" suggests their (*male*) desire. As in Foucault's work, what is neglected in their exhilarating vision of fluidity and flow (for instance, domesticity, children, the elderly) is telling, and strikingly reminiscent of the machismo of some of the male leaders of the New Left in the 1960s.

13. The notion of "everyday life" can be frustratingly amorphous, and Lefebvre's intensely dialectical approach, combined with his rejection of traditional philosophical rationalism ("truth without reality"), makes the concept all the more difficult to decipher. Lefebvre's description of "everyday life" might best be understood as embracing a series of paradoxes. While the "object of philosophy," it is inherently non-philosophical; while conveying an image of stability and immutability, it is transitory and uncertain; while unbearable in its monotony and routine, it is festival and play. In brief, everyday life is "real life," the "here and now," not abstract truth. Lefebvre's description of everyday life as "sustenance, clothing, furniture, homes, neighborhoods, environment" – "material life" but with a "dramatic attitude" and "lyrical tone" – contrasts sharply with Foucault's concept of heterotopias as isolated and removed spaces. See Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 1984); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,*

trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

14. See Janet Wolff, *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), esp. 34–50; Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993); Kristen Ross, Introduction, *The Ladies' Paradise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), and *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995). Of the critics cited here, Ross is the most indebted to Lefebvre, and, like Lefebvre, she stresses consumption's double-sided nature. For an insightful discussion of consumption and women's role with regard to architecture, see Leila Whittemore, "Women and the Architecture of Fashion in 19th-Century Paris," *a/r/c,* "Public Space" 5 (1994–95), 14–25.

Missing Objects

CATHERINE INGRAHAM

Recently[1] I was trying to untangle the famous aphorism "A picture is worth a thousand words." The more I tried to penetrate this equation, the more peculiar it became. We know, generally, the circumstances under which this phrase is uttered, circumstances where a certain crisis has arisen between two values, the value of the word and the value of the picture (to which I want to append everything grasped visually, although this poses problems). Although the import of the aphorism is that it takes many, many words to achieve what a picture can achieve all by itself, and all at once, the number 1000 is low when it comes to words. One thousand words represents about three pages of written text, about six minutes of continuously spoken language, about ten minutes of conversation. One thousand pictures = a million words, or one one-thousandth of a picture = one word, would be a more accurate way of stating the force of this aphorism. The issue of value and worth, so slyly persuasive in this equation, is related, then, not to some carefully weighed economy of words and images but to a tacit politics of expenditure that counts words as cheap and insubstantial and, therefore, proliferative, and images as substantial and dear and, therefore, unique.

I am belaboring this aphorism because I am interested in the equation between words and images, words and things, words and objects (fig. 1). At the same time, I recognize the ugliness and difficulty of words compared to things – how small and petty words are, how promiscuous and entangling. This ugliness is part of what aesthetically magnetizes me about words – that is, I am attracted by the possibility of writing them grossly at the scale of buildings much as, say, Barbara Kruger or Robert Venturi have done, taking them at face value, so to