

Retracing the Expanded Field

Encounters between Art and Architecture

edited by Spyros Papapetros and Julian Rose

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Retracing the Expanded Field

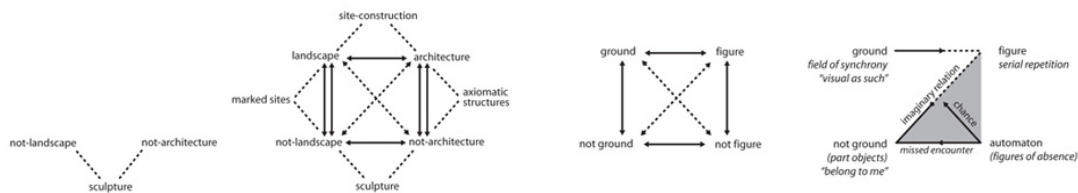
Responses

**Joe Scanlan / Eve Meltzer / Philip
Ursprung / Penelope Curtis / Josiah
McElheny / Sylvia Lavin / Kurt Forster /
Kenneth Frampton / Michael Meredith /
Sandro Marpillero / Emily Elisa Scott /
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Beatriz Colomina / Anthony Vidler**

Sandro Marpillero
RK's Diagrams

Introduction

I propose to relate the diagrams put forth by Rosalind Krauss in her 1979 essay “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (EF), with another set of diagrams published fourteen years later in the first chapters of her 1993 book *The Optical Unconscious* (OU). The 1979 diagrams mapped the emergence of a sculptural field that existed “outside” of the modernist juxtaposition of landscape and architecture. The 1993 diagrams activated from the “inside” the relationship between ground and figure in painting, exploring how the impact of time split modernist visuality itself. (Figs. 1 and 2)

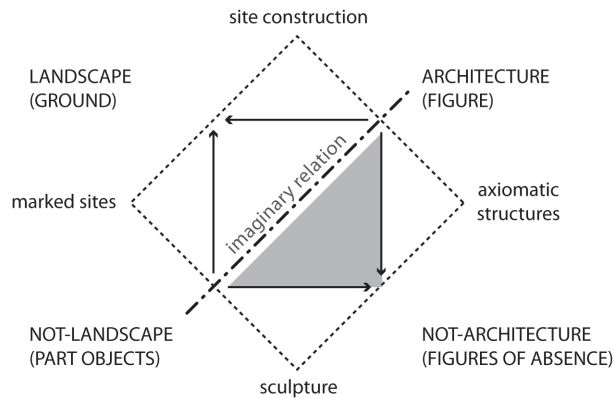


I am aware of the risks embedded in the exercise of redrawing and operating on Krauss's diagrams. However, her psychoanalytic references in OU have encouraged me to revisit the paradigmatic shift effected by her earlier essay, and its impact on architecture. This desire to look at the two sets of diagrams together opened up the potential to construct a conceptual figure, presenting architecture as a 21st century environmental apparatus.

In EF, Krauss used the work by Mary Miss as frontispiece, positing the term “site constructions” as akin to the armature of a partially-constructed building, which would set up fragments of experience before a building's enclosure curtails its potential to engage larger environmental relationships. Yet architecture, although bound to remain an object, is also immersed in a field of culturally inflected perceptions, which forward the agenda of these sculptural works by redefining programmatic content. Architecture's relationships with urban landscapes further introduce disjunctive processes among the diverse subjects that link a building's layers of use to their infrastructural networks.

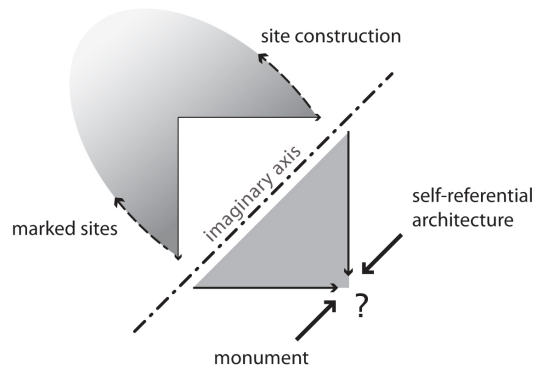
Fields in Tension

An overlay of Krauss's 1979 and 1993 diagrams focuses away from architecture as aestheticized object, towards engaging the tensions that act upon and are affected by urban and environmental flows. This overlay challenges architecture to weave together constructed and natural elements from the point of view of their spatial and temporal performance, engaging forces animating variously-scaled exchanges across and through a building's envelope, also situating architecture in the historical processes of formation and disruption of the built environment. (Fig. 3)



In OU, Krauss introduced the term “figures of absence” to identify the lumberyard of memories deposited in a subject’s unconscious. Such memories generate productive interferences that disturb her/his propensity to rely on language to project her/himself on the objects of perception. The position of this term in the diagram corresponds to the pole occupied by the term “not-architecture” in the EF diagrams. Referencing these two terms allows drawing a new diagram, to interrogate the status of architecture in relation to a new notion of ground, as it has emerged from the environmental concerns of sculpture.

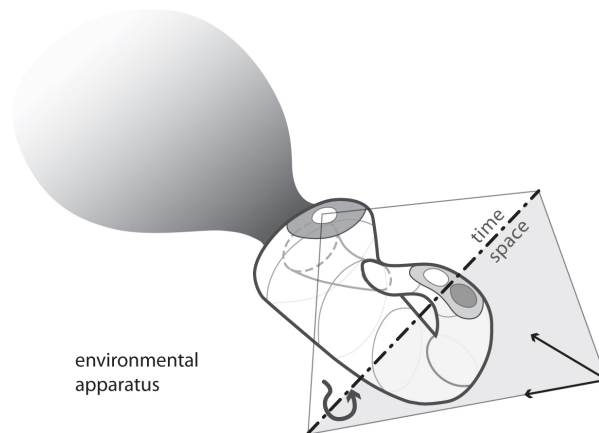
Revisiting the EF diagrams in relation to architecture, one can interpret the terms “marked sites” and “site constructions” as heralding the dissolution of modernist notions of pictorial landscape and naturalized ground. Alongside this dissolution, one can also interpret the terms “sculpture” and “axiomatic structures” as having crystallized two persistent tendencies, which have held architectural discourse within the closed circuitry already mapped by Krauss in the 1970s. These tendencies act as repressive agents, in maintaining architecture’s fixation on monuments, in the guise of signature super-objects, and self-referential architecture, generated through autonomous formal processes. (Fig. 4)



This persistence suggests the value of raising questions from the point of view of that which was traditionally located beyond architecture's horizon of sense. By conceptually situating oneself as an architect within the field that Krauss opened up for sculpture, it becomes possible to challenge architecture's fascination for its linguistic conventions, without expecting such challenge to yield definite solutions. This approach encourages, for example, an exploration of relationships between inside and outside, without reducing the tensions between proximity and distance to the limits of a site, or restricting that of container and content to use program.

Environmental Apparatus

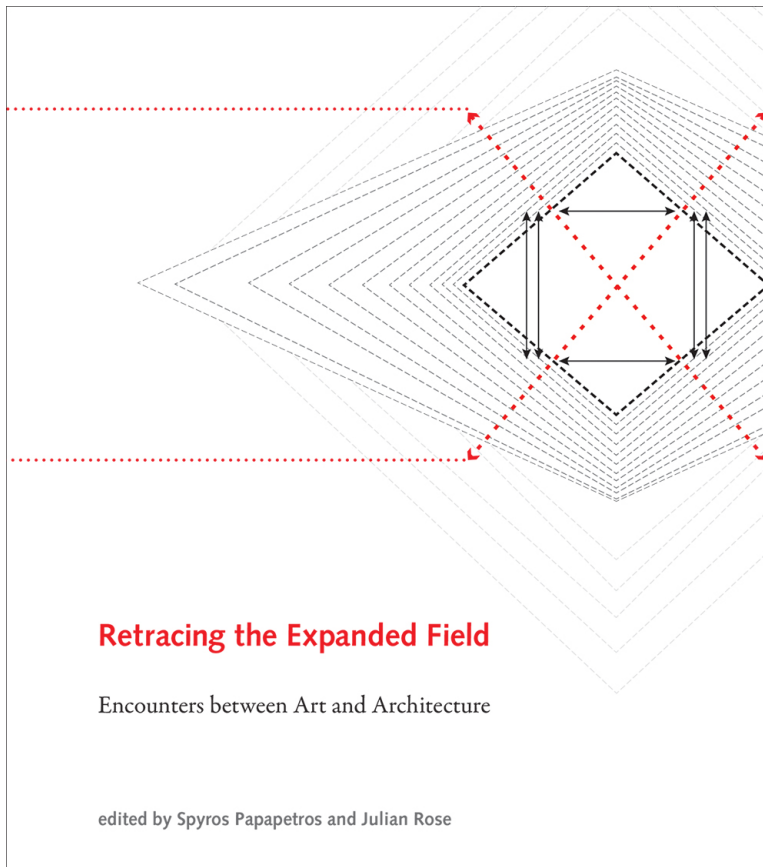
Here I posit the emergence from within the overlay of the terms established by Krauss, of a paradoxical figure of topology: the Klein Bottle. As analog, this figure acts as a conceptual device back-and-forth around the linguistic barrier identified in the OU diagrams as "imaginary relation." Instead of the mirroring between an object and the projections of desires on it by a subject, this analog introduces an imaginary spatio-temporal axis. A Klein Bottle is a manifold, a topological-mathematical concept: it describes a continuous surface with no distinction between inside and outside, that does not intersect itself although it passes through itself in 4-D, at the same time closed and not-orientable. (Fig. 5).



As conceptual device, the Klein Bottle allows for the co-presence of performative logics that modernist juxtapositions would have cast as remote to each other. It connects the notions Krauss laid out in the EF and OU diagrams, across the veil that binds architecture to its status as object. It puts to work the negative pole of the term "not-architecture," liberating it from the double constraint of the monumental and the self-referential. A Klein Bottle's continuity enables the relative position of this pole to vary, shifting "upwards" and/or "downwards" Krauss's original diagrams, releasing them from their 2-D plane. These variations of position, while intersecting the Klein Bottle's continuous surface, also point to spaces "above" and "below" it, towards the domains of conceptual and performance art, which were not part of the sculptural and visual concerns mapped by Krauss.

As a basis for producing conceptual figurations in space/time, the operational logic of the Klein Bottle not only describes the reciprocal exchanges between a participant in an aesthetic experience and the multiplicity of techniques structuring that experience. It also addresses the open-ended processes embedded in the production and realization of an architectural project, linking individuals and spaces to the dynamic interactions among multiple publics. As such, it facilitates focusing on architecture as an environmental apparatus, operating within the complex circuitry of transformative processes at work in the urban landscape.

Focusing on architecture as an environmental apparatus qualifies the potential for resonance of the spatial, temporal, and technological feedback loops that project physical and mental thresholds towards urban and environmental scales.



This is the integral version (text and illustrations) of my contribution to the book: Spyros Papapetros and Julian Rose Eds. *Retracing the Expanded Field; Encounters between Art and Architecture*. Boston: MIT Press, 2014