

# What is that thing on your Waterfront? Or How the Simpsons can help us enjoy the recent work of Frank Gehry

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*Is it a Fish, is it a Phallus, or is it just Pure Being? Much earnest speculation and cloud gazing surrounds the current work of Frank Gehry, often hanging around the issue of representation. To follow some of the dominant threads: it may be that the work contains a positive, if mysterious, representational content (Gehry); it may be that the work is actually a canvas which is simply conducive to a projected content, that its meaning should be read in the ambition to create such a canvas (Jencks); yet more radical, it may be that the meaning of the work is in fact the evacuation of any content, enjoyed in an attempt to produce a purely 'unintentional' built form (Linder).*

*A sophisticated and alternative articulation of these issues was offered last April by an episode of The Simpsons, 'The Seven-Beer Snitch'. A scene, in which Gehry plays himself, rests on a central joke; it shows the architect finding inspiration for a project from the form of the piece of paper the commission is written on, moments after it has been screwed up and discarded. As any joke, the scene suggests a momentary suspension of conventional reason; even though we know he uses them in his design process, we can't really understand his buildings as representations of screwed up pieces of paper, can we?*

*This paper accepts the suspended state, and examines the Simpsons episode as a critical text. It identifies a central thesis in that text; Gehry's current work does enjoy itself as an 'unintentional' object, but, paradoxically, the unintentional can only be enjoyed 'in tension' with a obscure traumatic intention, which it in turn represents. The paper explores what that trauma might be, both in the terms of the design process, and those of architectures public appearance, calling upon contemporary cultural theory. Finally, it steps back to consider the potentially hegemonic relation between Gehry and The Simpsons, speculating as to why Marge is so sure that Frank is "the best-est architect in the world!".*

## **Introduction: The Simpsons and Trauma.**

A scene in which the Queen offers Homer a souvenir Corgi was cut from a recent episode of The Simpsons. Downing Street justified its censorship, conscious of Britain's military involvements, saying it didn't want the country "looking like America's Poodle". The scene was to conclude an episode in which Tony appeared as a taxi driver giving the cartoon family a guided tour of 'historic' Britain.

While in office Bill Clinton was a frequent guest of the program, not only supplying his own voice but also playing his own sax'. Two months after impeachment proceedings over the Lewinsky affair he agreed to the airing of a scene in which his cartoon likeness attempts to seduce Marge.

The humour in both scenes depends on reference to a prior event that can be considered traumatic in the clinical sense; a Real event that refuses to be fully symbolized, fully incorporated into the narrative of life of the subject; Blair has entered a war without clear legal or democratic support, Clinton has lied to congress. Why do these two leaders lend their voice to a satire that, in pointing out their traumatic weaknesses, appears to undermine their authority?

From a Freudian perspective the answer is clear: The repetition of these traumatic events does not undermine their authority but paradoxically is a means to assure it. The first reaction to a personal trauma is to repeat it, the re-presentation of such an event affords the subject an agency lacking in its original presentation.<sup>1</sup> In the public realm this repetition also robs the other his opportunity to re-present the scene, to enjoy the subject's weakness. It is familiar political means to power.<sup>2</sup>

The success of The Simpsons satire depends upon an economy by which, the more accurate and damning its critique, the more willing to participate are its victims. Can we not expect then, that when the architect Frank Gehry appears on the program, that his appearance will present a unique critical opportunity, speaking the trauma at the centre of his work, his celebrity means to power, with his very own voice?

## **Fish, Phallus or Pure Being?**

Is it a fish, is it a phallus, or is it just pure being? Much earnest speculation and cloud gazing surrounds the recent work of architect Frank Gehry, in particular

the issue of representation in his work. Gehry himself is enigmatic. The symbolic content he consistently claims to represent is the figure of the fish, be it the whole fish, a bit of fish, or the fish's wake.<sup>3</sup> He endows this figure variously with personal, religious, or historic significance.<sup>4</sup> Charles Jencks supports this idea of an enigmatic content to the work, but for him the enigma is that it does not contain a clear symbolic content. Rather the work is successful because it provokes a number of projected Imaginary contents, perhaps a fish, a phallus and a screen actresses dress.<sup>5</sup> Mark Linder goes further in suggesting that the buildings have evacuated any positive content. He describes the work as "dumby building", referring to the dumb aspect of the analyst in psychoanalysis. The figure of the fish is important in Gehry's practice, but only as an aide memoir.<sup>6</sup> Being outside any traditional architectural convention the fish reminds Gehry of his impossible ambition, to find conventional architectures absolute "other", to build objects devoid of any architectonic qualities. Linder believes, evoking now the Freudian divan, that such an object provides a valuable site for personal reflection. Various then, Gehry's work might provide a positive Symbolic content, might provoke projected Imaginary contents, or might in fact be a Real object, one devoid of any representational content.

A sophisticated and alternative articulation of these issues was offered last April in an episode of *The Simpsons*, 'The Seven-Beer Snitch'. A central joke in the episode shows Gehry, who provides his own voice, finding inspiration for a project from the form of the piece of paper the commission is written on, moments after screwing it up and discarding it. The joke suggests a momentary suspension of conventional reason; it is a fact that Gehry designs his buildings by screwing up pieces of paper, but we can't really understand his buildings as representations of screwed up pieces of paper, can we?

This paper takes the joke seriously, accepts that Gehry's work is literally a representation of a screwed up piece of paper. It accepts *The Simpsons* episode as a critical text, and analyses it. It does this in the knowledge that given his complicity with the show we cannot laugh at Gehry here, only with him. It contends that there is a central thesis to the text, responsive to Gehry's, Jencks' and Linder's analysis. Gehry's work does ask us to enjoy it as a Real object - one devoid of Symbolic or Imaginary content; this is what is enjoyable about the screwed up piece of paper.<sup>7</sup>

However, such an object retains a representational content. It can only be enjoyed in as much as it buries and embodies a traumatically discarded content: the screwed up piece of paper only presents its potential as a particular project in that it buries and embodies a traumatically discarded potential for that project, in that it is literally a discarded brief.

### **The Creative Trauma: The Appeal of Marge Simpson**

The scene with the screwed up piece of paper is part of a passage that offers a discreet parody of the design process and the concept of 'inspiration'. This passage clarifies the nature of the Real object, its representational work and the enjoyment it offers. Frank first appears from a cartoon version of his familiar San Diego home. In his mailbox is a letter. It excites him as it is written on Snoopy notepaper. The letter is from Marge, inviting him to design a building for Springfield. He is quickly disappointed though. The brief simply calls for a replica of the Disney Concert Hall. He screws up the letter and discards it. However, the sight of the piece of paper is an inspiration to him. He realizes he must accept the commission crying "Frank Gehry you're a Genius!"

The design work is dealt with here through the letter. The first element of this work, the first appeal of the letter, is Imaginary. The Snoopy letterhead and Marge's clumsy handwriting are significant in their naivety. In the context of an architectural brief they provide the opening for an imaginary content, they suspend the potential for something entirely new, they afford the projection of a yet to be realized project. But not for long; Gehry's imagination is quickly deflated as he reads the letter. Marge is clearly only interested in employing Gehry to exploit the 'Bilbao effect'. Gehry convinces himself that any work he does for her will be entirely exhausted by her Symbolic mandate, by the role he fulfils in the economics of development.

The traumatic event here is the architect's failure to suspend the brief's Imaginary potential in the face of its Symbolic closure; his failure to bring about the image of a building which responds satisfactorily to the demands of the brief. Gehry attempts to bury this trauma by literally burying the words on the sheet of paper, folding it into itself and tossing it away. But once crumpled and discarded the letters Real content appears. This is twofold; the Real is the pure physical presence of the piece of paper, noticeable now because its Imaginary and Symbolic content



have been disfigured; but it is also the state of psychic excitement, generated by the traumatic event, that is discharged in the act of screwing up and discarding the piece of paper.

This moment of simultaneity is the moment of inspiration. Conventionally this moment would be understood as the positive intersection of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, the moment in which the architect finds a successful Imaginary scheme to represent a positive Symbolic content. However The Simpsons rendition is radically different. We cannot suppose that the screwed up ball of paper corresponds with either the building Gehry had imagined, or any issues in the brief. Inspiration here is the moment in which the architect accepts his ultimate failure - accepts that there is no possible intersection between the Imaginary and the Symbolic - and in discarding his ambition comes to identify completely with a Real object that provides obscured evidence of his attempt and failure.<sup>8</sup>

To reiterate, Gehry's work does ask us to enjoy it as a Real object, one devoid of any representational content. The screwed up piece of paper in The Simpsons analysis is akin to the fish in Linder's. However, this ambition is fundamentally flawed. The joke would not work if Gehry found inspiration for any old project from the form of any old piece of screwed up paper. The Real object can only be enjoyed in as much as it obscures but nonetheless represents a traumatically discarded intention. The enjoyment the object offers is the enjoyment of accepting one's traumatic failure.

### **Vicarious Enjoyment: The Delicacy of the Wrecking Ball**

The next scene describes the construction of Gehry's building for Springfield. It outlines a further problematic in the work. Gehry appears re-presenting the screwed up piece of paper as a model. Though recognizable, it has transformed to acknowledge practical questions of building. It has become a continuous envelope, not a single surface. It no longer has the accidental crumples of paper, but calculated parabolic edges. We then see a construction site in a conventional Central Business District. An orthogonal steel frame is being erected. Wrecking balls then deform the frame. The steel does not crumple as one might expect, but bends to the prescribed geometry of the model.

The work finds inspiration in the apparently Real object, which it thinks non-representation, but the resultant building assumes a clear representational content by literally representing it. This complication changes the nature of the work, again in two ways. On the one hand, the character of the original's pure physical presence is lost. By asking it to perform all the functional requirements of a building envelope, by changing its material, by modifying its form to suit the requirement of a new construction method, any sense of accident in that form, any sense of its coming into being without intention, is lost. The materials and technologies of the building are clearly labouring to perform in a manner that does not come easily. On the other hand, the focus on maintaining a minimal formal resemblance to the original forecloses any possibility

of further accidental characteristics occurring in the buildings design and construction. What that also forecloses is the potential for the traumatic creative experiences of other participants in the project. Perversely, in the ambition to produce a Real object, the Real characteristics of the project are consistently repressed in the name of representational work.

The wrecking ball scene defines the new enjoyment offered by the work. It is clearly a re-enactment of the earlier scene of Inspiration. However, the wrecking ball and the steel frame are not considered to have the same emotional capacity as Gehry's hands and Marge's letter. The construction workers must exercise extreme, even perverse, care, to suppress any evidence of their own hand in order to represent evidence of the architect's. The architect's inspiration, and the object that is its traumatic site, is being privileged by excluding others from it. The enjoyment of the wrecking ball operator is clearly not that of the architect's traumatic failure, but rather the enjoyment of one who is being denied the access to his or her own failure. We know that this fiction is less absurd than the facts. Today an enormous industry of automated design and production is being organized and finding the height of its application in realising the 'accidental' product of one frustrated man's hand.

### **The Professional Trauma: The Writing in the Folds**

This caricature is compelling when read against the built work. Running through a sequence of Gehry's buildings it is easy to construe their development as a folding in, a gradual burial of the architecturally linguistic aspect of his work. Gehry's early work responds to the high kitsch of Modernism by quashing forms debt to function. Through the technique of breaking down programme into a number of 'One Room Buildings', functional concerns are reduced to a minimum, such that any formal, spatial and material characteristics can be understood as purely gestural. Later, these elements are asked to collide. Windows are removed as independent elements, becoming the space between 'shifting' planes. Later still the 'fractured' space develops into a more 'fluid' one, essentially through plan. The floor is engaged through the use of ramps, but the section remains essentially orthogonal. Glazing elements are ideally moved to the roof, or removed altogether. Finally the innovation of a metal clad skin allows this 'fluidity' to be all encompassing.

This removes the distinction between wall and roof, the final issue of architectonic expression to the exterior.

We can question the sense of progression here by noting that at the point when the project fully internalizes its linguistic components, that is, when nothing we recognize as conventionally architectural appears on its exterior, these elements appear in their most crude form inside the building. Study models reveal the buildings to be built up of basic forms, colour coded to represent the function which defines them. The building no longer speaks through the articulation of these elements, but cloaks them in its image of 'fluidity'.

Simultaneously, we understand that the built work is itself a caricature, that the formal developments just described are representations of developments in the field of architectural theory. Post-Modernity in architectural theory involves a persistent questioning of the possibility of positive expression in building, as Gehry's work involves a persistent diminishing of positive expression in building. It moves from an insistence in the possibility of speech outside of Modernism's Ideology, through the doubt of deconstruction, to its current assertion of matter over thought.

To romance the issue, we could say that the writing that is folded into Gehry's recent work is the writing of Modernism. What is obscured but nonetheless represented is both the architectural linguistics of Modernist building, but also the Modernist ambition of the architect as positive social technologist. Without this romance, how is the work legible? How is it possible that the architect can reduce his work to that of crumpling up pieces of paper, unless this work is enjoyed in relation to his traumatic failure as a positive social technologist?

### **Post-Script: Spectacular Enjoyment.**

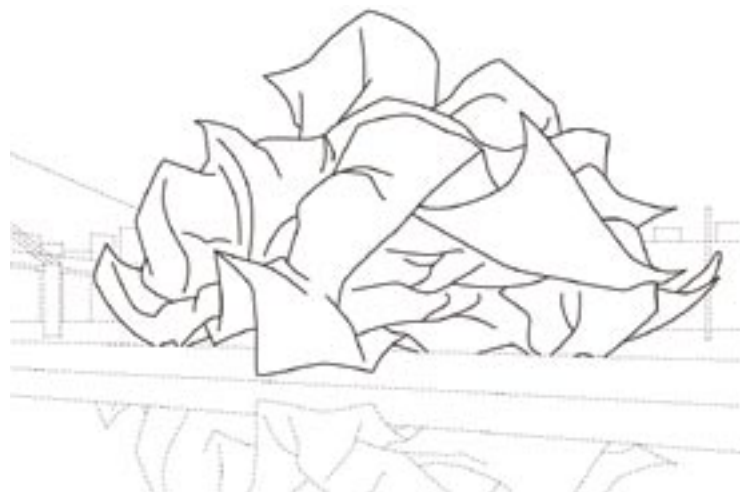
In his recent publication, Charles Jencks asks us to withhold criticism of what he calls 'Iconic building' - the buildings he claims can be enjoyed through their deployment of archetypal yet enigmatic symbols - because this form of enjoyment is that proper to our Late Capitalist predicament. Apparently still reeling from the death of God, culture ought to content itself with the horoscope columns. Gehry, along with a familiar constellation of stars, deserves our sympathy as the unfortunate victim of this larger historic condition.

We might be immediately suspicious of this plea knowing that, in the same week as appearing on *The Simpsons*, Gehry reassured the Brighton and Hove planning department on the quality of his proposition for their waterfront by announcing that Brad Pitt would be the restaurant. However, are we really justified in thinking him Gehry active among those who would reduce Architecture to the limits Jenks' proposes? Gehry's situation in this larger cultural issue is commented on by *The Simpsons*. His commission from Marge originates from a Springfield council meeting in which it is decided that the town needs an 'iconic' building. It will be a catalyst for economic regeneration, and a symbol of Springfield's cultural literacy (apparently in question?). Marge decides which architect to invite through a surreal chain of associations, which concludes "...music, culture, culture vulture, vulture scary, scary Gehry; architect Frank Gehry!" Lest we think her mad, it is quickly revealed that the headline of that month's *Concert Hall Review* magazine, referring to the recently completed Disney Concert Hall, had used the pun "So Good its Gehry!" Once complete, spotlights and fireworks mark the grand opening event for the building, however the concert inside is a flop. Everyone has overlooked the fact that they don't like orchestral music at all. Failed in its intended function, children try to use the building as a skate-park, but a staff made up of their grandparents beat them off with brooms. Eventually beneficent plutocrat Mr. Burns buys the concert hall, and converts it into a prison. He adds gun emplacements, but keeps the spotlights.

What we understand by the Marxist term of the Spectacle is this: As culture becomes mediated by sophisticated means of reproduction, those involved in its production become fewer. In order to defend the increasingly exclusive site of production, a number of things happen. The subject of the production tends to turn away from that of the society's life, concentrating on the machinery of reproduction itself. The meaning of what is said becomes less important, while the importance of speaker's authority is increased. The culture ceases to be the deliberative space of the society. Instead it produces spectacles, captivating events that reinforce the existing authority and assert the audience's exclusion from the means of production.

*The Simpsons* situate Gehry in the midst of an integrated Spectacle. The scene of Marge's 'chain of consciousness' suggests that even the unconscious thoughts of the Springfield resident are orchestrated by the mass media. The building's grand opening event that has overlooked the fact that no-one present likes music; its owner's hard line on skateboarding - today's mode of everyday appropriation de rigueur - and its eventual becoming a prison, all point to the architecture's active engagement in a Spectacular politic.

Let us follow our own chain of associations through instances of Gehry's work appearing in our popular culture. In each case we will look for an authentic



event or thing, in itself of no great meaning, but which is engaged in an act of reciprocal legitimation with its Spectacular representation:

1. Gehry's appearance on *The Simpsons*: His real voice lends authority to the cartoons satire, which in turn authorises him as worthy of that satire.
2. Gehry's appearance at the inaugural event of the Disney Concert Hall: Again his real voice appeared, sampled and played back as part of a musical performance, authorising that performance and in turn his architecture as a genuine mother-of-the-arts.
3. Brad Pitt's appearance in Gehry's proposal for Brighton and Hove: The real thing of the restaurant, Pitt's distribution of tables in a room, authorising and being authorised by Pitt's represented movements between tables in rooms on a cinema screen.
4. The Guggenheim Museums appearance in Bilbao: The real thing of the building appearing to the cultural tourist, authorising and being authorised by its reproduced image in cultural supplements and travel advertising.
5. Finally the crumpled ball of paper's appearance in Gehry's recent work; the ball of paper in publications about his design process, authorising and being authorised by its reproduction in the form of his buildings.

The standard apology for the Spectacle is that it is mere equipment, that it simply facilitates reproduction, does not enframe production. The *Simpsons* suggest otherwise, that it is not only the way that Gehry's work is represented that is Spectacular, but also the very notion of representation in his work. They do not support Linder's assertion that the work, to the extent that it exists without content, offers a privileged site for personal reflection. The reduction of content to a minimum in Gehry's work is what makes it so successful as Spectacle. The work offers the least possible interruption to "the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue".<sup>9</sup>

### **Conclusion: What is that thing on your Waterfront?**

However, as this paper contends, the monologue is not completely uninterrupted. There is still content in the work, there are still openings for our engagement. In the face of two Spectacular institutions, *The Simpsons* and Frank Gehry, this paper does what it can and takes them at their word. The original joke, that Gehry's buildings are literally representations of a screwed up piece of paper discarded in a fit of creative

trauma, far from being a suspension of reason, is in fact the only reasonable answer to the question "What is that thing on your waterfront".

It is not a fish, nor is it a phallus that also looks like Marilyn Monroe's skirt. It does not contain a positive Symbolic or Imaginary content. These suggestions, implying that it is an act of genius to make a skirt look unlike a skirt, are further aspects of the spectacle, means to foreclose the question into what the building represents. It is not a Real object, one devoid of any representational content. Not only is this fundamentally impossible, but in the way Gehry works, the Real potential in building is consistently foreclosed.

It is a building that represents, in the most advanced technologies available, a scrap of paper, screwed up and discarded by the architect's hand. The enjoyment that this piece of paper appears to offer is that of the artist's inspiration. This inspiration is the traumatic moment in which any possibility of making a positive statement is renounced in favour of a complete identification with the Real object created at that moment. This private trauma has a public face that it depends on for its legibility. Gehry's work answers the question as to what an architect can do if he is not a positive social technologist. Enjoyable as this may be, we have no direct access to it, because it must be represented for us. The enjoyment actually offered by the work is the enjoyment of our exclusion from this trauma. This enjoyment is offered in many integrated forms, through the architect's celebrity appearance, the building's appearance in the mass media, the ball of paper's appearance in the building itself. The degree to which Gehry has accepted that architecture's role is to provide this enjoyment, the degree to which he has integrated his work into the Spectacle, is the success of his work, is the reason why Marge is certain that he is "the best-est architect in the world!"

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Freudian example of elementary symbolization, the “Fort-Da”, illustrates this relation between repetition and trauma, the ‘compulsion to repeat’: “The child is traumatized by his mothers unforeseeable departures which leave him helpless; as a compensation for this, he plays the game of repeatedly throwing a spool out of his field of vision and pulling it back, accompanying his movement with the signifying dyad Fort-Da (away-here). By way of symbolization, anxiety disappears; the child masters this situation, but the price to pay for it is “the substitution of things by word”...”

Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with The Negative*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, pp. 91.

<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek has written extensively about the trauma and totalitarian politics, showing how public assertions of the gratuitous contradiction and excesses of an authority, by an authority, operate as a means to instil a kind of powerless fascination in their subjects: “An ... example is provided by the great projects of public buildings in the Soviet Union of the 1930’s, which put on top of a flat multi-story office building a gigantic statue of the idealized New Man, or a couple: in the span of a couple of years, the tendency to flatten the office building (the actual workplace for living people) more and more became clearly discernible, so that it changed increasingly into a mere pedestal for the larger-than-life statue – does not this external, material feature of the architectural design reveal the ‘truth’ of the Stalinist ideology in which actual, living people are reduced to instruments, sacrificed as the pedestal for the spectre of the future New Man, an ideological monster which crushes actual living men under his feet? The paradox is that had anyone in the Soviet union of the 1930’s said openly that the vision of the socialist New Man was an ideological monster squashing actual people, they would have been arrested immediately. It was, however, allowed – even encouraged – to make this point via architectural design...” Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, London, Verso, 2004, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> The terms Imaginary, Symbolic and Real are used here in their Lacanian sense. From the translator’s notes, *Écrits*: “The imaginary was then the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined”. “The notion of the ‘symbolic’ came to the forefront in the Rome Report. The symbols referred to here are not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, and forming a closed order – the question is whether this order is or is not complete”. “The ‘real’ emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary: it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its ‘raw’ state (in the case of the subject for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic x. This Lacanian concept of the ‘real’ should not be confused with reality, which is perfectly knowable: the subject of desire knows no more than that, since for it reality is entirely phantasmatic. The term ‘real’... began naturally enough, by presenting, in relation to symbolic substitutions and imaginary variations, a function of constancy: ‘the real is

that which always returns to the same place’. It then became that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: ‘the real is the impossible’. It is in this sense that the term begins to appear regularly, as an adjective, to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic.” Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, London, Tavistock, 1977, pp. ix-x.

<sup>3</sup> “When I was a kid I used to go to the market with my grandmother on Thursdays. We’d go to the Jewish market, we’d buy a live Carp, we’d take it home to her house in Toronto, we’d put it in the bathtub and I would play with that goddamn fish for a day until the next day she’d kill it and make gefilte fish. I think maybe that has something to do with it.” Frank Gehry, *Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects*, New York, Rizzoli, 1985, XVII.

<sup>4</sup> Of the Disney Concert Hall Jencks reports that the building was seen as “‘a luminous crescent’, a series of ‘drive in movie theatres’, ‘ships prows’, a flowering cabbage’, and as ‘the rust belt before the rust’...”. Claiming that “The verbal evidence supports the argument that the enigmatic signifier provokes an emotional response rather like a religious icon, except that now there is no pre-existing referent to the signifier and no doctrine to uphold...”, he goes on to conclude that: “When coherently aligned with metaphors of music – the deeper meaning of the concert hall – these codes guide interpretation along very general paths and are not just random associations... The ultimate meaning of the iconic building may be partially open – and that is the point of the open work of our time – but it is consistent enough to provoke the pilgrim to try to decipher the icons.” Charles Jencks, *The Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma*, London, Frances Lincoln, 2005, pp. 181-182.

<sup>5</sup> “When a fish is unapologetically proposed as a ‘perfect’ architectural form ... fundamental assumptions about architectures obligation to express (or signify) function come under question...Gehry’s Fish repeats [the] problematic of anthropomorphism, structure, shape and space in architectural terms and disturbs a long, collectively repressed concern with anthropomorphism and humanist iconography in architecture... For example, the inside of a fish is not ‘contained’ by its skin (or scales). Nor is the fish intended to be occupied. Like painting or modernist sculpture it is ‘all outside’ or ‘all surface’... the fish suggests neither of the two postmodern tropes that were pervasive in the 1980s: neither the humanist inscription of the whole body nor the fragmented body of deconstructivism.” Mark Linder, *Nothing less than Literal*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2004, pp. 209-211.

<sup>6</sup> The word enjoyment is used here to invoke the Lacanian term *Jouissance*. From the translator’s notes, *Écrits*: “There is no adequate translation of this word in English. ‘Enjoyment’ conveys the sense, contained in *jouissance*, of the enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotation it still retains in French (*jouir* is slang for ‘to come’). ‘Pleasure’, on the other hand, is pre-empted by *plaisir* – and Lacan used the two terms differently. ‘Pleasure’ obeys the law of homeostasis that Freud evokes in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, whereby,

through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. 'Jouissance' transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle."

Lacan, *Ecrits*, pp. x.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that the symbol of the fish, identified by Linder with an aspiration for the 'pure' 'non-architectural' object, appears at exactly this moment in Gehry's writing on his design process; "I kept drawing it and sketching it and it started to become for me like a symbol for a certain kind of perfection that I couldn't achieve in my buildings. Eventually whenever I'd draw something and I couldn't finish the design, I'd draw the fish as a notation". Gehry, *Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects*, pp. XVII

<sup>8</sup> "The spectacle is the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue. It is the self-portrait of power in the epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence. The fetishistic, purely objective appearance of spectacular relations conceals the fact that they are relations among men and classes: a second nature with its fatal laws seems to dominate our environment... If the spectacle, taken in the limited sense of "mass media" which are its most glaring superficial manifestation, seems to invade society as mere equipment, this equipment is in no way neutral but is the very means suited to its total self-movement. If the social needs of the epoch in which such techniques are developed can only be satisfied through their mediation, if the administration of this society and all contact among men can no longer take place except through the intermediary of this power of instantaneous communication, it is because this "communication" is essentially unilateral. The concentration of "communication" is thus an accumulation, in the hands of the existing systems administration, of the means which allow it to carry on this particular administration. The generalized cleavage of the spectacle is inseparable from the modern State, namely from the general form of cleavage within society, the product of the division of social labour and the organ of class domination." Guy de Bord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red, 1977, paragraph 24.