Fallen Cities: Architecture and Reconstruction

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The nature of contemporary power is architectural and impersonal, not personal and representative.
—The Invisible Committee, To Our Friends

THE SITUATION

In Arabic conversations, “the situation” (الوضع) is used to indicate prevailing political, social, and economic uncertainty. Those who use the phrase rarely specify what situation they are referring to. Has there only ever been one situation? The multiplicity implied in its nonspecificity binds one speaker to another in an implied assumption that is both intimate and collective. A former Baathist, Phalangist, Communist, or Pan-Arab Nationalist no longer. Not yet a martyr. Just a shared hesitation to speak the language of parties, names, and events. In their place, an empty term that stands for all possible parties, all possible names, and all possible events: “the situation.” Like an incantation, if you repeat it enough times, a million tiny acts of solidarity will add up to a collective perception. Curiously, this affective precision is secured by the complete absence of content in the statement. “The situation” can literally refer to anything. Its task however is not to convey information but rather to forge agreement that the predicament is so self-evident as to require no further explanation—“it’s bad,” “we” are “in it,” “together.”

This “we” is its work. Perhaps nothing forges solidarity like a shared sense of malaise. Perhaps it all depends on whether this shared sense is exhausted by its capture as malaise. In any case, whatever it lacks in specifics the term more than makes up for in scope. Indeed, the seeming inescapability of the situation colors every question and every judgment on the Arab city. Like the “Arab street,” a foreign policy term now used as shorthand to describe popular Arab sentiment, the “Arab city” appears perpetually aggrieved and inflamed. Undoubtedly, the fact that Arab identity, Arab cities, and Arab streets are constituted as certain kinds of problems, ones that command public interest, invite debate, and are worthy of discussion, cannot be separated from the multifarious geopolitical investments in the region. After all it is Arab identity, not some other identity,
that is at stake here, and not only for Arabs, since the question has for some
time merited discussions of a broader and certainly more pernicious nature
within colonial states with respect to their former empires. The streets and cities
of other communities are mainly matters of interest for those communities, as
well as those whose job it is to be interested in such things; they are simply not
burdened in the same way or by the same fears. To enter into this particular
debate then, even as a strenuous critic, risks accepting its frame and reactivating
the habit of posing questions according to these terms.

How to proceed then? One might take “the situation” and the commonality
of its use in everyday speech as a sign of caution and equivocation, a reluctance
to betray positions or enter into public dispute out of fear of recrimination. But
why insist on seeing this expression as a lack rather than an act of everyday
resistance? Its compulsive repetition is evidence of an attempt to suspend rep-
resentation long enough to allow mutual sympathies to form. If the statement
is not framed as lack, failure, or disavowal—and the suggestive ambiguities it
offers are pursued—then another entry point into questions about the Arab
city can become possible. This other entry point would not presuppose either of
the two terms that guard its entrance, either “Arab” or “city,” let alone the colo-
nial legacies that mark the significance of their conjunction beyond the Arab
world. So instead of starting with its refusal to specify, let us try to start with
its function, which is to forge a collective sentiment. These sentiments, as artic-
ulated through the countless expressions of popular sovereignty that have been
heard in the last few years suggest a nuanced understanding and sensitivity to
the relations between implicit and explicit registers, as well as to the tension
between affect and its capture through systems of representation.

After all, the implicit effective solidarity produced by

waḍā’ al-wad’a [the situation]

can suddenly crystallize into a perfectly explicit revolutionary demand:

'isha’ al-sha’ab [the people]
‘aṣṣa yurūd [want to]
’isaqāt [bring down]
an-nizām [the regime].

I would like to examine the way that new collective sentiments are expressed,
formed, and made explicit within contexts of social transformation. Architec-
ture has a fundamental role to play in these processes, and the examples cited
above provide new insights into how we might understand the political func-
tion of architecture. Beyond an attention to the intrinsic precarity of these
utterances is their urgent need to acquire a life beyond their performance in
everyday conversation, to take forms that survive moments of “popular jubila-
tion,” as Jonathan Littell recently put it.2 When the chorus of voices falls silent,
it is urgent to seize possession of all the passions of resistance, the investments,
the sympathies, and the sentiments, and to finally discover what structures best
secure their fate. It’s a question of desire: how to produce it, how to satisfy the
demands that flow from it, how to secure this satisfaction into the future?

Architecture has a fundamental role to play because it is able to contribute
something essential to the durability of new social diagrams—an impersonal
form. By stating that “the nature of contemporary power is architectural and
impersonal, not personal and representative,” the Invisible Committee point to
something that is growing clearer in leftist thought—something for a construc-
tive political architectural project.3 This is not to say that personality has nothing
to do with politics, or that we are done with the significance of the face, or
manners of speech, or charismatic leaders, but rather to indicate the way that
contemporary forms of power cannot be understood without a serious exam-
ination of our imbrication in material and technical worlds and the subtle yet
persistent solicitations these worlds make on life.

To make this proposition more concrete, I want to draw on a moment in
Lebanese history that was as unlikely as it was decisive. Commissioned by a
proto-state, named after a zarim (leader) designed by a part-time communist
and full-time Carioca, the Rachid Karamé Fair and Exposition project in Leb-
anon by Oscar Niemeyer is an object lesson in architecture and the problem
of nation building. The project depended on the model of the state that gave
birth to it, one that conceived of the nation as something plastic, one that
reserved the right to intervene in that plasticity in order to shape it. But already
by the 1970s, when an aggressive return to laissez-faire markets and the civil
war interrupted the nascent movement toward a social welfare state, Lebanon’s
political leadership was no longer willing or able to secure the conditions in
which the project was supposed to operate.

For many, the sense that individual projects fail to produce social transforma-
tion is troubling, if familiar. Maybe because it mirrors the secret presupposition
that individual works effect social transformation in the first place. At the very
least, it raises the question of architecture’s contribution to social transforma-
tion. In the case of the project in Tripoli, the failure to build a new Lebanese
state, legitimate institutions, and a workable idea of citizenship makes broader
questions regarding the instrumentality of architecture and its contingency
within social movements more explicit rather than less. Still, this judgment of
failure can only be made from the perspective of the 1960s Nahda, or renais-
sance, and its commitment to socialist, nationalistic, and pan-Arab programs.4
A contrary position could be taken, that the inability to take a monolithic form

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in a country without a hegemon was what lent Lebanon its peculiar ability to endlessly absorb regional pressures: not quite a state in any real sense, not even a peace—more a permanent, uneasy truce.

In either case, nation building is an impossible burden for a work of architecture to carry when extracted from the political, financial, and institutional context that commissioned it, lent it sense, and struggled to sustain it. More useful than any appeal to Arab-ness, then, is to examine the concrete processes of experimentation in which social diagrams are produced and how the instruments of modernity are taken up and modified, reactivating and mobilizing archaic structures like feudalism. By social diagram, I refer to implicit norms and explicit spatial and institutional forms that work together to produce, stabilize, and secure specific relations of power, including the production of national identity. In doing so, a more consistent, if transversal, genealogy can be cut through different claims for social change regardless of their periodization or their supposed regional or linguistic commonality. By way of Niemeyer’s intervention in Tripoli, I propose that the diagram is what secures the operation of the work. It is what sustains the drive for transformation, what allows it to persist.

Finally, I suggest that this work sets out to manufacture a certain kind of subject. The era of nation-building projects was directed toward an imagined subject to come, one whose natural affinity to family and community had to be reoriented toward the promise of citizenship and national belonging. In this process, one kind of collective sentiment had to be replaced by another: familial, communal bonds would need to dissolve and national ones would need to emerge to take their place. However, there was a challenge. The nation did not exist. It would need to be invented. In the case of Lebanon, the reformist nature of this project meant that this transformation would take on an inherently pedagogical nature. The state would draw heavily on urban, infrastructural, and architectural projects to dissolve filiations at a communal scale in order to better establish it at the scale of the state. Exactly how this was supposed to be accomplished is a matter of importance not only because the era was such a crucial juncture in Lebanese history, one that belies the catastrophic upheaval soon to follow, but also because it raises questions of a broader disciplinary nature.

THE DOME IN THE PARK

Returning to social transformation via this refrain, “the situation” requires that we distinguish between two different aspects: an interpretation that signifies some lack on one side (the inability to specify) and a direct intervention in the field of subjectivity between the speakers on the other (implying a common perception). One could say that architecture is still far too indebted to the

first at the complete expense of the latter. In order to explain this and justify why it is relevant to a discussion on architecture, a digression through theory is necessary, primarily to differentiate between a signifying and a-signifying signs. This distinction, which comes from the work of Félix Guattari, refers to those signs or aspects of signs that exist prior to their formalization as meaning. Guattari uses the concept to break the dominance of structuralist linguistics and psychoanalysis on our understanding of the unconscious. With respect to the statement “the situation,” it works to mobilize certain kinds of passions prior to the allocation of positions or the articulation of identities. In fact we could say these substrata of affect become a kind of raw material for the subsequent
formalization of linguistic statements. The difference is crucial: the absence of the referent with respect to the meaning of “the situation” produces the conditions under which a new referent (solidarity) can emerge. The condition that is being produced by the statement is nothing less than a small but precise intervention in the formation of subjectivity itself. The concept of the a-signifying sign invites us to attend to processes of subjective transformation that exist prior to or alongside understanding—that is to say prior to or alongside of the recognition of meaning in signs.

Acknowledging both the operational and semantic character of signs through this spoken example offers a way of thinking about architecture, especially the idea that “intelligibility” should be the dominant mode of reception. Consider the example of the dome, a paradigmatic element within Christian and Islamic architectural traditions. It’s an enduring form whose resistance to transformation makes it particularly qualified to reflect the immutability of sacred and profane images of the cosmos. Think not only of churches and mosques but also of observatories and planetariums. Responding to historians Rudolf Wittkower and Heinrich Wolfflin—who argued that dome of central-plan church architecture is of more concern. The issue of Arab identity and its architecture is of more concern. The legacy of this question and its hold over contemporary accounts of Arab identity and its architectural representation is a case in point, since it is still posed in terms of tropes and sometimes antagonistic social, theological, and political claims about the bodies arranged in concentric spheres around the earth, yet all power—includ

Indeed Wittkower, Wolfflin and Evans might well be justified in framing this problem in terms of codings and decodings of meaning insofar as such framing describes how the work was often reasoned by its authors and received by its audiences. The legacy of this question and its hold over contemporary accounts of architecture is of more concern. The issue of Arab identity and its architectural representation is a case in point, since it is still posed in terms of tropes and their representational adequacy. So the debate around domes or even the problem of appropriate and inappropriate orders now persists with meshrabih, geometric tiling, pointed arches, and vaulting are deployed to signify “Islam” or “Arabness” along a spectrum ranging from very subtle and discreet (good) to vulgar and kitschy (bad). Consider the Lebanese Pavilion in the Rachid Karamé Fair and Exposition site: a square-plan, open auditorium framed by a colonnade using a pointed arch. Most will recognize that this particular form refers to Ottoman traditions, of which there are many examples in the area. Some will not grasp the allusion, however, since the sign’s legibility is dependent on the observer’s prior knowledge. I happen to like the arches; others will find them unadorned, and most will probably pay them little attention. In any case, the form is supposed to signify cultural belonging and history.

Architecture works on us and through us regardless of whether we “get” it, regardless of its intelligibility, and regardless of our capacity to appreciate its tropes or derive pleasure from their modification. This is an important political point; at stake is nothing less than a claim about what architecture does outside of architectural discourse—what it does to nonarchitects. Buildings are primarily nondiscursive objects even if they are always enmeshed in discourses of every kind. This is why the concept of the diagram is so relevant here. It allows us to place the nondiscursive, a-signifying aspects of architecture into relation with the discursive, signifying aspects—architecture’s instrumentality is always bound to the nonarchitectural. Diagrams are not manifested literally as specific tropes, or even as systems of organization. Neither the pilotis, the free plan, the New York frame, or the Dom-ino are diagrammatic in and of themselves, nor can they be ever considered in purely architectural terms, whatever that might mean. They only act on the social body as intended when they are secured by a constellation of cultural attitudes, laws, customs, regulations, and other requirements. The discursive and nondiscursive elements work together within any diagram. The panopticon would simply be a damp, round building with a tower in the middle without the transformation of penal codes, prison reform movements, the judiciary, and a police force. The modern domestic unit would just be another way of strategically segregating and bringing together bodies without the “charitable” incentives of philanthropic organizations, the regular assessments of housing inspectors, or instruction manuals for poor families. Do prisoners or members of a nuclear family need to assess assessments of housing inspectors, or instruction manuals for poor families. Do prisoners or members of a nuclear family need to recognize these histories in the disposition of rooms and arrangement of functions? Will the disposition of rooms and arrangement of functions cease to act on their habits, pattern their socialization, or structure their gender roles if these histories are unintelligible? In other words, absent an understanding of its sociopolitical motive, will the prison cease to shape them as certain kinds of human subjects?
To answer this, consider another dome. In the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, in the park-like Rachid Karamé Fair and Exposition site, there is a dome that wears its dereliction a little better than the buildings around it. Some 62 meters wide, its slightly squat, not quite hemispherical shape gives little away. Only the acoustics and the sunken orchestra pit inside betray its uniqueness. The dome was supposed to be a venue for experimental theater and music, a program that makes it possible to calibrate the precise distance between the present situation in Lebanon and the past situation in Lebanon.

Back when it was still called the Syrian army and not yet “the regime,” thousands of soldiers were stationed in temporary barracks alongside the dome. These days, because of the situation, only the especially curious venture in. A one-hour drive from Tripoli will take you to the top of the Lebanese ranges, or the Qalamoun Mountains across the Bekaa Valley. From either vantage point, the sense of resignation is hard to shake. Nevertheless, these lost modernities deserve closer scrutiny. If a system of subjectification was built into the fair and exposition, it is worth asking exactly what kind of techniques would be addressed to the bodies and characters of those meant to populate the project? What was specific about architecture’s contribution to the project of nation building during this period? Is it possible to account for the imagined instrumentality of the project without relying exclusively on a semantic interpretation of its tropes?

TECHNOLOGIES OF NATIONHOOD

The exposition type played a critical role within nation-building projects throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, exemplifying concepts of citizenship and cultural belonging. The Rachid Karamé Fair and Exposition site draws on this history, especially its appropriation during the postcolonial era. Surrounded by a four-lane road and nestled in the elbow of a freeway connecting Tripoli to Beirut, the 1.1 kilometer long elliptical site might pass for the world’s largest roundabout were it not for the occasionally beguiling structure poking past the canopy of trees. The exposition and fair facilities occupy maybe one-third of the site, with the rest set aside as an imagined parkland for the metropolis that never materialized around it. The 750 meter long expo hall is the most dominant element. To its east lie pavilions set in gardens, most of which were intended for some form of ongoing cultural production.

Commissioned in 1962, the project depended on the brief appearance of something resembling a social welfare state, in which large-scale public works were seen as integral to perceptions of political legitimacy and therefore to nation building. By the 1970s, however, pan-Arabism, which first came to prominence with Nasser’s regime in Egypt and Gaddafi’s proposal for a Federation of Arab Republics, was on the decline. This indicated a regional shift away from secular and socialist principles toward sectarian political alignments. Military defeats and economic stagnation contributed to widespread discontent in the Arabic-speaking world. In Lebanon, the contraction of the state, the withdrawal of government from social services, and an inability to implement electoral reforms or build stable institutions coincided with the extreme regional destabilizations occurring as a result of the conflict between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), now operating from Lebanese bases.

Most exposition histories focus on the organization of the exhibitions and the strategies used to order, represent, and juxtapose different cultures. At times, scholars will turn to the technical innovations used in the construction of the exposition hall or within the exhibits themselves. Niemeyer’s proposal for Tripoli is different from the prototypical world’s fair or international exposition in that it combines an exhibition hall with buildings dedicated to cultural production within a landscaped urban complex that was intended to be used as a model for structuring the growth of a city. These four elements—the exposition hall, the cultural pavilions, the park, and the urban plan—should be understood as complementary components within a nationalistic, pedagogical project.

There are two main forms of movement through the site corresponding to the linear organization of the exposition hall and the placement of the pavilions. Niemeyer constructed a series of ramps and elevated vantage points that encourage visitors to continually withdraw from the mass and survey the crowd before returning back down to the ground. Here, the crowd could see itself seeing and being seen. Outside of protests and demonstrations, organized public gatherings of this scale were unprecedented, and the effect of finding oneself caught in this reciprocal spectacle would have been quite powerful. Being shaped here was not just architecture; that architecture forged an audience that could, in the vastness of its own spectacle, become self-aware.

As Lebanon urbanized during the colonial period, ‘asabiyyah (an Arabic term referring to social cohesion within a community group) and feudal familial ties that had traditionally structured sectarian belonging persisted in response to a highly competitive capitalist environment and the insecurity such an environment produced. Old networks of patronage remained important in the absence of a legitimate state able to insure the poor against the difficulties of urban life. In Lebanon, metropolitan anonymity did not dissolve feudal or familial bonds; it re-territorialized them and made them stronger. For a brief decade between the mid-1950s and 1960s, however, a concerted attempt was made to dissolve these links in order to establish them on new and different terms. The project in Tripoli is part of this history. Its organization manifests an attempt...
to orchestrate a set of affects and feelings of belonging that, when inscribed in
dominant narratives of nationhood, would become untethered from their com-
munal histories.

One can see the project as a machine designed to produce new relation-
ships between the crowd and the individual, and therefore the nation—a mass
orchestration of affect. However, the surplus of affect produced by the specta-
cle of the crowd that Niemeyer orchestrated through the ramps and vantage
points would as yet remain undifferentiated, little more than a mass gripped by
various existential intensities and feelings. This unformed set of affects there-
fore had to be captured and assigned a proper location within the social order.
The crowd recently decoded must be recoded, classified, and naturalized within
a national narrative. The exposition hall and the display of “characteristic”
elements from the various nations assembled would inform the normalization
and stabilization of a new Lebanese identity. Visitors would learn to distinguish
themselves as citizens by acquiring new rules of public conduct, especially the
consumption and appreciation of cultural artifacts.

Ordering the world into an image, as Timothy Mitchell puts it in his
description of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, produces two effects:
first, a representation of national difference and, second, the extension of a
colonial system of representation into the world itself? In Tripoli, the mass pub-
lar organization of the crowd and the relation of the individual’s vantage point
within it draw on the typological history of the international exposition and
its curatorial organization. Through arranging encounters with artifacts, the
fairground would have attempted to recode this undifferentiated population in
order to define Lebanon’s newly won place among other nations. In addition
to exposition planning and exhibition design, Niemeyer introduces a third ele-
ment: the pavilions for cultural production and performance. These pavilions
locate the citizen in a position of imagined ownership over the products of
cultural activity.

We might imagine the components of the fair working together to achieve
the following ends: The subjects’ communal bonds are confronted by some-
thing new—an orderly mass public spectacle, in which the subject undulates
into and out of the mass producing a charge of affect that is not yet formal-
ized. The consumption of the artifacts within the exhibition positions them
in the world through a national narrative, until finally they are led to see
themselves as the imagined producers of this national narrative. This is what
the architectural machine accomplishes within the social diagram. The first
component of the machine operates using a-signifying signs. The ramps and
changes in height are not symbols to be interpreted; they intervene directly in
the subjective field. Only later do the elements collaborate to produce signs
whose meaning must be read. However, the precondition of meaning in the

sign is the visceral charge produced within the subject. This representation
of nationhood can only operate inssofar as it can recode and formalize this
substratum of affects and passions the spatial qualities of the project produce.
However, this a-signification was only the architectural aspect of the diagram.
The larger pedagogical ambition depended on more than the designs build-
ings have on human nature. They depended on a state that was willing to see
itself as the architect of this national narrative, one in which these kinds of
large-scale infrastructure projects were secured and oriented to specific ends
through forms of cultural administration, curatorial strategies, exhibition pro-
grams, and the media. The weakness of the state meant that the pedagogical
diagram and its technologies of nationhood did not stabilize before the onset
of civil war in 1975.

AFTER THE REGIMES

Those who refuse to wean themselves off an enthusiasm for politics
project insurrections without end, powers constituent but never consti-
tuted, interruptions that are never the prelude to less abject continuities.
—The Invisible Committee, To Our Friends

Of the many outcomes of “the situation,” perhaps the most accepted is the
conflation of destruction and reconstruction. Revenue from luxury apartments
will shower down upon those who broker peace. In war, land speculation
makes a joke of military calculus. Soon enough, the rhetoric of imminent
futures promised in renderings of a new Aleppo or a new Damascus will dou-
ble, albeit in an architectural register, the present legacy of violence through
systematic destitution and dispossession. Before these images of cities to come
have acquired their final touches, however, the future they depict will have
been engineered into existence through land expropriation and models of real
estate speculation, through promissory notes based on calculations of future
revenue according to reliable standards and estimates of return. Untethered
from the realities of existing land tenures, undisciplined labor markets, and
unpredictable steel prices, they will reach purely speculative heights. Like the
images of many urban futures, those destined for the “Arab world” will need
to become standardized before they can be bankable—the recent images from
a design for a city of seven million people between the Suez Canal and the
hores of the Nile being a case in point. Like a bushel of wheat or a barrel of
oil, the urban future has become a standard measure. Its consistency, its ubiq-
uity, and its reliability are what allow it to circulate. It is not surprising that
promised cities act like commodities: in one sense, that is increasingly what
they are. The future has to learn how to flow. Its promise has to become liquid before it can become solid. As with grain and oil, too many inconsistencies leads to friction.

Despite the inherent conservatism of real estate markets and the dispiriting reliability of these propositions, their colonization of imaginations is far from complete. There is no lack of discontent toward—or critique of—these propositions within architectural discourse, and certainly no lack of emotional investment in alternative futures for Arab cities and Arab streets. In Aleppo, in Amman, in Beirut, in Cairo, in Damascus, in Gaza, and in Jerusalem, there are the most startling signs of political experimentation, social movements, activism, and institution building. There are, in other words, signs of survival, resistance, and invention to be found everywhere. From experimental coalitions on human and natural rights in Lebanon to proposals for democratic federalism in Southeastern Anatolia, from feminist movements in Kurdish communities to autonomous neighborhood assemblies in beleaguered Syrian cities, we see brave and vital attempts to reimagine social ties and forms of political organization. But without access to the equivalent of what Timothy Mitchell describes as the future’s “engineering works,” it is difficult to imagine how these precious experiments of alternative social orders can be sustained.

Discontent, critique, and desire alone will not be enough to turn aspirations into reality, because the various systems of calculation and capitalization that drive real estate development have a particular kind of durability. The aversion toward “social engineering” within architecture or urban design has not resulted in societies that lack “engineering,” let alone societies that are more perfectly ordered. On the contrary, the result is simply societies whose order and engineering have been dictated by those who have access to the future’s infrastructure, leaving the rest condemned to precarity.

Perhaps the people that were supposed to inhabit the fair site in Tripoli ended up materializing fifty years later in the streets and squares of other cities? These crowds, recently gathered and too quickly dispersed by brutal countervolations, insist that we question assumptions about the durability and stabilization of new social orders. The contingency of architecture with respect to these orders suggests a more careful examination of histories of subjectification as a pedagogical project. Such an inquiry would not simply entail escaping from signification but rather describing the feelings, codings, and structures in which signifying and a-signifying elements cooperate within a political project. The institutionalization of social movements might be one place to start, and architecture’s impersonal form might have much to contribute. After all, when regimes are brought down and after the people have expressed their demands, new kinds of structures to support new habits of life are needed if legacies of social transformation are to be kept alive.

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Dome for experimental theater and music, and Lebanese National Pavilion.
Important parts of this essay evolved as a response to Timothy Mitchell’s keynote address at “Architecture and Representation: The Arab City,” Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York, November 31, 2014, included in this volume as “The Capital City” (page 270), and as a result of an ongoing conversation with Nora Akawi, beginning in Palestine on March 20, 2015, on the function and understanding of “the situation.”


The exemplary account of this period and its regional effects is Samir Kassir, *Being Arab* (London: Verso, 2006).


Writing a decade after Evans, Jeff Kipnis makes the following comment regarding Villa Savoye, “It works for me and on me, but I can understand why others just see a nice looking house” (“Re-originating Diagrams,” in *Peter Eisenman: Feints*, ed. Silvio Cassarà [Milan: Skira, 2006], 194). The comment comes in the context of an attempt to explain the role of the diagram in architecture and its potential political instrumentalities. Yet in every example cited in the text, from D. H. Lawrence’s appreciation of Cézanne’s apples to the author’s own appreciation of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, intelligibility is tied to recognition, especially the recognition of signs. As he suggests, “only some are sensitive to architectural effects in the full political dimension” (194). The cultivation of “sensitivity” notwithstanding, and regardless of whether one reads this as a claim for prior acculturation or just personal taste, these signs are always things that are conveyed through formal tropes, in this case Le Corbusier’s five points. Architecture may or may not have specificity as a medium as Kipnis claims, but the model for how the medium works is stubbornly linguistic.


Mitchell, “Capitalization and Representation,” 270.