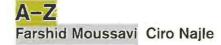# A–Z
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Awe is an affection resulting from an encounter with the sublime and is therefore enmeshed with an individual's subjectivity. For this reason it can only be an indirect act of an architect. It can only be triggered by other means, which fully take over the individual's attention without managing it directly. A sudden, overwhelming presence; a far-too-complex construct; an exceeding intelligence; a superb, irreducible being; a giant; a quick glance at a desired object; a deep extension; a dark imagination; an abyss: all can produce awe.

Blob formless, orderless, structureless, tasteless, greedy, gluttonous, sticky, disgusting, cheap, vulgar, horrifying, voracious, unstoppable, undefined, faceless, swelling, abnormal, curvy, fluffy, vague, indistinct, irreducible, primitive, one, and many. Its power lies not on force, persuasion, impact, influence, clarity, effectiveness, precision, dominance, or control but on sheer unintelligibility. So does its weakness. Used in architecture, it unifies the multiplicity of elements at play, thus reducing the complexity of a building.

Consistency along with complexity, pursued as an image rather than a performance, can be a consequence of the sheer excitement of using digital fabrication tools, which can cut any number of any shape. But true complexity includes the invisible in buildings, too. An iPhone does not look complex but is one of the most complex objects we have around. Consistency is therefore an operative ethics of managing complexity and its derivatives in order to surpass apparent complexity—that is, complication for the self-exhausting sake of complication.

Data the quantitative values that compute the conditions of an entity, phenomenon, relationship, or state of things, is not the thing itself but its codification through definitions that operate as a vehicle for its analysis, diagnosis, evaluation, simulation, and organization. More than a means of management, data is pre-architectural by definition: it is the plural "datum" onto which manifold organizations are—or can be—constructed. Once things are constructed, the sense of things does not require the data, which exists outside the thing itself, as mediation.

Empathy is subjective and therefore can be positive or negative. Nevertheless, repeated encounters with buildings can lead to habits of use that become unconscious. To discard habits and enable new experiences, buildings must be dissociated from conventions around which they are organized. The agency of architects lies not in determining empathies but in disrupting them, thus preventing them from becoming routine. Empathy is in equal measure the best friend of conservative architecture (its favorite source of self-confirmation) and the worst enemy of the materialist architect (whose sensitivity is as fine and sophisticated as it is hardhearted).

Function—often associated directly with use, according to the deterministic ethos of the functionalist tradition—more broadly involves the general relationship of something to something else, of which it is a function; yet seldom is the relationship one-to-one. Function is how things correspond, deny, reject, attract, constrain, become, determine, or even ignore one another—that is, what things do to each other, under what particular modality, in a net. Consequently, they make something unique and distinct from themselves. The function of a corridor, for example, is not in itself but rather the result both of what that corridor is comprised of and of that which remains outside the corridor, to which it corresponds.

Global practice of architecture has brought unease among architecture critics such that the architectural identity of nations is being erased. However, the same process that breeds similarities generates differences, too, albeit on another scale. To see them, it is necessary to look at reality differently. The nostalgia for long-lost identities—as artificial as anything else—and the desperation about belonging—at this point, inevitably hypocritical—requires being overcome by an appetite for singularity within the generic and for developing new capabilities and finer, more resolute, detached sensitivies. More than loss, this involves courage, imagination, and vehemence.

History is a repository of architectural material embedded with inertia, constraints, propensity, and latency; a source of organizations, modalities, models, types, techniques, operations, and ethics embedded with productive resistance. Seen through the material-ists' eyes, history is a pool of abstract knowledge, a mine of learning and working power, waiting to be dissected, unfolded, expanded, and taken to higher extremes and outer thresholds. To enable these actions, knowledge from the past—whether in the form of architectural concepts or in the form of design techniques—must be dissociated from its original motives or causes to reveal its ahistorical material content and become the seed for addressing new architectural scenarios.

Intelligence is gained through training the mind to think, whereas expertise is gained through receiving already known knowledge. Because no two design scenarios are ever the same, to engage them actively design needs intelligence rather than expertise. Intelligence involves defining interesting problems before assuring perfect solutions, questioning the repetition of the same each time rather than endlessly calibrating its effectiveness, and interrogating the default rather than applying it automatically and proficiently. Intelligence, therefore, necessarily has embedded within it a second level, through which it constantly redefines its own ground of certainties and premises: call it "the will of self-alienation."

Joints are the evidence of inconsistencies and differences in kind that become distin-guishable within the material continuum as a result of the segregation of problems in domains of thought, fields of expertise, realms of practice, or disconnected organizations and objectified as irreducible architectural entities. The expression of that evidence is usually called "detail": smart solutions to frequently unchallenged problems.

But there is another way to think of joints—as that which is inherent in any assemblage composed of heterogeneous elements that enter into relations with one another and cohere into a consistency. This, however, does not mean that joints do not exist, as con-sistency is an operation rather than a form. Heterogeneities and assemblages, such as buildings, can have many joints and yet be consistent.

Kitsch as opposed to the "authentic," can be pursued deliberately to make things easy to understand and easy to sell. But it can also be pursued intentionally in order to rescue things from the burden of originality and authenticity. Paradoxically, in the first case, kitsch works as an authentic release from the burden of intellectual mediation, while in a second instance (and in successive ones) it becomes an increasingly mediated artistic procedure that is consciously destined to emancipate, thus reintroducing the distance that it fights against through various forms of self-conscious humor. These forms take over its allegedly original instantaneity.

Limits can be seen as restrictive of freedom, when regarded through the lens of the author's indulgent subjectivity, or as the objective tightening of the space of work, when considered from the point of view of the work of architecture itself and its procedure. Under both registers, the limitlessness of an outstanding piece of architecture is nothing but intensified and provided sense, autonomy, and strength by limitations. When limit is considered not in terms of the architect's own authorship but in terms of the architect as an agent, it is no longer restrictive of freedom. Instead it becomes a platform from which individuals are liberated from conforming to forces that encourage habit and passivity over conscious choice in the way they are encountered in everyday life. In this sense, limit for an architect embraces the notion of responsibility without requiring the sacrifice of freedom.

Model is an anexact system of development that integrates a series of material (physical, structural, sensorial) traits and is able to respond to a multiplicity of concerns. It gener-ates different objects in space and time, such as the Gothic system, comprised of a pair of crossed roof arches with a polygonal ground plan, buttressed by side arches. The height of the central and side arches could vary (being either equal or different in height), as could the shape of the plan, resulting in singular cathedrals. Models mutually restrict their internal relationships through modalities, integrating them into wholes—multiplici-ties—that are simultaneously stable and unpredictable, generic and singular, structured and ductile, consistent and contingent, normal and normative, precise and open-ended, thus challenging the schematic assumption that in order for architecture to achieve rele-vance, it has to give up its inherent desire for permanence and universality.

Nature is one of architecture's most conceptually exuberant and theoretically inexhaustible inventions, prolific (as it has been throughout history) in generating organizational models, points of view, spectrums of imagination, ethical mandates, and visual paraphernalia. Nature is the counterpart of architecture within architecture: its other side embedded within, its most unexpected self, its other inside, monstrous, without which it appears as if it would

have never been born. Nature is wilderness, chaos, order, pre-architecture, landscape, ground, ecology, systems dynamics, a paradigm of beauty and ugliness, a model of uncertainty, or a pet, depending upon architecture. However defined, an inventive nature, hard or soft, creates an ecology of parts that is not separated from culture.

Organization defines the practice of an architect and involves numerous things that must be gathered into a single context to bring about economic, structural, informational, social, or climatic effects, among others. It is conventionally interpreted as the unification of things into a coherent whole, whereas it can also be approached as the arrangement or hanging together of disparate elements without unity. No matter how it is considered, organization implies making choices, both aesthetic and political. Inherently tendentious, organization involves the (desirable) reduction of particularities for the construction of a collective order that qualitatively exceeds in value the sum of its parts. Organization operates before and beyond form, and surpasses its figural and superficial connotations through the coordination of inner structures. Organization involves added value and ever-higher levels of thought at each stage of its process. It is the hard bone of architecture as a generalist discipline.

Planning involves the idea that the initiative of the private (even if public) and the practice of the architect are submitted to the common interest. What remains uncertain is what stands for and holds together this idea of the common: what guides its visions, what the time span of its mindset is, how far into the future it is projected, how proactively or reactively it proceeds, what its medium and techniques of mediation are, how general it attempts to be, and how much it determines, overwhelms, or calibrates cases. In this context, organizational models contain and surpass the straightjacket of ideological form, out of a more robust idea of process and a stronger will of organization: the paradigm of clarity, overcome by that of sturdiness. The interesting aspect of planning today is that it is culturally bounded. Planning in France is entirely different from planning in the UK, which is again different from planning in the US and Japan and, no doubt, very different from planning in China. At a time when mobility of technologies, materials, and designers is contributing to sameness in architecture, planning is a source of difference. Planning is ultimately a matter of speed, quality, level of democracy, and sense of drama. It is therefore anything but irrelevant for an architect.

Quantity and Quality are two sources of difference and expression, and are inseparable from one another. There is no quality that does not have quantity as an inherent measure of its intensity, and there is no quantity that carries no quality. The choice of what quantity of a quality or of what quality in a quantity is a matter of aesthetics and politics. But as large amounts of material, exceedingly large organizations, massive quantities of information, extremely slow or rapid processes, and exceptionally multifarious levels engender, through quantitative excess, new forms of quality that are irreducible to normal standards, the relationship between the two goes beyond their polarity and complementarity, to become integrated in a single concept, the expression of which overwhelms both politics and aesthetics.

Representation in architecture—drawings, schemes, diagrams, statements, documents, pamphlets, sketches, images, blueprints—is itself architecture in the classical sense: culture's means of description and control of matter. Seen at that level of generality and under that ontological register, whose active role in history ranges from the classical treatises—and their building collections—to the manifestos of modern architecture—and their pavilions, monuments, exhibitions, installations, or prototypes—representation in architecture is probably as influential as buildings themselves and, perhaps, more capable of enduring. Representation's inborn paradox is to be the physical manifestation of architecture's intangibility. However, representation is ultimately a way to archive narratives outside the design process itself. Thinking of drawings as representation suggests that architects have developed architectural ideas in their minds and then used drawings to communicate them. Given how complex and multilayered buildings are, this is impossible. If we were to design buildings in our head, they would be very simple buildings. Drawings construct ideas for the assembly of the myriad of elements of which buildings are comprised. Drawings, used not as an archive of the past or as the re-presentation of what we already know but rather as tools to design, are constructions of what has not existed before. They are therefore presentations, not representations.

Systematicity is a mode of operating that views reality as vital, dynamic, and open, but it should not be confused with rule-following. As Wittgenstein states in his *Philosophical Investigations*, published in 1953, "no course of action could be determined by a rule, because any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." Beyond rules and broader than logical set-ups, systematicity involves the embedment of internal consistency in actions as they happen—the codification and organization of becoming processes as they unfold in time. Through systematicity, architectural technique frees itself from the straightjacket of technocracy and embraces its responsibility for contingency. Systematicity implies absorbing all forms of chance in a project as deliberate and wished for, turning them into the constituents of authorship and making them inherent to the architect's will in regards to the object.

The sublime is the beautiful taking the sudden form of a synthetic thought, simultaneously engaging and rejecting the mere enjoyment of things and thus elevating the aesthetic experience from the sensible into the purely mental. The sublime is the ultimate "as if" condition. It involves the unmediated encounter with the unknown under rigorously controlled conditions, bringing into the world a completely abstract form of life that overturns any standard of niceness. Ordinariness and generality, when potentiated through radical skepticism, become sublime, rather than kitsch or common. The word "sublime" has been used to refer to that which is unpresentable. This usage of the word does not seem to define space for architecture but rather an experience of self-transcendence through indeterminate realities.

Ubiquity the experience of that which is everywhere, is today most generated by digital connectivity. Whether it regards reading a book, buying something, watching a performance, making a transaction, or socializing, it can be everywhere and is therefore

ubiquitous. Architecture, however, is not about being everywhere but about being somewhere. It has bounds, definiteness, and ending. In spite of this, architecture's dream of being everywhere has gone through various paradigms. While one extreme associates ubiquity with generality, extensiveness, infiniteness, lack of borders, repetition, indifference, neutrality, simplicity, blankness, and dominion, the other extreme achieves ubiquity by means of the opposite values: singularity, intensiveness, irreducibility, self-affirmation, variegation, differentiation, specificity, complexity, potential, and power. The question of architecture at a time of globalization is how to synthesize the two within a single model.

Vitality is not a (rather illustrative) matter of securing physical movement, programmatic flexibility, systemic adaptability, material endurance, human participation, or ecological or biological content in the architectural project but instead, a matter of how life, as a force, is embedded in organization both abstractly and performatively. Life is the name of the intangible in architecture, which, after having lost its aura, has possibly encountered concrete mechanisms for enduring. In *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), Robert Venturi writes, "I am for vitality as well as validity," and "I am for messy vitality over obvious unity [...] for the implicit function as well as the explicit function." This proposition for the play between the aesthetic and the practical defines the agency of an architect: to select, prioritize, and assemble elements and parameters, and in doing so, give life to a building. "Validity," "messy," and "function" were interpreted too literally, however, within the postmodern "style," resulting in buildings that stood as representations of a dualism between implicit and explicit function rather than buildings where the two cofunction to generate the unseen.

Work is a building, a plan, a diagram, a text, a book, or a strategy for an urban development. In this sense of the word, "work" is not mere effort but encounters with different subjects and mediums that result in new creations, which in turn can serve as the basis for other encounters and new insights, resulting in other work. If work commonly means that energy has been transferred between systems by means of forces, what remains to be seen, each time, in architecture, is what source of power inflicts those forces—what the unavoidable and/or available constraints are, what the changes induced in matter as a result are, and what in turn their new latent power is, all of which the architect claims as the result of his/her will.

X-ray is a metaphor for making visible the invisible; that is, the incorporeal, virtual, pre-architectural condition of architecture—its invisible organizations, energies, processes, relationships, dynamics, transfers, and exchanges—seen as matter. When the invisible became visible in architecture, not only did the discipline encounter a myriad of new possibilities but more importantly, the idea itself of possibility was rendered obsolete, surpassed by the idea of potential. Information took over the medium, and the architect was as empowered as urged into the managerial. The challenge today is how to remain in charge of—and responsible for—this power as it becomes fully available. The dichotomy of the architect as manager or ideologue is a fallacy. Architects who act as managers can be as ideological about their commitment to architecture as a service as those

whose commitment is to an architecture of pure ideas. Once we abandon dichotomies, we begin to see other ways that architects can use information, treating it as raw matter for tactical thinking. An informed architect is an agent able to propose ideas that shift or change a given reality rather than "ideals" that float independently and allow the status quo to remain. The architect's commitment is not to service pure ideas but to be political—to engage with life in order to change it.

Yes rather than no, can lead to opportunities, a new journey, an adventure, a new work. In architectural practice saying no is often considered a form of resistance to conventions, such as established rules, generic projects, low budgets, and so on. But rather than disengaging from the processes that shape built form, saying yes implies becoming imperceptible, immersing oneself in the specific forces that shape each built form and steering them into a line of flight or escape from conventions. Saying yes, therefore, is a way to be political. The politics of yes is the politics of full embracement, which involves both a detached and a resolute form of acting, as if there were no time left. Such politics implies overcoming the realm of politics as an end in itself and entering into the realm of sheer undertaking.

Zeitgeist or the spirit of the time, involves the assumption that architect and architecture, rather than constructs, are the passive expression of their time. Problems with this: one, architect and architecture are allegedly preceded and fully explainable by their epoch, and reducible to it; two, epochs are closed, coherent apparatuses instead of open-ended, divergent manifolds; three, epochs are constructed a posteriori by the historian or critic as if happening in real time instead of being unpredictably constructed and unfolded by their doers (who include historians and critics); and four, as alluring as the concept of spirit may be, it always involves the assumption that matter is elsewhere, detached from its divine and unreachable status. To these, pure subjectivity, free will, or radical expression are not thought-provoking alternatives but the other side of the same myth, burdening the subject to the same extent as they apparently liberate it. Seen from within, the Zeitgeist is what is constructed at every action, following and/or against the manifold previous ones, which inhabit history as if a flatland of coexisting lives. This is, in turn, constructed on the basis of models, without which no theory is possible—or, as historian Fernand Braudel states, "no theory, no history." And it is not abstract, not merely personal, not arbitrary, and especially, not one among many possible others in a field of endless—and valueless—possibilities. Rather, epochs are constructed along planes of consistency, themselves constructed on the way. Zeitgeist is, in this sense, an easy way out of the present and its manifold becoming, of which we are—authorial—forces.

Note: This text is the result of a series of brief e-mail exchanges regarding concepts proposed in turns, commenced by one and elaborated by the other, over the course of one to 24 hours.