

彼得·艾森曼

EISENMAN ARCHITECTS

当代世界建筑经典精选
Selected and Current Works



世界图书出版公司

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Introduction

The Eisenman Wave

By Sanford Kwinter

It is difficult to say which is the more impressive career accomplishment: to have generated an endlessly renewed trail of agitative hypotheses over a 30-year period, or to have eschewed nearly all the comforts of consolidation—and the inevitable complacencies—afforded by conventional, repeatable “successes” such as the production of “great” buildings or the development of a signature style. In both these respects, Peter Eisenman differs not only from other architects of his own generation (it would, after all, be charitable to say that the work of his fellow “New York Five” architects has now degenerated into nothing better than mannerism), but from nearly all other architects working today.

When Eisenman’s work began in the early sixties, it was, and remains to this day, a primarily *tactical* enterprise: its force from the outset was drafted from that of the enemy—classicism—but was also turned aggressively against it. The Eisenman parti has always been to deploy mobile entities such as *historical circumstances* (holocaust, Hiroshima), *situations* (death of God, transformations of domesticity and its mores) and *idea-moments* (generative grammar, structuralism, conceptualism, anti-humanism) against the ethos of established orders and places, reversing the age-old bourgeois victory of values of domain over values of time. Eisenman’s task has been to develop a practice that, to borrow an expression from Foucault and Nietzsche, would come *from outside*—a new type of modernist adversarial practice to be launched from a placeless but volatile “steppe,” home of disembodied fluxes, raw will to power, and the destabilizing forces of historical change. There is not now, nor has there ever been, a fixable Eisenmanian alternative architecture; tactical space after all is made up of a series of seized “occasions” (Greek *kairós*), so that the momentary triumphs that punctuate its unfolding campaign are never—indeed cannot be—stored. Like the autonomous, fluid nomad civilizations who made legendary assaults on sedentary cultures, Eisenman’s practice is assembled and articulated *in movement* and in the spirit of movement. Both operate through invasion, disruption, and the release of temporarily trapped forces into free motion and recombination.

In the case of Eisenman, I will argue, these movements and abrasions unfold on three distinct yet interconnected levels: the intellectual–historical, the discursive–textual, and the material–formal. Yet despite an amazing and persistent paranoia among colleagues (primarily the dull and unfree), there exists no Eisenmanian fiefdom, no domain of

concentrated “political” power, only the continuous forced convergence of “wild,” impersonal idea-forces both drawn from the amorphous outside and directed at the stolid world of quiescent form. The Eisenman-effect operates like the abrasions of a wave on a beach: the parade of ideas and intellectual currents that make up our collective post-war history are made to render, through rhythmic, directed encounters, what to a humanistic tradition was once solid—both Architecture and “Man”—a shifting fluid as well.

Eisenman has never claimed to be a philosopher. It is true that he writes with seriousness and discipline, yet his texts, like his architecture, are more than anything else promiscuous material fields of collision; aggravated surfaces onto which are drawn the raw, active forces that give shape to the objects of our world. The concrete way in which ideas are here assembled (it would not be out of line to ascribe to it a barbaric creativity) elicits, to be sure, the work of Robert Smithson and certain of the American minimalists, though most of all, Eisenman’s own early drawings and built work, which together are so textual and abstract that across the continuum of his practice it remains hard to say where his architecture takes place, or whether it is even primarily architecture that *is* taking place.

It has been easy to fault him for an occasional lack of rigor, yet that does not mean that such claims do not seriously miss the point. For what is important in Eisenman (and in this era of intellectual poverty and historical amnesia it merits being pointed out again) is that he is the first architect in recent history fully to take up the Futurists’ challenge to conceive of all of culture—plastic as well as historical, intellectual—as a single, continuous and connected field. In the parochial, pre-Eisenmanian architectural world, it could be said that architecture was at best cultivated and intelligent; whereas today, all culture and elaborated intelligence can—at least potentially—become architecture. The ductile nature of this new field—a new type of space entirely, because it is endowed with intellectual, textual and therefore infinitely extendable dimensions—belongs to one of the greatest cultural developments of our modernity. The origins of this program can be found in Nietzsche’s concept of “will to power.” Nietzsche was the first to proclaim that form was but the concrete *appearance* (*Schein*) of invisible conflicting

forces working below and across it. History, in the Nietzschean cosmos, became the history of *shaping forces*—that is, a fundamentally aesthetic phenomenon, and no longer a moral one—and this idea is one whose political implications have still today only begun to be worked out. That what is created and *said* in a “mental space” might be materially continuous with what is given shape in a domain that is entirely distinct and removed from it in nature and modality, that is, in a concrete, physical milieu; and that these two parallel but disparate types of phenomena might not only affect one another but in fact be engendered by the very same genus of forces, remains a radical epistemological claim. For how, to use Foucault’s terminology, do discursive objects—discursive practices—impose their effects upon, indeed form a tissue with, concrete or non-discursive domains? Though the answer to this problem is clearly too complex to develop fully here, it is enough to say that its solution entails a resonant feature or element through which an *illocutionary* property of language (culture and expressed mental objects) connects to, and communicates with a *performative* property within the concrete or built environment.¹

To say something in the world, as many post-war language philosophers besides Foucault claimed, is pre-eminently *to do something*. What this means in a nutshell is that linguistic and intellectual acts exist and operate by dint of their capacity actually to *change material conditions*: they program, suffuse, and in each instance, redistribute the physical world. The concept of a continuous and modulated tissue of effects that connects disparate phenomena (such as language, ideas and matter) together in a type of manifold or consistency, is a principle achievement, if not of post-war ontology, then certainly of post-war aesthetics. Language, in this emerging conjuncture, became for the first time fully and gesturally tectonic in its capacity to provoke and direct the forces of social and material assembly; the worlds of objects, institutions and buildings were increasingly seen—at least by Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, the French inheritors of this Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition—as hyper-dense forms of these same, fundamentally *programmatic*, milieus.

¹ The concept of the performative utterance was developed by British language philosopher John Austin. Its original formulation was meant to distinguish it from utterances which were not acts—that is, simple statements or matter-of-fact descriptions which were not actual *doings*—but only *sayings*. He originally named these latter objects *constatives*, but his entire late career was committed to withdrawing the formal distinction and extending the active, performative function to virtually all speech acts. In this extended domain, and at a level of higher nuance, he introduced the terms *illocutionary* to describe complete acts of transformation in an extra-linguistic domain (yelling ‘fire’ in a theater, saying ‘I do’ in a marriage ceremony), and *perlocutionary*, to describe acts that merely induce changes of state in the interlocutor or hearer (persuading, frightening or boring, etc.).

In architecture these developments found expression most fully in Eisenman where—just as in the delirious, paranoid, institutional milieus of Foucault—drawing (diagram), text and building actually came to connect with and interpenetrate one another in a promiscuous and unbroken continuum of determination and resonance. Here, all culture is *material* culture, while history, to speak like a biologist, becomes a living “excitable medium” in total intimate contact with all of its objects, shot through with, and correlated by, a propagative system of communicational waves. Every disturbance in the continuum is instantly converted into movement, registered and transmitted like an irrigating flow throughout the system.

Eisenman’s earliest intellectual roots did not, of course, grow out of the traditions of continental Europe, but from those of England and America, and all too often from the narrow milieus of academic architecture and formalist aesthetics. The Eisenman of the sixties was a follower of Wittkower and Rowe (not Nietzsche and Foucault), and in the seventies, of mainstream structuralism and Chomsky’s generative grammar. The search for logical or mathematically driven distributional rules appeared to be his primary interest, especially insofar as these embedded structures could be brought to the surface by rigorous operations, and there rhetorically hyper-developed at the deliberate expense of a founding “humanist” creator-subject. But of far greater importance, I would argue, even if its expression remained indirect, was Eisenman’s career-long fascination with the work of Giuseppe Terragni. For Terragni’s work was not, despite what most historians have argued, a rationalist, neo-Palladian grammar of static structures, but in fact a container of perpetual movement, a veritable standing wave that switched or migrated from state to state not unlike the chemical fluctuations in a Brusselator tank chemical clock.² This newly identified type of activity defied the calm, Platonic play of expressed orders of which these other systems were built. Indeed, Eisenman’s work has always been a search (unconscious?) to find, or develop, this wave from within the classical machine.³

One does not need to search far to see this forcible—even hubristic—process at work, for in the early *House* projects Eisenman had already laid down the choreographic lexicon from which his later work would never fully depart. Each of these ten or so projects may be said at the outset to develop

² The chemical clock is a container of liquid into which a steady stream of chemicals are fed. The catalytic effects that the chemicals have on one another provoke coherent waves of color, pattern and form to appear in the solution at regular intervals. On the relation of these autocatalytic systems to architecture, see my essays “The Genius of Matter: Eisenman’s Cincinnati Project,” in *Peter Eisenman and Frank Gehry*, (Rizzoli, 1991), and “Maxwell’s Demons and Eisenman’s Conventions: Challenge Match for the ‘Information’ Age,” (*A + U*, September 1993).

within an essentially boundary-fixed cube. Of course to say that the boundaries are fixed does not mean that they are either continuous or inviolate. They are, in fact, maniacally articulated with disruptions and deletions, crazily perforated like the program cards that drive a player piano. What is important of course is that in these experimental structures the “instrument” or resonating body, and the notational system (sheet music or program cards) are entirely coextensive with one another. There is here a very beautiful and almost mystically efficient compression of information. The structure of this type of system resembles the webways of ancestral Aboriginal dreaming tracks or songlines that articulate, like a dynamical map, virtually every physical feature of the Australian continent. No single clan or individual, of course, actually “understands” the language of any but their own, and their immediately adjacent clan’s, songlines; yet by means of deeply embedded patterns and intonations (a kind of deep structure of melodic contours and phrases available to intuition though not—yet—to analysis) a continent of specified details and trajectories appears to open transparently before one like a hyper-book ever further called into being with each turn of a page.

The encounter with the Eisenman House, at least in relation to classically based architectures from which it broke, has the cultural force of this type of anti-promenade, or, in a word, of the *walkabout*. The vertigo that these houses are said to provoke is but a bourgeois symptom of the neurotic preoccupation with maps and the transcendence they are able to induce by dissociating “space” from the object-world. Rather, I propose, the houses should be seen as a deliberate ideological break from a static, time-hating space (the economy of the colonial British, or more generically, European, city), and an immersion into the fluid criss-cross of infinitely multiplied trajectorial pulses; a system where “location” is established uniquely by “events”—the perpetual “calling out” of designated material features. In the Eisenman House, as in the Australian outback, the “song” and the landscape that is sung, are materially inseparable from one another (it is impossible to say which engenders which), primarily because both are embedded in a similar kind of *deep time*. In the Aboriginal case, of course, deep time refers to the infinite conjuring

³ That Eisenman at least consciously identified the insufficiency of these classical systems of reading, even if unable to get definitively beyond them, is irrefutable. See for example his study, “From Object to Relationship,” in *Casabella*, no. 344, January 1970.

(re-enactment?) of the origins of the universe; in Eisenman, a flight into pure syntax, a renunciation of the false and distant origin. The Eisenman Walkabout House frees the origin from the one-dimensional colonial time of a fixing—a remembering and a return—and transforms it into an ever-renewable process of an engendering or *a proceeding*. The Eisenman House, in short, was never meant to furnish a home, but rather to open architecture to movement, to re-turn it toward the lost pastorality of the *nomos*.

The distribution of structure in the Houses follows this particular logic as well. Here, the impression is of a steady, corrosive propagation of “lexical features” traveling from the edge surface or envelope inward, such that the breaking up of internal surfaces may be read as square-wave interference patterns.⁴ From the point of view of each House’s genesis, however, (that is, its conceptual and graphic development) it actually proceeds by very simple units (squares) shifted or rotated on elastic or mobile centers. A simple nine-square grid, for example, might emit a compound beat simultaneously to the east and to the south, as in House II, producing a sixteen-square grid over which is subsequently laid a new, expanded nine-square. (We know it is a compound wave, because an “extra” square is produced at the south-east corner of the new “el”.)

What has been engendered here is a type of polyrhythm whose logic is sufficiently important to all of Eisenman’s work that it is worth examining a moment. The first propagation of the grid-pattern is crystal-like: it repeats the proportions (if not explicitly the units) of the original structure at the same granularity as if it were a kind of simple dendritic extension. And yes, the germinal center has shifted 45 degrees to the south-east (from $x = 1.5$, $y = 1.5$ to $x = 2$, $y = 2$), forming a kind of embedded jig or guide for the resultant standing wave.⁵ Now the new, larger nine-square represents not simply an increase in the *frequency* of the structure but in its *amplitude* as well. There are two distinct, but now wedded processes: growth plus multiplication, or change in tonality, plus change in intensity or volume; and these both exist simultaneously, one inside the other. The effect is a series of nervous, reversible phase shifts that travel through the system, generating vibratory phenomena of varying period across

⁴ Square waves are rectangle-shaped energy pulses that oscillate regularly between two values but whose amplitude remains constant between jumps.

⁵ A standing wave is sometimes known as a stationary wave. It is created by the superimposition of a reflected wave on top of an incident wave that is propagating through a vibrating medium. The incident wave is “processed” at the medium’s boundaries where either some or all of the wave’s energy (and therefore its structure) is returned back toward its source so that an interference pattern is created, distributing nodes and antinodes across the transmitting surface. The energy or information, to underscore my main theme, propagates endlessly while the pattern remains, if not the same, at least highly stable.

every surface. And just as lines are moved in the initial stages in order to extend surfaces, to multiply internal frequencies, and to recalibrate amplitudes, surfaces and volumes too are set into motion. Again the operation is relatively simple: a surface or volume is permitted to slide along a jig, to “shed” geometry as it sweeps and frays, and to absorb the resultant disturbances and interferences by stretching and multiplying. Yes, these are cool, mechanical operations, but they produce fluid patterns of restless stabilization. The difference between this type of compositional system and the familiar classical ones is that here order is sought, and produced, far from, rather than close to, equilibrium. Eisenman-space has demonstrably always been approaching the algorithmic, the active, and the living.

In an Eisenman work, structure always emanates from an initial pattern that is knocked away from equilibrium. The disturbance then travels, reaches a limit, then turns back toward itself to form a self-interfering wave. The structural information, or modulus, proceeds in discrete steps along the wave, coming to a momentary rest at the next, and then at each subsequent beat. Each of these beats may be conceived of spatially as marking the floor of a basin or the trough of a sine wave. But the passage of this flickering modulus also *rakes the space*, articulating and disarticulating all that lies along its path: be it the real substance deposited according to the logic of another propagative center, or simply the ghost memories of a previous or future wave that has, or soon will have, passed through the synapse. The raking process links the discrete residues to the dynamic standing wave that subtends them. Such a system is no different from the sand shapes seen in Chladni figures—the elaborate regular patterns formed on resonating metal plates when a standing wave has been applied to them. Thus the continuous, one is lead confidently to conclude, exists even within the (homeo)static.

The entire Eisenman project, one could say, is lodged within the specific Modernist paradox: the theory of *continua*. This concerns the manner according to which energy (photons, electrons, etc.) may travel in waves, yet once located, arrested, and fixed in position, can express itself only as a particle. It was in Terragni that Eisenman first confronted the mechanics of this paradox—a kind of quantum indeterminacy *where the particle and the wave coexist*

within one another prior to the analytical “wave function collapse” described by the equations of Erwin Schrödinger and Louis de Broglie, that splits them definitively apart. De Broglie posited the concept of “matter waves” in 1923, while C.J. Davisson confirmed the hypothesis in two separate experiments in 1925 and 1927, the same years in which Terragni had begun to produce his first significant work.⁶ Eisenman always sought to articulate textually the intuited paradox in Terragni’s work with the particular language model of analysis that obsessed and inspired the work of most of his generation, but through which it simply could not be expressed.⁷ Yet Eisenman’s drawings and works nonetheless always possessed an *excessive* part that moved—silently and even unconsciously—beyond the limits of the analytical paradigm. It is here, in this excessive and unconscious space beyond the reach of reductionist analytics, that one finds the full blooming of the Eisenman effect and the Eisenman wave.

On virtually every level, Eisenman’s impact on architectural culture has been to render continuous and active what was previously separate and inert. It is always the introduction of a continuum into a discrete and disjunctive milieu that unleashes the processes of communicative disruption. But here is an anticlassicism of a very specific kind; one that is nowhere more obviously—or furtively—apparent than in Eisenman’s idiosyncratic use of script. In the typographical world, the roman forms—discrete, upright letters that mime the bombastic orders and monumentality of stone—are, in Eisenman’s hand at once ridiculed and mobilized by the single, fluid line that renders the same letters in a unique, continuous—almost exaggerated—cursive stroke. Here, the cursive form seizes power, visibly forcing the roman form to submit to its rule in a microdrama that throws all of Eisenman’s plastic and graphic work into newly clear relief. For beyond the polysemantism that the linguistic Eisenman imagined himself to be producing, beyond the polyresonance of multiple geometric orders that the formalist Eisenman conceived himself to be orchestrating, there lies another, perhaps more salient, Eisenman, though for that all the more hidden, even to himself: the Eisenman of movement, of the cursive form, of the continuous field, and of the propagating wave.

⁶ De Broglie was awarded a Nobel Prize for this work in 1929.

⁷ Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni*, (unpublished).

Like the photon itself, Eisenman has always been a creature of two intimately linked but irreconcilable phases: when he speaks and thinks about what he does he belongs to the classical particle world, but when drawing pen across paper, and moving ideas across the cultural spectrum, he forms a formidable wave. And yet it is perhaps well that this is so; because for the new generations emerging today, systematically removed from the intellectual turbulence out of which both the Modern and the Eisenmanian projects emerged, it is the built objects and the drawn artifacts that will continue to sing, in all their gritty, assiduous and mute refinement, in all their plastic and visual *excess*, about the new world to which Eisenman's particular brand of Modernist rhetoric itself could never explicitly speak, but to which the multiple risks and forms that mark his 30-year career unfailingly give place.

