Marc Angélil, Dirk Hebel

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Designing Architecture > A Manual

> Prof. Dr. Marc Angélil

Born 1954, Egypt > Master of Architecture, ETH Zurich, 1979 > Doctor of Technical Sciences, ETH Zurich, 1987 > Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, 1981–1987 > Associate Professor, USC, Los Angeles, 1988–1996 > Professor, Department of Architecture, ETH Zurich, since 1997 > Board member of the Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction

Marc Angélil is Professor at the Department of Architecture of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. His research at the Institute of Urban Design, part of the Network City and Landscape (NSL) competence center, addresses recent developments at the periphery of large metropolitan regions. Emphasis is placed on strategies to support sustainable urban processes – with attention given to the forces involved in the formation and transformation of cities.

His doctoral dissertation on the subject of technique and form in the theory of architecture was awarded the ETH silver medal. From 1982 to 1987, he was assistant professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and from 1987 to 1994 associate professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In 1994, he was named Assistant Professor of Architecture and Design at the ETH Zurich. His research activities deal with contemporary developments in urban design. Using various case studies from Europe, Asia and the USA, metropolitan areas are investigated in view of their physical structures.

He practices architecture with his partners Sarah Graham, Reto Pfenninger, Manuel Scholl and Hanspeter Oester – *agps.architecture* – with offices in Los Angeles and Zurich.

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> Jørg Himmelreich ::::::

> Jesse LeCavalier ::::::

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Deviations is a handbook and users' guide. It both documents the first-year architectural design course at the ETH Zurich and serves as a pedagogic instrument for teaching and learning. This publication would not have been possible without the commitment and creative input of the students. Our appreciation, first and foremost, goes to them. We are also grateful to the faculty team for its ability to breathe life into the didactic material and for its enthusiastic dedication to guiding students over unfamiliar terrain. Tremendously valuable were the periodic discussions with guest critics, who – from a much-needed external vantage point – were able to support the educational undertaking, propelling it forward with their engagement and insightful comments.

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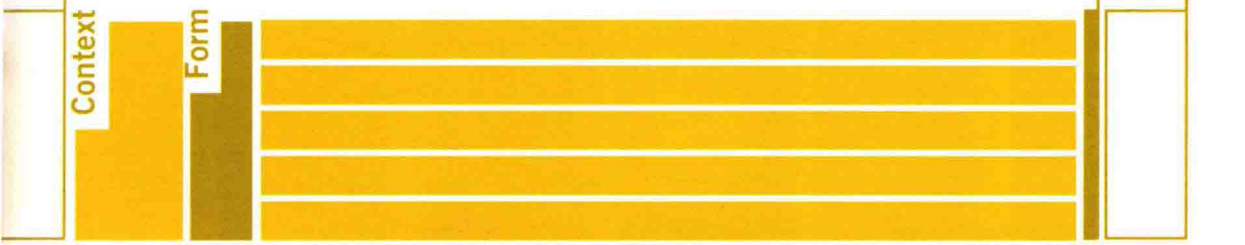

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FINAL REVIEW

Inchoate Deviations

Transformative Processes

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> MA: As our experiment in architecture pedagogy might be considered a work in progress, we agreed to engage in a series of dialogs – a type of *entretien* between collaborators – in order to open up new perspectives and, most importantly, to challenge the routine of the well-oiled teaching machine that we had created and that was running on its own momentum, so to speak. So, let me begin with a first provocation. When you joined our team several years ago, you courteously implied that it was time to investigate new avenues of thought and to deviate from the methods outlined in our first book on teaching, titled *Inchoate. An Experiment in Architectural Education*. Your assessment took two lines of attack. First, the theoretical framework of our operation seemed to support a certain category of institutional discourse, the domain of the so-called critical project – with a bias in favor of rational interpretation, analytical method, and academic corroboration. Instead, you argued for a projective practice as a potential trajectory for teaching. Second, the physical outcome of the students' work – despite the emphasis placed on the design of processes – gave the impression that a specific formal vocabulary or style was proactively being advocated. Instead, you made a case for a performative rather than formal approach to architecture. Although initially painful, both observations touched upon issues that had entered our teaching methods inadvertently. What was most bothersome about the critique was that it pointed to a trap into which we had fallen, while trying too hard to swim against the current. Our teaching accidentally propagated an *architecture with a capital A*, *architettura maggiore*, or *major architecture*, as some would call it. This is exactly what we wanted to avoid. Our didactic matrix, as you implied, was somehow reinforcing an understanding of architecture as an institutional body and a formal discipline, unwillingly reinforcing the status quo. Had we reached an insurmountable barrier or dead end? Were we going around in circles? And, it is in this regard that an opening was made, subjecting our teaching to a series of displacements – from which one could not emerge unscathed. The solution to our predicament seemed quite simple at first. Rather than opposing the established order of things, we embraced it wholeheartedly – but with a twist: by proposing a way of working both *with* and *against* the procedures producing this order. These procedures – the operative mechanisms of everyday practice, the median standard and

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