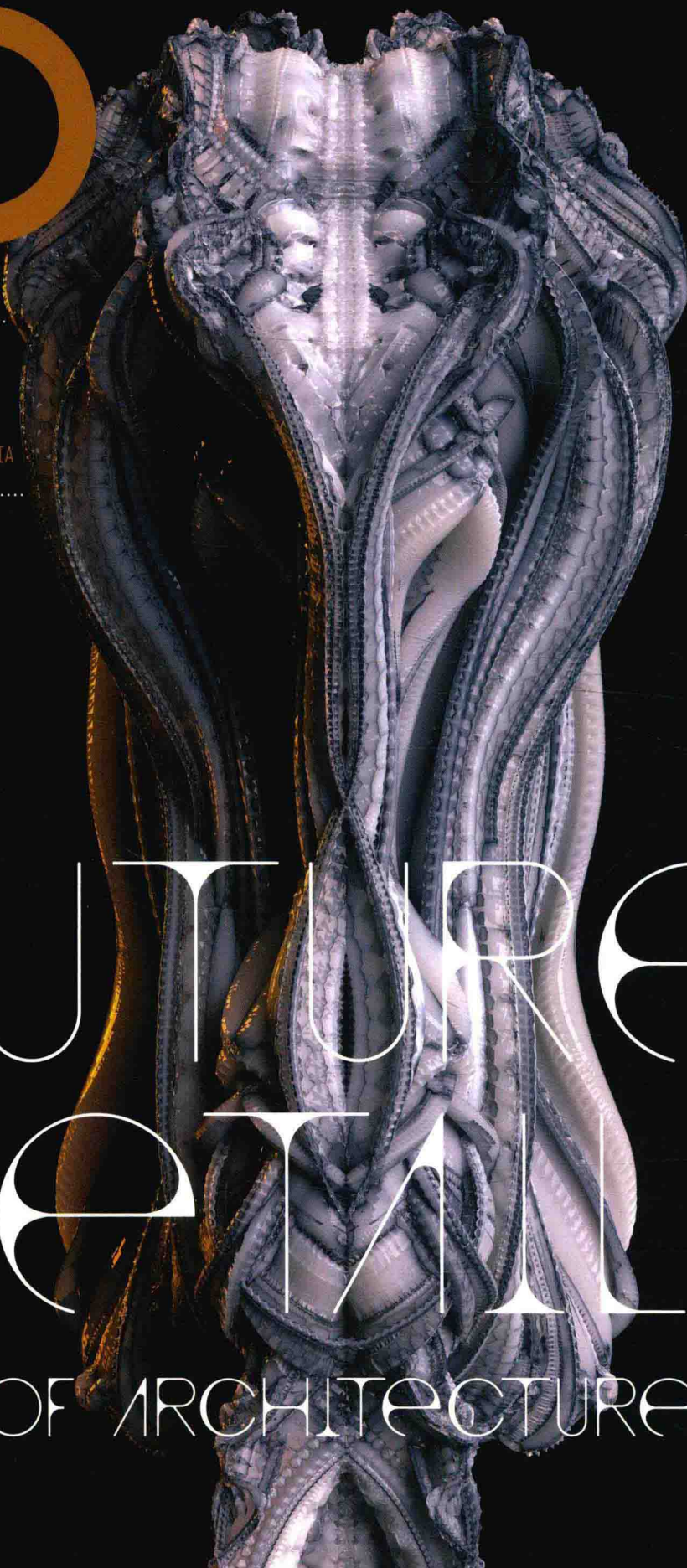


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JULY/AUGUST 2014

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GUEST-EDITED BY MARK GARCIA



FUTURE DETAILS OF ARCHITECTURE





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
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
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5 EDITORIAL

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6 ABOUT THE GUEST-EDITOR

Mark Garcia

8 SPOTLIGHT

Visual highlights of the issue

14 INTRODUCTION

Histories, Theories and Futures of
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44

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Ken Yeang
Alejandro Zaera-Polo

26 The Grand Work of Fiction:

The Detail as Narrative

Edward Ford

36 Details Around the Corner

Christian Schittich

44 Tectonic Articulation: Making

Engineering Logics Speak

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An Interview with Ben van Berkel

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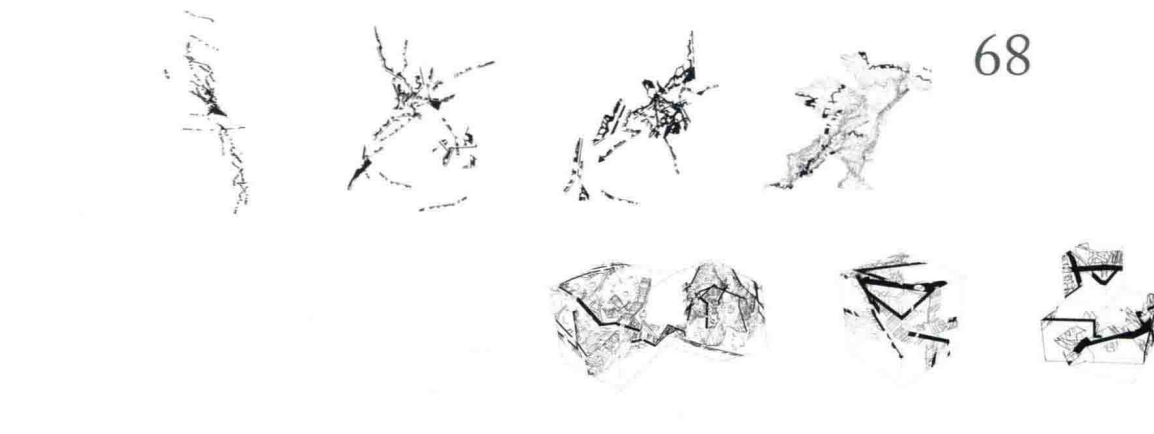
62 Close Up

Hernan Diaz Alonso

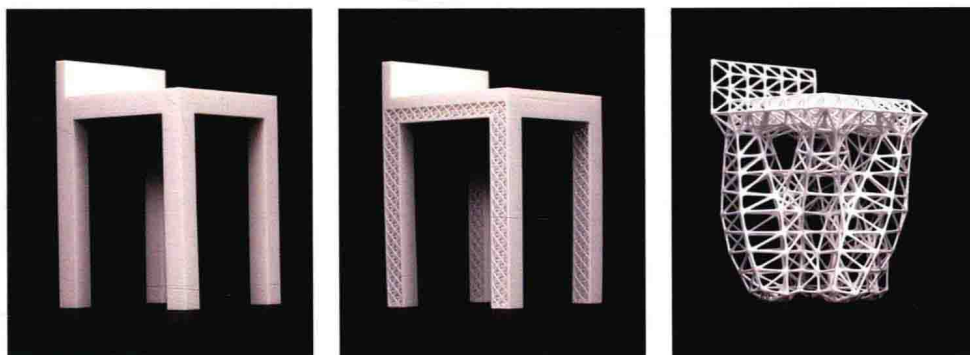
68 *Un détail de ce qui change:*

Function of a Function

Peter Macapia

- 
- 78 Future Landscapes of Spatial Details:
An Interview with Philippe Rahm
Mark Garcia
- 86 The Rise of the 'Invisible Detail':
Ubiquitous Computing and the
'Minimum Meaningful'
Carlo Ratti and Matthew Claudel
- 92 Information, Complexity
and the Detail
Dennis R Shelden
- 98 Growing Details
*David Benjamin, Danil Nagy
and Carlos Olguin*
- 104 DNA disPlay: Programmable Bioactive
Materials Using CNC Patterning
*Skylar Tibbits, Lina Kara'in, Joseph
Schaeffer, Helena de Puig, Jose Gomez-
Marquez and Anna Young*
- 112 The Post-Epistemological Details
of Oceanic Ontologies
Rachel Armstrong
- 118 Detailing the Walled
Garden for Lebbeus
Neil Spiller
- 128 The Gold Mine: A Ludic
Architecture
Nic Clear
- 134 COUNTERPOINT
The Architectural Detail
and the Fear of Commitment
Mark Burry
- 142 CONTRIBUTORS

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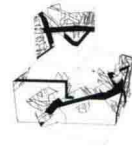
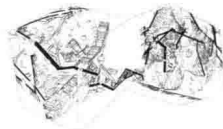
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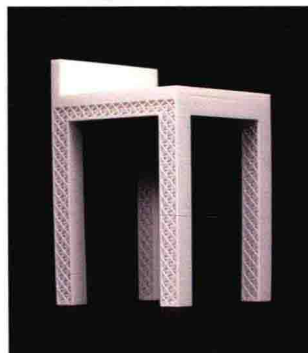
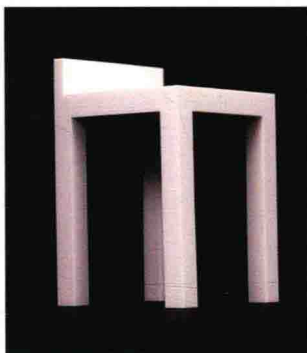
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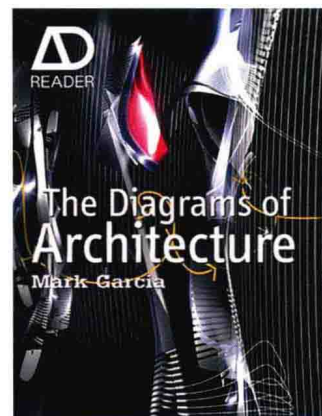
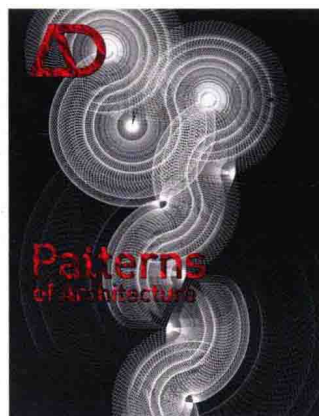
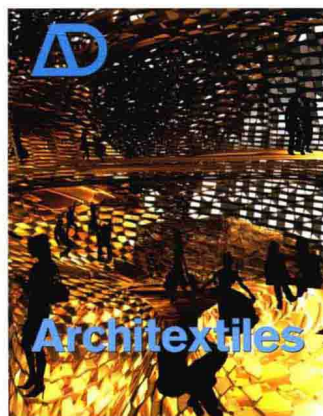
EDITORIAL

Helen Castle



The architectural detail is up for grabs. Never has there been a moment when it has been riper for reinvention. What is to be the place of something so dependent on its physical form in a digital and virtual world? The detail was perhaps one of 20th-century architecture's greatest preoccupations. Modernism substituted ornament and classical elements with highly finessed abstract detailing. Publications fetishised the architectural detail, reproducing the drawings of seminal buildings and their parts: piloti, components, modules, joints and the most discreet of trims. It is difficult to think that it was only a couple of decades ago that architects were obsessing over the High-Tech excesses of the detail – highly visible metallic cabling, pipework, cladding and glazing.

The spotlight that this issue Δ puts on the detail – one of architecture's most physical manifestations – is a speculative one. It asks the contributors to fast forward just beyond the present to the near future. This is a canny move on the part of Guest-Editor Mark Garcia, as the detail proves a promising vehicle for rethinking the current condition of architecture. For any discussion of the detail is ultimately about the practice of architecture per se. The wider connotations of the detail are perfectly summed up by Carlo Ratti and Matthew Claudel: 'detail can be thought of as the smallest radical element of architecture that can be imbued with significance', it 'is the most basic unit for conveying an idea in and of itself while simultaneously serving as a building block in elaborating a larger concept' (p 87). This notion of the detail as the most basic building block or unit for meaning keys into the convention of architecture as a language, in which the detail becomes a single word contributing to a greater narrative. Patrik Schumacher highlights the increasing importance of the detail as an integral part of the architect's tectonic toolkit, facilitating social communication. With much of the architect's role as overseer of the physical design and fabrication of architecture now being eclipsed by the engineer, the architect's main *raison d'être* becomes that of meaning purveyor or communicator (pp 44–51). Likewise the focus that Ben van Berkel and UNStudio have put on redefining the detail over the last 20 years recognises the essential contribution of detailing to 'a more intense architecture' (pp 52–61). There is no doubt, though, that the nuts and bolts of the physical detail is in flux: Hernan Diaz Alonso redefines tomorrow's detail as 'the close-up', which places emphasis on resolution and the conceptual rather than highly crafted physical properties (pp 62–7); Ratti and Claudel highlight how the development of the detail at the level of the microchip might lead to the transformation of buildings into highly responsive, human-occupied transmitters (pp 86–91); and Rachel Armstrong recognises the potential of biotechnologies to provide growing living detailing (pp 112–7). Mark Burry closes this volume with a Counterpoint that reminds the reader that the detail can never be severed from a full understanding of making, for to detail is to make a commitment to construction (pp 134–41). He also sums up perfectly the intrinsic relationship between the speculative and the physical that the detail and the practice of architecture encompass: 'It is this tension of reconciling the legitimacy of being afforded a speculative head in the clouds while at the same time needing to ensure its attachment to a body that has its two feet firmly placed on the ground, that adds a certain frisson to any consideration of the detail' (p 136). Δ



Zaha Hadid Architects, New National Stadium, Tokyo, 2013
Part of a series of Mark Garcia's photographic research into the details of ZHA's models.

Mark Garcia, Δ Architextiles, Nov/Dec 2006
This Δ researched the intersections of textile design with interior, architectural, urban and landscape design, and included Will Alsop, Dominique Perrault, Lars Spuybroek and Matilda McQuaid.

Mark Garcia, Δ Patterns of Architecture, Nov/Dec 2009
Examining and updating research around new types and technologies of patterns and pattern recognition in architectural and other forms of spatial design, this issue featured Patrik Schumacher, Hanif Kara and Alejandro Zaera-Polo.

Mark Garcia, The Diagrams of Architecture (Δ Reader), 2010
The first historical, theoretical and futurological anthology of diagrams in architecture, this definitive analysis includes essays by Peter Eisenman, Charles Jencks, Hanif Kara, Sanford Kwinter, Winney Maas, OMA, Reiser + Umemoto, Neil Spiller, Bernard Tschumi and Antony Vidler.

ABOUT THE GUEST-EDITOR MARK GARCIA



Mark Garcia is an author, researcher, editor and academic holding degrees in art history, philosophy and international management. He is currently a senior lecturer in histories, theories and futures, teaching BA and Master's-level students in the Department of Architecture and Landscape at the University of Greenwich, London. He has held academic teaching and management posts at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, and in the Departments of Architecture and Industrial Design Engineering at the Royal College of Art (RCA), where he supervised MA, MPhil and PhD students. He has worked in industry as a manager for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), and for Branson Coates Architecture (BCA).

Mark has written for *Building Design*, the *Architects' Journal* and *Architectural Review*. He has guest-edited two previous issues of *Δ* (*Architextiles*, Nov/Dec 2006 and *Patterns of Architecture*, Nov/Dec 2009), and is editor of the book *The Diagrams of Architecture* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010). He has also lectured to business and in universities in the UK, Switzerland and Japan, and collaborated on exhibitions, films, books, design, research and teaching projects with architects, artists, theorists, academics and engineers around the world. He is a member of the Advanced Virtual And Technological Architecture Research (AVATAR) group at the University of Greenwich, and a regular contributor to the university's AVATAR 'Future Cities' conference and publications series. He is currently researching, editing and writing *The Diagrams of Architecture Volume II: The Future Diagrams of Space*, and the first-ever books on the architectural cantilever: *Cantilevers: Flying Architectures* and *Anti-Gravity Architectures and the Spaceship*.

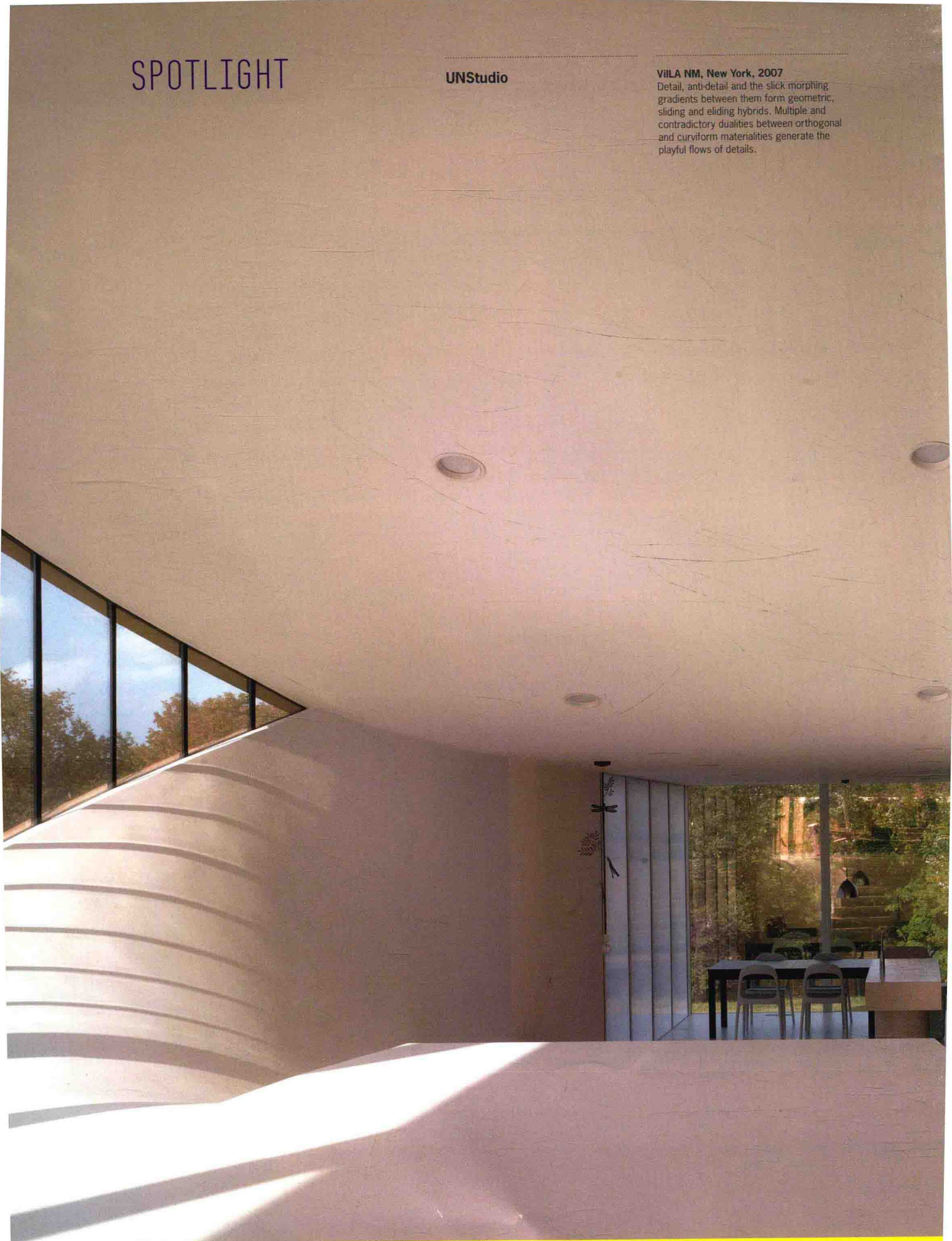
Other research interests include architecture and its futures as well as theory, fine art, photography, pop culture, utopias, diagrams, images, film, digital culture, literature, sports and other forms of mass media. Mark's research is characterised by a fascination with forgotten, lost, minor, strange and neglected spatial and design histories, ideas and innovations. While his research projects are always linked (the architextile, the pattern, diagram and detail are in special circumstances interchangeable), they are always the means to research innovation outside of architecture. As projects they search for a theoretical Archimedes lever: the small and ignored thing that can surprise and move planets. *Δ*

SPOTLIGHT

UNStudio

VILLA NM, New York, 2007

Detail, anti-detail and the slick morphing gradients between them form geometric, sliding and eliding hybrids. Multiple and contradictory dualities between orthogonal and curviform materialities generate the playful flows of details.








Xefirotarch

Teatro Colón, Bogotá, Colombia, 2013

In the project for the Teatro Colón competition, the hyper-reflective surface treatment produces a mirror-like quality in which people walking in the plaza not only become multiplied and distorted on the surface articulation, but are also placed on a stage where they themselves become the performers within the larger context of the building. This switching of roles between visitor and performer represents a different take on the contemporary role of a theatre.





Rudy Ricciotti

Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM), Marseille, France, 2013

The museum is the first building utilising ultra-high-performance concrete (UHPC) on a large scale. The fixation of the net-shaped diaphanous facade elements, however, is by means of 'frog fingers', a traditional method borrowed from glass construction.