Tishk International University
Engineering Faculty
Architecture Department

…… ARCH 525/ Architectural Criticism……

TOPIC: Deconstruction Theory (6)

Grade 5- Spring Semester 2023-2024

Instructor: Dr. Omar Abdulwahhab
Ph.D. of Architecture

Week 7

Define / Deconstruction Theory

Deconstruction Theory is a design approach that challenges traditional notions of form, function, and structure. It emerged in the late 1980s as a response to the perceived limitations of modernist architecture, which was criticized for its focus on functionalism, simplicity, and standardization. It involves breaking down or fragmenting architectural elements, such as walls, floors, and roofs, to create new forms and meanings. It often involves the use of non-linear shapes and irregular geometries, as well as the incorporation of materials and forms from other contexts or cultures.

Philosopher Jacques Derrida

The main elements

Deconstruction Theory involves exposing the structural and constructional elements of a building, such as beams, columns, and mechanical systems, as a way of highlighting their importance and challenging the traditional hierarchy of form over function.

- **Fragmentation:** Deconstruction often involves fragmenting architectural elements and reconfiguring them in unexpected ways. This can involve breaking down walls, floors, and roofs into smaller pieces, or using irregular geometries to create new forms.
- **Materiality:** Deconstruction emphasizes the materiality of buildings and structures. It often involves exposing the underlying constructional and structural elements of a building, such as beams and columns, as a way of highlighting their importance and challenging traditional notions of form over function.

The Main Elements

- **Contextuality:** Deconstruction often involves incorporating elements from other contexts or cultures, as a way of challenging the dominant cultural narratives that shape architectural form and meaning. This can involve using materials or forms from other regions, cultures, or historical periods.

- **Non-linearity:** it involves the use of non-linear shapes and irregular geometries, as a way of challenging traditional notions of symmetry and order. This can involve using curved or angled forms, or creating spaces that do not conform to traditional architectural norms.

The Main Elements

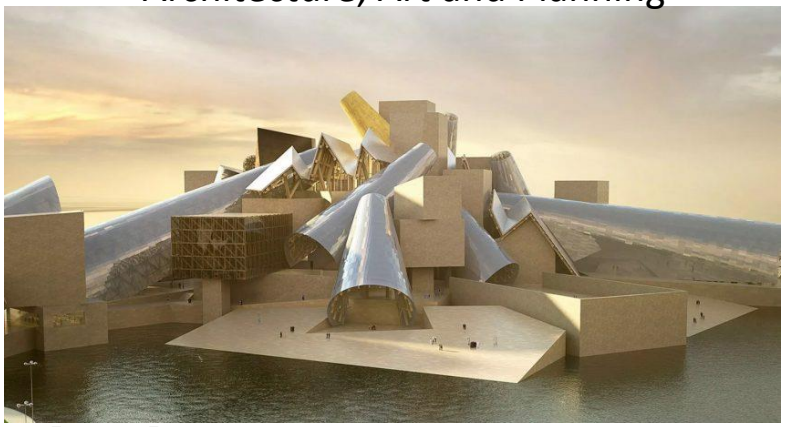
- **Subversion:** It seeks to subvert and challenge traditional architectural conventions, and to create new and unexpected forms and meanings through the deconstruction and reconstruction of architectural elements. It is a critical and analytical approach that seeks to expose and challenge the underlying assumptions and power structures that shape architectural design and practice.

Famous Architect Of Deconstruction Theory

- **Peter Eisenman**: Eisenman is an American architect and educator who is widely considered to be one of the founders of deconstructivist architecture. He is known for his use of irregular geometries, fragmentation, and materiality in his designs.

- **Frank Gehry**: Gehry is a Canadian-American architect who is known for his use of unconventional materials and sculptural forms in his buildings. His designs often incorporate elements of deconstruction, including fragmentation and non-linear shapes.

Peter Eisenman's P/A award-winning design for the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning



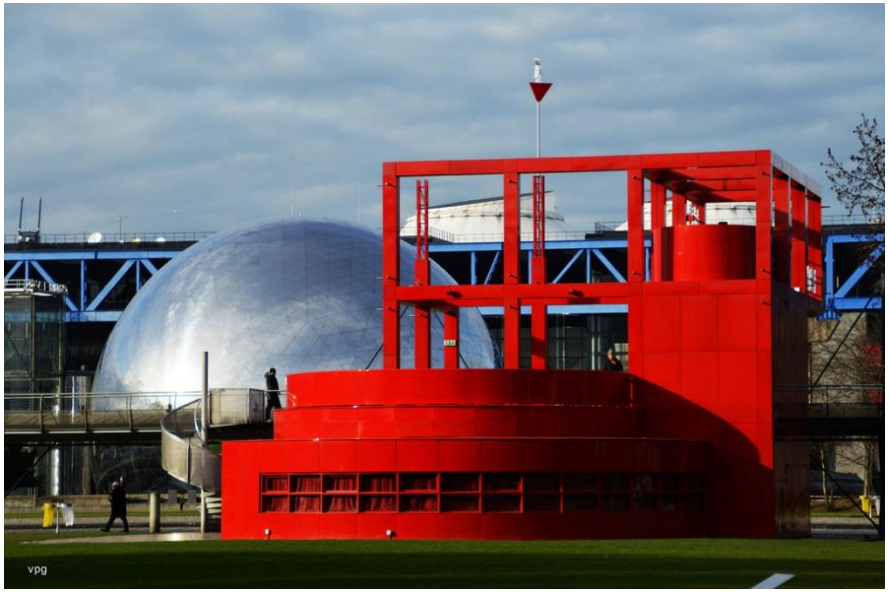
Frank Gehry is designing the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

Famous Architect Of Deconstruction Theory

- **Zaha Hadid**: Hadid was an Iraqi-British architect who was known for her innovative designs and use of non-linear forms. Her work often incorporated elements of deconstruction, including fragmentation and asymmetry.

- **Bernard Tschumi**: Tschumi is a Swiss-French architect and educator who is known for his theoretical work on deconstructivist architecture. His designs often incorporate elements of deconstruction, including non-linear forms and the use of unconventional materials.

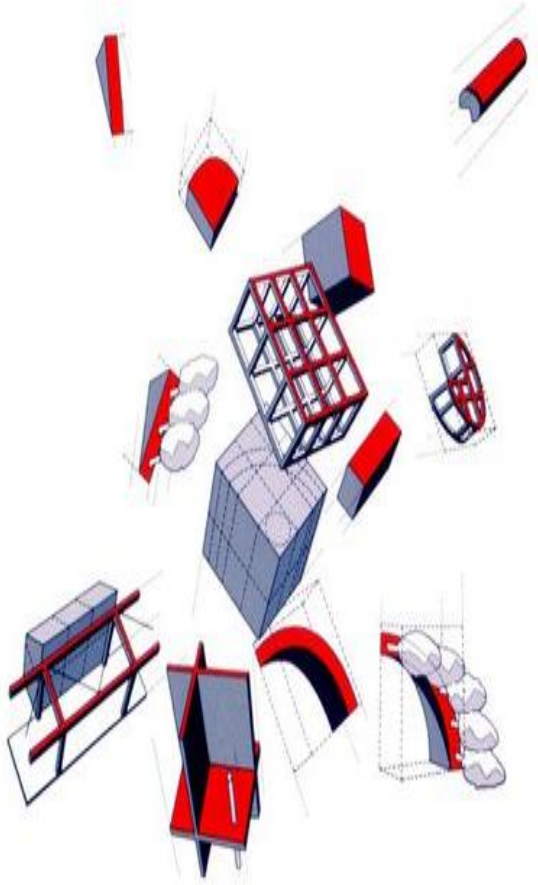
The Vitra Fire Station was her first major realised project.



What Is The Basic Theory Of This School

- The basic theory of deconstruction in architecture **is based on the ideas developed by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Derrida's theory of deconstruction is a critical approach that seeks to challenge and subvert traditional modes of thought and language, and to reveal the underlying power structures that shape our understanding of the world.**

- The basic theory of deconstruction in architecture **is based on the idea that architecture is not simply a matter of functionalism and efficiency, but is also a form of cultural expression that can challenge and subvert dominant cultural narratives and power structures**.



What Is The Main Critic Of Deconstruction Theory

- **Lack of functionality**: One of the most common criticisms of deconstruction in architecture is that it often prioritizes form over function. Because deconstruction often involves breaking down or fragmenting architectural elements, it can sometimes result in buildings that are difficult to use or inhabit.

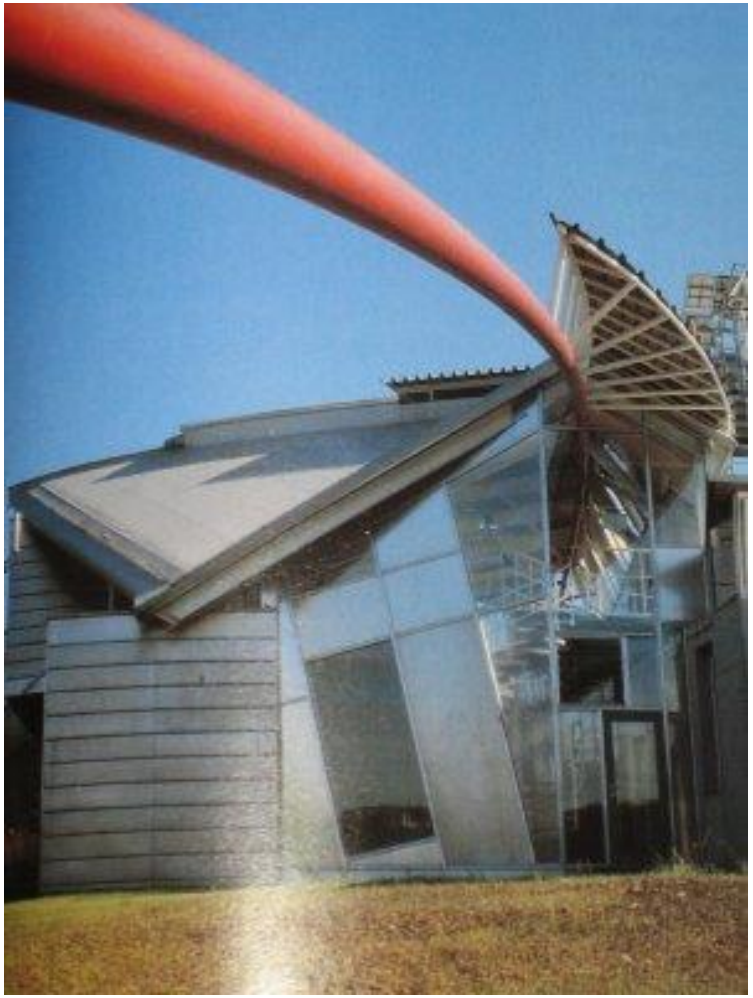
- **High cost:** Another criticism of deconstruction in architecture is that it can be very expensive to implement. Because deconstruction often involves the use of unconventional materials and construction techniques, it can be more costly than traditional approaches.

What Is The Main Critic Of Deconstruction Theory

- **Lack of sustainability**: Deconstruction in architecture can also be criticized for its lack of sustainability. Because it often involves the use of unconventional materials and construction techniques, it can be more resource-intensive than traditional approaches.

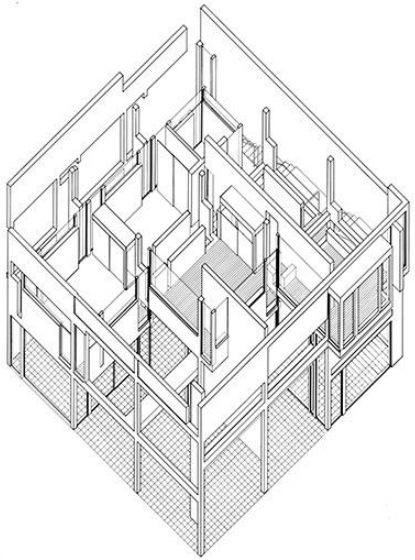
- **Lack of context:** Some critics argue that deconstruction in architecture can sometimes lack context or cultural sensitivity. Because it often involves the use of elements from other contexts or cultures, it can sometimes be seen as appropriative or insensitive to local cultural traditions.

- **Lack of clarity:** Finally, some critics argue that deconstruction in architecture can be overly complex or obscure, making it difficult for users or observers to understand or appreciate the building's form and meaning.

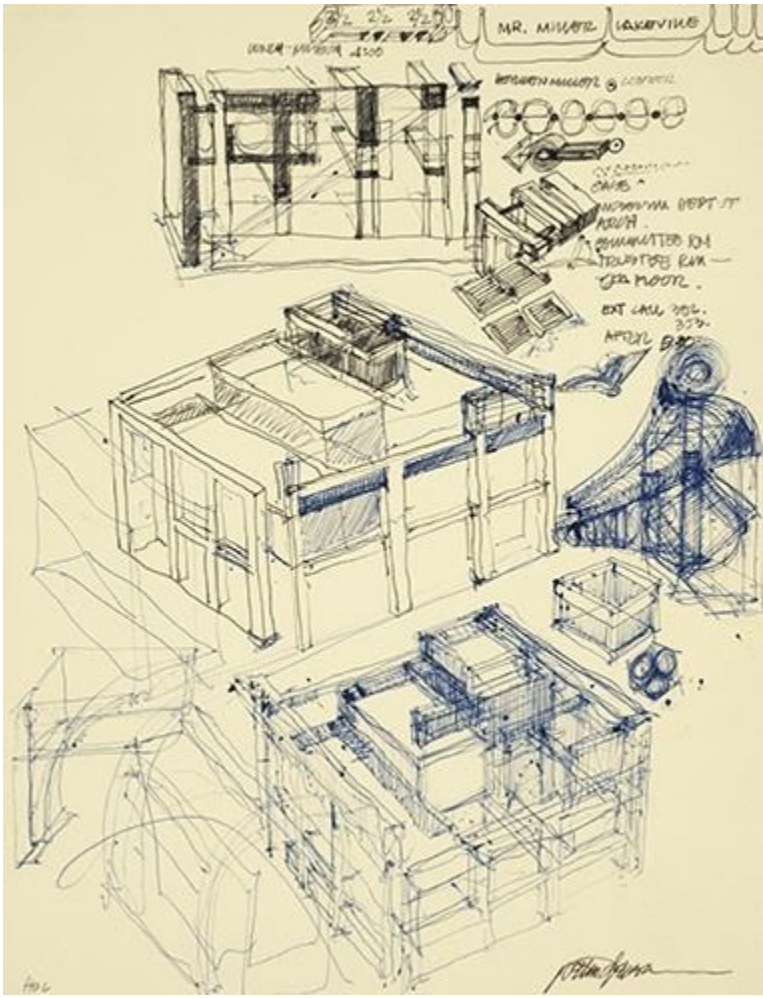


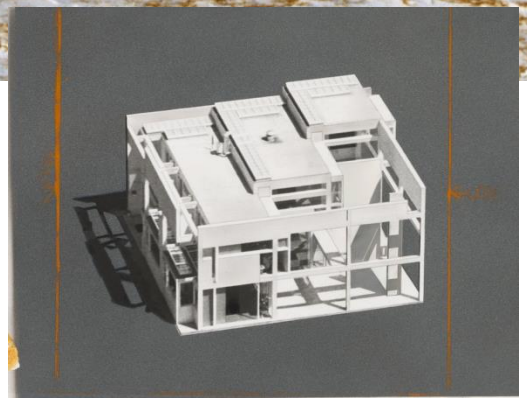
Famous Examples Of Deconstruction Theory

Peter Eisenman: The 'real architecture' only exists in the drawings. The 'real building' exists outside the drawings. The difference here is that 'architecture' and 'building' are not the same.



One of the 2,000 sketches that Eisenman produced for **House II**, which make up part of the Canadian Centre for Architecture archive. The project plays a double game of signification and **structure by including both columnar and wall systems of support,** either of which could be superfluous or necessary





House II project

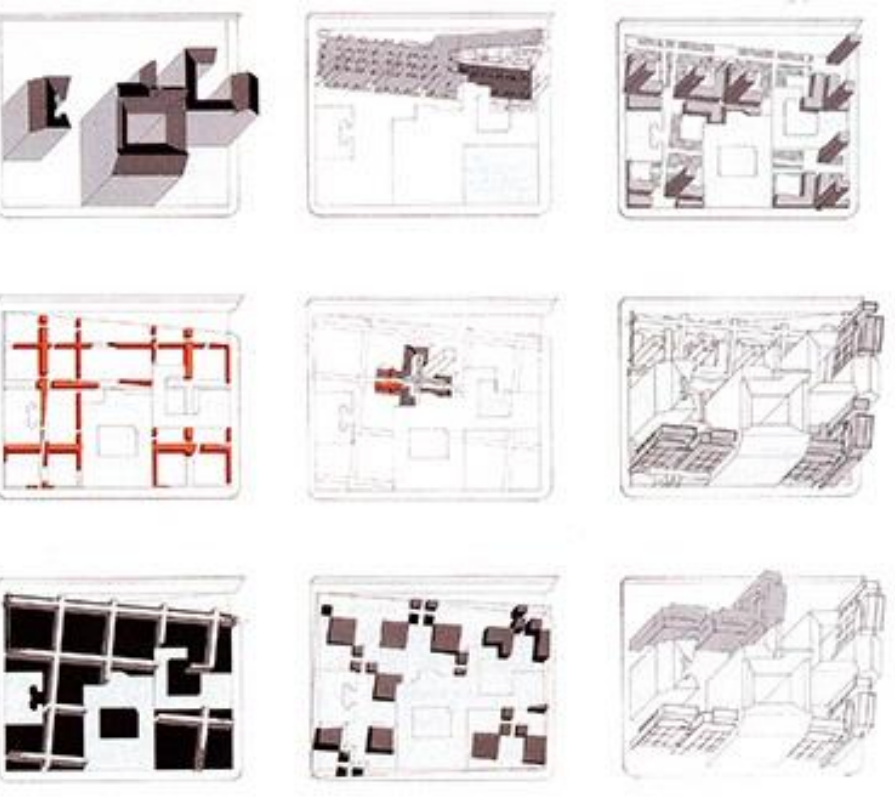
What influence did Derrida have on your work?

https://archinect.com/news/article/150003625/eisenman-s-iconic-house-ii-is-now-on-the-market-for-850k

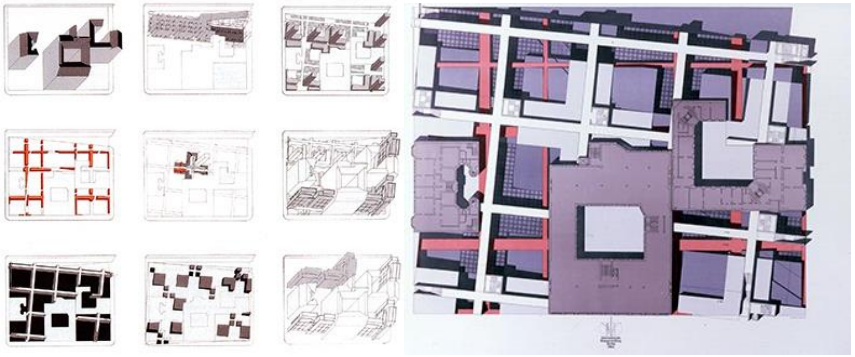
IA: What influence did Derrida have on your work?

PE: Jacques was important in the later stage of my work because he said that it was possible in language to separate the sign and the signified – that is, the thing and its sign. What has made architecture interesting for Post-Structuralist philosophy is that architecture is about the relationship of the sign to the signified, that the column, for instance, is the sign of the column and the column itself; or the wall is the sign of the wall and the wall itself. In Alberti's Palazzo Rucellai, there is both a grid system and a wall-bearing system, which says there is a redundancy or duplication of structural systems. This is also the case in my House II where there is a redundant structural system too. I would say my projects are 'Modernist' not only in a Modernist style but also philosophically and critically, in the sense of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and others. So when I built House II with a wall system that could support the house and a column system that could support the house, there is a sense of redundancy with the two systems. When you have this redundancy, the walls are either structural or signs. Is it possible, as in language, to separate out the sign and the wall to have what could be called 'free floating signifiers'?

https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/interview-peter-eisenman



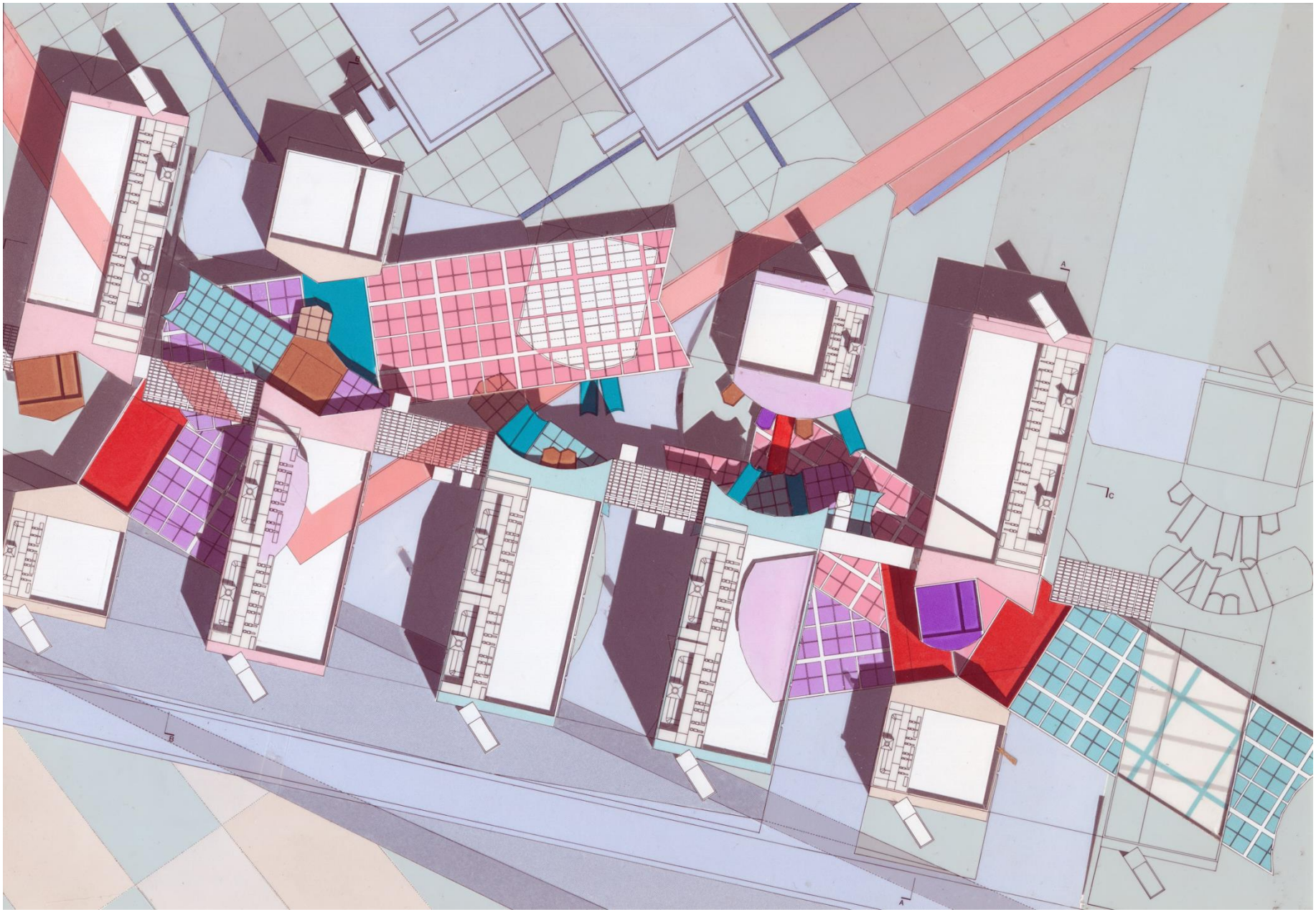
Eisenman's Checkpoint Charlie project for the Berlin IBA represented another approach to urbanism, history and absence - this time by reviving the grids of 1760 and 1830



- In 1980 I'm invited to Berlin to do the Checkpoint Charlie project, which includes the garden of walls. You can't walk on the ground of Berlin even though it is a project inscribed in the ground. And then I do the Wexner Center. A number of these projects fall within the concept of artificial excavations. The ground afforded me a critical dialogue with the then current (1978-80) theory of Figure-Ground Architecture: the black and white drawings of Colin Rowe and the Contextualists, work done for Roma Interotta using the Nolli map of Rome.

- What I was doing was the reverse. I was attacking the historicising obviousness of 'figure-ground' and trying to make what I call a 'figure-figure urbanism'.

- So all of these things come together. It's not all gratuitous or superficial, in a certain way it's a kind of life work for me. My own psychological work and my own thinking, my teaching, is of a piece. I cannot say that the first period was better or the second period was better; they were different and I was at a different stage in my life. And they all have relevance; they are both in text and in built form. I have both built and written in all three phases of my work.



His Biology Center for the University of Frankfurt was included in MoMA's Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition

An ambiguity between structure and ornament is produced in the design of the **Biocenter for J.W. Goethe University** by creating an analogy between architectural and biological processes. Biologists explain the construction of proteins by using four geometric figures, each with a specific color that symbolizes the **DNA** code. The shapes of the inner faces of these figures are capable of locking together in pairs. The blueprint for every protein is encoded in long sequences of these paired figures to form a double-strand chain. Using an analogy between biological construction and architectural construction, this chain can be transposed into architectural form in such a way that it produces an architecture symbolic of the discipline it houses.

https://eisenmanarchitects.com/Biocenter-1987

In the **Biocenter**, the biologists' figures are overlaid on the site in a row along the base of a zigzagging band, following the precise sequence of the DNA chain for the protein collagen, which produces the necessary tensile strength of structure (as in bone). Rather than simply representing the physical configuration of the DNA, **however, the project articulates the three most basic processes by which it produces proteins: replication, transcription, and translation**. Each of these processes was used to transform the base figure progressively. By architecturally subjecting the biologists' figures to the very processes they describe, the interdisciplinary boundaries between architecture and biology are burred. The final project is therefore neither simply architectural nor simply biological. Rather, it is an addition to a science complex that in itself can be naturally expanded, like the DNA double-helix model, as future use demands.

Thank You