It is now about sixty years since Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Alfred Barr, and I started our quest for a new style of architecture which would, like Gothic or Romanesque in their day, take over the discipline of our art. The resulting exhibition of 1932, "Modern Architecture," summed up the architecture of the twenties—Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Oud were the heroes—and prophesied an International Style in architecture to take the place of the romantic "styles" of the previous century.

With this exhibition, there are no such aims. As interesting to me as it would be to draw parallels to 1932, however delicious it would be to declare again a new style, that is not the case today. Deconstructivist architecture is not a new style. We arrogate to its development none of the messianic fervor of the modern movement, none of the exclusivity of that catholic and Calvinist cause. Deconstructivist architecture represents no movement; it is not a creed. It has no "three rules" of compliance. It is not even "seven architects."

It is a confluence of a few important architects' work of the years since 1980 that shows a similar approach with very similar forms as an outcome. It is a concatenation of similar strains from various parts of the world.

Philip Johnson

Critical work today can be done only in the realm of building: to engage with the discourse, architects have to engage with building; the object becomes the site of all theoretical inquiry. Theorists are forced out of the sanctuary of theory, practitioners are roused from sleepwalking practice. Both meet in the realm of building, and engage with objects.

This should not be understood as a rejection of theory. Rather, it indicates that the traditional status of theory has changed. No longer is it some abstract realm of defense that surrounds objects, protecting them from examination by mystifying them. Architectural theory generally preempts an encounter with the object. It is concerned with veiling rather than exposing objects. With these projects, all the theory is loaded into the object: propositions now take the form of objects rather than verbal abstractions. What counts is the condition of the object, not the abstract theory. Indeed the force of the object makes the theory that produced it irrelevant . . .

The nightmare of deconstructivist architecture inhabits the unconscious of pure form rather than the unconscious of the architect. The architect merely countermands traditional formal inhibitions in order to release the suppressed alien. Each architect releases different inhibitions in order to subvert form in radically different ways. Each makes thematic a different dilemma of pure form.

In so doing they produce a devious architecture, a slippery architecture that slides uncontrollably from the familiar into the unfamiliar, toward an uncanny realization of its own alien nature: an architecture, finally, in which form distorts itself in order to reveal itself anew. The projects suggest that architecture has always been riddled with these kinds of enigmas, that they are the source of its force and its delight—that they are the very possibility of its formidable presence.

Mark Wigley