

# Freedom and torture: the new architecture of domination and refusal

## The aesthetics of refusal and architectural atavism

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For over forty years, conceptual artists Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins have worked to realize a body made immortal by reskilling its habitual experience of architecture. As early as 1963, when Arakawa and Gins began collaborating on “the mechanism of meaning”<sup>1</sup>, until Arakawa’s death in 2010<sup>2</sup>, the pair conceptualized the co-embodiment of a person and their surroundings which would become (as their terminology evolved) the “Architectural Body.”

Their project has taken many forms – from a series of wall panels with a few lines of text (much like conceptual artists Joseph Kosuth or John Baldessari’s work in the late 1960s), to a series of panels with the added element of movable platforms for experiencing the work from unconventional perspectives. They cite this work as the impetus for their reversible destiny project because in its evolution they came to believe that “death is old-fashioned” and began to develop procedures so that others could catch up with their line of thought: “Art exists for working out procedures that will help our species take charge of – radicalize – its own evolution. Perhaps you have heard the term “Reversible Destiny”. Out it jumped at us, as direction and as a task, from this assertion, “WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DIE” (Gins and Arakawa, 2001: 77).

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The culmination of their long collaboration is a set of domestic spaces such as the Reversible Destiny Lofts in Mitaka, Tokyo (2005), and the Bioscleave House in East Hampton, New York (2000-2008). This kind of production contrasts with one of the main currents of 20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetic-political practices: the rejection of art as capitalist object for de-reified moments and experiences (from Dada to the Situationists, through to Gustav Metzger and his “auto-destructive” public performance-based works and onwards to more contemporary interventionist practices).

Metzger, for example, emerged around the same time as Arakawa and Gins. Whereas their work is atemporal, hermetically poeticized with a thin sheet of latex between the world and their art objects, Metzger catalyzes critical encounters with history, the world, people and technology. This paper will primarily focus on Arakawa and Gins’ practice, but will also examine how Metzger’s auto-destructive artworks constellate around collectively experienced trauma to set in motion public, critical and direct actions that seek to create new relationships with – and a new awareness in – the viewer. This is something Arakawa and Gins make claims to, but do not achieve. While their rhetoric – which is always about the perceptual experience – promises new avenues of freedom, their production remains bound to the object and the synthetic nuclear family home. In looking at these two practices together, the aesthetic-political atavism of Arakawa and Gins comes into clear perspective.

### **Habit and the body**

Contrary to the commonly held view that Arakawa and Gins’ reversible destiny project<sup>3</sup> is playful and conceptual, underlying the veneer of play is a politics of force, of carving an ideal into the body through the spectacular imposition of architecture on habit. Their work recalls Franz Kafka’s story *In the Penal Colony* (1971/[1919]), where the author describes an execution apparatus that implements scores of needles to carve the legal sentence of its victim on his body. The script is illegible to the eye but ultimately the flesh knows.

Habits in thinking shape the body: resistance becomes rigidity, tension, aversion to change and the perceptible narrowing of possibility in the range of movement and experience. Habits have been discussed as a guiding principle for human action since Aristotle. They generally imply the sedimentation of a way of being, to the extent that we are defined by the accumulation of habits. Brian Massumi (2002: 11) describes habit as “acquired automatic self-regulation”. According

to David Hume (1738), habit is a principle of human nature. In his discussion of Hume, Gilles Deleuze (1991: 30) raises the possibility that we not only have habits but that *we are habits*. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri observe in *Multitude* (2004: 198), “Habits are not really obstacles to creation but, on the contrary, are the common basis on which all creation takes place”.

As Kafka’s apparatus demonstrates, it is through the body that habit takes place and the undoing of habit is possible. In his phenomenology of habituality and habitus, Edmund Husserl writes about the phenomenological ground constituted by our flesh: we carry it around with us and it frames our experiences. These frameworks are the sedimentation of habit. It is in this way that we adapt to external conditions and that we have become habituated to technological augmentation and the social rhythms that affect our movements in our everyday lives.

### The Bioscleave House and Reversible Destiny Lofts

*You wake up at 8 a.m.; you should have gotten up at 7. You’re late because you keep hitting the snooze button after being kept up until 3 a.m. with a baby, work, or whatever. Stumbling around the room, after sliding down a pole, trying to find your underwear, socks and eyeglasses, you stub your toe on a mound of cement and then do somersaults down a hill towards the kitchen to make some coffee. You can’t find the Star Trek light switch and for some reason the burner is vertical instead of horizontal so you have to hold the pot in place while it’s boiling. These are just the first few minutes of your day. How long will it take before you burn down your 4 million dollar house – the one that all your friends admire but would never live in – and hope to collect on the insurance?*

Arakawa and Gins’ project syncs up with radical art practices bent on providing strategies for intervening in the cultural practices of everyday life, in their case, by engaging the plasticity of the human body and brain. In *Art’s Claim to Truth*, Gianni Vattimo (2008: 48–50) discusses how these artworks sometimes fail to enter the world of everyday life outside of their art world context and seem rather grounded in a futuristic anticipation of everyday life. The same can be said of the Reversible Destiny project.

In the late 1990s, Arakawa and Gins were commissioned to develop the Bioscleave House (Lifespan Extending Villa) in East Hampton, New York. After the original funders abandoned the project because it had become too expensive, a group of academics signed on to facilitate its completion in 2008. Costing more

than \$2 million to build, it represents the couple's only completed architectural project in the United States. At a listing price of \$4 million dollars on Sothebysrealty.com, it currently remains empty and on the market.<sup>4</sup>

The Bioscleave House is situated on several acres of land in the East Hampton's wooded area. While the house is designed for single-family use, it is off limits to children and adults are asked to sign a waiver when they enter to protect the artists from assuming liability for accidental injuries (or deaths). At the time of my visit in the summer of 2008, the original structure (a nondescript, mid-century A-frame cottage) was still attached to the front of the Bioscleave House, which forced visitors to walk through the familiar before gaining entrance to the work-in-progress.

At the threshold to the Bioscleave House, one experiences the de-familiarizing perspective that is characteristic of Arakawa and Gins' work. One is poised on the top lip of a large crater-like room with a steeply sloping floor that has a lumpy surface consisting of fist-sized mounds of soil mixed with cement. To get to the kitchen at the center of the open-concept space or to and from any of the rooms, the inhabitant must scale this terrain. There are floor-to-ceiling multicolored poles – reminiscent of a jungle gym – interspersed throughout the space to facilitate navigation for the uninitiated.

In order to enhance the sensation of disorientation, Arakawa and Gins selected a palette of 41 bright colors for the concrete walls and ceiling. The house's windows – which are long and narrow – sit at varying heights, giving the space a dizzying sense of multiple levels. There are no interior doors to the six-room house (living room, study, two bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom), not even one for the bathroom. Privacy is not an issue for immortals or, as Arakawa and Gins explain: "Comfort... is a precursor to death" (Bernstein, 2008).

The couple's purposefully designed somatic and perceptual challenges are meant to lead their inhabitants into a perpetually tentative relationship with their surroundings and thereby keep them young. The overall aesthetic of the space is "after the apocalypse" austerity mixed with the cheerful simplicity, plasticity and modularity of a children's playground.<sup>5</sup> This is the kinaesthetic-haptic formula for all of the spaces they have designed, which they attribute to their aim of addressing residential space as a work of art – to provide "new possibilities in thinking about the social role of art" (Arakawa and Gins, 2008).

Their nine-unit collective housing project "Reversible Destiny Lofts – Mitaka (In Memory of Helen Keller)" in Mitaka, a suburb of Tokyo, was designed to instill in its inhabitants a sense of "optimism and constructive action" (Arakawa and Gins, 2008). Each unit is meant to provide the necessary tools for reversing

destiny and comes with a set of written instructions on how to make use of the space. Like the Bioscleave House, the concrete interior and exterior walls of the units display a palette of myriad bright colors and the spaces have the same distinctive features (sloped floors with a lunar surface, built-in proprioceptive challenges reminiscent of a jungle gym, transparent walls for the bathroom in order to prohibit privacy).

Yet, the Mitaka Lofts – which have the same modular multifamily design used in landmark utopian communal living projects like Habitat 67, created by architect Moshe Safdie for Expo 67 in Montreal (1967), and the shared communal-living spaces designed for the Narkomfin building in Moscow (1928) to promote socialist family values<sup>6</sup> – are designed with the unique capabilities and disabilities of the *individual* in mind.

The social element is hallucinated in the artists' statement but never materializes as a real possibility. The lofts are available for short- or long-term use: from \$1,000 per week to \$760,000 for purchase. For all itinerant visitors, advanced reservations are required for entry. The spectacular commodity aspect of the work takes precedence over the stated conceptual project to make dying illegal, which is supposed to place communal aims above aesthetic vanity and commodity fetishism.

As domestic environments, these spaces are meant to have a continuing influence on bodily inhabitation but they are out of touch with the social practices that define them as spaces for everyday life and appear instead as an out-of-date, futuristic anticipation of daily life. As one visitor to the Mitaka Lofts presciently put it, "These lofts are great for photographs but a complete failure architecturally".<sup>7</sup>

### **Redrafting man: *Making Dying Illegal* or laying down the law**

It has been a philosophical trope since Michel Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon that power expresses itself architecturally. Foucault's identification of biopower as the primary form by which power exercises itself in contemporary society links spatialization with constant processes of subjectification that are historical and relative. For centuries, aesthetics and architecture have conspired to force ideals of perfection upon societies: from ancient Greece through to Albert Speer's Nazi architecture, and on to the incessant construction of glass-clad buildings for a global culture that has undermined privacy.

As a countermeasure to the spatialization of power, the reformulation of habit has been a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century modernist obsession. Bodily intervention has been explored in architecture since the "spatial turn" of the 1950s, which saw

the proliferation of design for bodies in movement.<sup>8</sup> However, it was preceded by direct physical interventions in the form of structural bodywork/somatic education since the 1890s with Frederick Matthias Alexander (the Alexander Technique), Moshé Feldenkrais (the Feldenkrais Method), Josef Pilates (Pilates) and Ida Pauline Rolf (Rolfing). The therapeutic goal of somatic education is to create self-awareness of psychophysical and neuromuscular habits through movement to re-naturalize the body and thereby liberate it from oppressive social constructions.

In the late 1950s, the situationists and unitary urbanists merged the construction of spaces with “constructed situations” pushing architecture towards “a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space... a means of *knowledge* and a *means of action*” (Chtcheglov [1953] in Knabb, 2006: 3). Architects such as Constant Nieuwenhuys, Archigram and Yona Friedman pursued themes such as “dynamic space”, “disorientation” and “disequilibrium”, and emphasized the ludic component of their work. The architectural utopians of the late 1950s and 1960s share the objective to return direct sensation and consciousness to everyday life and to create real opportunities for communing these ideals, which included undoing the stultifying architectonics of social life in general. Arakawa and Gins’ project is indebted to these past efforts, but their writings do not acknowledge their predecessors or contemporaries.

In the early 1960s, at the same time Arakawa and Gins began their collaboration on “The Mechanism of Meaning”, the Architecture Principe group was formed in Paris by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio. Parent and Virilio worked together until 1969, dissolving their practice after a political fallout over the events of May 1968. During their time together, they conceptualized a new architectural order and spatial syntax designed to provoke the body to adapt to disequilibrium and to promote fluid, continuous movement. They called this the “oblique function”.

By the 1950s, Parent had already envisaged an “architecture of mobilities, or a mobile architecture involving the deliberate cultivation of disequilibrium and fluctuation” (Redhead, 2005: 39), as well as environmental obstacles designed to shake people out of their passivity and move them into action.<sup>9</sup> Central to his architectural practice was “setting in motion that which is stable and immobile” (Redhead, 2005: 41). In their work together, Virilio and Parent designed abodes in the shape of bunkers that posed a series of perceptual and somatic challenges to their inhabitants, such as steeply sloping floors to awaken people from what they felt was sleepy complacency with the emerging consumer culture and against the pervasive threat of the war machine.<sup>10</sup>

Virilio has written that the purpose of the oblique function was to shift attention to the floor and to provide opportunities for enhanced proprioceptive experience of space; the ground destabilized and metastasizing at the same time the body is destabilized and metastasizing. With the oblique function, the floor is tilted and the body is propelled into compulsory movement. These forced aberrations, says Virilio, make architecture choreographic and are based on the idea of inducing “a constant awareness of gravity, bringing the body into a tactile relationship with the environment” (Virilio and Lotringer, 2002: 36). By imposing military forms and materials on their subjects, Parent and Virilio developed a critical, interventionist architecture that focused on forcing the body into new forms and establishing not being in the body as a force of liberation.

According to Virilio, oblique architecture creates a situation in which “[e]very dimension, every direction of space becomes a modification of the body” (Virilio and Lotringer, 2002: 36). This conception of the built environment, which resonates strongly with posthumanist discourses as well as with Arakawa and Gins’ work, engages the body with the environment at every turn. By interacting with an environment not to surmount it but to live in it, the function of the oblique seeks to undo the disregard for autonomy that is the product of speed culture. Between Virilio’s practice as an architect and his project as a theorist, readers can understand his vision for dromology: a world made microscopic and macroscopic by military technology, and the consequent transformation of human subjectivity within this milieu.

Arakawa and Gins’ project in *Making Dying Illegal* is not outwardly militaristic, like Virilio and Parent’s architectural projects in the 1960s. However, their work imposes law and architecture as constraints on the body. One enters their spaces through an elaborate set of rules. Once inside, there is the physical capture and containment in cell-like units; the juxtaposing of bright colors which is their trademark, traps their audience in the kind of permanent juvenalization that capitalism uses as a control mechanism. The layout of the space permits the possibility of constant panoptic surveillance. Their use of architecture as torture to force the body’s compliance to an external vision that is not inhabited by its creators suggests that their designs are ultimately uninhabitable. In this sense, Arakawa and Gins’ project continues past utopian tortures, by thinking the unthinkable: what if mortality is a (bad) habit that can be overcome?

As the title *Making Dying Illegal* makes evident, Arakawa and Gins default to law as a major metaphor for their work. Their central metaphor reveals the underlying force and violence of their project. They state that in order to become Architectural Bodies, the body must be “reworked” by biotopology. This recalls

the “manifesto building” typical of Soviet architects in the 1920s and early 1930s, meant to facilitate the social engineering programs for the daily lives of Soviet workers. The difference is, these homes were designed to promote social and political restructuring through collective living and were geared to the workers’ salaries and livelihoods by being placed in close proximity to the factories where they labored.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Arakawa and Gins have no interest in reconfiguring social and political relations as they are more interested in the prosthetic enhancement of the individual ego.

Although their stated aesthetic-political goals are quite different, Arakawa and Gins take up the New Soviet Man and the Nazi ideal that humans can be molded by architecture. The plastic elements therein have their analogy to the law: creation and recreation by force. In his “Critique of Violence” (1921), Walter Benjamin argues that it is not possible to separate violence from law and that in fact, all law is latent violence on the social body it governs (Benjamin, 1986: 277-300). As Jean Baudrillard (1983) argues, the law that is imposed on us is the law of confusion of categories: everything is sexual, everything is political, everything is aesthetic. Everything is everything, all at once. Each category is generalized to the greatest possible extent so that it eventually loses all specificity and is reabsorbed by all other categories. He calls this elsewhere the “trans-aestheticizing” of everything. Baudrillard reads the world as “disappearing” into the silence of an ironic hyperconformity at the vanishing point, or past the vanishing point – beyond the fetishization of art, for example (2005: 168-172). How does this account for the kind of mass fetishism of the object the project of making dying illegal anticipates?

### **Auto-catalytic art and the art of refusal**

For more than a century, it has been an avant-garde tradition to treat encounters between capitalism and the body, and capitalism’s control of the body as an impetus to focus attention on the failures of prevailing systems and to explore and challenge the parameters of living. Since the emergence of Dada, avant-garde art has struggled to overcome the capitalist object-fetishism that threatens to reduce art to commerce.

Following the spectacularization of contingency produced by the two world wars and Virilio’s description of contemporary life as a continual accident, avant-garde art can be described as “traumatophilic aesthetic encounters”. These encounters are politically and socially engaged practices that probe the limits of



art by eschewing the traditional art object, mobilizing contingency and engaging the audience in such a way that active witnessing to the mechanisms of culture the work entails are directly experienced by the spectator.

In his 1957 essay “The Creative Act”, Marcel Duchamp posited, “the two poles of the creation of art [are] the artist [‘a mediumistic being’] on the one hand, and on the other the spectator who later becomes the posterity”. While either of the “poles” suggested by Duchamp when taken alone present a naïve position, the collision of the two provides interesting possibilities. For instance, numerous Dada and Surrealist works evoke the cut-up body or the body’s seemingly organic entwinement with mechanical entities. Dada artists conjure the mindless, repetitive mechanization of everyday life. Their collage and readymade artworks projected all that was abject and tragic about the violence of modernization and technological domination, characterized by perverse juxtapositions dramatically mapping the impact of modernity on the sense of self and the heightened sensation of the body’s vulnerability. In this context, a concern with durability or permanence – of the art object or the body – seems almost perverse.

The Dada zeitgeist was dystopian. The future, inevitably apocalyptic, required disturbing yet compelling forms to fill it. Dada declared itself against all things, including dada itself. These expressions of rupture were a scream of refusal. But, as we have learned from Dada, the art of refusal cannot be refused; it gets absorbed into the refusal, turning critique into parody. According to Herbert Marcuse, refusal must not only be the guiding principle for all artistic creation, it must also be a manifestation of artistic creation itself. The notion of refusal serves both as the embodiment of a resistance to convention and as a concept with an underlying negative or reactive force that can be widely interpreted and applied. Marcuse (1955) himself insisted that this “negative” energy should be applied against the “surplus repression” society produced by imposing socially unnecessary labor, unnecessary restrictions on sexuality, and a social system organized around profit and exploitation. He called for the end of repression and the creation of a new non-repressive civilization which would involve libidinal and non-alienated labor, play, free and open sexuality. At the core of refusal is a question of ethics: what is it to resist, rather than what is to resist? What social needs, social desires and social responsibilities are tolerable?

Traumatophilia also resonates with Joseph Beuys’ expanded concept of art, developed in the 1960s at the time Arakawa and Gins emerged. Beuys’ idea of “social sculpture,” for example, can be summarized as art’s potential to transform society. In 1974 Beuys was invited to New York City to perform a series of public dialogues, during which he said:

I think art is the only political power, the only revolutionary power, the only evolutionary power, the only power to free humankind from all repression. I say not that art has already realized this, on the contrary, and because it has not, it has to be developed as a weapon, at first there are radical levels and then you can speak about special details.<sup>12</sup>

In the same year, he famously made the statement: “Every human being is an artist” (Beuys quoted in Tisdall, 1974: 48). Beuys’ notion of social sculpture is optimistic: art becomes life and dissolves into the social fabric of a new humanity.

One of the more illuminating examples of the avant-garde refusal of art as object since Dada is Gustav Metzger’s auto-destructive art, which emerged in the late 1950s. Metzger introduces time as an artistic medium and marks the ephemeral nature of the object via its slow disintegration or rapid disappearance. He demonstrates the reactive potential of art and technology and how this is a paradoxical process which is both destructive and creative. It also offers a spectacle that celebrates destruction and regeneration. Auto-destructive art conducts experiments in generative collective experiences, contingency, political antagonism and social consciousness. In addition to its direct aesthetic and political goals, it aims to transform the way people relate to each other and to shared histories and events.

Metzger’s theory of auto-destructive art first appeared as a manifesto written with the sculptor Brian Robins in November 1959. In this piece, consisting of seven short paragraphs, he states: “Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies” (Metzger, 1996: 59). He goes on: it is a unity of idea, site, form, color, time and disintegrative processes. In his follow-up manifesto [“Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art”], published in 1960, Metzger writes: “Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummeling to which individuals and masses are subjected” (1996: 59-60). In his third and final manifesto on auto-destructive art in 1961, Metzger proposed auto-creative art, “the art of change, of movement, of growth” (1996: 60) in which destruction is a prerequisite for renewal and creation itself.

For more than sixty years, transformative processes have continued to be at the center of Metzger’s work: the contingency of sculptures that fall to pieces or erode, canvasses corroded by acid, rubbish in trash bags, car exhaust in glass containers. The work may last a few moments or as long as twenty years. As Gustav Metzger repeatedly emphasizes in his theoretical work on auto-destructive art, the artistic subject tends to take the back seat, something that distinguishes it from other forms of art in general. It is replaced by an autonomism – what Metzger refers to as an agent – that sets destructive processes in motion in each work (1996: 59–60). The artist creates the framework for the self-activities of the

material and initiates the auto-destruction, but the artwork itself carries out the public action.

His works have resisted commodification by the art market by being public, performative, temporary and critical. With auto-destructive art, Metzger developed a praxis in which self-destruction was built into his art as the mirror of a world careering towards annihilation. He describes auto-destructive art “as a desperate last-minute subversive political weapon... an attack on the capitalist system” (Metzger quoted in Walker, 1995: 15).

### **Refusing refusal: the timeless object utopianism of Arakawa and Gins**

John Rajchman’s *Constructions (Writing Architecture)* opens with a line of questioning: “What if the architectonic in Kant were not an overarching system but something that has itself to be constructed anew, in each case, in relation to fresh problems – something looser, more flexible, less complete, more irregular, a free plan in which things hang together without yet being held in place?” Rajchman continues this “what if” exploration to pose ideas about informal plans, the open, the unfinished – equating “to think” with “to construct” – “to build a free plan in which to move, invent concepts, unfold a drama” (Rajchman, 1998: 1-2).

Social traumas change over time and resistance, as Rajchman points out, can only be temporary constructions that must be continually reinvented. Resistance historically oscillates between the physical and the metaphorical, the active and the meditative, the utopias and the dystopias. In the past twenty or so years, numerous critical evaluations of how technology affects our perception have shifted in emphasis to open, dynamic platforms. Negatory models of resistance are being usurped by procedures for emergence, ways to guide our trajectories toward better rather than the worst of imagined futures. As Nigel Thrift puts it, this involves moving away from the idea of innovation as “a trawling for the new” and toward “the continuous process of interaction that now seems to be becoming characteristic” (Thrift, 2007: 33).

This trend has been largely related to digital technologies and the body. Thus, what Marcuse’s work could not anticipate is that the management of scarcity would transform, with the new economy based on the Internet and technological revolution, into the management of informational, ideological and economic infinity. An infinity that denies its material foundation: the brain, body, culture, etc. Nevertheless, the idea of refusal he formulated has been able to maintain its use as an aesthetic and political tool to raise questions about often-elided

relationships of agency and complicity in routine experience. As Metzger recently said, refusal frees us to be in the moment:

There was a time a few decades ago when people thought they were so clever: “We know the earth will be burnt, but we’ll escape”. Now people are slowly beginning to think, “Alright, we can do that and will do that, but wherever we go, we’re trapped”. Because in the end, everything will end in nothing... When this idea percolates – and it hasn’t percolated yet – people will accept that, and they may begin to think along the lines that I’ve begun to think: that we might as well abandon all these dreams of permanent life and technology, and just live – live for the present and enjoy ourselves, and not kill ourselves with the ideal of immortality. (Metzger quoted in Obrist, 2008: 36)

The “few decades ago” that Metzger refers to is the 1960s – the period when Arakawa and Gins emerged. Arakawa and Gins’ work maintains its strong ties to the 1960s. One of the problems with working on a project with such longevity is that it must be flexible enough to adapt to extrinsic conditions, which is inevitably problematic with architectural projects. What does their work make of the hyper-stimulated technological world we currently inhabit? The always-on, always-present mobile forms of media that people use to communicate and to connect with each other in the most basic sense? The couple has no answer to these questions, and they indeed appear oblivious to them, for as Metzger predicted, the obsession with immortality kills time and removes the present.

Arakawa and Gins have never adapted their architecture to the changes in the environment and thus, the perceptual and proprioceptive changes the body makes to inhabit its environment. It is striking that in their forty-year practice there have been no shifts in their thought and production to accommodate for shifts in society and in individual bodies. The form of their overall project does not change and the forms they build do not change. It is as if they are stuck: their line of flight is suspended en route to eternity.

In Arakawa and Gins’ project, the prospect of reversal becomes stasis of form and meaning. By contrast with Metzger, in whose work time and destruction are ever-present mediums, and is geared around active witnessing and participation in social events, the focus of Arakawa and Gins on architecture, with its claims to permanence, and their promise of immortality for those who consume their spaces according to the rules they create – and at a competitive market price – reintroduces the capitalist specter of object-fetishism. Everyday life is a subset to their aesthetic aims.

It is in the relation of Arakawa and Gins’ project to time that the ultimately nihilistic atemporality and aspatiality of their project to make dying illegal reveals

its failure to connect with the body without the threat of force, and thus its close affinity with Kafka's apparatus. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes that, before modernity – the mass production of technologies and apparatuses for structuring time, the global standardization of time and the advent of Taylorism –, time was linked to social space. Now, it is linked to duration. In modernity, this transformation caused terror and anxiety – initially from the fragmentation, castration and amputation of the body maimed by technology or war, and later, from its augmentation and excess. This ties into the postmodernist anxiety that lived time is consumed by work, has substituted “labor” for work so that the body is turned on and yet exhausted by perpetual connectivity with machines, and is increasingly being experienced as a thing that is merely coded as mortal. In a recent essay on the economic crisis, Anthony Iles writes about the current affective state of affairs: “Capital’s deformation of the human through its imposition of inhumane drives – individualism, competition, greed, and destruction – leaves open little space for things to simply be things, or for humans to simply be themselves” (Iles, 2010).

The writing that accompanies Arakawa and Gins’ built work states that their architecture is designed for humans caught in the flux of transitioning from human to posthuman: “To live one’s life as an architectural body is the best option available to a member of the human species at this historical juncture. The average organism that persons (a person) possesses sufficient intelligence to gather that what, or if you like, who she has arrived here as exists as substantially *an unknown quality*” (Arakawa and Gins, 2006: 27). This is compelling rhetoric for those wishing to use affective techniques to reclaim the biological commons but their project lacks the public (free, open, inclusive) component to flesh out its experiential aims. What they propose instead is extreme and contradictory: a retreat from engagement with everyday life that is also a form of capitalist engagement through architecture. Ultimately, in Arakawa and Gins’ work, resistance to inhuman architecture and social practices recodify as all-too-human architectural and social practices. Force and refusal bend in towards each other, as extremes tend to do, and it is difficult to tell where one (fascism) ends and the other (a liberatory politics) begins.

## NOTES

1. Arakawa and Gins collaborated on “The Mechanism of Meaning” from 1963-1973 and from 1973-the present.
2. Shusaku Arakawa died on May 18, 2010.
3. For an overview of Arakawa and Gins’ reversible destiny projects, see <http://www.reversibledestiny.org>.
4. As of June 6, 2013 the Bioscleave House is no longer listed for sale among Sotheby’s luxury real estate properties but is still unsold and uninhabited.
5. I would like to call attention to the unsustainability of their works – *e.g.*, the lack of circulated air, use of synthetic materials, the highlighting of “in-between spaces” – to draw out the contradictory elements at play in their project even further.
6. The unoccupied lofts are reportedly intended to be used as “educational and cultural facilities.” See <http://www.architecturalbody.com/mitaka/eng/concept.html>.
7. See <http://decojournal.com/200810/the-reversible-destiny-lofts-mitaka-tokyo/>.
8. See the works of French architects such as David Georges Emmerich, Yona Friedman and Michel Ragon for example, and the work of Bernard Tschumi in particular. Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not permit further exploration of their works.
9. See also Sylvère Lotringer and Paul Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2002), 8-17.
10. Only one project Parent and Virilio designed together ever came to fruition: the Church of Sainte-Bernadette-du-Banlay in Nevers, France (1966).
11. A central aim for Constructivist architects was to instill the avant-garde in everyday life. I’m thinking in particular of their Workers’ Clubs, and a statement Vladimir Lenin made in 1919: “the real emancipation of women and real communism begins with the mass struggle against these petty household chores and the true reforming of the mass into a vast socialist household.”
12. Joseph Beuys, public dialogue at the New School, New York City, 1974. Available from [www.eai.org/user\\_files/supporting\\_documents/beuys\\_dialogue.pdf](http://www.eai.org/user_files/supporting_documents/beuys_dialogue.pdf).

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