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Graduate Sessions 6: Televisuality

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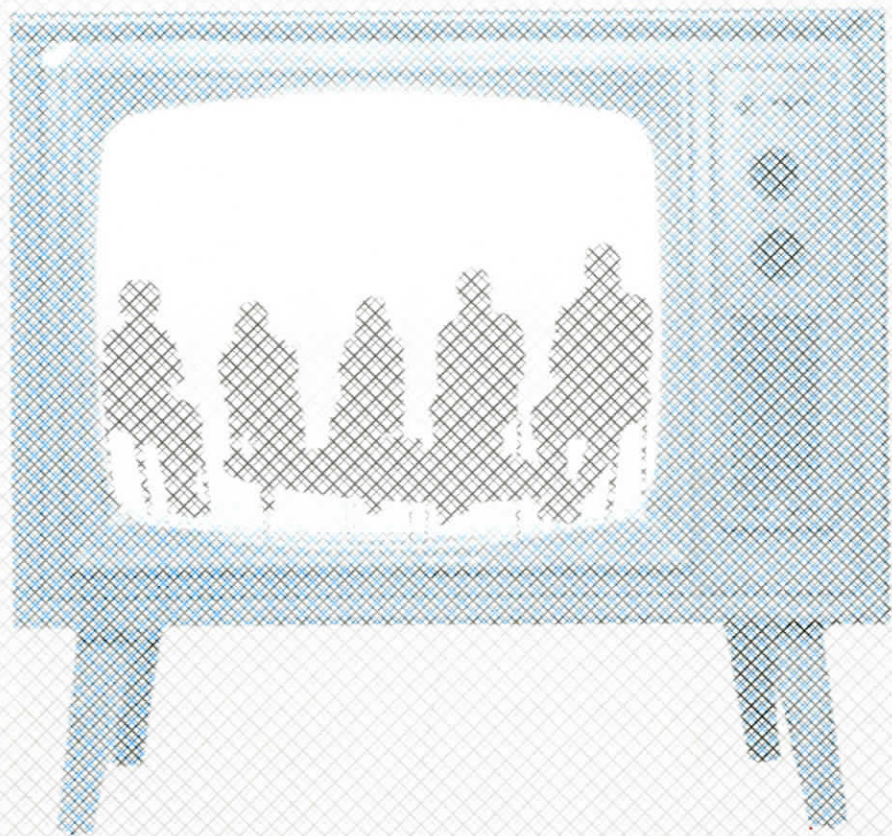
TELEVISUALITY

Televisuality
Graduate Session 06
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The Televisuality symposium was organized by Jon Yoder and the students of Architectural Theory + Design Research, a core component of the graduate curriculum in the School of Architecture.

Graduate Sessions is a series of seminars and symposia offering Syracuse Architecture graduate students the opportunity to engage leading scholars and practitioners in conversation and debate. The resulting pamphlets offer unique insights into the work of our guests as well as the ongoing concerns of our students and the graduate programs.

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graduate session 06

My boss said, "You're going *where* to do *what*?"
..."*Architecture* school??" Frank Lentz

INTRODUCTION Jon Yoder

This issue of Graduate Sessions presents excerpts from the roundtable
discussions of Televisuality, a symposium featuring leading scholars and
practitioners from the fields of architecture and television that came together
in The Warehouse Auditorium to discuss past, present, and potential col-
laborations between these two fields. The graduate seminar from which
the event emerged locates the activity of design research within a different
discursive terrain each year. It is essentially a research methods course with
an impulse for practice—meaning that design research is conducted with a
spirit of experimentation, and evaluated for its ability to creatively contribute
to contemporary design debates and practices. Two years ago, Mark Linder
launched this symposium series with Transcisciplinary Applications, an event
which brought together leading designers and researchers who had studied
architecture and are now applying specifically architectural techniques
to problems and projects outside of, or marginal to, the proper domain of

the profession. This year, the graduate seminar and resulting symposium focused more narrowly on transdisciplinary exchanges between the fields of architecture and television.

Leaving aside for now the equally difficult question of what television scholars and producers might glean from architecture, why might architectural scholars and designers be interested in television? There hasn't historically been what one could call a healthy or productive relationship between the two fields—at least from the architectural side. It would not be much of a stretch to describe the two fields as traditional adversaries. Many other disciplines also draw the high/low-brow boundary between themselves and television. But architects have been particularly hostile, often regarding the introduction of TV into our territory as an unwelcome invasion.

In the 1970s, for example, architectural historian Kenneth Frampton lamented the loss of public places to the "'mass' engineered somnambulism of the television," and philosopher Karsten Harries rejected Marshall McLuhan's optimistic portrait of the "global village," blaming the electronic disembodiment ostensibly engendered by TV for a general loss of cultural intimacy. In the 1980s, architectural theorist Michael Benedikt championed "real" buildings, and cautioned against the "sliding of architecture into the world of television." In the 1990s, architect William McDonough blamed TV-centered consumer culture for the devastation of the natural environment, and architectural historian Barry Bergdoll insisted that TV screens produce "a passivity profoundly at odds with the best learning."

This disciplinary hostility consists in more than merely maintaining the distinction between fine art and kitsch with art critic Clement Greenberg, fearing being supplanted by the media with author Victor Hugo, or even overcompensating with elitism due to a shared sense of commercial debasement.

Architecture's traditional province has been the design of the spaces within which cultural life unfolds. So it is understandable if TV's competing "world in a box" might be viewed as a threat by the architecture academy and profession. But importantly, as Sylvia Lavin noted in her presentation, we also appear to be in the midst of a rare moment of synchronicity between the two fields. It is precisely this apparent convergence that invites, if not demands, critical scrutiny and creative experimentation.

Why might architectural scholars and designers be interested in television? Architects have been particularly hostile, often regarding the introduction of TV into our territory as an unwelcome invasion. Jon Yoder

But what exactly is meant by the title, "Televisuality?" If the term "vision" describes the notion of unmediated viewing or natural eyesight, then "visuality" asserts that vision itself is also culturally constructed—in this case within, through, and around the effects of architecture and television. Generally, the individual symposium presentations and subsequent roundtable discussions venture speculatively and opportunistically—even (gasp!) *projectively*—into the still-only-crudely-mapped territory of the televisual. So instead of refuting Frank Lloyd Wright's aphorism that "television is chewing gum for the eyes," the symposium instead poses the multi-faceted question: how might transdisciplinary collaborations produce the longest-lasting flavors, the most vibrant colors, and the biggest bubbles?

soa.syr.edu/tv

PARTICIPANTS

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01: SPATIALIZING VISION

RT: I want to start out with two ideas that really came out in these presentations, and that is this notion of television in some cases as a *place*, a physical place. I remember growing up, that mantra, "Live from Television City in Hollywood!" was probably one of the things we heard more often than any other single sentence. And I know for me as a kid, that really *positioned*. For one thing, I thought there was a television city, that there was this place. And it was somehow better; Detroit was only Motor *Town*, this was Television *City*. And that was at the same time of course that Disneyland had just come out with Adventureland and Tomorrowland. But then to get to Frank: Current TV. I can understand this kind of nonsense going on in the '50s. Current TV is supposed to be the *internet*, and the *new* technologies, and all this kind of stuff. And by gosh if you don't seem to be playing the same game with this Chemosphere. It almost seems like somebody my age's (or maybe Al Gore's age) vision of the future. This is what our social studies textbook's final chapter used to look like. There'd be this Chemosphere-like thing, and there'd be a flying car pulling into the garage. So I find it fascinating how Current TV and Television City both have this notion of claiming a place. The very fact that Current TV has a *studio* is, in some ways, so charmingly twentieth-century.

The Chemosphere symbolizes Los Angeles. It doesn't symbolize Milan. It doesn't symbolize Trafalgar Square. It's not scalable. Frank Lentz

FL: Well, we thought—just in a very primal, instinctive way—we need to anchor, and have a place. And Los Angeles is one of the few places where the pebble hits the pond culturally, and it emanates out. For media, that's an important place. People look, they chase celebrity, things happen.

Architecture moved there in the mid-century because of the climate, and this celebration—this *mushrooming*—of a new way of looking at architecture. And lifestyle was something that was very exciting then and I think it remains. So it seemed natural for us to respond quickly with an idea that said "what would be the coolest place to hang out?" and "how does the television jump out at the viewer?"

Our first response was to deny the clear view which was deemed almost pornographic in nature and to dole it out in bits and pieces like an i.v. drip over the course of a visit. The building would pixelate, blur, or edit the site. The building in essence becomes a viewing device. Charles Renfro

LS: But I do think what you say about place and the imagination of place on television is really important. And that's where I ended, thinking about how much this kind of transfer of modern architecture from New York to L.A. was also a transfer of a kind of national imaginary for where we were when we watched TV. In the early days it was all from New York or maybe Chicago. And suddenly you were inscribed and addressed as an Angelino after that. Maybe your network's really doing the same.

FL: Yeah, the other interesting thing about CBS in their early days—they did a great job of vertically integrating their brand through the print media, through the on-screen, through the CBS eye, through the architecture. They got it right. It was so important because you had people who would land on a network on a nightly basis and stick with it. The news never made money for networks, but it got people to the network, and then they stayed. The idea for a network to even change their studio's look is a *big* deal. It doesn't just happen. It takes years, and the brass all have to fall into line and be in unanimous agreement. They just don't change rapidly because they still believe in brand.

RT: It's interesting how TV Land—even though that's not so much a place, but an administrative way of airing reruns on a cable channel—still has that sense of, "this is a place." And you really know what TV Land is like. It's got all that populuxe '50s retro kind of stuff.

SB: Yeah, and I think that's exactly what Current TV does really, really well: give the news context. It gives a sense of place for these people who are talking about the news, which is something we love to do as people. We love to recognize things, just like when somebody on stage says, "I'm from L.A." and everybody goes, "Oh!" We love to recognize stuff.

Television City expressed the vision of a new form of midcentury modernism that embraced the demands of the postwar consumer economy and its increasing need to make people attend to screens—screens sponsored by big industry. Lynn Spigel

RT: The question, though, that I keep coming back to is that it seems to be so *old-school* compared to how everybody seems to be thinking the news will be ultimately delivered—you know, everybody saying, "Who cares that

Katie Couric may leave *CBS Evening News* after the elections?" Nobody cares about these dinosaurs anymore because it's going to be delivered in this new nonlinear kind of way. That's always to me the hardest challenge with Current TV. It works fine on the internet, but what happens when you actually have to sit through the one you don't want to get to the one you do?

YouTube changes the metaphor from the vacuum tube to tubes of connectivity. Anne Friedberg

SB: The reason why I love Current TV more on TV than I do on the internet is because it makes a passive medium seem active, and it makes me feel like I'm getting culture in very short bursts. And that's really what I'm looking for today, whether I'm reading or I'm talking or I'm looking at anything. What I'm looking for is a form of general culture, which I don't get from any one source. But a medium like Current TV—however passive it might be since I can't really act on it from my couch—makes me feel like an active participant.

BC: Maybe I'm the only one who feels this way, but it seems to me strange that architecture has always to be playing this *comfort* role. We are talking about new experimentations with media and an extraordinary transformation of what television has been, and what would be the importance of this and the fascination with it. In the same way I'm shocked that the architecture, which in the '50s was so innovative that all contemporary architects, all modern architects, were working with—I mean, the Eameses were working closely with Billy Wilder. Charles Eames said that they learned more from Billy Wilder than from anything else, right? Building sets and so forth. So in this precisely fast model for learning so much about the world in a concentrated fast way, why not learn about architecture? Why are we now with a piece of architecture from 1950? Why is

architecture in general always fifty years behind? A few years ago you could not sell a piece of modern architecture. You couldn't sell these houses in L.A. a few years ago, and now they are incredibly valuable.

FL: Well, if you have to pick a place in L.A.—have you been to L.A. in the last few years? There's not a lot to pick from as far as iconic symbols of Los Angeles. L.A. builds and tears down much in the same way that it builds and tears down sets, and it's always been that way. They just tore down the Ambassador Hotel. It's—

BC: Right, sure, but what I was trying to say is what a great opportunity to engage contemporary architects from L.A. or from everywhere because they can fly to—

FL: True. I think that's totally valid.

The aesthetics of speed and mobility were also communicated through landscape design—and Los Angeles itself. Lynn Spigel

BC: What an extraordinary occasion to educate the public because I think the public is completely uneducated in architecture. They are much more educated in *anything* else. Anybody who goes to a good high school comes up with a decent understanding of modern art, for example. They would not laugh in front of a Mondrian, right? And they don't have the equivalent understanding of architecture. Even college—unless you go and take a class in architecture, you really don't understand. You don't know how to *read* it. Anybody with a college degree can read a text, can understand the difference between a good author and a trash novel. And nobody graduating from college, unless they pass by architecture school, has any idea about architecture. Isn't the media actually—

FL: Well, we pursue it through our original programming quite a lot through prefab architecture and design. We can tell the story better than in a single back plate. I think we can do a better job of it by commissioning, by soliciting, and by executing short-form content that is interesting. Look at the magazine rack. It's full of art and design. If you go to television, there's nothing. I mean, there's really nothing there. So it's an opportunity for us.

AF: Well, I was going to pipe in maybe—now I have to rethink this given what Beatriz has just said about the sort of avoidance of using modern architecture—

BC: 'Contemporary.'

AF: *Contemporary* architecture—but I wanted to say something about the specificity of John Lautner's work in terms of the Chemosphere as your studio. And I understand your question about the old form of televisual studio presentation, and that itself is a piece of retro nostalgia which may

or may not work. It may be comfort, but it may also be more static. But Lautner, I think—and I'm going to ask this as kind of a polemical question because I'd like to hear other people's responses—Lautner is one of those mid-century architects whose architecture, if we're going to have nostalgia for mid-century architecture, because of the televisual appropriation of it through *The Jetsons*, especially in that house, was a kind of architecture that was at the moment it was built a vision of the future. And now it's a vision of the future from the past, and so you're citing that nostalgia. But because it got routed through the Hanna-Barbera vision of the future to its *hyperbole*, to the hyperbole of what the future would be like that we're not quite living in, it does seem—I mean, in defense of the set—it does seem to evoke all of those pieces of the imaginary; not just mid-century architecture, but the television of *The Jetsons* and—

What if the glass house was made for TV, what if Johnson himself was made for TV? Beatriz Colomina

SL: You have to say that you live in a Lautner house, I mean it's just not fair. I'm sorry. [laughter]

AF: I know. I actually wondered why Jon, since he said Frank lived in a Lautner apartment, didn't include—

SL: And now Frank lives in a Neutra house!

FL: It *is* a little indulgent. [laughter]

SL: Well, I mean, the mind-boggling, neck-breaking idea that mid-century modernism is, in fact, the thing that escapes nostalgia to become the stage of currents. I don't think there's any way around that. That's just a problem—I mean it *is!* And I would say that beyond that, you see that repeated.

I think I'm just saying in a slightly different way what Beatriz said: In this conversation architecture is still the home or *real* places, and television is the place of virtuality. And it just seems to me that it's exactly that which a lot of people have tried to undo. There is also something interesting, a little anxiety-provoking for me, about the idea that architecture is the place that fixes things and provides comfort and so forth. And television is the place of the new. When Stefan said that what he really wants is to be made to feel that this passive medium is actually active, and the desire to be *duped*. That is, I'm sure, an absolutely widespread and shared desire.

RT: It's the glory of television. It's what it's best at.

SL: But to say it in a university—whoa!—I didn't *not* get it as a polemic, but nevertheless, I think it's still worth talking about architecture and media's different techniques. Or the shared techniques that they have to produce false images of action and to transform notions of passivity into comfort, and place, and so forth.

SB: I would say, if I could, that it all comes back to Plato's cave. The shadows we see on the wall, the truths—

SL: Pop-up windows? (laughter)

The core mechanics of the televisual are not projective but light-emitting and rely on another material, one that links the technology more directly to the technology of the window—glass. Anne Friedberg

SB: Yeah, the pop-up windows, absolutely! The truths that we see and then are liberated from to go see the real truths outside. I don't think those two truths are necessarily exclusive. I think we can enjoy the truth and at the

same time enjoy the fiction, or else there would be no Balzac. There would be nobody to entertain with the impossible, and that's what is fundamentally nice about being, as you said, duped willfully.

MS: I was just going to say certainly since Bilbao—since that museum and with this whole phenomenon of architecture tourism—"architourism"—of contemporary buildings. And I think we're going to see it dramatically in Beijing this summer; I have a feeling that several buildings are going to be focused on by television worldwide constantly. So I would have agreed more ten years ago that architecture is absent, banished from the television set, banished from the public mindset. But I sense in the last five to ten years a reemergence. Look at Dubai, the Bourg Al Arab—everyone knows it. And those images of the new cities arising in the harbor, images of various museums around the world: these are very familiar current images now. They're not—

CBS was hiring Andy Warhol and top-notch illustrators and artists. People watching weren't seeing just circus and vaudeville. Lynn Spigel

FL: They're promotional.

MS: They're promotional. They're branded images. In a way, I don't think it's a question about place versus non-place. It's really a question about how place is branded, how place is turned into an image that's flexible, mobile, that can be identified with—companies that can be identified with itineraries of individuals—consumable itineraries. And that's happening dramatically through this new crop of buildings. It might not have much to do with their *architectural* qualities, but certainly it has to do with their *spectacle*-qualities and their ability to stand in for an experience that the public can then identify with.

CR: I was just going to respond earlier to Beatriz's point about architecture and why we're so old-fashioned in a way. One of the interesting places to go is *Second Life* to see what's happening on there because there's really no innovation happening there, but there might be *replication*. And I was thinking that maybe one of the tools that we could be using more effectively is a platform like *Second Life* to put your parade of current architecture. If no one's going to innovate it, at least we can expose on that platform.

BC: Right, that's interesting. I actually was planning to do something with my students next year about architecture in *Second Life*.

CR: Me too. That's my studio topic. We should talk. [laughter]

AF: We should also talk—if my paper had been allowed to be a bit longer, the second part of it was about architecture in *Second Life*. And it's part of another project that I'm working on. And it's true that *Second Life* has taken this direction where it either goes mimetic and completely rebuilds the Farnsworth House, or it has the freedom from gravity and everything else to be innovative. And I think there's a lot to do with it.

SL: Are those the two options? That either you do nostalgic '50s architecture, or you move into outer space and you don't have any architecture at all?

BC: Exactly, exactly.

The icons of architecture, which we cherish (or don't), are not given much airtime on television. Stefan Boublil

AF: No, it's not just '50s. Every university that has a campus in *Second Life*; Princeton tries to rebuild the buildings of Princeton in *Second Life*, and Stanford the buildings of Stanford in *Second Life*, and that's mimetic. It's mimetic virtually. So it's not just mimetic to mid-century. It's mimetic to any

kind of architecture: Brick by brick and pixel by pixel it's being rebuilt, unlike the more innovative projects, which are wildly—

CR: Yeah—*Jetsons* or *Smurfs*.

AF: Because you fly! You do—you fly and you can move through spaces that are gyroscopic and 3D and very deep. It's different.

More than any media TV positions domestic architecture as a drama to be witnessed on screen and then reproduced at home, television's fairytales acting as the domestic aspirations and identities of millions. Mitchell Schwarzer

JU: I have a question for Lynn. You described watching television as being 'transported to the college of the city from the living room.' And in *Make Room for TV* you argued that television sometimes stands as a surrogate for city centers. Do you think television still operates as an urban surrogate, or has it forgotten the geo-physical city altogether?

LS: I think you're right that there's this two-way kind of relationship where clearly in Television City the architecture is informing what televisual space is, and televisual space is informing what architects are going to do. And I think as time went by—I mean, you're absolutely right—the spaces have this kind of mutual dependence on each other certainly in terms of virtual culture. We've seen that now. So I think that's a really good point. We're not still in the '50s, but I tend to go there all the time. [laughs]

JY: Anne, I really appreciate your description of what you call a "largess of remote visuality" and the notion that it could operate accretively to thicken the presence of something we typically understand to be virtual or lacking dimension. You talked about thickening through the sections that you

showed—the sections of the cathode ray tube and things like that. You talked about this in terms of a shift from two-dimensional to three-dimensional. It strikes me that when you're talking about a light-*emitting* device as opposed to a *projecting* device, there might also be a shift away from a Cartesian set of logics that have more to do with Alberti's window and less with television. And so maybe to talk about it in terms of Cartesian space or a kind of window framing is maybe not as productive or radical as it might be. How would you respond to that? Because there's something about the appearance of the TV consoles that you showed in the photographs that is so obviously alien to the perspectivally constructed spaces that are housing them, that it really seems like a Cartesian *alternative* in a sense.

Our work has expanded itself not only from the traditional media form but also from vision itself, exploring areas of sense beyond vision, post-vision, relying on other senses particularly smell and taste to reshape our knowledge of site and place. Charles Renfro

AF: Well, the beginning of your question was about the thicknesses, and clearly I was playing with the flatnesses of the screen material. But maybe my answer has to go back to *Second Life*, in that I only wrote this paper for this conference because I was asked to. I hadn't really been thinking about televisuality for a while, but I *had* been thinking a great deal about *Second Life* and the relation between two-dimensions and three-dimensions. And I have been thinking and working on the 3D web, which really transforms all of the arguments about perspectival space. One moves through the 3D web in a very different way, albeit with an avatar, albeit with a very awkward and clunky bodily interface. So my sort of back engine approach to the cathode ray tube was to think about the relation of that kind of thick, awkward—and Lynn has written about—its place in the home. It was this *thing*. It was a

piece of furniture that came in as a console and deranged domestic space.
Well, the flatness of the screen, which is more like the flatness of a window,
and Sylvia just leaned over and asked me where my television was placed in
my home because I have glass walls, and it's—

SL: Wrapped!

As a design analogy, the curtain wall invoked the television
itself. Lynn Spigel

AF: Right—280 degrees. So it's placed against a plate glass window, and
I don't have the kind of game that I showed in those transparent computer
screens ever set up on my TV screen yet, but I could. Anyway, so I think
maybe you could rephrase your question, because the thing about *Second
Life* as a new depth to the very flat screen is that it does force us to rethink
the representational. I think, as architects have to work in it too, it's more like
working in three-dimensional modeling than drawings can be.

PW: My question goes along with the last one. Frank and I were talking ear-
lier about the dual screen experience created by Current TV of the television
and the web. And I kind of feel that the TV right now is just a representation
of this performative screen of the web. So my question for anybody is how
does the TV screen become more performative, or is that necessary?

CR: The question is, "Does TV exist anymore?" I think that's the question,
and maybe we can come to a conclusion at the end of today. I don't really
think it does.

LS: I guess I would say, since my recent book was called *Television After TV*,
that I think it doesn't. But that classic form of TV—the kind that TV City pro-
duced, we don't see much of that. It's residual now. There's some of it, but

it's residual. And clearly the emergent thing is emerging, but it does have to do with 'what is TV?' Is it just showing the web, or is it interaction that's really just telemarketing? What exactly is it? I think we're not sure yet.

AF: Can I just add to that question, because it's a question of does TV still exist, and maybe we can all agree that it doesn't. But the *televisual* still does. And so this is why *Television After TV* still has *televisuality* in it. And all of the forms that we can incorporate under the "mushroom" umbrella of televisuality can include all of those other forms that involve the web, and the iPhone, and the other apparatuses of delivery.

Not only is there no disparity between architecture and television, but they have been friends forever. Stefan Boublil

02: VISUALIZING SPACE

BL: Wow! I'm sort of breathless after today. This was really quite an amazing cadre of talks and people. Since the day is winding down, and also since I've been really inspired by the kind of televisual drama of these last few talks, I thought I'd like to approach this moderation less like an academic and more like, say, Donahue and really provoke some of these things not as in an academic discourse. So, if you will, in this session I'd like to talk about: is TV truth? Is TV an open work? Do we really want to eat our sites? What is an aberrant reading of HGTV? And what is the auratic experience of your backsplash? So first, is TV truth? Is it an open work? Lynn, to you. [laughter]

> We believe what we see, but that doesn't mean that we expect TV to always depict the truth; in fact we cherish its ability to lie, cheat, and steal. Charles Renfro

LS: I guess I could just relate that to the topic of Mitchell's work on the Home and Garden Network. I don't know if you guys do, but I watch it all the time and can't figure out why I waste most of my life lying in my very unfabulous bedroom, which is usually very messy, watching this *glorious* stuff on TV. So while it's not truth, I think the context in which we watch TV creates this interesting dialogue between what we're seeing, which we often deconstruct and know isn't true—meaning the domestic context in which we watch and the screen. I think many of us, at least in your generation and even in mine, are pretty self-reflexive critical viewers at this point, and TV is constantly deconstructing itself. So I doubt that anybody takes verbatim what's on television. I think they're watching more in a mode that's thinking about their life and the lives of other people they're watching on television. One thing I wanted to ask Mitchell, if I could pass this along, was a good friend of mine wrote an essay on Home and Garden Network, or those kinds of networks in the British context. And her argument was kind of different because she was arguing that it was the first time where you really saw the inclusion of alternative family lifestyles on television. So a lot of the shows were about gay couples and lesbian couples and different kinds of family structures. And I do think that's true to some degree on U.S. television as well. So while you were painting a pretty conservative picture of it, which I agree with, you might also look at it not as *Leave it to Beaver*-ville, but as introducing something quite different.

MS: Yeah, I would agree. A lot of it stems from reality TV, and so the HGTV lineup tries to find as many bizarre characters as they can, and every living arrangement they can. I don't know if anyone ever saw the shelter magazine,

Nest? They would go for that kind of stuff: a whorehouse as a living arrangement, igloos, anything. I guess I was trying to point out—and I think this speaks to an audience of architects and aspiring architects—the way the network sees *you* potentially as cultural creators. You're the creators of cultural content that can then be sold to the public, and in that regard you can have an exalted position within society as the ones who create content for consumption. There certainly are many architects engaged—you see them on HGTV all the time. You just don't see the suspects that you would see in an academic presentation. It's like an alternative universe: the presentations we would normally have here and the presentations you'll see on television. Why is architecture not part of the TV scene—why is it excluded? Maybe intentionally so, but it's food for thought for all of us in a world where the places that are creating culture are the places that are thriving, and the places that are consuming are in a different situation.

BL: So it sounds like you're saying television *is* an open work. And, Sylvia: Is it? Is HGTV an open work? Is it completely closed?

SL: Gosh! I suppose as much as I am a good formalist, I'm still a little bit resistant to thinking that television is the same everywhere. And so I'm not sure *where* we're talking about. It's not that it's limited to America, but this is a particular set of relationships to television. So somehow I think that we have to allow our conversation to inflect *which* television? Which television audience? Which television company? I mean, how does it work? Where? How are you watching it? And so on and so forth. I suppose another thing that I wanted to say is, "Architecture is absent on TV?" Well, I think that that's absolutely *absurd*. It's *this* group that is eliminating architecture from television. I believe Beatriz's whole paper is going to be about how architecture—very high architecture—has been on television for an extremely long time. We saw so many images of *The Simpsons* showing the evacuation of nostalgic television. Frank Gehry was on *The Simpsons*, and everybody got the joke about how he designed Bilbao. And on some level, I mean, I would almost say that that was a smarter interaction with Bilbao than the

The "Eye Candy" exhibition, installed for the symposium by the Apartment Creative Agency, featured a wall of custom-molded chocolate lollipops with images of Oprah Winfrey and Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.
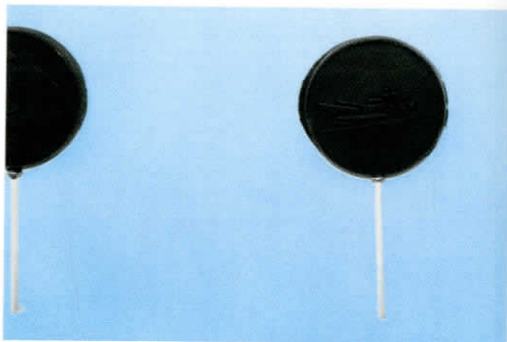
chocolates. I mean, let's just say this is the chocolate Bilbao versus television Bilbao. Here we are denigrating television as being unable to analyze this. I thought that was a really sophisticated architectural critique. What is the name of the show?—Mitchell mentioned it.

MS: *Designers' Challenge*?

SL: *Designers' Challenge*. My colleagues at UCLA were on *Designers' Challenge*, and the last time I was in New Haven, Bob Stern trotted out—as though he were an Olympic gold medal—Goyle. No? So you guys don't watch enough television. Maybe Lynn remembers *Top Design*. Goyle got to like the No. 3 in *Top Design*, and his tag was, "My name is Goyle as in gargoyle, and I'm an architect from Yale." So they're all over the place. It's just that there's another image that we want to construct about architecture and television, which is not true. That was your first question. Is it true or not true? No, I think—no.

BL: I know Charles has a point, but first we need a defense of the chocolates.

SL: No, I was just making an argument; I do like the chocolates. I have two of them in my bag. [laughter]

What does it mean to have an uncomfortable television? What are the new speculative possibilities that can be extracted from this idea of the *scomodità*—the discomfort?
Sylvia Lavin

CR: Should I throw the coffee table if we're doing Donahue? I want to say something like, "She took my *baby*! I'm gonna punch you, *bitch*!" [laughter]

SL: That's *Springer*.

CR: Sorry. But in the academic setting you have to ask what truth is. You have to redefine truth and in an academic sense, what does truth mean? And what I was trying to say is truth was the time that you're sitting in front of the television, and everything that you apprehend is true whether it's depicting fake things or not. It's a visual culture and it's culturally *true*. I guess that's what I was thinking about. And, "I want my baby back!" [laughter]

BL: Mitchell, I think you bring up a really important point about the experience economy and the transformation of everyday things, everyday goods, everyday objects—dining room tables with Bach playing in the background. And Charles, you were talking about eating our site. It's the same thing. Is television itself somehow the thing that has helped transform the way we perceive the experience of everyday artifacts? Do you think it's instrumental in it? Do you think it's just one of the things that's manifesting that?

MS: Like I said, I don't think it's operating alone. I think many aspects of the economy and media are operating in the same manner. I think television is *particularly* supple. It has tremendous resources, high production costs and content. It's the particular aesthetics of television—the fact that it's on 24/7, the fact that it's *live*—as a sort of power beyond, let's say, the shelter magazine. So I'm not sure fundamentally it's different in kind.

We read into that image of the couch potato that history of the hearth and its attractive warmth. Sylvia Lavin

BL: Frank?

FL: Well, Mitchell's analysis was a little close to home because my wife works at TLC and is addicted to these kinds of programming, and I watch a lot of it myself. In a way, I think it's somehow legitimate just because it exists. You have to recognize it whether you agree with it or not. It's like racism

exists. You have to recognize it. It comes from somewhere. It doesn't come just because people are inherently bad; there's a historic component. So I think it's okay and legitimate, and it's about experience. And you guys are architects and architectural critics that port over that experience from the buildings that you design. There just seems to be a desperate need in our culture for people to have individual expression and individual experience. And you can experience that by way of television, even if it's just the promise of a laser-etched backsplash.

A home is not just the lived space for playing out ideas and actions, but a viewed stage for activating moods.
Mitchell Schwarzer

SL: You're saying that laser-etching is apparently okay if it reflects *us*. But if it reflects your *horse* somehow this is intrinsically, ontologically wrong.

BL: High/low culture, right? Anne, your work has been really instrumental in bridging traditional art historical discourses and ways of thinking about the television as material artifact, physical artifact, and medium. How would you comment on the role of television as that combined thing—as a material artifact, cultural artifact, spatial artifact—within art historical discourse?

AF: Well, I'm tempted to do one of those things that people do on television, which is to take your question and not answer it—say what I wanted to say anyway. But I'll maybe get back to the art historical context, because the way that I would answer it would probably have to do with installation work and video work. I thought you were going to ask me to comment more on the aspirational models of television: the address to the audience as a consumer, or an aspiring transformative kind of discourse that is part of Home and Garden television and is part of much of what sponsored television was about. It was about addressing the viewer as somebody who could have a product or

have a different lifestyle and the medium itself was selling it to you. But I'm very struck by the model of Home and Garden television, because it does seem to produce—and in the clip that Mitchell showed it produces—not only the aspirational viewer, but the do-it-yourself viewer. And not all of them are do-it-yourself, because they still have to go out and buy the faucets and the tiles. But what I wanted to, as a good dystopic materialist, set comment upon—and this is in the same vein that I had to talk about e-waste and CRT debris and the price of obsolescence with consumer electronics—is that we have global waste heaps. I have to comment on do-it-yourself culture and its role with television and its role with YouTube. It sort of shifts the production costs onto the viewer. So all those people that upload their videos to You-Tube are what got Chad Hurley and Steve Chen, those two guys from Silicon Valley, the $1.6 billion when they sold their little website. So there is a cost. It's almost ideological—the fact that we're being addressed as consumers who can do things and then *our* labor is being sold back to us—we're cut out of it. You know, you might get an honorific of a prize, but I don't think they're paid to show their backsplashes. And you're certainly not paid if your video shows up on YouTube.

I tried to use the word 'viewsers' but everyone in the room laughed at me. Frank Lentz

MS: It's like that on *Fear Factor*, people aren't paid to eat insects. They do it because they're on TV. They want to be televised.

AF: They do it because they want to be famous for fifteen minutes.

SB: Which will exist—I just wanted to complete the sentence—until the day fame is no longer currency, which it has been and will be for the foreseeable future for the unfortunate eyes of our children. But that's the way it is.

Space-time is blurred: images from reality are fodder for fictions. Charles Renfro

BL: Lynn, is this partly what you mean by "Television After TV?"

LS: The do-it-yourself culture stuff, which John Hartley also talks a lot about, but has the exact opposite affirmative. I agree with Anne. She's right. But John Hartley thinks that this is empowering. And this whole question of the open text—I mean, this is just the thing in TV studies that makes you want to be in architecture instead, because they just ad infinitum will make this argument: "No, it's good! No, it's bad! It's open. It's closed." And it's a kind of crazy argument because as Sylvia pointed out, you really have to look at context: In what context is it a good thing? In what context isn't it?

JY: Charles, you talked about a shift in your firm's body of work that you're probably asked to explain frequently. I'm personally interested in your newer direction, but not because you're addressing the other senses. To me it's more about vision *unleashed*. It's more about a kind of thickening of vision that's happening within the buildings as opposed to the add-ons. So I'm not so convinced by the argument that now you're addressing the other senses. Could you comment on that?

CR: That's why I had to change my wording midstream: because I think it's an expansive position. Vision is still so important to the way we live our lives in our bodies. That is our primary means of apprehending the world and all the information around us. The expansion is a conceptual expansion more than a sensory expansion, but it involves the senses directly in an interaction with the physical world—and that's like drinking your site, or eating your site, or being immersed in the site in Blur. These are all things that, yes, vision is part of, but something else is part of it as well. And I think for a while we felt a little bit trapped by some of the histories that have happened in

the firm, and our kind of mining of the media world. I think we're trying to discover new ways to get at similar issues, but without working with technology and media.

KC: My question is also for Charles, or anyone else that can address the question. You posed the question, "Where has the device gone that incorporates the senses and the experience?" Well, one could speculate that it has manifested itself into games—like *Guitar Hero* or *Dance Dance Revolution*—that transcend the boundaries of the screen, where contrary to normative definitions of televisual space, the virtual site is placed into a physical location for human interaction. I'm wondering how this concept of site can change the understanding of space and construct potentials in new architecture.

Architecture was beginning to rethink its time just as television was redefining time as well. Sylvia Lavin

CR: Oh, that's for me? You know, they're all good points. I wanted to make the point that there was a lot of to-do about virtual reality. And *Guitar Hero* is still virtual reality. And they're all still virtual realities. I suppose the point I was trying to make is that they're not really lived experiences as we know them. I'm very nostalgic about lived experience. I kind of believe in interaction with humans, and being in a room, etcetera. That's why it's a critique of the virtual reality world, but it's an affirmation of the *televisual* world. I feel like we can do a lot of really interesting things with the televisual. How do we get our bodies and our social life and our interaction mechanism—? This is an old question.

AF: I guess I wanted to answer your question about the kind of bodily interaction with video gaming, because it isn't as if the *screen* has disappeared. Your bodily *interface* with it is very different, and it's much more haptic and mobile. And your relation to the virtual world of the screen is different than it has been to the kind of static screens of what we're calling the televisual. But I think it's a good question for us all to address or think about. I do think there are new ways in which the new platforms for that interface can be used differently than just the way that we've thought of as games—either the sports model or the shoot-and-kill model. I think *Guitar Hero* does something slightly different, although I probably have a deep ideological critique of that, too, in terms of how it produces the imaginary—that you are an imaginary famous rock star when you're really just able to push buttons. Anyway, I think that there's future work to be done with that interface.

SL: But you know, I'm only on medium, and I live for the day when I can play *Guitar Hero 2* on expert. I have to say when "you're only pushing

buttons?"—I mean, I can't push them that fast. I can't move my hand back and forth that fast. I can't read the screen that fast. I'm totally committed to mastering that and spend many, many hours. Only when people say that they play guitar: *that* I find just totally ludicrous. They are playing *Guitar Hero*, and it is a new instrument. It absolutely is a composition. You can imagine the things that are going to unfold. Somehow Anne must believe that, too. I know she does.

The Le Corbusier foundation, which is responsible for all of the architect's works, had no idea that he had been so involved in television. Beatriz Colomina

AF: I just have to say I have a 14-year-old son who is also learning guitar. And so it's really important for me to have him do his guitar practice and not play *Guitar Hero*. [laughter]

SB: I think we should also remind ourselves that it goes both ways. We're talking a lot about the physical going into the digital. A lot of the digital world—the computers and the TVs—are also making us more passive, almost living virtual lives. Lord knows my marriage has been virtual for years. [laughter]

SL: All I'm trying to say is that for every form of passivity, I'm sure you can find another form of dexterity that is demanded. So back to the, "Is it open? Is it closed?" It's just too generic a question. It depends.

BL: Well, but isn't that part of the question too about the evolution of these things? Sylvia, you're saying it's not *an* evolution. It's not that television just *is*, as Frank said, just as racism *is*. It's not just television *is*; television *becomes* constantly. And as with non-bricks and mortar media, there's a kind of dexterity to these things. I think we, as academics, expect a certain

kind of conservative categorical approach that has to do with—for better or worse—publication cycles, and course schedules, and that sort of thing.

SL: But there is an ideological issue because I think that I share with Anne the sense of obligation to bring certain forms of ideological conversation to the question of media. And she's done it in one way. And I think that there are lots of other ways in addition. But one of them is—at least I would say for me—Luddite-ism is something that one should intrinsically be resistant to. I mean, that is just what I think. So one of the things that I hear very often—I'm sure a lot of people on this panel hear this, maybe say it: "I don't belong to the digital generation. My fingers will never do the things as quick as a younger person will. My brain isn't wired that way." And so forth. And the lack of sense of obligation to actually learn and to not feel so passive in the face of these new forms of living seems to me really, really important.

CR: Do we not critique the new? We just accept the new without—

SL: I think for sure you learn how to *play* the new before you decide. I think that's all I'm saying.

Televisual space is both the space of the televisual and the changes produced by the televisual to space itself.
Anne Friedberg

BN: I think I'm getting sort of at the same point, but I think a lot of times today we've been making the assumption that television is a passive medium and that old forms of broadcasting are one-way. I think that cycled through a couple times and I'm just wondering: isn't it really just that we're not seeing in these new forms of media the way that they are active? And it's easier to see a video game as something that you're physically engaged in, as something that's more participatory than becoming entranced in the

narrative of a story or something like that. Or seeing something like Current TV where people are physically uploading content being more two-way than a feedback loop that occurs in culture where you're actually going to feed back the media based on the way you're receiving the stuff that's coming down to you. I mean, maybe the feedback loop is closed up a little bit, but it's the same mechanism in a way.

Philip Johnson was like a television personality, a journalist reporting on his own life in an easily understood language. There is no difference here between the reporter and the thing being reported on: Johnson was simply a Television program, a reality TV program longer than any of us could have imagined. Beatriz Colomina

MS: McLuhan called television a "hot medium," not a cool one. He called it active because of the low level of transmission and visual quality. You had to construct perceptually much more than you did with film. So he actually saw the viewers doing a lot.

LS+JY: That's 'cool.'

MS: Cool—right. Cool in the regard that you have to be active, right.

LS: But McLuhan is so inconsistent. I mean, one essay he *hates* TV; it's the end of the universe. The next, it's cool and participatory. And now I was thinking back to the TV City stuff and the way the architects were saying, "We're going to make this participatory space." And CBS is all about participatoriness. And of course, it's a corporate concept: "participatory." And we've come to fetishize the idea that passive is bad and participatory and active is good always. I like being passive sometimes. I don't understand why we have this value on you always have to be in constant mobility. What

about just thinking or—

MS: Because when you're active there's money being made.

CR: That's exactly right. It's shopping. It's activity of shopping.

LS: That's what I'm saying. So in exploring the historical ideologies about who wanted the participatory audience? It was CBS. And who wants it now? It's all these other companies. So before we replicate that logic, as Brody said, I think we need to think about that.

JY: I have one last question for Sylvia regarding her talk which picks up with this McLuhan issue. Umberto Eco's "openness" and McLuhan's "cool"—as I understand it, they're arising as conceptual models at about the same time. They're quite similar in that they have to do with participation and, potentially, televisuality. How might you talk about them differently?

SL: Well, first of all, that's actually a question you should ask to the media scholars, which I cannot pretend to be. I would say a couple things about Eco very narrowly. One is that my understanding of this argument about the open work is that it was open within limits, which I think relates also to some of this question. It could be open, but the work had to impose limits on how much aberration there could be. So it was not an infinitely open radicalization of the reader, not exactly to that extent. So you might compare them in the degree to which they allow this reader/viewer essentially to then act on its own or whether it was a process of inculcation. That might be a question. The other little aspect about Eco that I thought was interesting was the fact that this openness came from an art historical model, that it was an art historical model that is very, very invested in architecture in particular, as is McLuhan. Many of McLuhan's notions about television are actually rooted in the television in the home, in the work of Andy Warhol in spaces, and so forth. So one of my personal polemics is this idea that architecture—I don't think anybody here particularly repeated it, but it is often repeated—that architecture has to learn from technology and keep up with media and become mediatized. There is another view that suggests that media models could be based on other things, and that the kind of material distinctions we make are false and that they permit a continuation of this radical division between the real guitar and the *Guitar Hero*. And maybe that's my answer.

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