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**BODY POSITIVITY:
A CASE FOR CORPOREAL FORM**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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ABSTRACT

Born from architecture's increasingly shattered conceptual foundations, the formal project of bodily objects presents an interesting case study into the emerging dialectics surrounding considerations of representation, technology, and affect. This thesis examines the genealogical origins of corporeal form in order to further understand the stake that bodies hold within the production and reception of architecture. By tracing the pedigree of corporeal form back to the two types of architectural signification that emerged after modernism, bodies can be validated as a project able to extend and advance architecture's potential for individualized and collective engagement. By situating bodily objects within the histories of associative and receptive design, complex digital modeling, and architectural communication, this thesis makes a case for corporeal form and its ability to cater to sensual desires, permit amicable subject-object relationships, and enable personalized associations with architectural artifacts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within human sight and perception exists an instinctual desire for bodies that assists in deriving legible comprehensions of our visual world. Bodily objects, or our registration of objects as bodily, allow for a deciphering of and engagement with the eclectic forms that surround us. We *want* to see bodies wherever we look; their limbs and lumps diminish our anxieties of solitude and strangeness by providing us with the comforts of companionship and similitude. No matter how far we have to stretch our imagination when perceiving a form, humans will be inclined to conjure up a figure with a front, back, and maybe some appendages.

There exists an unlikely yet amicable relationship between corporeal forms and architecture, one that is closely aligned to discourses on representation and technology. The current genealogical position of bodies owes itself to the contemporary dialectics that have emerged around architecture and its signification. R. E. Somol, in his 2006 essay "Green Dots 101," specifies two different types of architectural communication that developed after modernism: the constative practice and the performative practice. The constative practices were those that prioritized place and trace, or context and process, in an attempt to retain the natural and authentic qualities of the built environment. In the opposing camp, the performative practices welcomed decorative and everyday as a means of enabling collective associations with built forms.

Throughout his essay, Somol proceeds by making a case for the resulting offspring of the performative practices, what he calls the project of graphic expediency. Through the rapidity of its graphic nature, an architectural logo values its whole over its parts, defies any unilateral reading, and activates potential collectives through what can be called custom massification, or the creation of unlikely communities through architectural reception. Douglas

Altshuler, in *Log 33*, expands on Somol's theorization of graphic shapes that give rise to collective subjects by describing a new architectural project that both continues and departs from the legacy of logos: the architectural character. Using the LADG's 48 characters as a representative example, a set of flabby forms intended to subvert the convention of bricks, he subsumes corporeal forms within the project of character and in turn welcomes bodies into canon of receptive architecture.

While Altshuler is correct to position bodies as architectural characters within the lineage of performative practices, it would remain an incomplete or shallow assessment to simply leave it at that. Contemporary architectural bodies also owe tribute to the alternative camp of architectural signification that Somol specifies: the constative practices. Born from the generational embrace of digital software and fabrication tools purloined from CGI film and aviation technologies, intricacy finds its goals in maximal formal variability able to cater to various contexts. In other words, the commitment to the process and production of unique form that characterizes digital intricacy finds its apotheosis in mass customization.

In its short history, the mechanisms of digital intricacy turned into a set of readily accessible plug-ins and easily appropriated techniques that in effect instantiated a sense of fatigue about modeling softwares and complex coding. Now several phases into this dissolution, the tools of digital intricacy have given way to a vast range of design explorations that converge the everyday and unexpected. In *Possible Mediums*, Kelly Bair, Kristy Balliet, Adam Fure, and Kyle Miller make note of this technological diffusion and catalog sixteen speculative design projects born from architecture's increasingly shattered conceptual foundations exacerbated by the rise of modeling and scripting software. One of these contemporary design mediums that they identify, and thus legitimize, is bodies. When offering a specific definition to body projects, they make note of not just the figural qualities of

corporeal form but also their very specific digital origins in topology. As Greg Lynn explains in *Animate Form*, topology, along with time and parameters, is one of the three fundamental properties of organization in a computer that is characterized by calculus-based flexible surfaces composed of vectors which can shift and adapt to varying forces and parameters. In incorporating this computationally-rooted concept in their definition, *Possible Mediums* has pinned corporeal form within the rapidly evolving history of digital intricacy and introduced greater nuance into the project's definition.

With its inclusion in both the performative and constative lineages of architectural communication, it is clear that bodies represent a marriage between the two. No longer are complex digital surfaces and receptive graphic objects exclusionary but instead, together, they have given rise to a formal project with a two-pronged approach; architectural bodies seek both goals of mass customization and custom massification. Architectural bodies, by way of calculus-based modeling, lend themselves to limitless heterogeneity as their topological surfaces can be designed to morph and bulge with infinite variety. In the same vein as early constative practices focused on place and trace, this ability for unique corporeal forms allows for individualized relationships with architectural design; with great ease, bodies can be designed to cater to any context. Advancing the potentials of this individuality, and per their inherited graphic nature, bodies also establish a lingua franca for their audiences. Not unlike shapes and characters, bodies invite collectives to share engagements with their forms by way of the characteristics native to topology. Arms, legs, and bellies, easy registrations of blobs and bulges, provide an accessible vocabulary for formal interpretation that transcends esoterics of architectural composition. Both customized and massified, corporeal form successfully coalesces the two distinct types of signification that architecture undertook after its modernist transitions with the infinite formal and interpretive possibilities that bodies enable

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BODY POSITIVITY: A CASE FOR CORPOREAL FORM

James Elkins, thinking through particular nuances in sight and perception, describes a natural human desire to want to read and register forms as continuous and complete figures¹:

“When we are confronted with an unfamiliar object—a blot, a funny smear, a strange configuration of paint, a mirage, a frightening apparition, a wild landscape, a brass microscope, a building made of brick and rock—we seek a body in it; we try to see something like ourselves, a reflection or an other, a doppelganger or a twin, or even just a part of us—a face, a hand or a foot, an eye, even a hair or a scrap of tissue. In other words, we try to understand strange forms by thinking back to bodies.”²

He underscores the fact that this impulse is not a mere preference for wholeness or smoothness; the desire for bodies is a more particular and instinctual search for corporeal forms that assist in deriving legible comprehensions of our visual world. Bodily objects, or our registration of objects as bodily, allow for a deciphering of and engagement with the eclectic forms that surround us. As Elkins demonstrates by unpacking various examples, ranging from star constellations and mathematical graphs to marble sculptures and medical photographs, there is a primal affinity towards anthropomorphization, pareidolia, and empathy when we are confronted with an object. We *want* to see bodies wherever we look; their limbs and lumps diminish our anxieties of solitude and strangeness by providing us with the comforts of companionship and similitude.

No matter how far we have to stretch our imagination when perceiving a form, humans will be inclined to conjure up a figure with a front, back, and maybe some appendages. “Even

¹ James Elkins, “Seeing Bodies” in *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 125.

² Elkins, 129.

odd bodies, things that are manifestly not human, get referred back to human bodies when we try to understand them.”³ In order to give ourselves the capacity to embrace it as a body, we answer to an object by projecting onto it; we share with it parts our own subjectivity and objectivity as a means of leveling intellectual-material positions. Transformed by our social desires, objects-cum-bodies hail viewing subjects and yearn for sensory interaction, inviting and encouraging viewing subjects to respond to their idiosyncratic profiles by soliciting and simultaneously rejecting attempts in identification. Bodies may ask to be interpreted as one familiar figure yet simultaneously deny any specification through distinctive qualities, postures, or stances—a body can assume a bipedal appearance yet refuse a reference to human form through any particular quirks or subtlety. This evasiveness allows bodies to flicker between vague and precise, strange and familiar, form and figure, object and subject. Rather than exist in exclusive polarities, they affirm contradictions, multivalences, and incongruencies. It is in this regard that bodily objects, inanimate or not, express their innate vitality; by straddling the line between objecthood and subjecthood, bodies are rendered as companionable entities that demand engagement with their audiences and contexts. It is to no surprise then that this material agency that bodies possess has proven to be a provocative subject matter for artists and designers.

Throughout the history of art, bodies and their representations have sustained as a core disciplinary concern. They can be traced all the way back to prehistoric cultural artifacts such figurines and paintings of humans and cattle, continuing into the deep questions of mimesis, the rise of anatomical expression, the deconstruction of visuality, and now a broad range of conceptual contemplations. Some of the more interesting recent works on bodies include those that interrogate them as forms that are inherently arresting, unpredictable, and political.

³ Elkins, 129.

The work of Japanese sculptor Bome extends and subverts sculpture's orthodox search for sensuous forms and embodied myths by masterfully transforming anime characters into life size, three-dimensional figurines.⁴ French performance artist ORLAN, through a sequence of cosmetic surgeries that attempted to hybridize her appearance with that of historical painting subjects, interrogates the human form by treating it as "not just as the screen on which meaning is simply inscribed to... but as the structurally malleable and changeable material through which models are brought to life."⁵ Other exemplary contemporary artists employing bodies as subject matter include Fernando Botero, Rosa Verloop, Mark Ryden and Marion Peck, Yoshitomo Nara, Kaws, and Brendan Monroe.

There exists a less popular but equally amicable relationship between corporeal forms and architecture, one that is closely aligned to discourses on representation, technology, and, most freshly, affect.⁶ John Hejduk valued them for their iconographic figuration, expressed in the quirky silhouettes of his Berlin Masques (1979-1983).⁷ Greg Lynn deploys bodies in his digi-scientific conceptions of architectural composition, as materialized in the blobs of his Embryological House (1988) and BlobWall (2005, 2007).⁸ The LADG (Claus Benjamin Freyinger and Andrew Holder) subvert convention by turning typically mundane bricks into the flabby and fleshy forms of their 48 Characters (2013).⁹ Other notable architectural bodies and body enthusiasts include James V. Lafferty's Elephantine Colossus for Coney Island (1885-1896),

⁴ Takashi Murakami, "Visual of Superflat Manual" in *Superflat* (Tokyo: Madra, 2000), 131.

⁵ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture" in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 327.

⁶ I am specifying here a particular relationship between biomorphic form and architecture rather than broader conceptual metaphors of buildings as bodies that began with Vitruvius. For contemporary explorations in the analogies between buildings and bodies, see Marcos Cruz' work and writing on neoplastic architecture in *The Inhabitable Flesh of Architecture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013).

⁷ Alberto Perez-Gomez, "THE RENOVATION OF THE BODY: JOHN HEJDUK & THE CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THEORETICAL PROJECTS," *AA Files*, no. 13 (1986): 26-29.

⁸ Greg Lynn, "Body Matters," *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts*, no. 5 (1995).

⁹ Amy Kulper, "Out of Character," *Log*, no. 31 (2014): 91.

Colin Fournier and Peter Cook's *Kunsthaus Grav* (2003), MAD Architects' *Absolute Towers* (2012), Zaha Hadid, Hernan Diaz Alonso, Clark Thenhaus, Ellie Abrons, and Bittertang (Antonio Torres and Michael Loverich).

What these examples denote is a developing pedigree that validates the exploration of bodies within disciplinary questions of form and meaning. While the architectural project of corporeal form can be traced as far back to the humanoid bricks and columns of Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Mesoamerica, it's current genealogical position owes itself to the contemporary dialectics that have emerged around architecture and its signification. R. E. Somol, in his 2006 essay "Green Dots 101," specifies two different types of architectural communication that developed after modernism: the constative practice and the performative practice.¹⁰ Characterized by the strategies of articulation (Kenneth Frampton's tectonics) and notation (Peter Eisenman's index), the constative practice is defined by "a commitment to the natural, necessary, and authentic" qualities of place and trace.¹¹ In contrast, the performative practices, constituted by the tendencies towards decoration (Robert Venturi's shed) and figuration (John Hejduk's characters), "embrace the conventional and arbitrary as a way to take pleasure in the ersatz and artifice," searching for collective association by way of the informational surface and ready-made.¹²

Throughout the essay, Somol proceeds by making a case for the resulting offspring of the performative practices, what he calls the project of graphic expediency. "Less concerned with means... than ends, the focus of graphic expediency is on audience and reception, and what might now be characterized as *custom massification*, the specific fashioning of unlikely collectives and synthetic communities."¹³ The device through which this project manifests is the

¹⁰ R.E Somol, "Green Dots 101," *Hunch: Rethinking Representation*, no. 11 (Winter 2006/7): 30.

¹¹ Somol, 30.

¹² Somol, 30-31.

¹³ Somol, 32.

architectural logo: a flexible, slippery form that collapses dichotomies of symbol and sign, mass and surface, into “the monolith of a *saturated shape*.”¹⁴ He goes on to specify a series of operations that define logos and their creation: the proliferation of a particular element, definition of a singular outline in order to obscure scale, development of a profile that is “imagable but without reference,” saturation of a consistent and monotone cosmetic, and perforation of a seemingly arbitrary set of holes.¹⁵ Through the rapidity of its graphic nature, the resulting logo is a shape that values its whole over its parts, defies any unilateral reading, and activates latent collectives.

Douglas Altshuler, in *Log 33*, expands on Somol’s theorization of graphic shapes that give rise to collective subjects by describing a new architectural project that both continues and departs from the legacy of logos: the architectural character.¹⁶ In “Animate Architecture,” Altshuler introduces characters as forms invested subjectivity that, similarly to logos, exert “mutually dependent and plastic agency” on fellow subjects and in the world.¹⁷ Translating Somol’s original twelve reasons into a new set of articulations that, Altshuler defines the architectural character as a “figurally solicitous architecture that gathers collectives” through various easy-going affects.¹⁸ When describing these characters, Altshuler works through the LADG’s 48 Characters as a representative example and thus subsumes corporeal forms within the project of character. In highlighting the “symbolic, zoo-morphic, emotional, companionable, and narrative qualities that inform [the LADG’s] 48 Characters,” Altshuler endorses the key characteristics of bodily objects and welcomes them into the canon of receptive architecture. In his list of reasons, one can easily match the defining traits of

¹⁴ Somol, 33. Somol notes here that logos are an extension of prior ideas on shape he identifies in “12 Reasons to Get Back Into Shape,” *Content* (Köln: Taschen, 2003).

¹⁵ Somol, 35.

¹⁶ Douglas Altshuler, “Animate Architecture: Twelve Reasons To Get in Character,” *Log*, no. 33 (2015): 129-132.

¹⁷ Altshuler, 131.

¹⁸ Altshuler, 132.

characters to that of bodies; Altshuler defends characters through qualities such as funny, adoptable, pudgy, pregnant, extensive, and perched.

While Altshuler is correct to position bodies as architectural characters within the lineage of performative practices, it would remain an incomplete or shallow assessment to simply leave it at that. Contemporary architectural bodies also owe tribute to the alternative camp of architectural signification that Somol specifies: the constative practices. In parallel to performative graphic expediency, Somol describes the resulting constative combination of notation and tectonics as the project of digital intricacy whose vessel of choice is the curvature-defined blob. Born from the generational embrace of digital software and fabrication tools purloined from CGI film and aviation technologies, “intricacy strives to *differentiate the homogenous* (e.g., ‘hot up’ Cartesian geometry, or individualize the previously standard unit).”

¹⁹ Characterized by this commitment to process and production, digital intricacy “achieves its natural apotheosis in the goal of *mass customization*, a call that still prioritizes the individual subject,” falling in contrast to the goals of collectivity of the performative practices.²⁰

In its short history, the mechanisms of digital intricacy turned into a set of readily accessible plug-ins and easily appropriated techniques that in effect instantiated a sense of fatigue about modeling software and parametric coding. With computer aided design programs becoming the standard means of architectural production, the curve turned casual, the blob became blasé, and the parametric now placid. As Michael Meredith describes it when recapping architecture’s current disciplinary condition:

“Once you know how to make the self-similar Maya patterns, they’re much less magical and are, frankly, superficial. It seems that almost everyone can make them with a few commands. Digital methodology is not a technical or disciplined technique

¹⁹ Somol, 32.

²⁰ Somol, 32.

anymore than working with basic Euclidean geometries is. Modeling software has become a tool that requires little knowledge on how to construct these geometries."²¹ Modeling softwares and the computational acrobatics that they enabled became trivialized by the growing commonality of digital interfaces. In relaying the history of digital technologies and its effects on architectural production, Stan Allen notes that rather than maintaining a heroic zeitgeist about complex mathematical surfaces that characterized the first stages of "costly, slow, and difficult to use" software and computers, architects became empowered" by the potential of networked interconnectivity or fluid personal identity promised" by the rise of the Internet.²² In this subsequent stage: " Architects tried to capture some of this new sensibility through experimental projects and installations, sometimes incorporating digital imagery, but these projects were, for the most part, realized with conventional means."²³ Allen goes on to describe the most recent evolution of architecture's digital turn in an encouraging tone:

"It's clear that after the experimental work of the 1980s and 1990s we are now entering a third, more mature, and less complex phase in our relationship to digital technology - a phase of consolidation and extension of the possibilities of the digital. Thanks in part to a new generation of architects who have been educated entirely within the digital regime and, on the other hand, to the first generation of digitally trained architects who have continued to evolve their thinking, the computer is beginning to have a more tangible and immediate impact. These designers are pragmatic about the computer's powerful ability to generate new formal innovations and effects, at the same time that they are realistic about its technical and procedural limitations. These

²¹ Michael Meredith, "Radical Inclusion! (A Survival Guide for Post-Architecture)," *Perspecta* 41 (2008): 14.

²² Stan Allen, "The Digital Complex," *Log*, no. 5 (2005): 94.

²³ Allen, 94.

designers find new potentials in unexpected mixtures of the digital and the analog, the real and the virtual, or the everyday and the fantastic."²⁴

This paradigm shift can also be said to stem from the tumultuous effects the Great Recession had on architectural production; as Mark Foster Gage writes, "with fewer resources available for complex architectural dreams, interest in the digital derivation of architecture began to wane."²⁵ It is clear that now, after a cultural-economic transition, digital software techniques have departed from their fetish-cult origins and are now a set of flexible tools and tricks that give rise to various formal and affectual explorations. "Pragmatic, inventive, and hands-on, this is a more expedient approach to digital design expertise, which is now understood to be only one among many design intelligences."²⁶

In their timely survey of architectural production, Kelly Bair, Kristy Balliet, Adam Fure, and Kyle Miller make note of this technological diffusion and catalog sixteen speculative "design mediums" born from architecture's increasingly shattered conceptual foundations exacerbated by the rise of modeling and scripting software.²⁷ One of these contemporary design mediums that *Possible Mediums* identifies, and thus legitimizes, is bodies. Included in their catalog of bodies is, of course, the LADG's 48 characters, as well as works by Ellie Abrons and Bittertang; these selections expand on the project of bodies to include concerns of tectonics, interiority, and materiality. Offering a specific definition to these projects, they write

²⁴ Allen, 94.

²⁵ Mark Foster Gage, "Speculation vs. Indifference," *Log*, no. 40 (2017): 122.

²⁶ Allen, 95. For a thorough analysis of architecture's entwinement with digital technologies see Mario Carpa's anthology, *The Digital Turn in Architecture: 1992-2012* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013).

²⁷ Inspired by Rosalind Krauss' theorization that art has entered a "post-medium condition," Bair, Balliet, Fure, and Miller intentionally use "medium" as a conceptual foothold that supports their assertion that architectural design and production is now a fragmented sea of conceptual trajectories. "Following Jean-Luc Nancy's provocation that there are 'several arts and not just one,' we use the improper plural 'mediums' to highlight the plurality of contemporary architecture. Where 'media' foregrounds technical apparatuses, 'mediums' implicates a broad range of working methods, both material and abstract." Kelly Bair, Kristy Balliet, Adam Fure, and Kyle Miller, "Notes from the Middle" in *Possible Mediums* (New York: Actar Publishers, 2018), 19.

that: "BODIES are continuous topological forms with features resembling human or animal body parts."²⁸

Through the particular mention of topology in their definition, *Possible Mediums* makes a clear reference to the writings on computationally-derived architecture of Greg Lynn and other theorists and practitioners who Somol may have placed within the digital intricacy tribe.²⁹ As Lynn explains in *Animate Form*, topology, along with time and parameters, is one of the three "fundamental properties of organization in a computer" that is characterized by calculus-based flexible surfaces composed of vectors which can shift and adapt to varying forces and parameters.³⁰ By extension, topological forms are the smooth and seamless surface-based objects made possible by digital technologies that now, with the mainstreaming of modeling software, are a means of achieving the fluid and fleshy formal traits of bodies. In incorporating this computationally-rooted concept in their definition, *Possible Mediums* affirms the fracturing of architectures digital turn and the resulting transformation of software into adaptable tools applicable to various experimental design approaches. With their description of bodies, *Possible Mediums* has pinned corporeal form within the rapidly evolving history of digital intricacy and introduced greater nuance into the project's definition.

With its inclusion in both the performative and constative lineages of architectural communication, it is clear that bodies represent a marriage between the two enabled by the recent dissolve of architecture's strict definitions. No longer are complex digital surfaces and receptive graphic objects exclusionary but instead, together, they have given rise to a formal project with a two-pronged approach: architectural bodies seek both goals of mass customization and custom massification. Much like self-sufficient Rorschach tests, bodies permit

²⁸ *Possible Mediums*, 37.

²⁹ Somol, 31.

³⁰ Greg Lynn, *Animate Form* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 20.

endless variability in not just their design but also their reception. Architectural bodies, by way of calculus-based modeling, lend themselves to limitless heterogeneity as their topological surfaces can be designed to morph and bulge with infinite variety. In the same vein as early constative practices focused on place and trace, this potential for unique corporeal forms allows for individualized relationships with architectural design; with great ease, bodies can be designed to cater to any context. Colin Fournier and Peter Cook's *Kunsthau Graz* serves as a quintessential example of how an architectural body, cognizant non-Euclidian harmony, can be highly responsive to the particularities of its site in Graz, Austria.³¹ Advancing the potentials of this individuality, and per their inherited graphic nature, bodies also establish a *lingua franca* for their audiences. Not unlike shapes and characters, bodies invite collectives to share engagements with their forms by way of the characteristics native to topology. Arms, legs, and bellies, easy registrations of blobs and bulges, provide an accessible vocabulary for formal interpretation that transcends esoterics of architectural composition. With the infinite formal and interpretive possibilities that bodies enable, individualized subjects can establish collective associations with architectural forms—both customized and massified, corporeal form successfully coalesces the two distinct types of signification that architecture undertook after its modernist transitions.

Corporeal forms accomplish their individualized multiplicity through what can be referred to as amicable affects. Consistently, the affective potential of bodies are earmarked as an important characteristic of these works and as such should be investigated in order to further understand the project of corporeal form. Farshid Moussavi, in her introduction to *The*

³¹ Fournier, writing about the project, makes note that: "The particularity of Graz as a landing place is that, unlike Vienna, the city, acting as a cultural capital of Europe for 2003, has always been fairly receptive to the presence of the 'other,' as evidenced by the deviant and provocative projects coming out of the Grazer Schule in the past fifty years." Colin Fournier, "A Friendly Alien: The Graz Kunsthau" in *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (New York: Monacelli Press/Columbia Books of Architecture, 2003), pp. 84-85.

Function of Form, shares a concise definition on affect and how it contributes to the reception of form:

“Affect...is an ‘intensity’ transmitted directly by an individual or form, the specific qualities of which depend on the characteristics of that individual or form. Affections are in the effect of a form on individuals and are subject to different types of mediation, whereas affects are pre-personal and unmediated and can generate different affections in different persons.

The perception of an architectural form involves two stages. First, an affect is transmitted by a form. The affect is then processed by the senses to produce unique affections - thoughts, feelings, emotions and moods. As an affect can unfold into different affections or interpretations in different beings, it imbeds a form with the ability to be perceived in multiple ways.”³²

Using the works of Mies van der Rohe, Rem Koolhaas/OMA, and Foreign Office Architects as examples, she lists a wide array of example affects/affections that include rationality, order, lightness, differentiation, skewing, continuity, origami, landscape, a whale, a ship, and several others. Defended by other writers such as Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Sylvia Lavin³³, affects and affections have emerged as a recent trend in architectural discourse that signify a shift in the theorization of formal production and perception. No longer are interpretation, representation, and mediation an expected means of architectural reception, instead immediate sensual response is now valorized for its potential to revitalize architecture and its communication as it can create the potential for both singular and multiplied engagement.

³² Farshid Moussavi and Daniel López, *The Function of Form* (New York: Actar, 2009), 19.

³³ Refer to Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "The Politics of the Envelope," *Log*, no. 13/14 (2008): 193-207 and Sylvia Lavin, *Kissing Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Architectural bodies emerged from and extend this affective turn as they rely on the transmission of affects to appeal to both collectives and individuals. Jason Payne, analyzing the growing abatement of critical architectural discourse, may have been one of the earliest patrons of contemporary architectural bodies and their affective potential:

“Questioning the primacy and self-sufficiency of geometry, ... emerging work shows an increasing skepticism of intentionally esoteric abstraction and makes room for the qualitative of materiality. Color, texture, *body*, weight, and finish assume new relevance. Even more, figurative association, or shape that is suggestive of something known in the world as opposed to that which strives toward abstraction, is no longer taboo.”³⁴

On the one hand, bodies construct mass audiences by satisfying instinctual visual desires for corporeal form through their graphic, familiar qualities. As Altshuler describes, bodies extend the genetics of shape through their figurally inviting formal traits that invest them autonomous subjectivity and induce affects such as zoomorphism and companionship. On the other hand, bodies hail particulars through the evasive identification game they play; bodies invite individuals to presume one type of formal interpretation and then eagerly fail their expectations, requiring a personalized affection to emerge instead. Ellie Abrons, when describing her bodily objects, refers to corporeal form as elusive for this reason: “Best understood as forms that evoke many associations and evoke many things, but are none of them.”³⁵ Together these two qualities, presumably diametrically opposed in their historical origin, give way to affects that allow for their personal interpretation by way of shared human association. As *Possible Mediums* describes: “Akin to character or posture, the accumulation of

³⁴ Jason Payne, “Hair and Makeup.” *Log*, no. 17 (2009): 46 (emphasis added).

³⁵ Ellie Abrons, “Author After Author,” Vimeo video, 59:09, posted by “Princeton School of Architecture,” October 06, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/185992815>.

detailed features and surface qualities produces a totalizing affect and brings to mind common emotional or physical states, such as ‘that one looks sad’ or ‘that one is sleeping.’”³⁶ We see then that corporeal form, in its seasonable emergence within architectural production, falls right in light with the rise of affective interpretation; bodies accomplish their individualized multiplicity through commonly shared human affects such as empathy, pareidolia, anthropomorphization, carnality, flabbiness, funniness, cuteness, exhaustion, gregariousness, and so forth.

Corporeal form holds an innate preference in human perception and as such has continuously validated itself as a formal project suited for architecture’s current discursive situation. Enabled by the dissolve of technological and representational esotericism, bodily objects represent a successful offspring of the different types of disciplinary communication that defined architectural production after modernism. Simultaneously solicitous graphic shape that cater to collectives and digitally-derived surface that allows for individualization, bodies coalesce the goals of architectural signification into a friendly, figural form. As such, bodies serve as an exciting opportunity for architecture to explore formal considerations that move away complicated interpretation and instead invite audiences to engage with architectural objects through amicable affects. Put lightly, architecture should grow more body positive—it should welcome the flabby, fleshy, funky forms that cater to our instinctual desires, permit amicable subject-object relationships, and enable personalized associations with architectural artifacts.

³⁶ *Possible Mediums*, 41.

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