Art and Architecture: A Place Between

Jane Rendell

For Beth and Alan

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Acknowledgements

When Malcolm Miles first asked me to contribute to an MA directed by Faye Carey called 'The Theory and Practice of Public Art and Design' at Chelsea College of Art and Design in London the term 'public art' was new to me. Over the next few years I learnt that public art was an interdisciplinary practice that refused to settle as simply art or design. If design, and I include architecture here as one design discipline, can be considered a form of practice that is usually conducted in response to a brief or a set of requirements, and if fine art is defined by its independence from such controls, then public art, in drawing on both approaches, constructs a series of differing responses to sites, forming a continuum of practice located in a place between art and design. If designers are expected to provide a solution to a problem, albeit a creative one within a given set of parameters, and artists are encouraged to rethink the terms of engagement, then public art practice, by operating in a place between, is well positioned to address the procedures of both art and architecture.

'You cannot design art', one of my colleagues once warned a student studying public art and design. One of the more serious failings of so-called public art has been to do precisely this, to produce public spaces and objects that provide solutions – answers rather than questions. If there is such a practice as public art, and that in itself is debatable as will be discussed in this book, then I argue that public art should be engaged in the production of restless objects and spaces,

ones that provoke us, that refuse to give up their meanings easily but instead demand that we question the world around us.

Teaching public art suggested to me different ways in which theoretical ideas could inform studio practice. In architectural design education there is great pressure to design buildings within the terms the architectural profession sets. Unlike history, commonly believed to provide a non-threatening and benign contextual backdrop, theory is often understood in direct opposition to design, at best as an abstract subject with no practical use, at worst as the source of difficult and distracting political questions. When I left Chelsea to return to the architectural school at the University of Nottingham, the point in the process of teaching architectural design where it seemed possible to make a connection between theory and practice seemed to be located in the construction and critique of the design brief. Here, conceptual thinking and theoretical ideas provided more than a context for design; they allowed the invention of imaginative yet critical narratives to form the conceptual basis to an architectural design project. Following my time at Nottingham, at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, my interests in the production of art and architecture have further evolved into a pedagogical and research programme of 'site-writing', where modes of working adopted from the design studio and fine art practice spatialize writing processes, resulting in creative propositions in textual form that critique and respond to specific sites.

This short autobiographical tour serves to acknowledge the important role teaching has played in my exploration of the relationship between art and architecture and the colleagues and students who have inspired this book. My thanks go to my teachers, both students and colleagues, on the BA and MA in Public Art and Design at Chelsea School of Art and Design, especially to Faye Carey, Julia Dwyre, Sophie Horton and Sue Ridge. Thank you too to all those at the University of Nottingham who during my time there were prepared to take a

risk, step outside what might be thought of as 'architecture', and to try something a little bit different and see where it might take them. At the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, I consider myself very lucky to have taught with such stimulating colleagues as Iain Borden, Davide Deriu, Adrian Forty, Dan Gretton, Felipe Hernandez, Jonathan Hill, Lorens Holm, Sarah Jackson, Brigid McLeer, James Marriott, Barbara Penner, Peg Rawes, Katie Lloyd Thomas and Jane Trowell, who together have provided a place to think and write history and theory in many different ways. Thank you also to my students at the Bartlett, who have been open enough to allow the course of their research to change through their engagement at an early stage with some of the ideas in this book. Rex Henry and I shared a mutual interest in the 'spatial arts' through our collaboration on the *Public Art Journal*. So thank you to Rex and to the other contributors to *A Place Between*, a publication that served as a seedbed for this book in many ways.

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Because these ideas sit precariously between theory and practice, art and architecture, they have taken a long time to enter the world as a book, far longer than I ever intended or expected. I therefore wish to say a special thank you to Susan Lawson for providing a home for my work at I.B.Tauris and for her careful reading of the manuscript in the final stages, to Nick Beech for his excellent help in obtaining images and to Stuart Munro for designing the layout of the book. Finally my thanks go to David Cross for his longstanding patience with this project, for critical commentary, intellectual inspiration, but most importantly for emotional sustenance.

Introduction: A Place Between

For some years now I have been positioned in a place between art and architecture, theory and practice, exploring the patterning of intersections between this pair of two-way relationships. In *Art and Architecture* I trace the multiple dynamics of this ongoing investigation and, in so doing, draw on a range of theoretical ideas from a number of disciplines to examine artworks and architectural projects. It is neither desirable nor possible, to sketch out an inclusive picture of contemporary art and architecture. To do so one would have to operate without any selection criteria. Such an approach would run against the grain of this project, which, at its core, is concerned with a specific kind of practice, one that is both critical and spatial, and that I call 'critical spatial practice'. In art such work has been variously described as contextual practice, site-specific art and public art; in architecture it has been described as conceptual design and urban intervention. To encounter such modes of practice, in *Art and Architecture* I visit works produced by galleries that operate 'outside' their physical limits, commissioning agencies and independent curators who support and develop 'site-specific' work and artists, architects and collaborative groups that produce various kinds of critical projects from performance art to urban design.

In the last ten years or so a number of academic disciplines – geography, anthropology, cultural studies, history, art and architectural theory, to name but a few – have been drawn into debates on 'the city'. Such discussions on the urban condition have produced an interdisciplinary terrain of 'spatial theory' that has reformulated the ways in which space is understood and practised. Rather than attempt to summarize the work of such influential spatial thinkers as Rosi Braidotti, Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Luce Irigaray, Doreen Massey and Edward Soja, in *Art and Architecture* I focus my attention on particular aspects of their writings. I do so to provide starting points for considering the relationship

between art and architecture with reference to several different theoretical themes.

Theoretical ideas have suggested the conceptual framework for *Art and Architecture*. My readings of the works of postmodern geographer, Soja, in particular his concept of trialectical as opposed to dialectical thinking, borrowed from the philosopher Henri Lefebvre, have informed this book's tripartite structure.[1] I have drawn on Soja's triad of space, time and social being to provide this book's three sections, each one emphasizing a different aspect of 'a place between' art and architecture: specifically, the spatial, the temporal and the social.

The focus in Section 1: 'Between Here and There', is on the spatial. In it I deal with how the terms site, place and space have been defined in relation to one another in recent theoretical debates. Through the chapters in this section I go on to investigate three particular spatial issues: (1) the relationship between site, non-site and off-site as locations for art and architectural practice; (2) commissioning work outside galleries where curation over an 'expanded field' engages debates across the disciplines of art, design and architecture; and (3) how art, as a form of critical spatial practice, holds a special potential for transforming places into spaces of social critique.[2] In Section 2: 'Between Now and Then', I shift the scale from a broad terrain to examine particular works as new interventions into existing contexts, highlighting the importance of the temporal dimension of 'a place between', specifically, the relation of past and present in allegorical, montage and dialectical constructions and the time of viewing and experiencing art and architecture. Finally, in Section 3: 'Between One

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[1] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Expanding the Geographical Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

[2] I borrow and develop the term 'expanded' from Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the expanded field', in Hal Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1985) pp. 31–42. This essay was originally published in *October* 8 (Spring 1979).

and Another', I turn the emphasis to the social to look at the relationships people create in the production and occupation of art and architecture and consider 'work' less as a set of 'things' or 'objects' than as a series of exchanges that take place between people through such processes as collaboration, social sculpture and walking.

Having laid down the structure for this book in a synchronic fashion, it became apparent to me that it was impossible to talk of work made in the present without reference to either the past or the future. For this reason, I take each section backwards to locate it in a broader historical trajectory, but also forward to speculate on future possibilities. Looking backwards, I make connections with the work of minimal, conceptual, land and performance artists of the 1960s and 1970s, whose work has in many cases been informed by an interest in architecture and public space. Such projects play an important role in providing a historical perspective on our current condition both in terms of art and architectural discourse as well as wider critical, cultural and spatial debates. The contemporary projects I focus on engage with the trajectories set up by the earlier works, and have been in the main produced by artists operating outside galleries, materially and ideologically. In this book I do not deal equally with art and architecture. Since my interest is in practices that are critical and spatial, I have discovered that such work tends to occur more often in the domain of art, yet it offers architecture a chance to reflect on its own modes of operation. Sometimes I can point towards certain kinds of architectural projects already occurring but in other cases I can only speculate.[3] Looking forward then, I argue that discussion around these artworks gestures towards future possibilities for architecture.

[3] For a discussion that parallels this opinion, see Johanne Lamoureux, 'Architecture recharged by art', in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.) *Anyplace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) p. 130.

A Place Between Art and Architecture: Public Art

Art and architecture have an ongoing attraction to one another. When I first came into contact with the discourse on public art, it changed my understanding of this relationship. At this particular cultural moment in advanced capitalist countries, an interest in the 'other', whether the feminine, the subaltern, the unconscious, the margin, the between or any other 'other', is manifest and could be characterized as a fascination with who, where or what we are 'not'. Architecture's curiosity about contemporary art is in no small way connected with the perception of art as a potentially subversive activity relatively free from economic pressures and social demands; while art's current interest in architectural sites and processes may be related to architecture's so-called purposefulness, its cultural and functional role, as well as the control and power understood to be integral to the identity of the architect. Artists value architecture for its social function, whereas architects value art as an unfettered form of creativity. For example, architect Maya Lin, best known for her public artworks, has described her experience of the division of art and architecture like this: 'I always sense that the fine arts department thought we were somehow compromizing art because we built things for people as opposed to being pure and doing it for yourself.'[4]

Art and architecture are frequently differentiated in terms of their relationship to 'function'. Unlike architecture, art may not be functional in traditional terms, for example in responding to social needs, giving shelter when it rains or designing a room in which to perform open-heart surgery, but we could say that art is functional in providing certain kinds of tools for self-reflection, critical thinking and social change. Art offers a place and occasion for new kinds of relationship 'to function' between people. If we consider this expanded version

[4] Maya Lin, 'Round table discussion', in Richard Roth and Susan Roth King (eds) *Beauty is Nowhere: Ethical Issues in Art and Design* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998) p. 67.

of the term function in relation to architecture, we realize that architecture is seldom given the opportunity to have no function or to consider the construction of critical concepts as its most important purpose.

When art is located outside the gallery, the parameters that define it are called into question and all sorts of new possibilities for thinking about the relationship between art and architecture are opened up. Art has to engage with the kinds of restraints and controls to which only architecture is usually subject. In many public projects, art is expected to take on 'functions' in the way that architecture does, for example to alleviate social problems, comply with health and safety requirements, or be accessible to diverse audiences and groups of users. But in other sites and situations art can adopt the critical functions outlined above and works can be positioned in ways that make it possible to question the terms of engagement of the projects themselves. This type of public art practice is critically engaged; it works in relation to dominant ideologies yet at the same time questions them; and it explores the operations of particular disciplinary procedures – art and architecture – while also drawing attention to wider social and political problems; it might best be called critical spatial practice.

In the late 1980s it appeared that artists in Canada and on the west coast of the USA were leading the way in public art. They were developing practices out of a community base, which rather than avoid the distinctions between different modes of art, worked to extend and critique them. Artist Suzanne Lacy coined the term 'new genre public art' to describe what she saw as a new trajectory where public art could include conceptual and critical work with a focus on collaboration, interaction, process and context.[5] Also published in 1995, the various essays in art critic Nina Felshin's edited collection *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism* pointed to the potential of socially engaged public art practice as a tool for political

[5] Suzanne Lacy (ed.) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).

critique, while writer Tom Finkelpearl describes this period as a time in which artists, administrators and communities 'reinvented the field of public art'.[6]

Now, ten years on, it is disappointing to note that the potential of public art, pointed to in the 1990s, has not really developed in North America in the way we might have hoped. In New York today, for example, it seems that a very clear division exists between the 'fine' art celebrated in the gallery districts of Soho, Chelsea and more recently Williamsburg and Brooklyn, and the 'public' art found in the outside spaces of the city. Few galleries wish to move outside their own economic circuits and frames of reference; however, there are changes in the commissioning of public art, which indicate a move from object-based to process-based work and towards a more critical mode of practice.

In the UK, despite the noticeable increase in the funding of so-called public art projects, the category of 'public art' has come to be considered a problematic or 'contested' practice.[7] In *Art, Space and the City*, cultural theorist Malcolm Miles describes two of the main pitfalls of public art, its use as wallpaper to cover over social conflict and tensions and as a monument to promote the aspirations of corporate sponsors and dominant ideologies.[8] Many so-called 'fine' artists have been particularly scathing about public art, including those whose careers have been built around a sustained critique of the gallery system, for example, the artist Chris Burden has remarked that: 'I just make art. Public art is something else, I'm not sure it's art. I think it's about a social agenda.'[9]

By linking 'social' to an 'agenda', a distinction is at play that associates the social aspect of public art with a deterministic approach and, by implication, fine

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[6] Nina Felshin (ed.) *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995) and Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
[7] David Harding (ed.) *Decadent: Public Art – Contentious Term and Contested Practice* (Glasgow: Glasgow School of Art, 1997).
[8] Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[9] Chris Burden, quoted in Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) pp. 79–80.

art with freedom. However, in extending their field of practice outside the gallery, some 'fine artists' have encountered the criticism that their work is overly concerned with personal interests or the ongoing debates of the art world and is not attentive enough to the specific concerns of a particular site and audience. Perhaps because of these problems, terms such as site-specific or contextual art have been used more recently to describe art outside galleries. I will, however, continue to use the term for a while longer here since the tensions at play in discussions around public art allow us to examine the ideologies at work in maintaining distinctions between public and private space.

The category 'public art' usually refers to a certain kind of artwork, a large sculpture placed in an external site; the word 'art' describes the object and 'public' the site in which the art is placed and/or the audience or the body of people 'for' whom the art is intended.[10] At the start of her essay 'Agoraphobia', art theorist Rosalyn Deutsche asks, 'What does it mean for space to be public? The space of a city, building, exhibition, institution or work of art?'[11] The boundaries drawn around notions of private and public are not neutral or descriptive lines, but contours that are culturally constructed, change historically and denote specific value systems. The terms appear as social and spatial metaphors in geography, anthropology and sociology, as terms of ownership in economics, and as political spheres in political philosophy and law. Public and private, and the variations between these two terms, mean different things to different people – protected isolation or unwelcome containment, intrusion or invitation, exclusion or segregation. And as the privatization of public space increasingly occurs in all

[10] Patricia C. Phillips argues that art should be designated as public not because of its accessibility but 'because of the kinds of questions it chooses to ask'. See Patricia C. Phillips, 'Temporality and public art', in Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (eds) *Critical Issues in Public Art, Content, Context and Controversy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 298.

[11] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996) p. 269.

directions – extending outwards to all regions of the globe and inwards to hidden reaches of the mind – we need to define carefully how we use the terms.

In the Western democratic tradition, 'public' stands for all that is good, for democracy, accessibility, participation and egalitarianism set against the private world of ownership and elitism. But if public space relies on democracy and vice versa, what kind of democracy are we talking about? Democratic public space is frequently endowed with unified properties, but one of the problems of aiming for a homogenous public is the avoidance of difference. Philosopher Chantal Mouffe has argued instead for radical democracy, a form of democracy that is able to embrace conflict and passion.[12] For those who support the public realm, 'privatization' is associated with the replacement of public places by a series of private places with exclusive rules governing entry and use. But if we take instead a liberal-rights-based perspective, then privacy is understood to provide positive qualities, such as the right to be alone, to confidentiality and the safeguarding of individuality.[13] For those who support the private realm, public spaces are seen as potentially threatening, either as places of state coercion or sites of dissidence in need of regulation.

The terms 'public' and 'private' do not exist then as mutually exclusive categories; rather, their relationship is dependent and open to change. For example, public art located outside the private institution of the art gallery may still be inside the corporate world of private property and finance, and further still inside the private world of the fine art network.[14] In the long term it probably does

[12] See Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993). See also Ernesto Laclau and Mouffe Chantal (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*, translated by Winston Mooore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985).

[13] Judith Squires, 'Private lives, secluded places: privacy as political possibility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 12 (1994) pp. 387–410.

[14] Jane Rendell, 'Public art: between public and private', in Sarah Bennett and John Butler (eds) *Locality, Regeneration and Diversities* (Bristol: Intellectual Books, 2000), pp. 19–26; Jane Rendell, 'Foreword', in Judith Rugg and Dan Hincliffe (eds) *Recoveries and Reclamations* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2002), pp.

make sense to abandon the term 'public art' simply because its use requires so many justifications and explanations. Here, in *Art and Architecture*, I suggest a new term, 'critical spatial practice', which allows us to describe work that transgresses the limits of art and architecture and engages with both the social and the aesthetic, the public and the private. This term draws attention not only to the importance of the critical, but also to the spatial, indicating the interest in exploring the specifically spatial aspects of interdisciplinary processes or practices that operate between art and architecture.

7–9. See also Jane Rendell (ed.) 'A Place Between', *Public Art Journal*, October 1999.

A Place Between Theory and Practice: Critical Spatial Practice

In the late 1970s artist and theorist Victor Burgin argued that art theory was at an end because it was 'identical with the "objectives of *theories of representation*s"'.[15] Burgin was suggesting that because social and cultural theories of representation already focused on questions of concern to artists, there was no need for a theoretical discourse that dealt only with art. In a more recent collection of essays debating the 'point of theory' in literary criticism, literary critic Brian McHale's position suggests the opposite tendency with reference to contemporary literary criticism. McHale bemoans the preponderance of generalized theoretical texts, and laments the loss of a theory specifically derived from a study of literature, a theory that lies between the general and the specific.[16]

This ability and desire to differentiate between certain kinds of theory and assess their relative merits appears to be missing in architectural debates on theory. In recent collections of architectural theory from the USA, no attempt is made to distinguish between theories that have been generated out of their own disciplines and those that have come from elsewhere. In the introduction to one of these collections, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, Kate Nesbitt does choose to separate architecture theory from criticism and history;[17] while in another, *Architecture Theory since 1968,* K. Michael Hays sees architecture theory as a form of mediation between architectural form and social context.[18] Remaining under discussed are the differences between theories, their aims and objectives,

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[15] Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) pp. 204.
[16] Brian McHale, 'What ever happened to descriptive poetics?' in Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer (eds) *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Continuum, 1994) pp. 57, 59.
[17] Kate Nesbitt (ed.) *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) p. 16.
[18] Michael K. Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) p. v.

the ways in which they represent (usually implicitly) varying models of knowledge, their disciplinary origin, and what relationships they are able to construct with specific kinds of objects. In the UK there has also been a lack of distinction made between particular kinds of theoretical positions, and here too those in architecture talk of 'theory' in general rather than distinguishing between critical theories and architectural theories. The difference is that in the UK the tendency has been to favour critical theory. For example, the essays architectural theorist Neil Leach brought together in his edited collection *Rethinking Architecture* specifically turn to critical theory rather than architectural theory as a way of engaging with architecture. The authors of the essays in *InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory*, a book I edited with Iain Borden, examine the relationship between architectural history and critical theory, demonstrating different modes of writing theorised histories, bringing to the surface questions of critical methodology.[19]

To negotiate the relationship that theory has to practice and vice versa is no easy task, but as a contemporary critic I take this to be my role. The term 'theory' is often understood to refer to modes of enquiry in science through either induction, the inference of scientific laws or theories from observational evidence, or deduction, a process of reasoning from the general overarching theory to the particular. Critical theory is a phrase that refers to the work of a group of theorists and philosophers called the Frankfurt School operating in the early twentieth century. The group includes Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Benjamin; and their writings are connected by their interest in the ideas of the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, the political economist Karl Marx, and the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Taken together, their work could be

[19] Neil Leach (ed.) *Rethinking Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1997); Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds) *InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory* (London, Routledge, 2000).

characterized as a rethinking or development of Marxist ideas in relation to the shifts in society, culture and economy that took place in the early decades of the twentieth century. Critical theories are forms of knowledge, but according to Raymond Guess, in *The Idea of Critical Theory*, they differ from theories in the natural sciences because they are 'reflective' rather than 'objectifying' – they take into account their own procedures and methods. Critical theories also have a particular set of aims in that they seek to enlighten and emancipate their readers by providing a critique of normative attitudes. Critical theories aim neither to prove a hypothesis nor prescribe a particular methodology or solution to a problem; instead, in a myriad of ways critical theorists offer self-reflective modes of thought that seek to change the world, or at least the world in which the inequalities of market capitalism, as well as patriarchal and colonial (or post-colonial) interests, continue to dominate. 'A critical theory, then, is a reflective theory which gives agents a kind of knowledge inherently productive of enlightenment and emancipation.'[20]

I extend the term 'critical theory' in this book to include the work of later theorists, poststructuralists, feminists and others whose thinking is also self critical and desirous of social change. For me, this kind of theoretical work provides a chance not only to reflect on existing conditions but also to imagine something different – to transform rather than describe.[21] More importantly, in *Art and Architecture* I explore the spatial aspects of different kinds of critical theory and the relationship between these theories and art and architectural practice. These explorations range from debates about space, place and site in cultural

[20] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p. 2.
[21] For a detailed discussion of the various possibilities opened up by critical theory for thinking the relationship between theory and practice, see Jane Rendell, 'Between two: theory and practice', in Jonathan Hill (ed.) *Opposites Attract: Research by Design, Special Issue of Journal of Architecture* (Summer) vol. 8, no. 2 (2003) pp. 221–38.

geography and art theory (Section 1: 'Between Here and There'), to discussions on juxtaposition, disintegration and melancholy in allegorical, montage and dialectical techniques in the work of Benjamin (Section 2: 'Between Now and Then'), to examinations of the spatial construction of subjectivity in feminist and psychoanalytic theory (Section 3: 'Between One and Another').

It is easy to generalize the relationship between theory and practice and perhaps a little dangerous. Each historical moment offers a particular set of conditions and, depending on their own life story, each person takes a different approach. I trained and worked first as an architect and practitioner and later as a historian and theorist. This influences the place I occupy between theory and practice. I say this because although I started out chronologically as a practitioner, for me the relationship between the two 'starts' with theory. Reading critical theory is what opened up my world and allowed me to see things differently. Theoretical debates changed the ways in which I understood architectural practice, expanding my expectations of what architecture could do. But it took me a much longer time to realize that theoretical concepts could not provide the 'answer' to critical practice, that the relationship between theory and practice was not one of continuity.[22]

Critical theory is instructive in offering many different ways of operating between 'two'. The philosophy of deconstruction developed by Jacques Derrida has allowed us to critique binary thinking and understand how the hierarchical relationship often assigned to two terms in a pair is not natural or pregiven but a social construction that can change according to how we are positioned. In a binary model, everything that one is, the other cannot be, thus limiting the possibility of thinking of two terms together. Such a model operates hierarchically, where one of the two terms is placed in a dominant position. Derrida's project

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Routledge, 1998) p. 276 argues that the relationship between theory and practice is one of discontinuity.

aims to expose the ways in which binary systems allow things to be only 'like' or 'not like' the dominant category and replaces such prevailing intellectual norms with new formulations.[23] The radical move deconstruction offers is to think 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', putting deferrals and differences into play and suggesting instead 'undecideability' and slippage.[24] Feminist theorist Diane Elam has observed that Derrida's understanding of 'undecideability' is not indeterminate but rather a 'determinate oscillation between possibilities' and argues that by refusing to choose between one and another such a position offers a political potential.[25]

Broadly speaking, my approach in this book takes up certain tenets of deconstruction to destabilize binary assumptions that are often made about the relationship between art and architecture, private and public and theory and practice. First, I refuse to think of either term in the pair as dominant. Second, I consider how one term in the pair operates through the categories (such as function mentioned above) normally used to define the other. And third, I invent or discover new terms, like critical spatial practice, which operate simultaneously as both and neither of the binary terms, including the two, yet exceeding their scope.[26]

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[23] See for example, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) especially pp. 6–26. See also Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone Press, 1981) for an attempt to perform rather than describe deconstruction. See also Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[24] Derrida's aim is not to destroy the categories but to 'destabilize, challenge, subvert, reverse or overturn some of the hierarchical binary oppositions (including those implicating sex and gender) of Western culture'. See Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (London: Taylor & Francis Grosz, 1989) p. xv.

[25] Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms. En Abyme* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 83.

[26] According to Elizabeth Grosz, Derrida uses the term deconstruction to describe a threefold intervention that destabilizes the metaphysical structures of binary oppositions. Following Grosz's reading of Derrida, the first step in the process of deconstruction is the strategic reversal of binary terms, so that the term occupying the negative position in a binary pair is placed in the positive position and the positive term is placed in the negative position. The second is the movement of

My process also connects with a fascinating conversation between philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault that took place in 1972. Here Deleuze reveals quite directly, though certainly abstractly, how he comprehends a 'new relation between theory and practice'. Rather than understanding practice as an application of theory or as the inspiration for theory, Deleuze suggests that these 'new relationships appear more fragmentary and partial',[27] and discusses their relationship in terms of what he calls 'relays': 'Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.'[28]

I would certainly agree with Deleuze that the relationship between theory and practice is fragmentary and partial; I enjoy his concept of a relay whereby one discourse forms a link or passage between aspects of the other – theories travel between practices and practices travel between theories. Although the notion of relays at first appears symmetrical, it turns out not to be, for the suggestion that theory needs practice to develop is not accompanied by its reversal. This may be because, for Deleuze, theory is 'not for itself'. 'A theory is exactly like a box of tools. … It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who then ceases to be a theoretician), then the theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate.'[29]

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displacement in which the negative term is displaced from its dependent position and located as the very condition of the positive term. The third and most important strategy of deconstruction is the creation or discovery of a new term that is undecidable within a binary logic. Such a term operates simultaneously as both and neither of the binary terms; it may include both and yet exceed their scope. See Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, p. xv.

[27] Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and power: a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze', in Donald F. Bouchard (ed.) *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: Ithaca, 1977) p. 205.

[28] Foucault and Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and power', p. 206.

[29] Foucault and Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and power', p. 208.

It is this needy aspect of theory that interests me: theory needs to be used. I am also interested in Deleuze's suggestion that theory is 'local and related to a limited field' and should be 'applied' in a more distant 'sphere'.[30] Yet, although I would agree that theory needs to travel far afield, I prefer to think of theories throwing trajectories, or suggesting paths out into practice, rather than being used as 'tools' of 'application'. It is the proactive and inventive aspect to Deleuze, his thinking about what theory can do, that holds appeal for me, but so too does its corollary, what practice can do for theory. My position is probably at its closest to Deleuze when he says that in its encounter with 'obstacles, walls and blockages' theory requires transformation into another discourse to 'eventually pass to a different domain'.[31] It is this possibility of transformation – the potential for change that each may offer the other – that interests me here in *Art and Architecture.*

In *The Point of Theory,* art historian Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer argue that theory is a way of 'thinking through the relations between areas' and 'a way of interacting with objects':[32]

> 'Theory' only makes sense as an attitude; otherwise the generalization of the very concept of 'theory' is pointless. Part of that attitude is the endorsement of interdisciplinarity, of the need to think through the relations between areas where a specific theory can be productive, and of the need to think philosophically about even the most practical theoretical concepts, so-called 'tools'.[33]

If Bal and Boer are correct, and I believe they are, in suggesting that the productive use of theory takes place in an interdisciplinary terrain it is worth spending a few moments outlining what might be meant by the term

[30] Foucault and Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and power', p. 206.
[31] Foucault and Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and power', p. 206.
[32] Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer (eds) *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Continuum, 1994) pp. 8–9.
[33] Bal and Boer, *The Point of Theory*, p. 8.

'interdisciplinary'. In both academic and arts-based contexts, the term interdisciplinarity is often used interchangeably with multidisciplinarity and collaboration, but I understand the terms to mean quite different things. In my view, multidisciplinarity implies that a number of disciplines are present but that each maintains its own distinct identity and way of doing things, whereas in interdisciplinarity individuals move between and across disciplines and in so doing question the ways in which they work. In collaboration, the emphasis is less on disciplinary distinctions and more on how individuals work together towards end points decided through mutual consent.

In exploring questions of method or process that discussions of interdisciplinarity and the relationship between theory and practice inevitably bring to the fore, critical theorist Julia Kristeva has argued for the construction of 'a diagonal axis':

> Interdisciplinarity is always a site where expressions of resistance are latent. Many academics are locked within the specificity of their field: that is a fact … the first obstacle is often linked to individual competence, coupled with a tendency to jealously protect one's own domain. Specialists are often too protective of their own prerogatives, do not actually work with other colleagues, and therefore do not teach their students to construct a diagonal axis in their methodology.[34]

Engaging with this diagonal axis demands that we call into question what we normally take for granted, that we question our methodologies, the ways we do things, and our terminologies, what we call what we do. The construction of 'a diagonal axis' is necessarily, then, a difficult business. When Kristeva talks of 'the

[34] Julia Kristeva, 'Institutional interdisciplinarity in theory and practice: an interview', in Alex Coles and Alexia Defert (eds) *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity, De-, Dis-, Ex-*, vol. 2 (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1998) pp. 5–6.

anxiety of interdisciplinarity', she is referring to the problems we encounter when we question the disciplines with which we identify. It is precisely for this reason that, despite being a passionate advocate of interdisciplinarity in current art, architectural practice and academic debate, I also remain sceptical because real engagement in interdisciplinary work is not simply procedural but demanding emotionally as well as intellectually and politically, demanding because this way of working requires us to be critical of what we do and open to change.

In *Art and Architecture* I operate across this interdisciplinary terrain, seeking to make a new kind of relationship between theory, specifically critical theories that are spatial, and art and architectural practice. If theory has often been used in certain kinds of architectural discourse as a way of post-rationalizing practice by drawing out general 'rules' and describing these as theories for 'how to do it', offering a 'recipe' for how to design, this is certainly not my intention here. The theoretical ideas I introduce at the start of each section have not been used to generate any of the works I go on to describe. I am not interested in using theory as a general model against which to 'test' the specifics of practice, or in another version of this method, to use practice to illustrate theoretical concepts. There is a strong tendency for theorists interested in art and architectural practice to choose to explore works they feel exemplify a theoretical position, but this is not the 'point' of theory for me.

Rather than use theory to explain practice or practice to justify theory, the point of theory in *Art and Architecture* is to articulate a place between art and architecture; by discussing spatial concepts in theoretical writings I open up a place between art and architecture that allows works to be explored in relation to one another as forms of critical spatial practice. I introduce theoretical concerns at the beginning of each section in order to set a scene, to frame a debate, to raise particular questions or issues that are then further explored through practice. The thematics raised by the theories have allowed me to select a

particular range of artworks and architectural projects in each of the three sections to investigate. My aim is not to 'answer' any of the questions raised theoretically, but to see how those same questions operate materially through close examinations of certain arrangements of critical spatial practice. Here, in this place between, discussions of theoretical ideas can draw attention to particular forms of practice and then, moving back in the other direction, these works, and the connections and differences between them brought to the fore by considering them as forms of critical spatial practice, in turn pose questions of the concepts. So, if theoretical ideas have informed my choice of artworks and architectural projects and suggested to me new ways of thinking about them, it is also the case that the works themselves take the theoretical ideas in new and unexpected directions. And to draw this set of introductory ideas into a summarizing question: if critical spatial practice provides such a rich terrain for exploring the relationship between theory and practice as well as art and architecture, how to write this place between?