

The Space of Materials: A Sculptural/Architectural Interchange

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To begin with the concrete physicality of matter rather than images allows for a change in the entire profile of three dimensional art: from particular forms, to ways of ordering, to methods of production and finally to perceptual relevance"

Richard Morris,
Notes on Sculpture Part 4

The recent surge in interest regarding material and physical aspects of building can be understood through a careful examination of the premises of Minimalism, which also sought a return to material realities. The extraordinarily articulate definition of terms which accompanied the development of that movement sheds light on issues of central concern to current architectural practice, providing a model for the reintegration the world of material phenomena with the world of virtual experience. Concepts like "Weak form" have provocative correlates in the writings, for example, of Richard Morris on the "New Monumental" and the premises of "process art" shed light on current redefinitions of Architectural practice.

The development of Minimalist Art as it moved towards Post-minimalism and Earthworks establishes an armature for the development of definitions of "the material realm" which moves inexorably from the object to its processes, towards its process of fabrication on one hand, and to the spatial temporal process of experience on the other. A set of paradigmatic works from Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Eva Hesse, Mary Miss and Helen and

Newton Harrison will be used to clarify how the preoccupation with materiality led to discoveries and transformations of concepts of Time, Gravity, Order (v. Process), and Space. These issues naturally create an intersection of this work with the material focus in contemporary architectural work, and reveal the extent to which a preoccupation with matter can be generative in architecture far beyond structural, technical or decorative concerns. This intersection will be mapped out by pairing the sculptural work with slides of work by Miralles and Pinos, Herzog and De Meuron, and Alvaro Siza.

This paper carefully avoids a spurious visually based identification of "minimalist" looking architects, instead concentrating on the way in which a focus on materials ends up creating a radical redefinition of spatial experience. Two well known and important articles situate the work; Rosalind Krauss' "Sculpture in the Expanded field maps out a critical territory in which Architecture, Landscape and Sculpture can converse. "A picturesque stroll around Clara-Clara," by Yves Alain Bois, establishes the premises of this new spatio-temporal experience, which I believe is as operative in Architecture now as it was in sculpture at the time that article was written. This space has strong parallels in current definitions of "virtual" space and my reading in this paper would like to suggest that rather than being seen as alternatives, these two modes can be understood as related.

Editor's *note*; The full text of this paper was not available at the time of publication.