

TECTONICS AND SPACE: SEMPERIAN MOTIVES IN THE WORK OF GIGON/GUYER

MARK COTTLE

Georgia Institute of Technology

We know next to nothing about the things around us. Seeing things and materials, seeing them anew, touching them, comparing them, using them: this is a way of establishing a relationship with the world. —Annette Gigon¹

INTRODUCTION

The work of Gigon/Guyer, a contemporary practice based in Zurich, is exemplary on a number of points—not the least of which is the high level of thoughtfulness, precision, and modesty they bring to the art of building. Their work is carefully situated, in the context of Swiss village life, and within contemporary Swiss construction culture, and much could be written about their production within that milieu.

But rather than focus on how buildings are fabricated per se, I am interested here in exploring how spaces may be constructed by the experience of the beholder or the occupant of architecture—as she engages *bodily* in a tectonics of phenomena, and as that engagement awakens within a host of embodied experiences and spatial intuitions.

Kenneth Frampton defines ‘tectonics’ as the poetics of construction. In this research, however, I would like to see what we may gain by extending that definition from one concerned principally with fabrication to include the poetics of ‘construing’—that is, of *constructing one’s experience* of an architectural environment, its spaces and its meanings, through an interaction between cognitive and haptic explorations of the built artifact.

Here I extend the word ‘haptic’ to involve more than just touching with the hand, but also understandings of space derived through one’s ears, one’s nose, and tactile information perceived through one’s eyes. The gait—registered by the feet, and by the hips, shoulders, and elbows—also

comes into play in the act of constructing spatial experience as one negotiates ramps, climbs stairs, crosses thresholds, bumps into furniture, and so on. To quote August Schmarsow, the nineteenth-century German theorist of space:—“The ground under our feet ... is ... the precondition for the sensation of our body and for our orientation to the earth’s general arena. It is, however, also a precondition for our naturally developing sense of space, that which is cultivated in beings standing and walking with erect postures.”²

A shift in focus from a conceptual to a *corporeal* understanding of spaces—from intended meanings to constructed understandings—suggests a move away from a conception of architecture as semiotics, as a language to be decoded, that was ascendant in the eighties. This preoccupation with architecture as signification put an emphasis on the systems through which architecture communicates meaning, whether through a symbolic program, a refined absence of iconography, or through—“tell-the-tale” details that told all under the careful exegesis of the historian/critic.³

If the building ‘as text’ and the user as a literate reader of signs are operative metaphors in Frascari’s reading of Scarpa’s details, I suggest the Ruskinian figure of the “intelligent observer” or the “intelligent eye” as more appropriate for the work of Gigon/Guyer.⁴ For if their work may still be considered to ‘speak’ it does so without a recourse to representations, to symbolic and linguistic systems, or even an appeal to architectural literacy; it is, so

to speak, an *architecture parlante* avant le lettre.

Gigon/Guyer's work provides an admirable terrain for exploring the sensate body as a primary site of spatial understanding. Their designs do not develop out of what they know; instead through an heuristics of material substitutions, they distill the effects they want to have; by sampling materials for the sensations they evoke, they discover which "sensations a building should awaken". They proceed through their design process in much the same way an occupant of their architecture might through one of their buildings.⁵ In this sense, their procedures mimic the "perspective of the beholder who begins by looking and marveling at something",⁶ then sorts through material qualities by sampling the sensations they give rise to. Their way of making their work parallels our way of experiencing and making sense of it.

Semper's material and constructional taxonomies (mound, roof, enclosure) offer an armature for a formal close description of Gigon/Guyer's architecture. The historical accident aside of both of them having designed buildings in Zurich (Annette Gigon went to school in the building Semper designed for the ETH), my first pass at the work of Gigon/Guyer suggests that their work is resonant with "Semperian obsessions". Luckily, it is his essay *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or Practical Aesthetics* that appears to inform their work, more than Semper's dry and academic ETH building.⁷

What I think makes the work of Gigon/Guyer so compelling—and so important—is that they completely buck the current trend of normative practice, which seems to be a calculated trajectory of attrition, toward a built environment predicated upon inattention. The makers of a typical building (designers and builders both) are constantly saying to themselves, and subsequently to us, "Oh, no one will ever notice that." And we become acclimated in time not to look where there is no pleasure looking. When was the last time, in an American building from the past decade or so, that you wanted to look up, and were rewarded with what you saw?

Gigon/Guyer assume that you and I will be looking, that we will notice how things are put together and might wonder why it was made this way rather than another, that we might notice how the light

moves across a surface, or the sounds and deflections of our feet on different floors, or how a space alters its proportions as one turns toward a distant view. They expect us to notice, so they take great pains to make it worth our attention. And for the respect that they accord to us, I would submit, they deserve our respect and our attention in full measure.

SEMPERIAN MOTIVES

The concepts I wish to bring forward from Semper are as follows: His contribution to the polychromy debate; the—*Four Elements of Architecture* (the roof, the mound, the enclosure, and the hearth); and his notion of—'dressing' as articulated in *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; Practical Aesthetics*.

It is perhaps significant that Semper's first publication was on the matter of polychromy. The polychrome controversy—the contention that the monuments of the ancients were not originally left as bare Euclidean beauty, but that the white marble had in fact been painted—could be interpreted as an important—'modern' moment insofar as it signaled a shift in the relation of authority to history and the natural sciences.

(Though it appears that this posed a challenge to the authority of the academy and its prescriptions, rather than to tradition *per se*, since, by virtue of their appeal to the archeological records, they were seeking legitimacy in classical examples nonetheless.)

But I would like to suggest that, independent from the scholarly merits (or not) of the case itself, the alleged use of polychromy among the ancients also provided an important and radical theoretical apparatus that made possible the formulation of decidedly 'modern' notions of tectonics, surface, and space.

This is where I think Semper 'lucked out', because he was able to take what could now seem a purely academic tempest in a teapot and see beyond to certain formal and technical possibilities presently identified with modernity: the shift in privilege from object to space (indeed the very conception of space), and from mass to surface, and from concrete material to abstract perception.

The displacement involved—from a material, ontologically understood, to an attribute, the optical perception of a color—provided a point of departure for Schmarsow in developing his theory of dynamic space.

Schmarsow used a notion of kinetic vision, in vogue among some artists at the time, and took this displacement one step further. For him space could only be perceived dynamically, as one moved through it. It follows, then, that the material of the enclosure of said space would be truly 'immaterial'.

Nonetheless, if one considers a tectonic of experience, then this apparently 'atectonic' notion can be read dialectically: the act of constructing the artifact is abstracted, even erased, in order to foreground the act of constructing spatial experience.

Here's a moment where I feel a need to introduce a contradictory thread, as I think Benjamin's account of how oral tradition plays itself out in craft production argues the opposite, where, like Ruskin, he posits that the pleasures of contemplating a work are directly related to the pleasures taken in its making.

In *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts*, Semper came back to the notion of polychromy. But, with an increased systemic interest in the technical operations involved in making, he broadens the concept into 'dressing' or cladding, developing it from his concept of the enclosure in *The Four Elements*, a formulation whose expression can be much thicker than paint.

Without going into too much detail, a few brief comments concerning *The Four Elements* may perhaps be useful. For one, Semper used the term 'elements' not to describe literal 'primitives' or forms, but rather to connote groups of motives or ideas, and to describe clusters of technical operations involved in building that he believed grew out of various crafts, such as pottery and weaving.

The idea of the roof, then, was allied with the structural framework that would support it. The concept of the mound, stemming from the need to lift a fire off the damp ground, could be extended to terracing, canals and dams, and eventually to the load-bearing masonry wall.

The hearth dealt with a series of ideas of a different order, and perhaps he would have been clearer had he called his work, *The Three Elements of Architecture—And Another Thing*. Anyway, he identified the hearth with the space enclosed, the place people could occupy together around the fire, protected from the elements, wild beasts, and other people. The hearth could be extrapolated to the altar, and even, in a quotidian way, to the slide projector in a seminar room.

For this reason he called it the moral center of architecture—working from a multivalent and ethnographically diverse account of the 'primitive hut' origin story, one closer to Alberti's version than, say, that of Vitruvius, Laugier, or, for that matter, Loos (who speculated that architecture began as a suit of clothing, perhaps, in his case, as expressed in the craft traditions and technical operations of Saville Row).

The majority of Semper's attention, however, goes to the enclosure, which he posits began with fences fashioned from tree branches, was refined first into basketry and wicker, and then into textiles woven from threads. As more solid walls came up behind, either to support or insulate, the hanging textile hanging became 'dressing' or cladding. Even when replaced by other materials, such as stucco, wood, and stone, the cladding never became vestigial. As Semper remarks, the thickness of the wall does not matter, but the surface of the enclosure does, because it defines space.

SEMPERIAN ELEMENTS

Looking back at the projects, we can observe a series of formal tropes or 'obsessions', derived conceptually from Semper, which could be said to characterize their work.

SITWORK

First, the sitework, or mound, which generally presents itself most clearly at the threshold of the entrance. With the Vinikus Restaurant and the Kirchner Museum, both 1990-92, both in Davos, one can see an interest in the ground as it rises from the sidewalk to meet the floor inside. In the Kirchner, a broad wedge of concrete, the width of the entry canopy, extends from the lobby, sloping gently to the asphalt sidewalk, where the two are

joined by a few inches of perforated metal cover, allowing for the inevitable movement of materials and providing an understated accommodation for drainage.

Since this wedge begins flush with the floor of the interior, and is of the same material, color, and finish as the lobby and circulation spaces, the effect is of the interior space flowing out to the street'— or, conversely, of the materials of the street and sidewalk acquiring a bit of polish before moving into the building. Certainly a generous gesture for a public building, as it both neatly removes barriers (and the appearance of barriers) for people in wheelchairs or others who have difficulty negotiating steps, but also because it signals that the events within are somehow related to those without, even as it elevates the interior events.

Another reading of the wedge would find the threshold dislocated, from the thermal enclosure at the door, to the thin strip of metal at the sidewalk, the moment that the building begins its 'presencing' to the foot of the patron or visitor.

The treatment of the glazing and the skin of the enclosure compliments this reading, as it floats ever so slightly above the plinth/floor. Vertical elements around the entrance are made as transparent as possible, dematerializing further the sense of definitive enclosure at that point, and supporting the horizontal sweep of the floor. This is strengthened by the placement of the entry so that the side of the wedge is flush with the side of the building. Thus the line of the wedge can be seen clearly on the façade, morphing cleanly into the line of the plinth/floor.

So successful is this tongue of concrete in describing the floor as a plinth, and an extension of the sidewalk and street, that it comes as a complete surprise to find at the back of the building, where the ground slopes away, a series of windows punched into the concrete wall. Not only does the horizontal concrete plane cover a full basement, but an occupiable one, replete with comfortable offices. Notably, while a handsome elevation, this view is carefully kept out of the published photographs.

In the Vinikus Restaurant just down the road the wedge is replaced by a stoop, as befits a commercial structure of much smaller scale. Here, too, the

stoop rides flush against the side of the building and the glazing around the door pulls back – in this case drawn far back, along much of the seating in the dining room, extending the façade from the short side facing the street and giving it the smile of a crocodile. Again, an explicit formal connection is made between the floor of a commercial interior and the paving of the street.

The situation shifts somewhat at the 1993-95 extension of the Art Museum in Winterthur, a 'temporary' structure on pilotis in the backyard of the original neoclassical 1913 structure. Here, the new galleries float over a parking lot and have no entrance of their own. One moves through an extended sequence of gallery spaces on the main floor of the primary building, one slips through the *poché* to two smaller rooms behind the main ones, and then enters a connecting piece lined on all sides in smooth, polished, resonant wood-particle panels. One then descends an echoing stair to land in the new gallery spaces, where the floor is a smooth plane of concrete.

This concrete floor in the galleries is duplicated in the parking below, which is flush with the ground, follows exactly the footprint of the building above, and is a smooth pale grey, in contrast to the nubby dark grey asphalt of the street, the sidewalk, and the driveways that lead in and out. Thus, from the exterior of the building one is led to understand the paving of the parking lot as a floor, while from the interior, as one steps down into the new spaces from the drum-like connecting bridge, one understands the floor, despite one's prior knowledge, as a return to the ground, albeit an 'elevated' one. Back on the street, one will look at the parking level differently, as a plinth made of light and air.

This reading is achieved by a combination of the exercise of the intellect and the intuitions of the body as one moves through the project—an unfolding awareness of the building, how it is made, and what it means, that Ruskin might credit to the operations of 'the intelligent eye'.

In the Liner Museum, 1996-98, located just on the other side of the tracks from the main part of the town of Appenzell, the wedge of concrete returns, here expressed as a kind of loading dock, larger than the entrance box. In addition to accommodating the change in grade between road and entrance, this overscaled welcome mat also provides

space for handicapped parking. (Everyone else must park in the field across the way.)

As in the Kirchner, the concrete surface begins at the edge of the property, the road (no sidewalk here, on the outskirts of a smaller, more rural town) and moves into the building as the floor. Unlike the former, this wedge halts at the entrance vestibule, articulated as a box or bridge between the volume of the wedge and that of the building proper. Metal grating covers the floor of the bridge/box in front of the outer set of entry doors, and cocoa matting between the two sets of doors. The smooth concrete floor returns as one enters the lobby. These shifts in the floor acknowledge the exigencies of entering a rural structure in Switzerland in bad weather, sending messages both of protection from the elements, and of welcome, by giving a generous architectural expression to the area for closing umbrellas, scraping boots, and so on.

The sense of protection and welcome, of both linking to the street and separating from it, is intensified by the bridge/box, which appears to be concrete on all sides *but* the floor, in contrast to the rest of the structure. This entry piece appears to hover, by virtue of a large reveal at the ground, though anyone who wants to can easily see the concrete foundation, held back by the thickness of the entry's side walls.

The foundations of the entire building are of concrete, barely visible, as the steel cladding of the roof and wall panels come down to within a couple of inches of the ground—to the height of the grass. The land has been graded to slope away from the building so that the panels end in a smooth horizontal line all the way around, with a consistent shadow between the metal and the grass, giving the building the feeling of a large body resting on the ground, rather than set into it.

Two overscaled windows, each the full height and width of the corresponding space within, extrude from the body of the building, floating above the grass. Each cantilevered window commands half of a short façade: One faces the railroad, and beyond it, the center of town; the other faces the countryside and the parking pasture. These two windows imply that the building is moving in both directions at once—like the red trains gliding by on one side, and the cars on the other. Interestingly, this response to the two-way traffic flowing

around the rural site organizes the plan's interior flow as well, toward which these extrusions play a significant role as destinations.

In the careful way the mound is expressed in the foundations and the floors, Gigon and Guyer incorporate the necessary parts of a building's construction into an increased awareness of the building's relationship to its context, both physically and socially. They employ a reduced palette of materials and forms from project to project, modifying and adjusting them to achieve subtle, nuanced, and appropriate responses to local conditions.

ROOFWORK

Similar obsessions and modulations obtain in their treatment of the roofs of these projects, most notably in their use of the sawtooth form in the art galleries in Winterthur and Appenzell. As has been noted before, the conditions of both towns are quite different, as are the contents of the galleries' collections:

In addition to the temporary exhibitions, the extension in Winterthur houses several important high modern paintings by the likes of Agnes Martin, Brice Marden, Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, and Richard Tuttle, together with a roomful of works by Gerhard Richter. While not exactly elephantine, the works contrast strikingly with the intimately-scaled Morandis and Mondrians that form an important part of the collection in the main building. The Liner Museum accommodates changing exhibits as well, but they are usually prints or works on paper, in line with the sensibility of the Liners—*père et fils*—whose work the building enshrines.

From the street or road, the serrated silhouettes describe their brief: to keep out the weather while admitting diffused natural light into the interior from above (an important concern of many European art galleries and museums, which prefer natural light to artificial means). At the same time the factory-derived roof profiles suppress the conventional hierarchical relationships one normally associates with cultural institutions.

Some may be tempted to read the sawtooth roofs metaphorically, interpreting them as some sort of comment on mass-production and art, or on modernism and rationality. Whether or not these read-

ings can be sustained—and, if so, whether or not they may be understood to constitute a critique—the forms themselves are carefully proportioned and integrated with the rest of the buildings, preventing them from ever lapsing into cartoons. The factory association is unavoidable; the meaning, however, remains more elliptical and ambiguous.

In the case of the Winterthur extension, the profile is strictly modular and unchanging. Its primary expression is one of neutral urbanity, giving the formal reading of a larger element subdivided according to the modules of a grid (a grid closely related to the parking below).

On the interior the same feeling obtains—if one is oriented East-West—one can look through the openings between the galleries and see the same vaults continuing from space to space. Facing North or South, however, the opposite is true. Of the nine rooms, the third of them closest to the staircase are four bays long, the middle third are five bays, and the third furthest from the stair are three. So one instinctively counts bays in this direction and takes an additive measure of the spaces as they expand and contract.

These experiences of the vaults, along or against the grain, work very similarly to encode a diversity of scales to the spaces, much like Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Texas. Further, the vaults participate in a dialogue with the walls and their openings that encodes the body's relation to light, view, and surface—and also to the body's movement through the spaces.

The situation alters considerably at Appenzell, where each serration describes a single room in the longitudinal direction, but two in the transverse. Further, each vault is a slightly different size, diminishing as one moves away from the entry lobby. From outside, as one stands at the entry, this forced perspective increases the perception of direction and flow, in concert with the asymmetrical vaults, which face North.

But the lack of a dimensionally consistent module has other effects as well, allowing visitors (and the townspeople) to see references to the gabled houses pressed against each other in the town, each basically the same, but subtly different. Others find references to barns—rustic versions of factories—and to the region's characteristic

gumdrop-shaped hills. The architects may well have intended the roof forms to evoke these comparisons, for their work seems always doubly sited, taking into account the social space of the immediate vicinity, and also indexing the majestic backdrop of mountains and valleys.

Inside the Liner Museum, each of the ten gallery spaces has a subtly different set of dimensions and proportions. Only two each will share a length and sectional profile; five will share a width. One always knows one's coordinates within the loose grid of rooms—the general disposition of the plan is obvious upon entering. Yet, exacerbated by the shifting deployment of wall openings, each room is a little different, a difference one senses even if one doesn't pick up the dimensional adjustments. One wonders what the next space holds in store.

In both buildings, the formal order of the roofs (and the vaults they describe) oscillates between that of smaller forms aggregated and of larger ones subdivided. It would seem that Gigon and Guyer are at pains to preserve this delicately unstable balance, in tandem with a dialectic between 'urban' and 'natural' forms.

All buildings in the town of Davos by fiat must have flat roofs: In the nineteenth century, city ordinances dictated that they should be flat in order to prevent accumulations of snow falling off onto passersby. In the Kirchner Museum and the Davos Sports Centre, the architects continue their interest in bringing in light from above, as described in the previous two projects, and, in a more subtle way, extend the dialogue between part and whole, aggregated and subdivided, that they articulated so eloquently in the serrated roofs of Winterthur and Appenzell.

In the Kirchner, each of the four gallery spaces is formed as an independent block, linked by fluid space for circulation and sitting on a plinth of services. Each gallery is top-lit by a clerestory going all the way around which illuminates a translucent glass ceiling. The roof proper is opaque and doesn't participate in transmitting the light. Yet its horizontal surface describes the top plane (the glass ceiling the lower one) of a light plenum. In place of the usual grasses or small stones, glass pebbles pave the roof, glinting with a cold light reminiscent of the distant glacial peaks. It may be remembered that in Switzerland one is as likely to

see a building from above, or from below, as from head on. Most buildings can also be seen from miles away.

The canonical shot of the Kirchner, a cinematic view, with the camera aiming slightly down on it and then beyond to the distant peaks, speaks not merely glamour, but also to the formal and phenomenal metaphor that informs the entire project: the story of a tamed (orthogonal) natural landscape—of giant stones, hard and dense, sheathed in ice, water streaming between them, and mists rising off them—a metaphor that resonates even in summer. This morphological fiction isn't perhaps necessary to appreciate a building that is admirable in so many respects. But it is interesting to see how it informs the general massing, the choices of materials (for example, the various transparencies in the glass cladding and clerestories), and the disposition of the spaces in the plan.

ENCLOSURE

In describing sitework and roofwork, I have already touched upon aspects of enclosure with several of these projects, particularly in their exterior cladding. It has been unavoidable, since the elements can be disengaged from each other only provisionally and momentarily. Frequently the metal (or glass in the case of the Kirchner) that covers the roof will be drawn down the sides of the structure. And frequently the treatment of apertures in the walls, such as the window frames in the Liner Museum, will find companions on the roof. In the Winterthur extension, the metal cladding comes down from the roof and glass cladding rises up from the ground, overlapping at the level of the galleries. The metal cladding continues, wrapping the underside of the galleries—the ceiling of the parking. And the glass finds its way to the skylights on the roof.

If one tries to color-code a wall section of the building, by material, one begins to see how each element of the building is constituted by overlaps. Each form, and each material, is linked by a set of semantic and phenomenal relations to all the others in a project—and by extension to other projects—forming a reduced but highly articulate formal vocabulary. The choice of materials for each project, for example, is amazingly tuned to the social and phenomenal registers of the specific place:

The Kirchner Museum is sheathed in rectangular panels of frosty glass, covering, but not completely obscuring the insulation behind. What better material than ice for a ski resort? Or for a connection to the glacier in the distance? The Liner Museum is clad in oversized 'shingles' of shiny stainless steel, reflecting the colors, in summer, of the blue sky, the green grass, and the apple red trains. One of the striking aspects of the Liner is how the exterior gets rosy cheeks every time a train goes by.

The extension building at Winterthur is made of more common stuff: Sheets of galvanized metal cover the roof, the bridge, and the exit stairs. Greenish vertical c-sections of industrial glass climb up the walls from the parking like ivy. These two materials have a dull satin gleam that not only feels quite at home with the asphalt and stones of a more urban environment, but also gently reflect the softer, darker greens of the trees and landscaping in town. A line of mature trees borders the street, and the parts of the façade that show between the trees blurrily reflect them. At moments the building is hardly there. Given the structure's position behind an important neoclassical building from the turn of the last century, its status as an addition to that building (and a temporary one at that), and given as well an important building by Semper just across the street, one may begin to understand their compulsion for modesty.

While the materials may appear extraordinarily humble in such a refined environment, yet they are handled with the simplicity usually accorded to precious stones. In the effects they achieve, such as the moiré caused by the overlap between the vertical glass cladding and the horizontal bands holding the insulation, or the strange light that leaks at night between the layers of the walls at the sides of the windows, they are indeed much to be prized.

But a puzzle remains: The exterior seems as though it could disappear into the mist of lawn sprinklers. Yet the gallery interiors of the building are dense, hard, and very white. As mentioned before, the floor is smooth grey concrete. The walls, vaults, and the embrasures of the openings between gallery spaces (they are so tall, and so lacking in detail, one hesitates to call them doorways), they are all covered in white plaster, with no millwork whatsoever. Why would a building that appears so modest and temporary on the exterior

present itself so solidly and permanently, so monumentally, on the interior?

HEARTH

Semper called the hearth “the moral element of architecture”, because it was the place where people gathered. In this sense it didn’t operate the same way as his other three elements, because the sitework, roofwork, and enclosure were merely the means to protect the hearth. If one considers the hearth the main event, and the others supporting players, the focus shifts from the apparatus of enclosure—foundations, roofs, columns, walls—toward an expression of architecture’s basic purpose: to give shelter to the group (a very different story than the one advocated by Laugier). Schmarsow articulated this shift, nascent in Semper’s conception of the hearth, stating that architecture’s function was to “create space”, a notion picked up upon by Berlage when he defined architecture as the “art of spatial enclosure”.

In his formulation of architecture as the—“enlargement of bodily feelings into spatial feelings”, of architectural space as “the figuration of human activities ... as a living amalgamation of human impulses, created perceptually by its creator and its users”,⁸ one finds an extension of Semper’s notions of “architectural space as a nexus of social activity ... [formed by] various material industries (foremost, the textile arts)”.⁹ These two concepts in tandem—spatial forming through the materials of enclosure and through movement and extension outward from the body—suggest a provisional apparatus upon which to drape our experiential understandings of Gigon/Guyer’s work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and “The Storyteller”, *Illuminations*. Edited and with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.
- Bram, Matthias. “Conversation with Annette Gigon, Mike Guyer” . *Daidalos*. August 1995.
- Burkle, J. Christophe, and Monika Landert, editors. *Gigon/Guyer Architects: Works and Projects 1989-2000*. Translated by Robert Thomas. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2000.
- Evans, Robin. *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997.

Frampton, Kenneth. *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.

Frascardi, Marco. “The Tell-the-Tale Detail”, *Via 7*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984.

Gigon, Annette, with Mike Guyer and Edelbert Kob. *Annette Gigon/Mike Guyer: Museum Liner Appenzell*. Ostfildern/Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000.

Mallgrave, Harry. *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*. Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994.

Ruskin, John. “The Lamp of Truth” and “The Lamp of Life”, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

Semper, Gottfried. “The Four Elements of Architecture” and “The Textile Art: Considered in Itself and in Relation to Architecture”. *The Four Elements of Architecture and other Writings*. Translated by Henry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Schwarzer, Mitchell. “The Emergence of Architectural Space: August Schmarsow’s Theory of Raumgestaltung”. *Assemblage 15*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991.

Steinmann, Martin. “Conjectures On the Architecture of Gigon/Guyer”. *Gigon/Guyer Architects: Works & Projects 1989-2000*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2000.

Wechsler, Max. “Beauty is Admissible: Architecture as Visual Event”. *Gigon/Guyer Architects: Works & Projects 1989-2000*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2000.

NOTES

¹ Matthias Bram. Conversation with Annette Gigon, Mike Guyer. *Daidalos* (August 1995), 48-54.

² Harry Mallgrave. *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 65. Schmarsow’s theory of *Raumgestaltung* (spatial forming), and his proto-phenomenological insights into physiological and psychological aesthetics are borne out in our daily experience of the world we live in. Barcelonans, for example, will tell you that they cannot ever get lost in their city. Their feet always tell them where they are—between the micro-topography formed by the varying patterns of tiles that line the sidewalks and the subtle but insistent gradient of the land as the city tilts slightly toward the sea. Granted, there are many other factors that contribute to wayfinding and to the often intense pleasures of Barcelona’s pavements. But a short walk in, for example, Amsterdam or Providence, Rhode Island, will suggest that there’s something to what they say.

³ Marco Frascari. "The Tell-the-Tale Detail". *Via 7* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984), 22-37. The signifying function of architecture is preëminent in this reading of the detail's pragmatic and representative functions. Frascari sees details as the "minimal units of signification in the architectural production of meanings" (23) through their conjunction of the "practical norms (technology) and the aesthetic norms (semiotics)" (36).

⁴ John Ruskin. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984). In "The Lamp of Truth" Ruskin mentions, but does not develop, the notion of the *intelligent* and the *careless* observer: "... that building will generally be the noblest, which to an intelligent eye discovers the great secrets of its structure ... although from a careless observer they may be concealed." (40).

⁵ Martin Steinmann. "Conjectures On the Architecture of Gigon/Guyer". *Gigon/Guyer Architects: Works & Projects 1989-2000*. (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2000). Steinmann mentions their 1993 exhibition in Lucerne in which they made their way of working manifest: "Shelves

filled with samples of different materials occupied the middle of the exhibition space ... they were simply there, like in their atelier, in order to investigate their suitability from case to case to evoke certain sensations" (219).

⁶ Max Wechsler. "Beauty is Admissible: Architecture as Visual Event". *Ibid.*, 360.

⁷ The disconnect between his writing and his architecture was not lost on his contemporaries. Mallgrave (1994) quotes from a letter from Fiedler to Hildebrand: "It seems to me that all of Semper's individual originality and daring have been buried under his art-historical erudition... I am once again going through his writings, and I am astounded again and again by his revelations. Yet while he expounds upon the origin of architectural forms, it never affects his individual artistry. The latter is never spontaneous invention ... but always something derived... [H]is buildings tediously wind their way through their historically prescribed course." 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.