

**THOMAS MICAL**

***Blurring (What-comes-after-Transparency)***

**Abstract**

"After" examines the meanings and effects of the demise of the myth of transparency in architecture (both Rowe's literal and phenomenal, plus Toyo Ito's 3 new modes of transparency), arguing after McLuhan that transparency is not the media but the message. The ascendancy of modernism is the ascendancy of the myth of transparency, yet transparency is a subtractive strategy; like negation, it is never complete. There is something like Duchamp's *inframince*, the *infra-thin* minimal difference that is produced and persists in transparencies. The *inframince* explains the "pathological kernel" sustained through the prior repetitions of transparency in modern architecture, as the minimal surface of sense. The *inframince* of sense renders whatever divides interiority from exteriority as stained, contingent, haunted, and blurred.

The modern metaphors of transparency will be shown to stage the contemporary appearance of a more difficult conceptual and visual principle, the emerging tropes of blurring as a dissipative structure in media-architecture. Blurring precedes perception, yet this phenomenon has increasingly been used in art, media, and architecture to overcome the "clear and distinct" diagrammatic representations of categories of spatial formation. Blurring is an abstract-machine within perception and representation: the blur approximates that which persists as unnamable and unrepresentable, as figure without form. The blur is created from the arrested movement between concept and image. As a deformed anamorphosis, Toyo Ito's theory of blurred space (the incommensurate superimposition of primitive body-space and the invisible electronic ether) blurs what remains of transparency. In this essay, the tropes of blurring in the works of Ito, Diller+Scofidio, and artists such as Rothko, Bacon, and Richter will be analyzed using the critical methods of both Deleuze and Lacan. The blur is here posited as both technique and theory, informed but not identical to the trace, the virtual, and the Lacanian imaginary. From these concerns, the essay will explain the movement from the modernist transparent subject to the blurred subject of media-architecture.

**Zur Person**

Thomas Mical, Dr.; 1998 doctorate on Nietzsche and DeChirico, practiced architecture in Chicago and Tokyo, and taught architectural history-theory, cinematic urbanism, and media-philosophy in Georgia Tech and Wien; editor of *Surrealism and Architecture* (Routledge, 2005); recipient of a multi-year research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council entitled "The Optic of New Architecture: From Transparency to Blur".

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