

THE ARCHITECTURE OF ETHICS: STANLEY TIGERMAN

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Chicago-born Jewish architect Stanley Tigerman wouldn't mind to be portrayed as a sort of freethinker and even libertine of the architectural discipline while, paradoxically, constructing himself as the defender of ethics in architecture. He is somebody who insists that what architects do with physical architecture is important but that ultimately the architecture of the 'here and now' is a mere scaffold to support ideas that exceed the sphere of art and that lie beyond the expressive possibilities of architecture.

Philosophy has institutionalized a series of major figures—the positive philosophers—who constitute the foundation of the field as we have come to define it: Plato, Kant, Hegel, and the like; but it also draws its vitality from their dialectic counter-parts: the anti-philosophers—Socrates, Kierkegaard, Bataille—i.e. those thinkers, who don't play by the rules, and who (some would claim) have no business being counted as a part of the discipline of philosophy. These anti-philosophers, however, are indispensable to making philosophy move. If given the choice, Tigerman would certainly side with the anti-philosophers ... constructing himself as a sort of anti-architect, who cannot leave the discipline because it is what fuels his resistance—the resistance to all these fantasies of perfection, synthesis and performance—of “do-good-ism” in the world. He insists that he wanted to become an architect when he read Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead*. It made him furious! If your hope is to save the world, build the largest shelter for homeless people, like Stanley did with his Pacific Garden Mission in

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Chicago, or found a school for socially responsible and environmentally conscious design (like he did with Eva Maddox when they founded *Archeworks* in Chicago in 1994). But do not expect an invitation into the architectural Hall of Fame for it. For that, you need other techniques: You need a *theory* of *anti*-architecture.

Tigerman provides something of that sort. He has all the credentials to master the subject of architecture; but in spite of that, his *real* “subject” never ceased to be the human being, while architecture was, for him, a sort of stage or dramatic space within which to choreograph the dialogues and encounters between humans. His long-lasting friendship with the late dean of the Cooper Union School of Architecture, John Hejduk, was largely based on this common interest: Didn’t Hejduk also fathom architecture as an arena for the poetic and ineffable meeting between humans, as well as for the empathy between human subjects and the subject of architecture? While Hejduk designed cities “populated” with architectural characters on their journeys from Venice to Berlin and to Prague, and from Riga to Vladivostok, Tigerman liked to draw his own autobiographical dream cities set against the backdrop of non-realist environments in the spirit of Joan Miró’s “Carnival of Harlequin” (1924-25) and the “Garden of Earthly Delights” by Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, which was filled with literal renditions of certain proverbs of the day. The so-called Architoons were always colonized with the fragments and anecdotes of Tigerman’s personal, eclectic architectural memory—from Greek caryatids, to Mies van der Rohe’s buildings, to tectonic details of the Chicago balloon frame, concentration camp barracks and their steaming chimneys, the temple of Solomon, the Chicago street grid, and Tigerman’s own buildings and paper projects. This imaginary cosmos was animated by little frogmen or cherubim in the tradition of François Rabelais’s grotesque carnival characters in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*—which the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin had rediscovered as the epitome of an “open” or “polyglossic” text in his *Rabelais and His World: Carnival and Grotesque* from the mid-1960s.¹ Tigerman’s cartoon figures seemed to protect his personal and plural *Oikos* of memories as much as they guarded the disciplinary book of architecture—which was at risk of turning abstract, inert, and static in the hands of the second and third generation modernists under whom Tigerman was trained (i.e. the generation of Paul Rudolph). One of the Architoons portrays one such cherub (a.k.a. an architect), who is torn in a Janus-faced reality between the “archaeological” gravity of the discipline and his spirited need to escape into another world of personal, idiosyncratic creativity: He is stepping on top of an architectural column which breaks underneath his feet while at the same time he stretches and reaches up to

hold on to the umbilical cord of one of his creative offsprings, the phallus-shaped Daisy House (Porter Beach, Indiana, 1975-78), which took flight on top of a cloud.

His interest in the exchange between “subjects” is the reason Tigerman kept being drawn to ethical philosophy and the theories of dialogism, from Aristotle to Emmanuel Lévinas—Lévinas, the philosopher and Talmud-scholar who was also formative for Jacques Derrida’s attentiveness to the alterity of writing, and who was close friends with the anecdotalist of the unknowable, Maurice Blanchot; and then to Martin Buber, who published



THE DAISY HOUSE

his book *Ich und Du* (I and Thou) in 1923, in which he cogitated about the nature of the true encounter with the Other. Buber maintained that the genuine meeting between I and Thou could not be premeditated (or “composed”), but that it was utterly serendipitous and, hence, revelatory. In a sense, the sublime spontaneity and transience of the principle of “dialogue” as described by Buber has been at odds with the tradition of architectural production where thorough planning, notation, and representation preceded the actualization of the project. In Buber’s terminology, such a “structured” confrontation with the world treats that world as a

collection of objects. When the subject “plans” the world in this way, however, he can no longer encounter subjects, but all his relationships are reflections of his own ideas: Ich-Du turns into Ich-Es (I-It). As one of the ills of modernity, dialogue is turned into a monologue, and alterity is suppressed.

In Tigerman’s view, by the 1960s, architectural modernism had turned into a monologue only accessible to the narrow circle of architectural *cognoscenti*. He hoped, nevertheless, that his career as an architect could be a journey to discover otherness in architecture, and, as the title of his 1982 book *Versus: An American Architect’s Alternatives* suggested, to track down “other” stylistic and ideological attitudes in architecture. To this end, he made a point of remaining a sort of outsider to the orthodox teachings of the discipline.² Like Buber, Lévinas, and Derrida, Tigerman’s Jewishness has played a determining role for this desire for alterity. He was introduced to the study of the Torah by his grandfather, a self-taught Talmudic reader, and has subsequently always affirmed his Jewishness. With it, he has cultivated a compassion for the oppressed and the persecuted. In architecture, this empathy translated into a skepticism towards establishment doctrine, from which he liked to distance himself. His book *Architecture of Exile* from 1988 thematized the “exilic” relationship the Hebraic culture entertained with the hegemonic, Greek or “Hellenic” tradition of architecture as manifested in the candid structure of the Parthenon. The book also made a case for the liaison and convoluted dialogue between the (visible) realm of architectural aesthetic with the more ethereal spheres of ethics and the sacred—between presence and absence. As a Jew, Tigerman continues to relish the existential “drift” between the contrasting sentiments of alienation and belonging to the city of Chicago—a predicament Saul Bellow had so captivantly described in his *Adventures of Augie March*; the *bildungsroman* begins with the famous sentence “I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man’s character is his fate, says Heraclitus... ”³

At the time Tigerman tried to launch his architectural career in Chicago, he felt that a certain strand of modernism had besieged architectural discourse while the experimentalism of younger architects was pushed aside. In order for the discipline to stay energetic and lively, however, the “minimal palette” of the modernist canon had to open up and accept certain “contaminants” into its stern aesthetic, stringent utopianism, and ideological catechism. Tigerman challenged all claims

that architectural study was “ontological” in nature, i.e. that the discipline had to devote itself to some stable conceptual “synthesis” or inner “being,” which theory was called to uncover. Instead, he alleged that architecture had an “inability to define itself inherently”⁴ and that, therefore, it needed to transgress its cherished myths of purity and perpetuity (e.g. the clarity of tectonic and functional principles, the permanence of proportional systems, the synthetic nature of typological partis, a.s.o.). Instead of propagating the modern myths of stability, Tigerman fathomed architecture as the rift or space, which inserts itself in-between incongruous temporalities: “The gestalt of art lies in that intersection of one’s own epoch and eternity.”⁵ One of his missions became to disclose the heterogeneity of Chicago’s architectural heritage and reveal alternative directions to the legacy of the “heroes” of modernist Chicago—of Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham, Frank Lloyd Wright, and, most of all, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Mies had come to Chicago following the close of the Bauhaus by the Nazis, as part of what Tigerman called the “German invasion”⁶ of Chicago modernism. Appearing as a sort of European aesthetic arbiter and ideologue, Mies was able to give something to the United States that none of the other modernist forefathers could: Unlike Le Corbusier, who was perceived as too intellectual to fill this role, Tigerman argued, or Walter Gropius, whose theories lacked paradigmatic clarity, Mies’s architecture, “was not unnecessarily demanding on the functional or intellectual levels,”⁷ and was thus able to convey a sense of Ur-European taste, permanence and democracy. While Tigerman praised Mies’s early role in America, he rejected the subsequent pervasive dissemination and banalization of his architecture by his many followers, particularly C.F. Murphy and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, who adjusted Mies’s ideas to the corporate context and made of his architecture

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Tigerman's relationship with Mies and Miesianism has been complex to say the least; he invokes Mies in most of his texts, where he makes of him a kind of straw figure or voodoo doll of modernism. While the acolytes had turned Mies into their "object" of contemplation, study, and imitation, Tigerman fathomed a more subjective (Buber's Ich-Du) encounter with Mies — Mies as an imaginary father figure and mentor. Nine years after Mies's death, in 1978, Tigerman addressed an open letter to him in which he reported that, "here in Chicago everything appears to have remained much the same as it was ten years ago"⁸; he then wrote a postscript to that letter in 1986, in which he deplores "that Americans, by and large, still consider you [Mies] as a commercial paradigm rather than as a philosophic role model."⁹ Tigerman did see in Mies's abstractionism a philosophical stance: Because the German *émigré* had inaugurated a radically "other" vision in architecture, he could figure as the epitome of the liberal freethinker. In Tigerman's mind, to imitate Mies did not imply that one had to repeat his abstract aesthetic, it meant to make oneself different from anyone else so far ... including Mies. In architecture, Mies could function as the model for the individualist.¹⁰ Much of Tigerman's own architecture can be read as a dialogue with Mies's "matrix," which nevertheless is traversed and warped by another, more "supple" geometrical logic: The composition of Tigerman's Oakbrook Residence from 1976-77, for example, seemed to emulate the paradoxical meeting of the Miesian grid with a more fluid, flexible, and lyrical geometry. Similarly, some of Tigerman's early oil paintings, which directly borrowed from another German-born artist, Josef Albers, also evidenced an interest in the close alliance between rational line geometries and the quasi-figural presence a slight disturbance of geometry can engender.

Tigerman's part real, part imaginary exchange with the German expatriate was intentionally concocted as a psychoanalytically charged relationship, which culminated with Tigerman's creation of an ambivalent collage in 1979, entitled "The Titanic"; the work showed Mies's Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology precariously floating (or possibly sinking) in the ocean against the backdrop of a clouded sky. "The Titanic" illustrated the *nachleben* of the ambivalent encounter between Tigerman and Mies—immersed in an oneiric and unstable milieu of the clouds and the deep water. With it, Tigerman demanded that the baton be passed to a (then) young generation of architects in Chicago, who felt a Bloomian anxiety of influence from their modern antecedents.¹¹

In 1976, Tigerman turned his personal discontent with the architecture

scene into a more collective disagreement when he co-founded a group of self-declared “individualists” and “freethinkers”: The Chicago Seven included Tom Beeby, Larry Booth, Stuart Cohen, James Ingo Freed, James Nagle, Ben Weese; in 1977, the group expanded to eight to include Helmut Jahn, the “Baron von High-Tech.”¹² The first formal event of the Seven was an exhibition the group organized for The Cooper Union in New York, and later took to Illinois. The participants of the exhibition conceived of “Chicago Architects” as a sort of *salon des refusés*, which was scheduled to be on display at the Richard Gray Gallery simultaneously with the “official” and “canonical” retrospective of Chicago architecture at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art, entitled “A Hundred Years of Chicago Architecture: Continuity of Form and Structure.”¹³ The New York opening of the show was to give it legitimacy before it would go back “home” to Chicago. In order to communicate their insurrectionist intent, facing up to the official tenet of Chicago modernism, this group of architects was named after its political homologue in Chicago, also called the Chicago Seven around social right activists Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, John Froines, Lee Weiner and Bobby Seale, all of whom had been arrested and put to trial for conspiracy and for instigating to riot at massive protests against the Vietnam War at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.¹⁴ Seale had to appear again at hearings in 1970 as one of the New Haven Nine during the New Haven Black Panther trials. During these trials, the architecture school of Tigerman’s alma mater, Rudolph’s Art and Architecture Building at Yale, fell prey to a mysterious fire, although no arson was revealed. Both the Chicago Seven and the New Haven Nine were all finally found not guilty of conspiracy, yet Tigerman was well aware of the cultural stir these conspirators had provoked—not least because Tigerman knew Weiner. Beyond the

name of the political precedent, some of its street-fighter terminology was also adopted by the architectural Seven; one of its members explained that “what Mies did is that he thought of it as a war for saving our souls or the battle for the saving of architecture. Late in his life he once said, “I’ve showed them how to do it. I am winning the war for architecture.”¹⁵ The Seven rose up against becoming the foot soldiers of a war they did not endorse.

The Seven also positioned themselves in rivalry with two groups of architects on the East Coast, one of which had declared a shared interest in the autonomy of the discipline of architecture in the context of the CASE study groups in the late sixties.¹⁶ As an outcome of one of these meetings held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1969, five of its members published a series of house projects in a book entitled *Five Architects* in 1972; the projects were intellectually strung together by a critical essay by historian Colin Rowe.¹⁷ Because of his aptitude to provide a connective theory for their ideas, Rowe emerged as the *eminence grise* of the “New York Five,” or “Whites,” which included Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier. It did not take long until the Whites’ interest in Le Corbusier and the autonomous, abstract syntax of form was challenged by the so-called “Grays,” who were mostly associated with Yale and Pennsylvania universities, and included Vincent Scully, Robert Venturi, Robert A.M. Stern, and Romaldo Giurgola, among others. The Grays promoted the semantic dimension of architectural form, and its ability to “communicate” by connecting to the history and the architectural motives of the Western humanist traditions.¹⁸ The staged rivalry between the Chicago and the New York groups was based on a significant conceptual difference, in that the Seven abstained from defining a shared set of aesthetic and theoretical principles, so that every one of its members would preserve his individuality and singularity. Tigerman described the Seven’s liberal agenda as follows:

The New York Five thought they had something in common, and they presented themselves as Whites: exclusivist, autonomous beings ...they had a certain collective belief in “autonomy.” The Grays, which was [Romaldo] Giurgola, [Robert A. M.] Stern, and all those people, saw themselves as inclusivists. The guys in L. A., the Silvers, saw themselves as studies in extrusion, because of the speed of the automobile.

The Chicago Seven have nothing to do with each other—formally, and non, personally. I don’t even see them. ...It was the only way we could get seven desperate people who had nothing in common, including respect for the other; but one thing we had in common: we needed to penetrate a city that was monolithic, that was Miesian.¹⁹

The Seven stayed away from delineating a shared aesthetic-formalist code; instead, they were mostly defined *negatively*, by stating that they did not participate in the established architectural culture of Chicago. This strategy of affirming identity through negation and distance was entirely consistent with Tigerman's ironic *weltanschauung*, which hinged on the possible co-existence of contradictions and unresolved dualities. The Seven made this ironic self-understanding into an ideological model for urban cohabitation when, in 1978, they organized the "Chicago Townhouse" competition at The Graham Foundation. This event came in defense of a pluralist discipline, and became one of the forerunners of the *strada novissima* installation at the showcase event for postmodern architecture two years later at the Venice Biennale, called "The Presence of the Past."

Tigerman's advocacy of the creative and independent freethinker has to be seen against the background of a determining and officially sanctioned conflict the United States engaged in at the time he developed his project in architecture: the Vietnam War. The senseless loss of human life in the worsening war after 1965, and well into the 1970s, presented the American society with an existential puzzle, which destroyed the former confidence in the ability to master and control every aspect of life; moreover, it stirred up suspicions about the ethical value underlying the positivism of the modern and secular lifestyle. When the United States's official campaign against Communism turned into a national disaster, Tigerman started to question the relative gain of abstract and universalizing heroism in the face of the individual suffering of the people of both war nations. He was well aware that the emerging existential angst around Vietnam did not only affect the collective conscience, as the media in the socially oriented sixties kept suggesting, but it resulted in fears on a very personal level: The national calamity made him

aware of his own finitude and mortality. Together with this realization of finitude, Tigerman's simultaneous midlife crisis, only added to his individual disquietude at the time.²⁰ He wrote in 1982 that towards the second half of the 1970s, "I felt the need to reassess the way I wished to live the rest of my life. I became fascinated with the idea that the notions of humor and irony could be regarded as perverse responses to the acknowledgment of death."²¹ Here, he announced his primordial reason as well as the rhetorical modes of expression of his form of architectural liberalism; the introduction of humor and irony into architecture was to open a space within the discipline's dense matrix of foundational assumptions, and reconquer within it a territory for individual freedom of expression. In spirit, the double, tragic/comic rhetoric of his architectural writing and design is very close to Roberto Benigni's in his 1997 comedy *La vita è bella*—a daring aesthetic-ethical *tour de force* about the life in the concentration camps in Auschwitz.

In view of the Western world's apparent lack of self-doubt and self-criticism manifested in the U.S. government's bad judgment around the Vietnam war and the war protests, Tigerman challenged the "modern" notion of an overarching and synthetic ideology (i.e. the *zeitgeist*) which was considered to epitomize all aspirations of a people at a particular moment in time. He criticized the collective delusion of endless progress which, more than engrained in the very project of modernity, was also endemic to the post-Emersonian, American pioneer ethics and found itself boosted by the economic upswing and the consumer euphoria in the postwar decades. Ultimately, he considered the United States' one-sided confidence in an uninterrupted cultural, social and economic renewal in the 1950s and early 60s immature: "There is something perverse about the reenactment of the desire to remain collectively 'young.' It is as if an entire culture rejects its own coming of age because it may ruin that culture's optimism."²² The heroic and positivist devotion to this shared belief seemed like a naive conceit of a nation, which failed to understand the true meaning of individual "existence." Vietnam shattered the illusion that a nation like the United States would or could speak with one voice, and that any attitude of dissent and disagreement should dissolve in the positive spirit of an allegedly unified ideological will of the American society.

In the context of these questions raised in the socio-cultural sphere, Tigerman was drawn magnetically to the intellectual tradition of existentialism, from Socrates to Søren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, from Dostoevsky to Kafka, and finally, to Mark C. Taylor's (a-)theological

speculations—themselves based on Kierkegaard.²³ Tigerman liked to think of his own position in architecture as analogous to the place Kierkegaard occupied in philosophy: What Kierkegaard was to Hegel, Tigerman thought he could represent in relation to Mies. In a sense, Hegel and Mies both attempted to “systematize” existence through their respective sterile metaphysics, which was in the service of a universal *welt-* or *zeitgeist*. Kierkegaard and Tigerman, by contrast, insisted on the importance of the subjective perspective as well as the freedom associated with it. They maintained that singular, contingent acts and reflections were not dictated by any universal will, but instead, belonged to the free initiative of every discrete human being—the sphere of “That Individual.”²⁴ Along with his disapproval of abstract *systemdenken*, Kierkegaard had expressed his criticism against a fixed, dehumanized, and “spatialized” view of time, and suggested to replace it with the more individualized and transient notion of “life-time.”²⁵ Tigerman similarly insisted that space and time were contingent on the mortal existence of a person’s lifecycle; many of his sketches make thematic the idea of the irrecuperable passage of individualized time, as does, for example, the drawing entitled “Hinge.” About his phallus-shaped Daisy House, Tigerman wrote: “The necessity to communicate the finite condition of man in all its ironic nobility was an obvious requirement of [this building].”²⁶ The house’s patron truly epitomized the Janus-faced relationship between the very human sentiments of tragedy and comedy: The client was the owner of burlesque show venues in Chicago, and was diagnosed with terminal cancer when he approached Tigerman to design the house. After turning down the client several times, Tigerman finally accepted to design a house for him under the condition that the project would make his patron laugh: “I drew an erect phallus with semen coming out at the end, directed at him, and he laughed. He

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liked it, and we built it, and he died three months later; that's the truth."²⁷ This thoroughly humanized, tragic/comic liaison with other subjects through the medium of architecture has been at the core of Tigerman's critique of modernism, and was, at the same time, fundamental to his own version of "postmodernism."

ENDNOTES

1. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).
2. Refer to Tigerman's autobiography *Building Bridges to Burn*, forew. by Emmanuel Petit (ORO, 2011).
3. Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Angie March: A Novel* (New York: Viking Press, 1953).
4. Tigerman, "The Ten Contaminants" (1991), *Schlepping Through Ambivalence: Writings on an Ambivalent Architectural Condition*, ed. Emmanuel Petit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 54.
5. Tigerman, "Juxtaposition vs. Judgment, 1965," *Versus: An American Architect's Alternatives* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 56.
6. Tigerman used the expression "German invasion" to designate Mies van der Rohe's arrival in Chicago in an interview with Barbaralee Diamonstein. Diamonstein-Spielvogel, "American Architecture Now: Stanley Tigerman," Diamonstein-Spielvogel Video Archive, Duke University Libraries, 1984.
7. Stanley Tigerman, "Mies van der Rohe: A Moral Model"; "Paradigms in Architecture," *Perspecta 22, The Journal of the Yale School of Architecture*, Rizzoli, New York (1986), 118.
8. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Tigerman, *Versus*, 30.
9. Refer to Tigerman's "P.P.S. to Mies," *Schlepping Through Ambivalence*, 153.
10. I borrow the idea of the meaning of imitating an individualist from Alexander Nehamas's view of Socrates, in *Art of Living*, where Nehamas claims: "To imitate Socrates is therefore to create oneself, as Socrates did; but it is also to make oneself different from anyone else so far, and since that includes Socrates himself, it is to make oneself different from Socrates as well. That is why he can function as the model for the individualist" *Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Sather Classical Lectures, 1998), 11.
11. In 1973, Harold Bloom published *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, in which he argued that because a poet must look for an original poetic vision in order to guarantee his survival into posterity, the overwhelming influence of his precedents provokes a sense of anxiety in living poets.
12. Tigerman designates Jahn as the "Baron von High-Tech" in *Versus*, 30.
13. Oswald W. Grube, Peter C. Pran and Franz Schulze, *100 Years of Architecture in*

Chicago: Continuity of Structure and Form (Chicago: J. Philip O'Hara, 1976).

14. The Chicago Seven were originally eight, but one of their member's trial (Bobby Seale's) was separated from the trial of the other seven because of his blatant disrespect of the court proceedings and the judge.
On the Chicago Seven protests and trials, refer to: J. Anthony Lukas, "Judge Hoffman Is Taunted at Trial of the Chicago 7 After Silencing Defense Counsel", *New York Times*, February 6, 1970; David Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: the Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Abbie Hoffman & al., *Conspiracy*, introduction by Noam Chomsky, edited by Peter and Deborah Babcox and Bob Abel (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1969). 55
15. James Ingo Freed, *Chicago Architects Oral History Project* (Chicago, Illinois: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000).
16. On the CASE study group meetings (Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment), refer to Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
17. *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972).
18. For a discussion of the "White/Gray" debates, refer to Joan Ockman, "Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of Oppositions," in Beatriz Colomina (ed), *Architecture Production* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988).
19. Conversation Stanley Tigerman with Emmanuel Petit, Princeton, NJ, December 2001; in Emmanuel Petit, "Irony in Metaphysics's Gravity: Imagination and Iconoclasm in Architecture 1960s-80s," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, January 2006, Annex B.
20. *Ibid.*, 115.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Tigerman, *The Architecture of Exile* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 155.
23. Tigerman extracts most of his references to existentialist thinkers from William Hubben, *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka: Four Prophets of Our Destiny* (London and New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1952 & 1962). Later, Tigerman refers a lot to Mark C. Taylor's *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
24. The epitaph on Kierkegaard's grave referred to the philosopher as "That Individual."
25. Paul Bové, "The Penitentiary of Reflection: Søren Kierkegaard and Critical Activity," *boundary 2*, vol. 9, no. 1, A Supplement on Irony (Autumn, 1980), 233-58, p. 237.
26. Tigerman, *Versus*, 116.
27. Conversation Tigerman with Petit; "Irony in Metaphysics's Gravity..."

QUESTION: *The essay by Emmanuel Petit is talking about your ethics. And in the essay one of the things he says is that your temperament or approach would have more in common with the anti-philosophers like Socrates and Kierkegaard and Bataille rather than the system builders like Kant and Hegel. Is that something that you would agree with or be in sympathy with?*

ANSWER: I don't have any feeling about it at all. Emmanuel writes what he sees and thinks is correct, and I am, with respect to him, simply an other. So I don't have any feelings that he's right or wrong or whatever.

Q: *Then he does get in to the struggles that went on in the 1970s and 1980s with postmodernism and your central role there, and at the time, a lot of times it was relegated to being about style, and he brings out the idea that there was a strong ethical incentive or underpinning to your work and your positions at that time, and I was hoping that you might have something to say about that.*

A: Yeah actually I do. Architecture is an elitist one. We are the hired guns for the wealthy. Or those in power, or kings or princes, or princes of industry, or princes of the art world. We were never about ethical considerations. But its provable in the last fifty years at least, when you could actually explore the phrase "follow the money and you will find architects" So when kings had to build in apartheid South Africa, we did. When the kings had to build for the Shah of Iran we did. When it came time to build for OPEC money we did. And so today you find major corporate firms stampeding to the ticket counter of overseas airlines to work on projects in countries whose human rights history doesn't exist. So it still is the same. But in the 1970s on the heels of Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction* in

Architecture, architects took a second look at their origins. And so there was an attempt, feeble there's no question of it, stylistic, yes, to get in touch with their predecessors. To find roots as it were—of a rootless people. I wrote a book twenty-five to thirty years ago entitled the *Architecture of Exile*, which stipulates that Americans are in exile. This is not our land. It belonged to the American Indians etc. It was promised by the bible. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust but this is not our soil and we are exploitive even as I speak to you, so yes I for a very long time, not that I hold it as a badge of honor, I have been a person who has been involved with ethics, who writes about it, who tries to build about it, etc. Yes that's true.

Q: What specifically in postmodernism as it was playing out at the time seemed to you to have an ethical imperative?

A: Well, among other things, you have to remember that you are talking to someone who may be native to Chicago, but ultimately it is not my home. I was born here but it is not my home. This is a Baptist fundamentalist city. And also was a city that took great care to patronize Mies van der Rohe. And so it was very difficult in the sixties to come back from graduate school and to find a place in this place which was no place for me. And so we formed something called the Chicago Seven, with a group who were antagonistic to an establishment condition, and we tried to make a place for us at the table. Around that time, a little bit later, I did that infamous piece about the titanic, about Crown Hall sinking into Lake Michigan and it struck a note at the time and it drew great discussion in the then emerging architectural culture in Chicago which was really nothing more than two sides battling it out between the traditional, canonical structural constructivist tradition and another group that had nothing in common—the Chicago Seven—but who felt that a more open, multi-valent condition might be better for all concerned in Chicago, and so

we battled our way to the table, and there were any number of events—mosh pits or whatever—where we invited others to argue it out with us and they came and we did. That condition no longer exists today. Basically, there is no Chicago architectural culture.

Q: What you had in common was an attitude towards multivalence?

A: What we had in common was we wanted a place at the table. Make no mistake about it. We were all different, one from the other and to find that place took a long time but it did transpire at some point. So yes, you could call it multivalent, you could call it philosophically inclined, but it was really very self-oriented and selfish. We wanted respect without the credential of having studied with Mies. And it ultimately transpired. In the process, Chicago opened itself up to every stripe of ambulance chaser who came to Chicago to build.

Q: I do have one other question I would like to run by you. One of the things Emmanuel brings out in the article is about spontaneity. He thinks that cultivating spontaneity with another person through design rather than sort of presenting them with a design—he thinks that spontaneity is something that characterized what you do. Do you agree with that?

A: Again, I don't know about that. I do know that we in the West fear, as Emmanuel Levinas put it, the other—The other that stalks the street. We are terrified of looking this person in the eye. We're terrified of terrorists, forgetting that the tradition of terrorism is rampant in all the countries of the West. Think of the French Revolution, think about the American Revolution—it was filled with terrorists. The British didn't know if they were going to have a bomb in their pocket. Suicide bombers are just an advanced version of the terrorists we were—American, that is. So I think—I'm reading a book right now that is very interesting, called *On the Muslim Question* which years ago could have been called “*On the Jewish Question*” the Jews in America and everywhere else, were never respected, they had to fight for the place and ultimately they had no place even in America. Only if you fell into the melting pot and declared yourself an American first—so we don't take kindly to veiled Muslim women or trance-talking Muslim males. We could—this country is supposed to be made up of diversified people that are not the same to each other. It's the only country on Earth that has that distinction. We could embrace an other, a foreign person, a person that doesn't speak like us and who has values other than ours—meaning values established by the Koran—as opposed to the Judeo-Christian bible. But we could, so I'm of the type who believes in that, who doesn't scare. You know, you go through life with only two ways, with fear or with love. And those who go in fear die

in fear, and those who go in love die in love. And that's really all I have to say about it. I mean, I am an architect. I trade, I also read and I write and I draw. I do other things other than making buildings. And I like to think and hope that the buildings I make, make sense. We [Tigerman McCurry] don't market, we don't brand, we don't have a marketing director. I'm not interested in branding, I'm not interested in any way in the diminishment of the discipline. But it is being diminished all the time—right now, as we speak. In other words, I'm glad I'm eighty-three and I'm not going to live to see the disaster that's about to come to architecture.



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