

Cloud as an Alternative Architecture

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In *A Theory of /Cloud/* (1972), the cloud, or rather, the graph of cloud, served as the entry point of the French art historian and theorist Hubert Damisch (1928-2017) in his understanding of the limits of Western art and art history as framed since the Renaissance. Here he initiated another possibility of painting—a “theory” of painting, which he simultaneously termed “a history of painting”—by concluding the book with an examination of Chinese landscape painting. Participating in the sinophilia of French intellectuals that accompanied the Chinese Cultural Revolution launched by Mao, Damisch’s turn represented his philosophical initiative to reflect on and shift away from Western metaphysics, especially from the negative dialectics of Hegel, and towards a different architecture based on a harmonious and positive materialist dialectic inspired by Chinese Taoist and Chan Buddhist philosophy. Here, in Damisch’s “reinvention” of Chinese painting, the cloud not only literally entered paintings to negotiate the intertextuality of mountain and water, ink and brush, and even that of the painter and painting, but also to fill the role of the materialist body in a different perspective of world formation—as the breath, the one movement that sustains or constitutes all life. In Damisch’s vision, such a cloud even leads to a different kind of architecture, one that counters the philosophical metaphor of architecture as the stability of the arche, the subject, the essence, or any anchored center. The cloud and its philosophical architectural alternative also contribute to a reflection on the very physicality of architecture, leading to the formation of an architecture in absentia, to which Damisch was to return in 2003 when discussing Diller+Scofidio’s *Blur Building* (2002), as well as the Chinese architecture of the Ming Dynasty.

Damisch conceived *A Theory of /Cloud/—toward a history of painting* (1972) (Figure.1) while teaching at l’École Normale Supérieure (ENS), where he started running a seminar with Derrida and Althusser in 1966.¹ The collaboration was prompted by Althusser’s desire to hold a seminar and generate a book on the production of art from the perspective of practitioners that would be based on interviews with artists and analyze their practices from a Marxist point of view.² In 1971, Damisch published an article entitled “History or/and Theory of Art” that dealt with the foundations of the discussions held during the seminar, the concern of which he was to echo in his 1972 book.³

“Theory” is the first keyword in the title of Damisch’s book. In the French intellectual scene of the 1960s and 70s, Althusser was the great advocate for a renewed understanding of “theory”, especially after the publication of *Reading Capital* (1965). In this book, he conducted a “theoretical” intervention in Marx’s “theory” and redeemed it by collapsing it with “history” and reuniting it with “practice” rather than regarding it or Marx’s *Capital* as an *a priori* model that was less concrete or real than empirical history, which was the way the book was generally understood at the time.⁴ Engaging in discourse with Althusser right from his subtitle, Damisch wrote: “towards a history of painting,” thereby collapsing theory and history through his specific engagement with the material, that is, cloud, which enables “a” or “another” (as opposed to the dominant) or “one among many” histories of painting.

Even as Althusser’s theoretical engagement with the Chinese Cultural Revolution served to support his re-reading of Marx, Damisch’s theoretical intervention with Chinese art and architecture helped him envision a different approach to the history and theory of art and architecture that moved from “scientific” historical materialism, advocated by Althusser. In other words, the two authors’ “theoretical approach” consists of a reading or process of reinvention, a recommencement, in which the transformation of the material of discourse in its specific material, historical spatial-temporal frame is intersected with other materials in their inevitably different spatial-temporal frames.

Damisch understood that his taking on Chinese art would have a particular quality as it was a subject outside of his immediate field, conventionally understood, or his most familiar knowledge construction, which was Western art history. In other words, there is necessarily greater inaccessibility intersecting his own connections with that of his subject’s. The key underlying point is that by voluntarily choosing to interact with Chinese art, he could intentionally displace himself, or, in his own words, find a balance between alterity and identity.⁵ Damisch admitted that this was why he sought help with the comparative method—with juxtaposing, generally speaking, the West and the East as well as the past and the present.⁶ In other words, the structure and material of his argument could destabilize that very argument, so that it, if not acquiring an element of vulnerability, would be vitalized for him and his audience through a certain degree of alienness. This balance kept his formulation vis à vis the object open-ended instead of definitively terminated. In “History and/or Theory,” Damisch

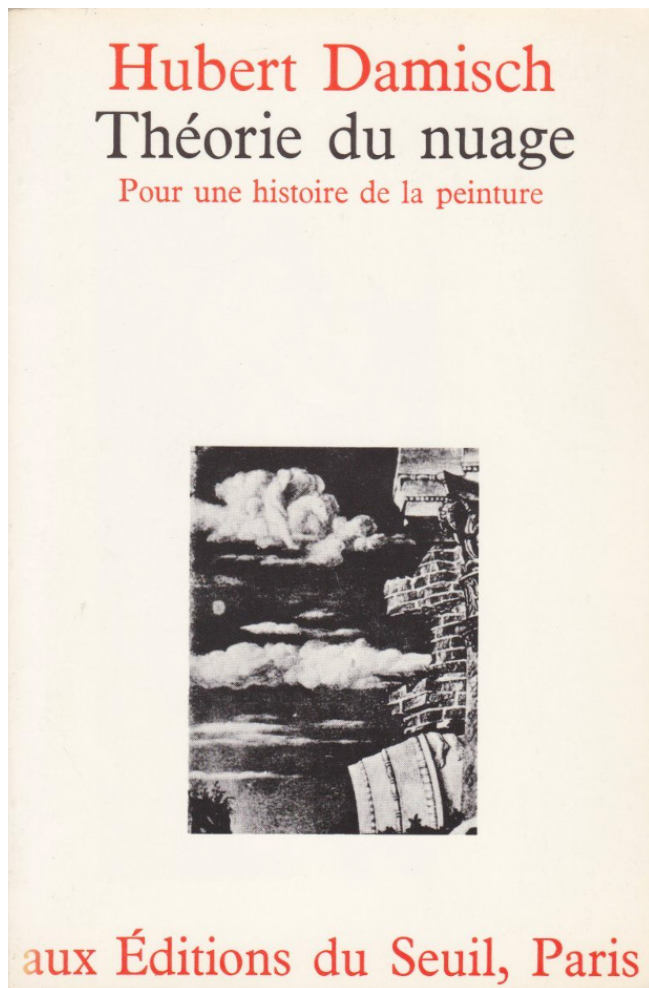


Figure 1. Hubert Damisch, *Théorie du nuage*, 1972. Éditions du Seuil.

also emphasized that the current discipline of art history was a “strictly local” practice that excluded the “art of the savage” and “Asian art,” abandoning these to specialists, despite fashioning itself as a unitary inclusive approach to all art.⁷ Damisch claimed that such a stand was, in fact, a realization of the dominant ideological control that incorporates the incompatible artifacts under the vague rubric of “culture.”⁸

“/Cloud/” is the second keyword in the book’s title. To clarify, following a semiotics tradition,⁹ Damisch uses the two slashes to indicate that he was referring to the signifier of cloud; in this book about painting, it is the pictorial graph of the cloud.¹⁰ Understandably, Damisch conceived the book under the significant influence of semiology, of Ferdinand de Saussure, and of the structuralist analysis initiated by structural linguistics and revitalized in France through the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss in his correspondence with Roman Jakobson in the US in the 1950s. /Cloud/ was also a displacing choice as it is the one element that escapes the system of perspective, a canonical Euro-American structure of painting since the Renaissance, while remaining key to painting.¹¹ Such a paradox is especially

present in the celebrated demonstration of linear perspective by Brunelleschi, in which he represented the baptistery of Florence on a reflective tableau, only to leave the sky empty so that it could catch reflections—which, in turn, verified the legitimacy of his system. All this could be understood to mean that a certain construction of the cloud functions as a center that pins down the play of painting. Compared to Damisch’s first attempt at structuralist analysis in his 1964 article on the architect Viollet-le-Duc (one of his first published articles, and specifically on architecture), his choice of cloud as subject in his 1972 book reveals his transformed ambition to push any stable structure to the edge, to de-validate its illusory center, and reimagine a new fluid field—one contemporary with the retrospectively coined epistemological turn from structuralism to poststructuralism circa 1966.¹² From another perspective, this choice of subject could just as easily have been an attempt to arrive at the threshold between identity and alterity.

At such a threshold, the reflection with the cloud pushes for an alternative history/theory of painting. In the final chapter on Chinese landscape painting, Damisch presents the Chinese painter Shitao of the late Ming early Qing dynasty and his idea of the “One Brushstroke” (Yi Hua). His aim is to demonstrate the possibility that the Euro-American binary of linearity and pictoriality, debated since the Renaissance, may be non-existent if we take into consideration the harmonious materialist dialectic movement of the One Brushstroke—or even a certain kind of mark or trace making. In which case, the graph of the cloud is a troublesome symptom of the “stain,” or the pure material substance of the degree zero of painting.¹³ This claim led Damisch to conceive and curate the 1995 exhibition “Traité du Trait” (Treatise of the Mark/Trace), that prioritized marking as the shared primeval significance of painting and other activities of art-making.¹⁴ He presented the Chinese brushstroke in the first segment of the exhibition, bracketing his discussion of it between the incisions of Lucio Fontana and the contours of the Renaissance masters, stating: “Chinese art embraces painting, drawing, and writing as a single concept, so that a ‘preliminary detour’ through Chinese art may well be a journey to the ‘central place’ of all marking.”¹⁵

Shitao’s theory of “One Brushstroke [Yi Hua 一畫]” can be understood as presenting a kind of harmonious dialectic at work, differentiated from the violence of the succession within the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Yi Hua thus became of interest to French intellectuals of the 1960s who were trying to break away from the hierarchical, idealist, teleological, and violent historical views of Hegel. Deeming it “key to the use of /cloud/ in landscape painting,” Damisch referred throughout his chapter to the One Brushstroke of Shitao’s treatise *Comments on Painting*, which was available to him in Pierre Ryckman’s French translation of 1970.¹⁶ Damisch highlighted that the One Brushstroke simultaneously united ink/brush (or as he put it, “flesh and bones”), things/people, the movement of the body and the greater movement of the universe, or nature.¹⁷ Such

a union of body, pen, and painting can also be deduced from Damisch's analysis of the formation of Chinese characters: "brushstroke [Hua 畫]," is composed of "brush 聿," which is a hand writing with a stylus, and "field 田."¹⁸ Moreover, as Damisch notes, this field is "not a matter of delineation and, above all, is not governed by any predetermined closure,"¹⁹ but instead, backed up by the writing sequence of the character and that of the simplified character of "painting" [Hua 画], maintains a certain openness while indicating relative orientations.²⁰ Alternatively, as Damisch later explained in keeping with Lacan, a painting or tableau is both coherent and productive.²¹ Meanwhile, this unity with nature at large can be traced to the character "one [Yi 一]" (also the graph of a single line), which, as Damisch notes (Figure. 2),²² alludes to the oneness that initiates nature's movement through "changes" or "transformations" (also Yi, 易, as in *I Ching* 易经, *The Book of Change*, a character said to derive from the form of the chameleon 蜥), by splitting into two or more, as explained in Taoist as well as Chan Buddhist philosophy, in *I Ching* and *Tao Te Ching*. Such philosophical implications in Yi Hua can be traced to the historical fact that Shitao was a Chan Buddhist monk who converted to Taoism when formulating his *Comments on Painting*.²³ It is also worth noting that "translation [also Yi, 译]," is said to originate from "transformation [Yi 易]."²⁴ Moreover, this oneness is represented as a single line in the Ba Gua, which identifies the further creative transformation of oneness (Figure. 3). Later, in *Traité du Trait*, Damisch points out the connection between the One Brushstroke of Shitao and the "One" of *I Ching* and Taoist philosophy, as well as its grams.²⁵ Worth noting here is that the gram of *I Ching* is translated into French as "trait."²⁶

Damisch writes that the "mission" of painters who adopt the theory of Yi Hua, "is not to capture the fleeting appearance of things," "but to seize upon their organizing principle."²⁷ This organizing "principle of the universe,"²⁸ or nature, that the One Brushstroke is trying to seize in painting according to *I Ching* is, I argue, a certain harmonious material dialectic—one that in Damisch's mind is understood or even formed retrospectively in opposition to Hegelian dialectics. In the first place, the dialectic consists of two equal parts that coexist in an inseparable oneness in which they work with each other to produce, in harmony, rather than in conflict or violence or by battling each other to establish a hierarchy. Moreover, the oneness is to be started with, rather than a resolution of conflicts teleologically achieved through the process of *Aufhebung*. The two parts at work are already the oneness, and their pairing is not a privileged formation since it is the same as one, but also as millions. Damisch emphasizes that this "is a dialectic of hospitality," building on the terms "host (zhu)" and "guest (bin)."²⁹ Another way to understand this dialectic is through the morphology of the Chinese character "change [Yi, 易]," which consists of the "sun [Ri, 日]" and the "moon [Yue, 月]." This pair evolved into the notion of Yin/Yang (the title of one of Damisch's sections). The two can also be understood as the male and the female. Damisch points out that this dialectic is "founded upon

sexuality" and that both partners, active or passive, are equally privileged, and that this differs from the idealist interpretation that favors the active, which can be seen as "assimilated to spirit or mind."³⁰ In *I Ching*, the blurry or chaotic oneness in which the two poles engage in creative action is known as Yin Yun.³¹ Shitao takes up the idea of Yin Yun when elaborating his theory of One Brushstroke in *Comments*, where he devotes an entire chapter to it.³² Meanwhile, Damisch mentions it when discussing the concept of the "'Fusion' of Yin and Yang," which for Shitao is "the union of the brush and the ink."³³ Damisch's inquiry into this harmonious dialectic of hospitality in the case of painting may anticipate and respond to Pierre Macherey's 1979 book on reading Spinoza in juxtaposition to Hegel, in which he envisions a non-Hegelian dialectic, one that is positive rather than negative and that works with a new kind of non-teleological play of contradictions, or as he puts it, "the struggle of tendencies that do not carry within themselves the promise of their resolution. Or again, a unity of contraries, but without the negation of the negation," i.e. one that prescribes a violence of "negation" if not also a teleological movement towards an end.³⁴ In fact, as signified by its title, *Hegel or Spinoza*, Macherey's book foregrounds the same problematic of "or," that is, the coexistence of alterity and identity, at once temporal and atemporal, as we saw in Damisch's "History and/or Theory" (1971), which this author is likewise taking on in her project. Damisch's reinvention of Shitao and *I Ching* on the primacy of nature, the oneness, and its omnipresence in the infinite number of singular things, also corresponds to the interest in Spinozist monism in Althusser's circle in the mid 1960s.³⁵ In fact, Spinoza too formulates the monist omnipresence as "nature" instead of as a transcendental god in a way that is similar to the oneness as nature in *I Ching*.³⁶ Moreover, the Chinese inspired formula also presents a materialist dialectic that stands in contrast to Hegel's idealist one.³⁷

Another critical aspect of the kind of dialectic that Damisch emphasizes is its materialism—a materialism, he states, that "we are beginning to see," "following Althusser's and Sollers's work on Lenin's text," that "turns out to be what thought has suppressed."³⁸ In other words, this materialist dialectic is no longer a metaphysical, abstract, and conceptual operation as it is in Hegel. Ink/brush is essentially a different kind of dialectic binary with substance, with flesh and bones, which, as Damisch writes, is "unlike [the] purely formal or analytical oppositions of the line/color, linear/pictorial, or even form/matter type,"³⁹ of the sort that have governed the Euro-American discourse on art since the Renaissance with an "idealist reduction."⁴⁰ If we go back to the chaotic metamorphic state of the oneness in creation, Yin Yun, we discover that it literally means "amorphous smoke" or "cloud." The Chinese character for the term is "氤氲." In Chinese, "气 [Qi]" means "air," or "breath," and "Yin Yun 氤氲" clearly includes "Qi 气." It refers to the material being of oneness, or better yet, it points to the essential materiality of this kind of dialectic at work—in Qi, breath, or "cloud" ("云,") because Yin Yun can also be written as "網纒"). As Damisch

duit dans l'art occidental, Ciel et Terre n'apparaissent pas comme deux registres superposés, conventionnellement définis et que signalent un certain nombre d'accessoires (soit, pour le ciel, les nuées, qui assurent en outre la communication entre les deux régions en servant à l'occasion de véhicules pour les acteurs de l'istoria), mais comme deux termes antithétiques qui concourent, par leur opposition même, à la production du paysage, dès lors que le peintre a ^{un}su trouver, par le trait de pinceau, la mesure qui les articule (1). Mesure non pas finie mais infinie, le travail de peinture étant appelé à se développer "jusqu'à inclure l'infiniment grand" et à s'amenuiser "jusqu'à accueillir l'infiniment petit (2)". Et de même, l'Unique Trait de Pinceau, qui représente l'unité de base de la peinture, "cet Unique Trait de Pinceau confère l'infinité des traits de Pinceau (3)", confirmant du même coup qu'il s'agit là d'une notion essentiellement productive, ~~caractérisée par une~~ ^{caractérisée par une} ~~infinité potentielle.~~ ^{infinité potentielle} Mais qu'on n'aille pas croire qu'il suffise pour faire une peinture de quelques marques de pinceau, de quelques taches sur une feuille de papier ou un tissu de soie: si la mesure du Ciel et de la Terre n'a pas été prise au préalable (et l'on sait maintenant quelle est la foncti

- (1) Selon Granet, (op.cit., p.125, n.3), "le mot tsie signifie "articulation", et évoque l'image d'un noeud de bambou. Il désigne l'instrument dont on se sert pour battre la mesure (le Roi fait concerter le Yin et le Yang en battant la mesure aux quatre saisons) et les divisions du temps qui servent à rythmer le cours des saisons".
- (2) "Quant à l'immensité du Paysage: avec ses terres étendues sur mille lieues, ses nuages qui s'enroulent sur dix mille lieues, ses successions de cimes, ses alignements de falaises, même un immortel qui, dans son vol, n'en voudrait prendre qu'un aperçu superficiel, n'en pourrait faire le tour", SHI TAO, ch.VIII, p.111.
- (3) P. Ryckmans insiste à juste titre sur l'ambivalence du signe yi, — dans le concept de Yi houa, 一書 ; yi, —, ne signifie pas seulement "un", mais aussi l'un absolu du Livre des Mutations (la barre —, le premier emblème fondamental qui, par division et combinaisons successives, exprimera la totalité des phénomènes), l'Un dont la division produit le Ciel et la Terre. L'étymologie du caractère, tian, 天, "ciel", ~~qui naît de la barre —~~ associe de manière typique la notion d'un à celle d'absolu: "天 signifie hauteur extrême, que rien ne peut surpasser; ce caractère provient de l'association de yi, —, "un", et de da, 大, "grand" (art.cit. p.85)

SHITAO

yi'houa

天

tian

大

da

supposé

IMEC, Abbaye d'Adenne, 14280 Saint-Germain-la-Blaie

Figure. 2 Hubert Damisch, manuscript in revising A Theory of /Cloud/, 1972, on the morphology of "—" in relation to the bars in I Ching (Livres des Mutations). Damisch papers, IMEC.



Figure 3. Trigrams and hexagrams in *I Ching*. Public Domain.

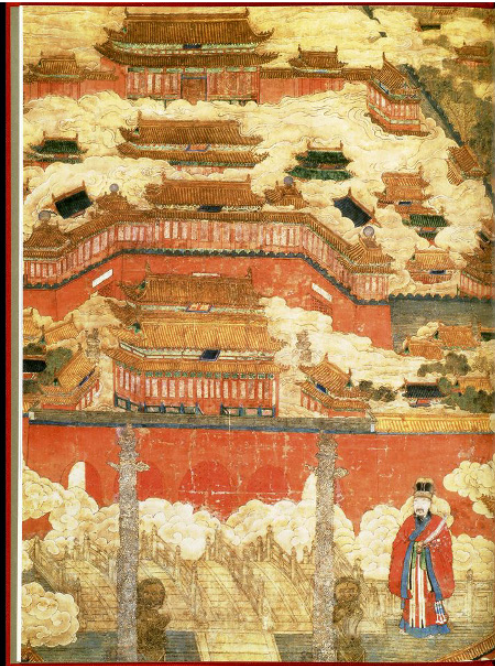
observes, breath, Qi, “is precisely the movement of life;” “it constitutes the primary, simple, fundamental element that is the Unique Brush Stroke, which animates what is originally undifferentiated and draws beings and things out of chaos.”⁴¹ In terms of form, this breath is embodied in the graph of the cloud in Chinese landscape painting, from which emerges the dialectic play between mountain and water, which, to Damisch as to Shitao, is analogous to brush/ink.⁴² In other words, “cloud serves to introduce movement...for cloud makes intertextual exchanges possible between the mountain and the water.”⁴³ Later, in *Traité du Trait*, Damisch follows Pierre Ryckmans in saying that “Shitao’s originality is to reduce pictorial gesture to its most simple concrete manifestation while portray the highest abstract universality.”⁴⁴ In other words, it is at once



Figure 4. Blur Building, Hubert Damisch, ppt slide for lecture “Effacer l’architecture,” at CCA, 2003. CCA archive.

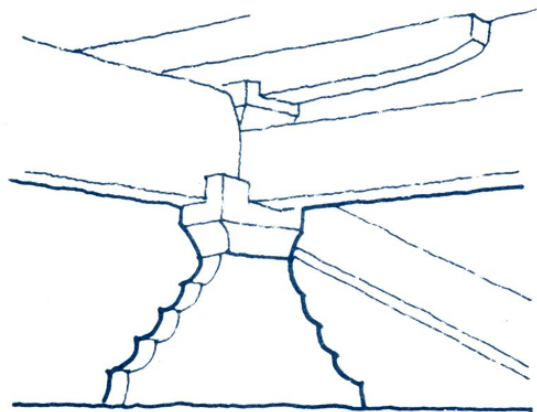
concrete and abstract, resolving the opposition between the material and structural principle.

Damisch focused only on painting in the book despite the fact that he had started engaging with architecture much earlier with Viollet-le-Duc. Three decades later, in 2003, however, he came back to the theme of cloud in specific relation to architecture, when, inspired by Diller+Scofidio’s Blur Building (2002), he give a lecture on cloud and architecture at the Canadian Center for Architecture (CCA) that was subsequently published in 2004. It is here that Damisch reiterates the importance of the position of this theme, which lies at the intersection of the “comparative approach of the fate [...] of the sign or /cloud/ element in western art and the art of the Far East” and in “the reflection on the specifically architectural determinations and resonances of structuralist thought.”⁴⁵ He locates an epistemological reflection of structure in the structuralist sense in the Blur Building’s ambivalent cloud structure as it negotiates between the bones of steel and the flesh of the fog (Figure. 4), as well as in its levitation over the lake in opposition to architecture’s classical, solid, gravity-bound



« Cité du palais, Beijing » (détail), dynastie Ming

Figure 5. Ming dynasty painting of the Forbidden Palace in Beijing, Hubert Damisch, ppt slide for lecture "Effacer l'architecture," at CCA, 2003. CCA archive.



Tuofeng

Figure 6. Tuofeng, Hubert Damisch, ppt slide for lecture "Effacer l'architecture," at CCA, 2003, CCA archive.

anchorage in the ground. Here, we can also see a pun on the philosophical metaphor of architecture as a solid metaphysical basis, a basis questioned in particular by the epistemological turn towards poststructuralism in France in the late 1960s. An alternative structure—albeit still a kind of structure because it is not the “absence of architecture” like the Blur building—Damisch theorizes, is “architecture in absentia, an ‘absent’ architecture or one on the verge of absenting itself: an architecture in suspense.”

Damisch then turns to Chinese architecture and its pictorial presentation during the Ming Dynasty (Figure 5). Here focuses on the depiction of architecture in a state of levitation, especially through the emphatic insertion of graphs of clouds at its foundation. Such levitation can also be spotted in the fact that “the gap between the rim of the roofs and the beams that serve as architraves is itself filled by what looks like packing or cotton of a different color [...] resembling curling clouds.” Damisch rightfully surmises that the wooden Chinese building with its beams and columns has a structural system that differs from the trabeated system of the ancient Greeks, which was based on stacking or the unidirectional transmission of pressure. Instead, the Chinese wooden structure is closer to the steel one of the Blur, which relies on a combination of tension and pressure that is enabled by the various elements, and consists of an interlaced multidirectional network or force field. These elements were multiplied to such a degree that they eventually lost their structural function and became pure ornament, which enabled those elements or blocks (tuofeng) (Figure 6) that were structurally functional, to take on the form of a cloud. This transformation showcases the structuralist concrete interconnectedness of all things—one that counters the idealist functionalist ideology’s conceptual separation and hierarchy of structure and décor—instead of: considering the cloud that emanated from the structure and blurring its contours as a superfluous detail, a bit of décor or ornament. If there was an added element, it formed an integral part of the structure [of the alternative kind...] in which the structure only made sense by producing the addition (the “supplement,” in Derrida’s terms) in order to, in turn, disappear into it.

This account is a continued specification of the “architecture in absence,” situated in the poststructuralist philosophical discourse with an Althusserian materialist twist espoused by Derrida and others. It argues that all elements, functional or not, tangible or intangible, are consequential to a structure, and that there is no hierarchy governing them. Or better yet, that structure, understood from this perspective, does not consist of fixed presences, essential functional or structural units that are nothing but ideal illusions, but rather of a constant flux of traces enabled by and consisting of a continuous production of supplements, one after another, that add and replace. Such a structure is an activity, its significance resides in the production process rather than in any end product. As in his *Cloud* book, so in his conclusion to this article, Damisch locates this kind of

structure in the constructive “revolution of the ‘breath,’” or Qi, performed in painting with the One Brushstroke. This is what leaves a mark or trait of the literal trace of such an event.

Damisch’s return to Chinese architecture in 2003 was closely related not only to the Blur Building but also to his lecture “Anything But,” which focused on the issue of “undecidability.” He gave this talk in 2000 at “Anything” on the final day of the Any conference series, where Diller+Scofidio also presented their scheme for the Blur Building. Emphasizing this connection even more is Damisch’s “Blotting Out Architecture,” which was published in the inaugural issue of *Log*, a journal founded by the organizer of Any and meant to continue the discussion generated by the conferences. In his lecture, Damisch demonstrated a possible theoretical object of “undecidability;” picking up a piece of paper (two dimensional), he crumpled it into a ball (three dimensional), and reopened it. The final result was a thing (instead of an object) of a certain thickness, yet one that was neither bi-dimensional nor tri-dimensional and that could be considered as a way of thought [that] no longer operates exclusively in either the two dimensions of paper architecture or the three dimensions of the built environment, but in the in-between. At the same time it dismisses the opposition between vertical and horizontal, which directly relates to the idea of undecidability that was fundamental to Any’s approach to architecture. But it also induces a new approach to the notion of construction, as well as to the ideas of form and formless.

Instead of defining the object with established oppositional binary concepts of “two dimensions”-“three dimensions,” “vertical”-“horizontal,” “form”-“formless,” which are by nature unstable and would open up a non-binary spectrum to infinite differences, the object problematizes such binaries by serving as a literal trace of a series of operations that are disinterested and unmotivated, in the sense that they do not have an a priori end or telos in mind. It engages the materials in their history-making, or it engages with the movement facilitated by material encounters—necessitated by at least two elements, the paper and the hand—that build or produce together in a positive manner without the immobile presence of architecture or pre-established conceptual delineations and methods, in the space of a cloudy undecidability that enables the emergence of an alternative architecture in accord with a harmonious positive materialist dialectic.

ENDNOTES

1. Hubert Damisch and Stephen Bann, “Hubert Damisch and Stephen Bann: A Conversation,” *Oxford Art Journal* 28, No. 2 (2005): 157-181, 158.
2. *Ibid.*, 180-181.
3. Hubert Damisch, “Histoire et/ou Théorie de l’art,” *Scolies*, 1 (1971): 27-36.
4. Louis Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” in *Reading Capital* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2015), 215-355. Originally published in French (Paris: François Maspero, 1965), 266.
5. Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Hubert Damisch, “A Conversation with Hubert Damisch,” *October* 85 (Summer, 1998): 3-17, 16.
6. Damisch and Bann, 160.

7. Damisch, "Histoire et/ou," 30.
8. Ibid.
9. For example, as Umberto Eco explains: "Having adopted the decision of representing the sign-vehicles between slashes (/XXX/), and since in a book even the quotation of an object needs to be realized through a word, let me assume that when something which is not a word is taken as a sign-vehicle and is therefore represented by a word, this corresponding word will be written in italics between double slashes (/xxx//). Double slashes thus mean "the object usually corresponding to this word". Thus /automobile/ represents the word 'automobile', while //automobile// represents the object usually called /automobile/;" *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 31.
10. Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 14 "...this theme or index is /cloud/, the pictorial graph denoted as cloud at the level of description The word will appear between two forward slashes (as in the title to the present work) every time that the analysis requires it to be identified as a signifier; it will appear in italics only when used in a strictly denoting capacity, and between quotation marks when it refers to that which is signified." The book was originally published as *Théorie du /nuage/: pour une histoire de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972).
11. Explained by Damisch in, for example, Bois, et al., 8-9.
12. I am thinking of Derrida's "Structure, Sign, Play" and the 1966 John Hopkins colloquium, but also certain earlier tendencies in Althusser and Lacan.
13. Bois et al., 8.
14. Even the word "trait" is used and played with at the end of this section; Damisch, */Cloud/*, p. 224: "The text quoted above reveals another 'trait' that has nothing to do with linearity." The use of "trait" is subtle, as the translator notes on p. 312, n. 176. The French "traite" can mean either "trait" or "feature" but also "line." But the "line" here has been emancipated from linearity, thus "mark" might be closer in meaning.
15. James Elkins, *Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History* (Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 43, quoting from and translating Damisch, *Traité du Trait*, 31.
16. Damisch only mentions Yi Hua five times in his book, but almost always at key points, where a new dialectical order that concerns materiality, possibility, but also a celestial principle is at stake, as when he discusses the relationship between ink and brush, Qi (Breath), original chaos, the rhythm of the universe; Damisch, */Cloud/*, 206. In addition, throughout the text he relies on, quotes and refers to Shitao's Comments, which revolves around the central theory of YiHua; of a total of 102 footnotes in the relevant part, 35 are drawn from Pierre Ryckman's 1970 French translation of Shitao's book, *Les "Propos sur la peinture" de Shitao: traduction et commentaire pour servir de contribution à l'étude terminologique et esthétique des théories chinoises de la peinture*, ed. Pierre Ryckmans (Bruxelles: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1970) which was preceded by Ryckmans, "Les Propos sur la peinture de Shitao," *Arts asiatiques* 14 (1966): 95, n. 4. An English translation of Shitao's *Comments on Art* was not available until *Enlightening Remarks on Painting*, ed. Richard E. Strassberg (Pasadena, CA: Pacific Asia Museum Monographs, 1989). Twenty-three of these are Shitao's; the remaining twelve are Shitao's quotes of other sources or Ryckmans' comments. Pierre Ryckmans later adopted the name Simon Leys.
17. On flesh and bones, Damisch, */Cloud/*, 207.
18. Ibid., 206. And according to *Shuo Wen*, painting is made up of limits; it resembles the paths that delimit fields.
19. Ibid., 210.
20. Ibid., 210-211.
21. Damisch and Bann, 163.
22. First time, Damisch, */Cloud/*, 308, n. 119. As Damisch notes with reference to the term Meng yang 蒙养, "The origin of this concept is to be found in *I Ching*: 'The task of the saint is to distinguish rectitude from chaos.' From this the expression, in everyday language, comes to mean the basic instruction given to a child beginning to learn to read Chinese characters." One can see that Damisch carefully referred back to the *I Ching* source. Again on p. 309, n. 142, in the correspondence between Shitao's theory of directions and *I Ching*. This will be explored later in the essay. The final time on p. 310, n. 150. This case is especially important as Damisch notes: "Ryckmans rightly emphasized the ambivalence of the sign yi— in the concept of yi hua 一畫: yi means not only "one" but also the absolute One of the *I Ching* (the bar, the original fundamental emblem that, through successive divisions and combinations, expresses the totality of phenomena), the One that, upon being divided, produced the Sky and the Earth." Here, Damisch aims to testify to the connection between the micro and the macro in Yi Hua based on the use of the Chinese character Yi. He also acknowledges *I Ching*'s centrality to the heart of Yi Hua, as well as the dialectical constitution of oneness that we will further explore in the next part of the essay. In a last sentence of the fragment of his 1972 course script, Damisch also connects the Sky to the "S," presumably the Subject, the Ego, and Earth to the "id," attributing further signification to cloud and the theory of Yi Hua in relation to Freud's theory regarding subject formation. Dossier, typescript, Hubert Damisch papers. n.p.
23. Shitao, *Enlightening Remarks*, 32. In around 1694, Shitao renounced his formal status as a Zen monk and adopted a Taoist identity, Ta-ti-tzu.
24. E.g. Martha P.Y. Chang, *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation*, vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 187, after Zan Ning (919-1001CE), and Gongyan Jia (Tang Dynasty)'s annotation on Zhou Rites, p. 241. Also see Martha P.Y.Chang, "To Translate Means to Exchange?" *Target* 17 (2005) : 27-48, 36.
25. Hubert Damisch, *Traité du trait: tractatus tractus*. (Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995), 37.
26. François Cheng, "Lacan et la pensée chinoise," in *Lacan, l'écrit, l'image* (Flammarion-Champs, 2000), 133-153. More specifically, the continuous lines "trait plein" and the broken lines "trait brisé".
27. Damisch, */Cloud/*, 218.
28. Ibid., 201.
29. Ibid., 213.
30. Damisch, */Cloud/*, 215.
31. 周易, 系辞下传, "天地氤氲, 万物化醇。" 周易译注, p. 346. Not translated in the Wilhelm edition.
32. Chapter 7, The Chapter on Yin Yun [氤氲章].
33. Damisch, */Cloud/*, 215. Also in the book's Chinese translation: 于贝尔·达米施, 董强译. 云的理论: 为了建立一种新的绘画史. (南京: 江苏美术出版社, 2014), p. 243. "笔与墨会, 是为氤氲. 氤氲不分, 是为混沌. 辟混沌者, 舍一画而谁耶? 化一而成氤氲, 天下之能事毕矣。" 《氤氲章第七》
34. Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza* (1979), trans. Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 212-213. On the negation of negation as teleology, see p. 207.
35. Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir* (1992), eds. Olivier Corpet and Yann Moulrier Boutang, trans. Richard Veasey (New York: The New Press, 1993), 211.
36. E.g. Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics* (1985), London, New York: Verso, 1998. P.2.
37. Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, pp. 212-213.
38. Damisch, */Cloud/*, p. 225. He cited Lenin instead of Mao, possibly because Althusser's published work on Cultural Revolution was still anonymous.
39. Ibid., p.209.
40. Ibid., p.213.
41. Ibid., p.214, ft. 126, 127 after Jing Hao, Bi fa ji (Notes on the method of the brush; tenth century). P.308.
42. Ibid., p.220, ft 159, p.311.
43. Ibid., p.221.
44. Damisch, *Traité*, p.37. Author's translation.
45. Hubert Damisch, "Blotting Out Architecture," *Log* 1 (2003), 9-26, p.18.