on an adjoining property in 1950 and died of a heart attack while swimming in front of the villa, such hyperbole, unsupported by visual or narrative evidence, remains unconvincing.

The audience for Bundschuh’s film remains unclear. Much of the content relies on the viewer’s prior in-depth knowledge of Gray’s work. Themes such as the conflict with Le Corbusier over the murals he painted at E.1027 are introduced in a suggestive manner but remain undeveloped. The cinematic device of placing small copies of Gray’s historic photographs of E.1027 in the rooms in their current damaged state is ineffective; the images are too small and visible on screen for such a short time that the effect of the comparison is evident only to cognoscenti.

More effective are the interviews with two individuals who knew Gray personally and who offer significant insights into her personality and work. They are Philippe Garner, an expert on Gray’s furnishings and author of a monograph on her work published in 1993, and Zeev Arum, a furniture dealer licensed to reproduce certain of Gray’s designs shortly before she died in 1976. Highlighting the nuances of her designs, Arum marvels that, at the age of ninety-two, she negotiated dimensional adjustments of millimeters for her furniture. Arum marvels that, at the age of ninety-two, she negotiated dimensional adjustments of millimeters for her furniture. They are Philippe Garner, an expert on Gray’s furnishings and author of a monograph on her work published in 1993, and Zeev Arum, a furniture dealer licensed to reproduce certain of Gray’s designs shortly before she died in 1976. Highlighting the nuances of her designs, Arum marvels that, at the age of ninety-two, she negotiated dimensional adjustments of millimeters for her furniture.

A brief segment panning across Gray’s lacquer screen Le Destin (1913) does more than reveal the textured surface and material richness of her early lacquer work; it suggests that transcribing spatial experience to film could be more convincingly accomplished by relying less on still photographs and more on filming her extant furnishings and carpets. Items from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and from private collections are missing from the film. Other significant omissions include the interviews with Gray filmed during the latter years of her life, which were used to great effect in an exhibition at London’s Design Museum in 2005, and the portfolios she assembled to document her work, now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland. Owing to her highly reclusive personality, such items—inaccessible online or not incorporated in other documentaries—convey an impression of Gray’s inquisitive sensibilities more powerfully than photographs from her early life.

Gray’s independent persona and the originality of her creative work are no longer in doubt, yet in a heavy-handed effort to canonize her, the film only briefly mentions her collaborative undertakings with Japanese lacquer master Seijo Sugawara and Evelyn Wyld, her partner in a weaving enterprise, and completely overlooks the most significant of such partnerships—that with Badovici, with whom Gray collaborated from 1922 to 1932. Perhaps Bundschuh believes that the act of collaboration undermines the significance of an individual’s work, but collaboration is an essential aspect of the practice of architecture and should not be overlooked as a historical phenomenon. In this light, it is noteworthy that, following their period of collaboration, Badovici never designed buildings of comparable historic significance. Indeed, he so misunderstood Gray’s aims for E.1027 (its name is a cipher of their intertwined initials) that he failed to recognize the contradictions between the spatiality of Gray’s architectural approach and that of Le Corbusier’s murals, which he not only sanctioned but encouraged.

Although Gray despised the murals, they contributed directly to the preservation of E.1027, initially through Le Corbusier’s efforts to control the villa’s ownership, and ultimately through their very presence, as they comprise the largest collection of in situ paintings by the Swiss architect. After vagrants moved into the villa following the murder of its owner, the town of Roquebrune Cap-Martin bought E.1027 in 1999, purportedly to preserve the murals as much as Gray’s design. Restoration efforts, delayed by bureaucratic red tape, are slated to begin this spring, and with luck the villa soon will open to visitors.

Gray may have been “among the most fascinating and influential [women] of the twentieth century,” as the film’s narration concludes, yet Badovici’s efforts, however misguided, were indispensable to her architectural enterprise. He facilitated her ability to transmute the sensuality of her early lacquer work to the scale of architecture. Much like the imaginary destination that Baudelaire conjured in “L’Invitation au voyage,” one could say of E.1027 or Tempe à Pailla: “it is there we must go to breathe, to dream, and to prolong the hours in an infinity of sensations.”

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Modern architecture, like the Greek ruins in a painting by Nicolas Poussin or Claude Lorrain, has challenged contemporary artists to hone their metaphors and ways of looking. Thomas Demand’s Bauhaus steps or Christopher Williams’s Arts Club stairway evoke the now receding “appropriationist” moment in art of the 1970s and 1980s when the practice of ringing variations on Old Masters was commonplace. Yet, the importation by conceptual artists of examples from one art form into another is peculiar, and that this has largely involved classic modern architecture is very peculiar indeed. Perhaps the most baffling resurgence of this tendency is the current rage to adopt the crispest of iconic modern monuments—those by Mies van der Rohe in particular—as subjects for studying their seemingly opposite qualities: imprecision, vague effect, shimmer, atmosphere, and afterimage.

While the relationship of these art works to the intent of the architecture...
they depict—I am thinking of Hiroshi Sugimoto, Thomas Ruff, Luis Lambri, Inigo Manglano-Ovalle, Olivo Barbieri—may be treacherous, there is no question about the subtlety, fineness, and rigor with which they have been made, nor about their extraordinary eloquence. The work of Heinz Emigholz is another matter. A Berlin process artist, Emigholz moves between making films, writing texts, and presenting the documentation—notebooks, diaries, and indices—of how both are produced. For more than twenty years he has filmed a miscellany of American architectural sites—from Louis Sullivan's banks and Rudolf Schindler's dwellings to the odds and ends of roadside vernacular—as primary subject matter in an investigation entitled Photography and Beyond. Its purpose seems to revolve variously and indiscriminately around vague notions of "architecture in time," "self-portrait through works," and "spaces of contemporaneity."

The method is straightforward enough: Emigholz assembles a comprehensive catalog of an architect's work, puts together a team of three, then travels by road from site to site over a concentrated time period, with a 35 mm movie camera, a couple of reflectors, and a tripod at the ready. At each site he films up to forty static shots lasting a few seconds each, capturing whichever aspects of the building seem to be accessible at the time, using whatever light or lighting conditions are in place, moving no furnishings or signs of inhabitation, and recording ambient sound. These shots are then pasted together in real time into a chronological sequence with no commentary, as a sort of cinematic catalogue raisonné of architecture.

In the case of Bruce Goff, Emigholz's trek to sixty-two buildings located between Chicago and Los Angeles took just under sixty days in the spring of 2002. An extraordinarily elaborate theoretical mechanism was then assembled in parallel texts that establish a rationale for the time-consuming production of what are often murky images representing almost accidental points of view, rarely better and usually worse than a traveler's snapshot. Emigholz explained his procedure in his film Miscellany:

Space is melted down through the work of the gaze and, in the moment of taking the picture, welded in its components. In the act of taking the picture, a momentary linkage of spatial components is rigidified. The production of a representative image is a special case in this constellation and has little to do with thinking, if one grasps thinking as a flow. Interest should focus on the theater of the gaze, which plays out in the space between the photographer's brain and the camera's field of vision. The reality and content of the image constitute themselves in it: this is not "me," but the product of a specific process.

Emigholz would claim that this technique helps to divorce the work from the eye behind the camera, but in fact many choices have been made: the number of viewpoints and their location, none of which follow a consistent pattern from site to site; the length of time that each is run; and the camera angle, which commonly reflects the artist's love for the cliché of the 15-degree tilt. It seems extraordinary to employ a cumbersome 35 mm camera and then allow it to show little more than lines and colors on a plane, with an occasional reflection to animate the scene, taking no advantage of its ability to capture the very depth and width that would communicate the spatial sense that seems to be part of his subject. If the third dimension is weak, the fourth is almost pointless: in a few rare instances the wind blows or a fan turns or more likely there is a dance of the glare of light on a glass shard; but the camera never lingers long enough to show a change in space as shadows shift or the sunlight dims.

Like many other simplistic observations of architecture, there is also confusion between locating a casual viewpoint and finding a "real" one. Simply refusing to let the camera dramatize a view or the photographer seek some visual theater does not in itself get us closer to representing the way a building is framed and perceived by the eyes of those within it. Emigholz's views may be ordinary and almost accidental, but they are rarely anything like the actual points of view we would have if we sat or stood still at a normal juncture. And those "real" moments might in fact be filled with very real spectacle.

The now ubiquitous use of the static camera to capture what artists think architectural space is about may involve a terrible misunderstanding of the architecture involved. The experience of a building, unless one is at prayer, attending a concert, or falling asleep in a lecture hall, is about movement. If one is not walking between rooms then one is walking in one, and if one is in repose and the head is not moving, then the light is moving. Above all, if one is walking around, up to, into, and through a site for the first time, the discovering eye darts everywhere and lingers little. It is a measure of that circumstance that Emigholz's two hours of Goff work much more successfully—indeed provide a moving introductory tour of the buildings—if his DVD is fast forwarded and viewed in fifteen minutes.

The most noticeable of the film's images are not the ones that show these astonishingly flamboyant works are shaped, but those that capture accidents, either accidents in their social condition (the decay of the fabric or the kitschy taste of their inhabitants) or in the visual phenomena that accompany them—a glint of light, a flicker of a shadow, the reflection of a tree, the conjunction of nature and structure through a window. The living eye is trained to edit out these events, but they can happen to any building of any quality and underline how frequently the willful banality of Emigholz's shot gives precedence to whatever in the building is least remarkable.

Indeed, dwelling on the commonplace is now an alarming tendency in the representation of even the most adventurous design. In their recent film sequences for the exhibition of Peter Zumthor's work in Bregenz, Nicole Six and Paul Petritschagbin train a static film camera on almost arbitrary moments within each building and end up locating...
the ordinary within the extraordinary, the least remarkable sights on the most remarkable site. Meanwhile the stunningly atmospheric photographs of Laura Padgett, which capture Zumthor’s intentions toward the evanescent, were absent.

What is this new compulsion to banalize the wonderful, to isolate so carefully, amidst works of great power and originality, those points that can be framed to look most trivial? Have we become afraid of “character,” or temperament, or “beauty,” or expressive line? In our dread of vulgarity are we so discomfited by unfolding space, or an emotive palette, or the sheens and textures of a florid mix of surface? And like Sugimoto, Lambri, and Ruff, do we locate the transcendental only where the ground is cool and clinical and sure enough to absorb it without embarrassment? Surely what Goff possessed was the courage to follow the logic of any scheme to the possible bad taste of its conclusion. Such exuberance deserves not trivializing but dramatizing. He constructed his own persona in analogy to an aesthetic object—filled with contradictions, mysterious at times, and never reducible to “just” words. Not least because of his education in the classics and philosophy at Harvard before considering a career as an architect at the age of thirty-four, Johnson liked to borrow loosely from Heraclitus’s wisdom; he agreed with the philosopher, who stated “eyes are better informers than ears,” and adopted his belief that change is the only constant.1

The medium of motion pictures appears best suited to capture Johnson, who constantly related his thoughts with the help of words, grimaces as well as gestures. It is as if the narrative aspect of the film medium duplicated his idea of “procession” in architecture, always leading from one surprising event to the next, and never standing still in one place.

Whoever tries to understand Johnson’s personage and to grasp “what makes [him] tick”2 is therefore bound to revisit some of the film footage, which makes him come alive in a different way after his recent death. What historiographic status these films and documentaries will be given versus the more traditional records for the writing of history (in other words, textual material) will have to be decided by the individual historians who reconstruct Johnson’s legacy. A classical deontological argument for favoring textual documents over film material could be that seeing Johnson “perform” compromises the ideal of the historian’s detachment and objectivity.

Yet arguably, and without falling into an overly “ceci tuera cela” contention, the “modern” media have become so central to both Johnson’s modus operandi and the cultural context in which he operated that historiography might have to reconsider some of its most cherished principles. In Johnson’s case, his attention to the “live” delivery of his character makes him unique among architects and thus should be counted as part of his contribution to the field. His extravagant demeanor appears to be what motivates both his way of speaking and his way of conceiving architecture. Here is a man whose words are truly “embodied” by their author, and to disconnect them from his physical body will inevitably lead to the diminution of his words’ potential meaning. Johnson documented history in his idiosyncratic and animated way, and therefore, animated documentaries should be counted among the most effective means by which to remember him.

Philip Johnson: Self Portrait is structured around a series of interviews conducted by art historian Rosamond Bernier, founder of the renowned French art magazine L’ŒIL and personal friend of many masters of the School of Paris, including Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Léger, Miró, Ernst, and Giacometti. As an interviewer, Bernier understands that any attempt to be too inquisitive with Johnson tends to lead to either self-deprecating statements or amusing hyperboles. As such, while Johnson casually proclaims that he is “just a pasticheur,” he also declares that he is now “without doubt the leading architect in the United

John Musilli, director

**Philip Johnson: Self Portrait**


Barbara Wolf, director

**Philip Johnson: Diary of an Eccentric Architect**


Philip Johnson died in January 2005 at the age of ninety-eight. Today it is audiovisual media that best convey the architect’s charisma and character. These two documentaries—now historical documents—produced at different moments in his life shed light on his personality and self-created media image. They illustrate the connections between Johnson the man and his impact on architecture.

Johnson did not believe in “principles” of architecture, and his many views and assertions on the subject do not amount to a coherent or synthetic theory to be taught and replicated. If anything, he preferred stories and anecdotes, with which the architect could publicize his artistic moods before an audience. He constructed his own persona in analogy to an aesthetic object—filled with contradictions, mysterious at times, and never reducible to “just” words. Not least because of his education in the classics and philosophy at Harvard before considering a career as an architect at the age of thirty-four, Johnson liked to borrow loosely from Heraclitus’s wisdom; he agreed with the philosopher, who stated “eyes are better informers than ears,” and adopted his belief that change is the only constant.

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Philip Johnson: Self Portrait and Philip Johnson: Diary of an Eccentric Architect, separated from each other by a decade, hinge on the idea of Johnson thinking aloud about his art. Both films weave in a survey of his wide range of aesthetic dispositions, with the undeniable entertainment value of his relentless commentaries and explanations. In both cases, the spectator is offered a demonstration of this architect’s mercurial wit at the basis of the social persona for which he was notorious by the time of his death.

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