EVERYDAY ARCHITECTURE

STEVEN HARRIS

Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common, was explored and poetized. That which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign—is it not?—of new vigor when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar"

In the twenty years since Deborah Berke and I finished school, the nature of architectural discourse has fundamentally changed. In the mid-1970s there were those still discussing architecture from within the discipline. Peter Eisenman was lecturing on the political implications latent in Le Corbusier's Maison Dom-ino, Anthony Vidler on the redemptive geometry of the Cité de Refuge. In a series of lectures at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in 1976, Colin Rowe inveighed against the failed political agenda of modernism.

At that time, the introduction into architectural discourse of theoretical models from other disciplines—mathematics, logic, linguistics, literary criticism—had already been underway for a number of years. Contemporary architectural theory began to differ significantly from
texts that had come before, particularly those preceding 1968. By the mid-'80s, French structuralism and its derivatives, particularly poststructuralism, had become institutionalized within the architectural academy, superseding theories derived from other fields. Why structuralism eclipsed other schools of theory is not difficult to grasp: as a pedagogically efficient technique of textual analysis, it could be deployed on a purely formal level, safely removed from the intense intellectual and political critique of consumer society inherent in theories derived from Marxist analysis.

The hegemony of structuralism and its derivatives coincided with the virtual abandonment of architecture's social and political ambitions and the estrangement of direct experience from architectural discourse. Textual "readings" of the architectural project and a tendency toward formal hermeticism exacerbated the alienation of architecture from lived experience. Meanwhile, competing schools of theory associated with Marxist analysis, at least in America, became affiliated with theorists such as Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown, and with student activists and anarchists groups. To a large degree, the success of structuralism and its derivatives within the academy can be seen to correspond to the failures of the social movements of the '60s in America and France.

While this theoretical wrangling was underway, the production of architectural objects continued, albeit more slowly in New York's late-'70s recession. Neither neo-Marxist critiques of consumer culture nor poststructuralist analyses jeopardized the patron-dependent architectural commission. The focus on authorship and the obsession with the display of heroic formal dexterity in both the fabrication of the architectural object and the representation of the architectural project resulted in a series of architectural commodities marketed and consumed in ever-quicken cycles. Between the early '70s and the early '90s, for example, the same apartment on Central Park West was renovated three times. The original apartment by Emory Roth was first renovated by Robert Stern. About five years later, the apartment was redone by Michael Graves, only to be redesigned a few years later by Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas. Each iteration was duly published in the architectural press and shelter magazines, and parts of the Graves version was even disassembled and tax-deductibly donated to the Brooklyn Museum.

The consideration of everyday life as a critical political construct represents an attempt to suggest an architecture resistant to this commodification/consumption paradigm, a paradigm that has come to dominate contemporary architectural practice. Neither sentimental nor nostalgic, this alternative to theories derived from structuralism and its descendants proposes reconsideration of another strain of French thought developed between the 1930s and '70s that is represented by the critique of everyday life advanced by Henri Lefebvre. Engaged intimately with the quotidian, with lived experience and political struggle, this line of thought did not find the broad American audience of structuralist discourse, but was known primarily among activist groups such as the Situationists.

What unites the articles and projects collected here is a distrust of the heroic and the formally fashionable, a deep suspicion of the architectural object as a marketable commodity. Consideration of the everyday in architecture is seen as potentially able to resist, in Lefebvre's words, "the bureaucracy of controlled consumption," that is, the forces of late capitalist economy and their complicit governmental authority. The resistance lies in the focus on the quotidian, the repetitive, and the relentlessly ordinary. The everyday is that which remains after one has eliminated all specialized activities. It is anonymous, its anonymity derived from its undated and apparently insignificant quality.

Lefebvre's aphoristic and episodic critique of everyday life can also be related to other theories that place emphasis on the role of the quotidian. The Annales school of historiography, sociological critiques of popular culture, theories of abjection, histories of the vernacular, issues of authorship, and contemporary feminist theory are among the discourses that underlie many of the projects and articles included in this volume.
This collection is neither a blueprint nor a recipe for an architecture of the everyday; no examples for the pages of the magazines, no projects to be marketed as the latest fashion. There is no Howard Roark of the everyday. Instead these are tentative proposals and tangential provocations that describe a territory irregular and open, inexact and conceptually fragmented. Alliances are often unlikely, contradictions blunt. There is no perfect order, no grand scheme. It is in the dialectical relationships among and between these various contributions that the everyday resides: between Mary Tyler Moore and Franz Kafka, among Levittown and Old Little Tokyo and Las Vegas.

Potential sites for an architecture of the everyday begin with the body. Secretive and intimate, it is marked by the routine, the repetitive, and the cyclical; as the locus of desire, it is often home to the transgressive, the perverse, and the abject. Both Peggy Deamer’s essay, “The Everyday and the Utopian,” and Pat Morton’s investigation of the WomEnhance website can be read in terms of—to use Deamer’s phrase—the body/subject/individual. Deamer’s article reconsiders the work of 1960s and 1970s utopian architects in terms of the writings of Marshall McLuhan, Herbert Marcuse, and Fredric Jameson. Morton’s presentation of the WomEnhance website, on the other hand, is probably best understood relative to recent feminist theory. Issues of the body are conflated with issues of domesticity—one moves from the home page through the Throat to the Hymen—in the virtual spaces of (the) WomEnhance.

WomEnhance represents one of the multiple and sometimes contradictory considerations of the domestic that underlie a number of these projects and essays. The quotidian nature of domesticity is foregrounded in Mark Robbins and Benjamin Gianni’s “Family Values (Honey I’m Home!).” By documenting the private, ordinary realm of the everyday lives of purportedly extra-ordinary people—homosexuals—the project offers a view of marginalized domesticity and demonstrates the often banal character of the unauthorized.

Issues of domesticity are also central to several other projects included in this volume. Mabel Wilson and Peter Tolkin’s photographic essay on John Outterbridge’s residence/studio/gallery in South Central Los Angeles documents the insinuation of domestic life into the public space of the art gallery. Wilson’s text and Tolkin’s photographs provide specific tectonic readings of a building process formally and materially improvisational. Similarly, Mary Ann Ray’s photographic analysis of geckondu—houses taking advantage of a Turkish law allowing those who build in one night to remain—develops a taxonomy of formal strategies deployed by anonymous builders. While the Wilson/Tolkin project focuses on the juxtaposition of domestic routine with the authored work of art, the Ray essay suggests an authorless vernacular architecture whose legal status is a product of specific domestic routine.

While Ray’s photographs of geckondu record the tectonic result of a law that defines property ownership in terms of specific domestic activities, Robert Schultz’s graphic analyses of various Levittown houses demonstrates the marketing of domestic accommodation through the manipulation of suburban imagery. As opposed to Ray’s categories, which are primarily formal and material, Schultz’s distinctions are economic and iconographic; he lists the appliances that come with the house, diagrams public spaces within the house, and develops a “pretension index” keyed to the front elevation. Schultz’s gentle irony exploits the disjunction between simple democratic ideals—represented by the housing of returning World War II veterans—and the literal production and highly sophisticated marketing of the house as a commodity.

Discussion of the Levittown house recurs as one of the three domestic models in Signs of Life, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour’s 1976 show at the Renwick Gallery in Washington. Deborah Fausch’s essay about this exhibition, “Ugly and Ordinary: The Representation of the Everyday,” traces the debate among often contradictory uses of the term everyday and its relationship to ideas of vernacular, populist, and nominally democratic architecture.
A less benign reading of the postwar American suburb occurs in the photographs of Gregory Crewdson. Constructing tableaux within his studio, he manipulates the familiar and ordinary to create a realistic unreality, made strange and alien. As A. M. Homes has noted, Crewdson's world includes the stiff-stocked dioramas of museums of natural history, train set suburbs spread out across ping-pong tables, and the high happy colors of Disney, all seen as though we were burglars come calling on our own lives. The suburban domestic environment is rendered simultaneously desirable and fearful.

Suburban desire and the class associations inherent in what Herbert Gans referred to as "taste-cultures" underlie Margie Ruddick's article on the garden of her neighbor Tom. Contrasted with the upper-middle-class conceit of discretion and restraint—ironically produced at great expense—Tom's garden is a matter-of-fact compulsion of pragmatic accommodation. Straightforward and at times vulgar, it is seen to possess an authenticity reflecting a direct engagement with the natural world. Peter Halley's essay also examines issues of class and coded representation, distinguishing between one use of the everyday as a signifier of wealth and power, and another as the embodiment of common democratic culture. For Halley, the first use is elitist and perverse, while the second is firmly rooted in twentieth-century American art.

Issues of popular culture also inform Mark Bennett's floor plans of American television situation comedies. As Ernest Pascucci's essay "Intimate (Television) notes, television is the most everyday medium of architectural representation, broadcast directly into the home and participating—as Pat Morton points out in her WomEnhouse essay and Peggy Deamer describes in her comments on McLuhan—in the dissolution of the strict division between public and private. The adjacency of Bennett's drawings and Pascucci's text is intended to invite speculation about television's architectural representation of everyday life. Indeed Pascucci's essay specifically questions the tendency to associate television with the death of public life, exemplified by the writing of Richard Sennett and Kenneth Frampton in the 1970s.

Highly-mediated representations of everyday reality also occur in the work of James Casebere. Photographing a world entirely of his own making—whitewashed models of commonplace landscapes and interiors—his subjects, often postmodernist, are rendered in an extraordinarily banal and matter of fact manner. In Casebere's work, architecture uncannily embodies social ideals at both the individual and collective level.

Casebere's photographs along with the essays by Fausch and Pascucci shift the discussion of the everyday from the domestic to the public realm and the more overtly political. Unlike the "Signs of Life" exhibition where Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour's analysis was insistently neutral, Sheila Levant de Bretteville's "Remembering Old Little Tokyo" project is explicitly political. It is theoretically indebted to the Annales school of historiography and is entirely public in focus. Based on a kind of history from below, it uses text, images, and timelines imbedded in the sidewalk to tell the stories of a Japanese-American community. This narrative begins in the 1890s and extends through the 1940s, when many of the neighborhood's residents were forced out of their homes and into internment camps.

De Bretteville's project can also be understood relative to the notion of deterritorialization that informs Joan Ockman's essay on normative architecture. Tracing the transformation of revolutionary European modern architecture of the 1920s into American corporate architecture of the '50s and '60s—particularly that of Mies van der Rohe and Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill—Ockman chronicles the shifting relationships between minor and major architecture, between the glass utopias of the '20s and the fully embodied expressions of advanced capitalism of the '50s and '60s. Rejecting the approaches of both Tafuri and Venturi and Scott Brown, Ockman's proposal for a critical theory of normative architecture depends on strategies neither heroic nor nostalgic, but incremental, subtle, and persistent.

Finally, two essays serve as bookends to this volume. The first, Henri Lefebvre's "The Everyday and Everydayness," is accompanied by
an introductory text by Mary McLeod. Her essay not only situates Lefebvre within twentieth-century French intellectual history, but also chronicles his involvement with the Surrealists, the Situationists, the Utopie group, and the events of 1968 in France.

The final essay is that of my co-editor, Deborah Berke. Aphoristic and anecdotal, modest and direct, her essay proposes eleven characteristics an architecture of the everyday might possess. Reading her essay, one begins to imagine, in physical and tectonic terms, an architecture that suppresses authorship, denies celebrity, and flirts with invisibility: an architecture of the everyday.

HENRI LEFEBVRE'S CRITIQUE OF
EVERYDAY LIFE: AN INTRODUCTION
MARY MCLEOD

Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all.

What is the goal? It is the transformation of life in its smallest, most everyday detail.

—Henri Lefebvre, Critique de la vie quotidienne, 1947

Probably more than any other philosopher of the century, Henri Lefebvre addressed themes intrinsically relevant to urbanism and architecture: everyday life and the nature of space. Although Lefebvre's writings were almost completely unknown to American architects and architectural theorists until recently, his work played a critical role in French cultural and architectural debates from the 1920s to his death in 1991: in the 1920s and '30s with the Surrealists, in the '50s and early '60s with the Situationists, in the '60s with the Utopie group, and in the '70s with Anatole Kopp, Manuel Castells, and other contributors to the review Espaces et Sociétés. Lefebvre's numerous writings on urban issues, as well as his active association with architects and planners, helped generate in France a widespread critique of modern planning methods and architectural functionalism, a critique that sparked many in these fields to participate in the events of 1968 and that contributed significantly to socialist planning policy in the 1980s.¹ After the Production de l'espace (Production of Space) was translated into English in 1991, it was predictably

¹ Michel Treibisch claims that Lefebvre's notion of everyday life had its greatest impact in Germany during the 1970s, not among architects but among political thinkers and activist groups, and parallels can readily be drawn between Lefebvre's "everyday life" and Jürgen Habermas's notion of Lebenswelt. Treibisch, preface to Henri Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life, vol. 1: Introduction, trans. John Moore (New York: Verso, 1991), xvii. Treibisch's preface to the first volume of the Critique of Everyday Life is one of the best introductions to Lefebvre's thought in English. The original French edition was titled Critique de la vie quotidienne (Paris: Grasset, 1947).
only a matter of time before Lefebvre's rich thinking about space and daily life entered the broader American cultural debate. Today the growing interest in Lefebvre's ideas among American architects stems from a relatively modest aesthetic and political program: a rejection of avant-garde escapism, pretension, and heroicism in favor of a more sensitive engagement with people's everyday environments and lives.

Lefebvre was acutely conscious of the relationship between his philosophy and the historical moment from which it emerged. He insistently historicized his claims, frequently reminding the reader of the conflicts and conditions in France that generated his investigations. Thus, there is a certain paradox in republishing Lefebvre's essay "The Everyday and Everydayness" now, in another cultural context, twenty-five years after its original publication. Certainly, he would see everyday life, and especially American everyday life, differently today. But while Lefebvre's analysis emerges from a particular French situation and can only be understood in that context, it offers a provocative critique of and challenge to present-day American architecture. To what extent do contemporary architectural movements perpetuate the cultural practices that Lefebvre criticizes? How might an awareness of everyday life inform American architectural debate and practice? What are the limitations and potentials of Lefebvre's theory today? Can it retain a transformative potential?

Lefebvre developed his concept of everyday life over the course of more than half a century. He proposed the notion as early as 1933 in an article, "La Mystification: Notes pour une critique de la vie quotidienne," published in the small leftist review Avant-Poste. One of the first French philosophers to consider seriously Hegel's and young Marx's writings on alienation, Lefebvre regarded everyday life as a means of countering the "mystified consciousness" that encoded alienation in all spheres of existence. Like many French intellectuals of his generation, Lefebvre condemned the aridity and detachment of traditional philosophy and sought a

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3. Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, "La Mystification: Notes pour une critique de la vie quotidienne," in Avant-Poste, no. 2 (August 1933): 91-107. As cited by Trebushin in his preface to Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life. Many of the themes of this essay are later developed in Guterman and Lefebvre's book La Conscience mystifiée (Paris: Gallimard, 1936). During the 1930s Lefebvre collaborated frequently with Norbert Guterman, who, like Lefebvre, had been a member of the revolutionary Philosophes circle in the 1920s. Guterman was expelled from the Communist Party and Avant-Poste was published independently of its control.
mode of analysis that engaged daily life. He saw Marxism's materiality as an important foil to both Bergsonian irrationalism and contemporary neo-Kantianism, but he rejected orthodox Marxian emphasis on economic determinants. In the 1930s, the financial crash, mass unemployment, the perpetual parliamentary crises, and the rise of Nazism and Fascism had led numerous young French thinkers in various factions—including fascists, Catholic reformers, existentialists, and nonconformist Marxists—to seek "the concrete" and the "real." Their goal was "total man" or "real man"—in Marx's phrase, the development of "human powers as an end in itself." Embracing all aspects of man's subjectivity, including biology, spirituality, creativity, and emotion, this vision of liberty as personal development countered economic models as well as abstract democratic (Enlightenment) ideals. Lefebvre, however, was quick to oppose the "spiritualism" of right-wing thinkers such as Denis de Rougemont, seeking instead a position that would unite thought and action. In 1928 he had already joined the French Communist Party and was actively committed to revolutionary transformation. During these same years he also read the early works of Martin Heidegger, and while deeply influenced by his notion of Alltagslichkeit (everydayness), he disdained Heidegger's purely phenomenological view of consciousness, his archaicism, and his pessimism. By the 1950s Lefebvre's position had evolved full-fledged into a form of existential Marxism, though one closer to Nietzschean joy and Dionysian plenitude than to Jean-Paul Sartre's haunting specter of "nothingness." But as a witness to Nazism and an active member of the French resistance, Lefebvre was supremely conscious of the risks of nihilism and the dangers of the "superman" as model. His alternative postulation of "superhumanism," with its embrace of the humble and prosaic, rejected the elitism and heroism inherent in Nietzsche's rhetoric.

While his preoccupation with alienation would remain constant, Lefebvre's focus shifted gradually from reassessments of Marxist categories of production and class in the 1930s and '40s to examinations of mass culture, consumption, and urban space in the following three decades. Immediately after World War II, he was the French Communist Party's leading philosopher, but by 1958 he was expelled for his critiques of Soviet policy; while still a committed Marxist—if, as always, an unconventional one—his framework broadened, absorbing and responding to contemporary social and intellectual developments, most notably structural linguistics. In addition to his writings of the 1930s, he devoted four books specifically to everyday life: the three volumes of the Critique de la vie quotidienne (Critique of Everyday Life), published in 1947, 1961, and 1981, respectively, and La Vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne (Everyday Life in the Modern World) in 1968, probably his best-known book in America. "The Everyday and Everydayness," first published in the Encyclopédie Universelle in 1972, encapsulates many of the themes of that book, though in a necessarily synoptic form in which much of the richness and complexity of his argument, as well as the pleasures and irritations of his rhapsodic prose, are difficult to discern.

**EVERYDAY LIFE**

Lefebvre's concept of everyday life is elusive, due in part to his intensely dialectical approach and his refusal of any static categorization. At its most basic, it is simply "real life," the "here and now"; it is "sustenance, clothing, furniture, homes, neighborhoods, environment"—i.e., material life—but with a "dramatic attitude" and "lyrical tone." Lefebvre stressed that contradiction is intrinsic to its very nature. While it is the object of philosophy, it is inherently nonphilosophical; while conveying an image of stability and immutability, it is transitory and uncertain; while governed by the repetitive march of linear time, it is redeemed by the renewal of nature's cyclical time; while unbearable in its monotony and routine, it is festive and playful; and while controlled by technocratic rationalism and capitalism, it stands
outside of them. Everyday life embodies at once the most dire experiences of oppression and the strongest potentialities for transformation. However inhuman, it reveals the human that still lies within us. "A revolution," Lefebvre claimed, "takes place when and only when people can no longer lead their everyday lives." 7

When Lefebvre wrote his first volume of *Critique of Everyday Life* in 1943, he proposed the notion of everyday life, as he had in the 1930s, as a means of broadening Marxist ideological critique beyond issues of production, class struggle, and economic determinants. He felt that a more encompassing philosophical category was needed to analyze the very pervasiveness of alienation, extending beyond labor and specialized functional spheres to include all that which eluded definition, "the residuum." In his first volume, he stressed the diminishing importance of class, the contraction of the work week, and the increase in leisure time; in his subsequent writings of the 1950s and '60s, he gave greater emphasis to the rise of advertising and the media, the expanding role of consumption in daily life, and the increasing systematization of urban life. In Marxist terms, his notion of everyday life can be seen as existing somewhere between the base (economic determinants) and the superstructure (ideas, concepts, values), or, more precisely, as challenging any hierarchical division between the two. Lefebvre considered everyday life more significant than work itself in determining experience and social transformation.

At first glance, Lefebvre's notion of everyday life seems pessimistic, especially in its post-1957 manifestations. In *Everyday Life in the Modern World* he contrasted contemporary everyday life with preindustrial daily life, which he characterized as having been regionally diverse yet locally unified—the "style." Everyday life, which emerged in the nineteenth century, lacked this integrated style; increased rationalization brought increased fragmentation. Lefebvre argued that in the two decades following World War II, technocratic and bureaucratic organization had permeated nearly every sphere of existence, resulting in ever increasing functional specialization, social separation, and cultural passivity; hardly a facet of domestic life, leisure time, or cultural activity escaped systematization. For Lefebvre, one of the most vivid embodiments of this relentless "rationalization" was the contemporary city. He was deeply affected by the construction of a new town, La Cour-Mourenx (1957–60), near his birthplace in southwestern France, and decried its desertlike spaces that killed any quality of public spontaneity or play. As did Jean-Luc Godard in his films *Alphaville* (1965) and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966), Lefebvre presented a bleak picture of urban and suburban homogenization—the anonymous grand ensembles dominating the urban peripheries; the sterile, repetitious office blocks; the antiseptic supermarché; and the endless proliferation of suburban pavilions across the hillsides like "hundreds of dead chickens in an immense shop window." 8 He equated this relentless homogenization with "Americanization" and, despite his intensely French perspective, by the late 1960s saw it as a potentially global phenomenon. 9 In this respect, his vision of everyday life is darker than that of Michel de Certeau, who was profoundly influenced by him. De Certeau largely ignored the monotones and tyrannies of daily life, stressing the individual's capacity to manipulate situations and create realms of autonomous action—what he called a "network of antdiscipline." 10 However, Lefebvre's emphasis on the oppressions of daily existence is also countered by a transcendent belief that everyday life cannot be contained by bureaucratic regimentation, that it harbors the desire that generates transformation. Nature, love, simple domestic pleasures, celebrations, and holidays all erode any prospect of total, static systematization.

One of the most moving sections of Lefebvre's first volume of *Critique of Everyday Life* is his account of rural festivals, "Notes Written One Sunday." In this chapter, drafted at the height of post-Liberation euphoria, he presented the peasant festival as indicative of the joy, freedom, and sense of community that everyday life might come to provide in a more enduring and

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8] Lefebvre, foreword to the Second Edition of *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, 43.
meaningful way. Lefebvre envisioned, as he would throughout his life, a future society of abundance, increased leisure, and personal liberty, grounded in everyday desires and needs. The limitless possibilities of this future were already evident in everyday life, but only in "moments." While the subsequent two volumes of Critique of Everyday Life emphasize the growing domination of society by bureaucracy and "controlled consumption,” Lefebvre's dialectical thinking continues to convey optimism. His method is less a positing of binary opposites leading to a new synthesis than a depiction of multiple tensions that will generate an unpredictable transformation. For Lefebvre, totality was not a product of a concept "begetting itself,” but a concrete reality open to the future. As he confessed, he was more interested in subjective praxis than in objective determinism. Utopia was an essential component of that praxis, only by proposing alternative possibilities, conducting endless experiments, and constructing new futures could individuals and groups actively initiate the process of social transformation. And like his notion of totality, his notion of utopia precluded any totalitarian synthesis or controlling a priori vision. Lefebvre insisted on the necessary incompleteness of Marxist thought.

But while Marxism remained the primary springboard for Lefebvre's thinking, other intellectual developments in the interwar and post-World War II periods were central to the emergence of everyday life as an analytical category in his work. Besides existentialism, there was a tremendous growth of the social sciences in France—in sociology, anthropology, demography, and geography—and of history, owing largely to the emergence of the Annales School, which dispensed with diplomatic and political history (the history of great men and great events) to investigate general mentalities and structures of ordinary life. In his first volume of Critique of Everyday Life Lefebvre paid homage to Annales historian Marc Bloch's ground-breaking work Cercles originaux de l'histoire rurale française (French Rural History) and to geographer Albert Demangeon's studies of rural life. The Annales School and Demangeon, however, emphasized the stasis and persistence of everyday structures, whereas Lefebvre underscored their contradictions and tensions. Another, quite different parallel might be drawn between Roland Barthes's essays in the 1950s, compiled in Mythologies (1957), and Lefebvre's readings of humble, ordinary events. Lefebvre admired Barthes's "brilliant" investigations, closely followed his semiological research, and made frequent references to his writings. Both thinkers contributed to the review Arguments (1956–1962), which attracted a group of intellectuals disillusioned with Communist Party doctrine. Yet by the 1960s the differences between Barthes and Lefebvre were more important than any superficial similarities. Some of Lefebvre's most stringent intellectual attacks were aimed at structuralism, which he viewed as an escape from politics and as an extension of technocratic rationality to the intellectual sphere. Evoking Marshall McLuhan, he characterized structuralism as “cool,” lifeless, and lacking any passion or engagement. He was just as critical of Michel Foucault's rejection of dialectical history and subjectivity, and, later, of Jacques Derrida's elevation of writing over speech, a position he viewed as elitist. This does not mean Lefebvre was tied to traditional notions of humanism, which by the 1960s he regarded as a...
"sordid" product of bourgeois mystification; rather, his distrust stemmed from his refusal to abandon concepts of choice, political identity, and agency, which he considered essential to political action and social transformation.18

WOMEN AND EVERYDAY LIFE

For contemporary readers, one of the most interesting aspects of Lefebvre's thought, and one that is only hinted at in "The Everyday and Everydaisy," is his acute analysis of the role of everyday life in women's experience. He asserted that everyday life "weighs heaviest on women" (as well as on children, the working class, and other marginal groups) and yet also provides women realms for fantasy and desire, for rebellion and assertion—arenas outside of bureaucratic systematization. Early on, Lefebvre recognized the impact of consumption on postwar French society and its particular role as both demon and liberator in women's lives. While oppressive and controlling—and degrading in its sexual objectification—consumption cannot be contained by rationalization as readily as production can; "desire" remains "irresistible," harboring hopes and needs, and "a spontaneous conscience."19 Throughout his accounts of everyday life, Lefebvre referred to women's closer contact with cyclical time, the rhythms of nature, spontaneity, and tactility; and, despite moments of infuriating sexism and disturbingly essentialist rhetoric, these descriptions give credence to notions previously denigrated in French culture.20 In his 1974 book The Production of Space, he traced the diminution of "feminine" qualities of space (for instance, the hidden, cryptlike spaces of the ancient world) with the emergence of perspective and absolutist control in the renaissance and baroque periods, and later with the dominance of technocratic rationality in the post-Enlightenment era. Lefebvre's appreciation of the feminine anticipated in different ways the writings of French feminists Hélène Cixous (her aesthetic of fluidity, multiplicity, and continual metamorphosis) and Julia Kristeva (the notion of women's time as simultaneously cyclical, monumental, and linear).21 In the past decade, Lefebvre's writings have sparked investigations by a diverse group of feminist theorists exploring mass culture and women's occupation of public space, including Rosalyn Deutsche, Alice Kaplan, Doreen Massey, and Kristin Ross.

THE AVANT-GARDE AND UTOPIAN EXPERIMENTATION

Lefebvre's comments on modernism and avant-garde art also take on a particular relevance today, with the emergence of a neo-avant-garde. Lefebvre contrasted the modern and the quotidian as historically contemporaneous and interrelated categories, which counterbalance one another. The modern is novelty and brilliance, daring and transitory, proclamatory in its initiative; the everyday is enduring and solid, humble and "taken for granted": "it is the ethics underlying routine and the aesthetics of familiar settings."22 While Lefebvre appreciated the questioning and investigative qualities of modernity (a historical condition that he believed ended with Fascism and the failure of socialists' revolution), he was deeply critical of the avant-garde's escapism, exoticism, and cult of the bizarre. In his view, its claims of generating social transformation were illusory.

21 Although there are important differences between Kristeva and Lefebvre, their interest in understanding multiple experiences of time, especially for women, suggests interesting parallels. Both cited James Joyce as a source of inspiration for their meditations. See especially Julia Kristeva's essay "Le Temps des femmes," in Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents 5, no. 33/34 (winter 1979); 5-19.
art's role in social transformation. In the 1920s, as a member of the Phalèscs circle, he became actively involved with the Surrealists, attracted to their radical critique of rationality, their indictment of bourgeois society, and their desire to transform life. But Lefebvre soon broke with André Breton, attacking in his first postwar study of everyday life the Surrealists' "enormous pretension," "aesthetic individualism," "erotic Romanicism," and "deep, lasting defeatism." Lefebvre felt that they failed to distinguish between the "abject reality" of the interwar years and "human reality" itself. He was one of the first to note the puerile aspect of their masculinist preoccupations and criticized their "adolescent" quest for the novel—exemplified by the "beautiful, unique, absolute, mysterious woman"—as an answer to life's ills. They promised a new world, but merely offered "spiritual charlatanism." For Lefebvre, the Surrealists' "far-left" critique, in its relentless rejection of life, resembled the reactionary critiques of capitalism that proliferated in the 1930s.

During the 1950s Lefebvre again turned to art as a means of transforming everyday life; in the early 1950s, he had contacts with the CoBrA group, and, from 1957 to 1962, was in active dialogue with the Situationists, who shared his disdain for avant-garde abstraction and were equally committed to a revolutionary transformation of everyday life. Led by Guy Debord, the Situationists proposed concepts such as dérive (literally, "drift"), a semiprogrammed wandering intended to bring new urban connections and insights through displacement and dislocation; psychogeography, the study and manipulation of environments to create new ambiances and new psychic possibilities; and situation, a spatial/temporal event staged to catalyze liberatory transformation. Lefebvre and the Situationists were fairly close for a period of time. The Situationists borrowed heavily from ideas that Lefebvre developed in his critique of everyday life, especially his depiction of encompassing alienation, his analysis of commodification as eroding symbolism and use value, and his idea of festival as a privileged moment. In turn, Lefebvre was inspired by their active engagement in spatial experimentation, their focus on urban transformation, and their global critique. He particularly admired Constant Nieuwenhuys's visionary project New Babylon, which in its collective and playful use of labyrinthine space "ridiculed" labor-based functionalism. Lefebvre appreciated the project's scale—something between an apartment complex and a city—which he saw as breaking down public/private dichotomies and promoting new social exchanges. Although he considered the project a bit obsessive and abstract, and premature in its proclamation of the disappearance of work, Lefebvre did not criticize the scheme's potentially oppressive dimensions, such as its overtones of behavioral engineering or its obliteration of any sense of tradition, locale, and domesticity.

But by the early 1960s, Debord and Lefebvre had parted—acrimoniously. The break was prompted by personal matters (charges of plagiarism and relations with women), but there were important ideological differences as well. Lefebvre never accepted the Situationists' belief in the revolutionary potential of situations or short-term events. He believed that revolutionary change was a slower and more comprehensive process, less theatrical and individualistic, necessitating a more historically grounded engagement with everyday life.
Situationists, in turn, criticized his theory of moments as too passive and abstract: it implied waiting for moments of revolutionary transformation rather than initiating them; in addition, it lacked the spatial dimension of situations. In hindsight, Lefebvre’s critique seems closer to the mark, but the Situationists’ attacks contained an element of truth. As much as Lefebvre wanted to engage everyday life, he remained more successful as a critic and observer, inspiring others to act more than himself. 27

However, Lefebvre’s interest in experimentalism and utopianism, the postulation of the possible as the real, persisted, and just prior to the events of 1968 he became actively involved with another avant-garde faction committed to the transformation of everyday life: the Utopie group. This marginal interdisciplinary group, which published a review of the same title, included urbanist Hubert Tonka, a former plasterer and protégé of Lefebvre; feminist and landscape architect Isabelle Auricoste; architects Jean Aubert, Jean-Paul Jungmann, and Antoine Stinco; and sociologist and critic Jean Baudrillard, who was Lefebvre’s assistant at the University of Nanterre. 28 The magazine presented a revolutionary critique of the city and French cultural practices, publishing satirical drawings and excerpts of comic strips to make their acerbic points. By this time, Paris had become surrounded by the grands ensembles, and the office towers of La Defense were a testament to the triumph of technocratic modernity. Influenced by both the Situationists and the British Archigram, the architects in the Utopie group promoted ephemeral architecture as a means of creating festive, playful milieux, which they regarded as phalansteries of a world to come. But any tenuous links between the visual and political programs quickly dissipated, with the review becoming a strictly critical and purely textual forum, in Lefebvre’s view a “negative utopia.” 29

Lefebvre’s attraction to these three avant-garde movements carried its own contradictions. He was grateful to Marc Dessau for providing information about the group and access to their publications. 29
seduced by their revolutionary claims, their desire to merge art and life, their iconoclasm, and their creative visions. But his own insistence on the humble and ordinary, on a vibrant accessible art (a populism neither sentimental nor simplistic), and on an engagement with the “real” led to either mutual incomprehension or active disagreements. He was too much the philosopher and sociologist to accept mystical claims, but, more significant, he was too committed to improving ordinary lives to accept fantasy projects as sufficient. By the late 1960s, his commitment to transforming everyday life turned from avant-garde aesthetic experimentation to strategies for the planning of cities.

**URBANISM AS THEORY AND PRACTICE**

Lefebvre’s emphasis on the city distinguishes his notion of the quotidian from many English and American discussions of daily life, which tend to focus on domesticity and the private realm. For Lefebvre, as for many feminists today, the rigid divisions between public and private, work and leisure, and monotonous routine and escape were exactly the reductive categorizations that everyday life challenged. Lefebvre saw the city as the greatest hope for a viable, liberal everyday life, and from 1968 to 1974 he published seven books exploring urbanization and the production of space. The city was the locus of the most intense contradictions of capitalism: on the one hand, it revealed the relentless tyranny of rationalized processes instituted by the state and advanced capitalism, of which government urban planning was one of its clearest manifestations; on the other hand, it demonstrated the intense fragmentation created by private property. Lefebvre considered the very inability of capitalism to contain contradiction as opportunity for a revitalized urban life. His manifesto *Le Droit à la ville* (The Right to the City), written just prior to the events of 1968, served as such a program for reform. In it, Lefebvre decried the anonymity and lack of community of recent French new towns and peripheral development and called instead for greater urbanity, centrality, street life, residential participation, and opportunities for spontaneity. It was necessary, he believed, to see the city as a collective œuvre, an ongoing act of human creation, diverse but unified. Lefebvre appreciated the need for symbolic monuments and public spaces, but condemned false picturesqueness and nostalgia. In an article in *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* he proposed new programs—“multifunctional” and “transfunctional” buildings and spaces—that would generate new forms of urban contact and sociability.

Always committed to combining theory and practice, Lefebvre was simultaneously involved with practicing architects and students in efforts to achieve a new urbanism. During the 1960s and ‘70s he taught courses and gave lectures at the École Spéciale d’Architecture, where his books *Le Droit à la ville* (1968) and *La Révolution urbaine* (The Urban Revolution) (1970) served as manifestos for a generation of students eager to reject Beaux Arts academicism. In 1970 he founded another review, *Espaces et Sociétés*, with architectural historian Anatole Kopp, but soon left that publication due to its inflexible dogmatism and exclusion of visionary speculation. Over the next two decades, Lefebvre’s activities and writings had a significant impact on urban policy in France, leading to programs for the revitalization of urban cores, the creation of new urban monuments of a more democratic cast, the renovation of the grands ensembles, and the inclusion of collective spaces in new towns such as Créteil. But Lefebvre was rarely pleased with the results, which he saw as inevitably compromised by government contingencies and limited imagination. He remained committed to a more poetic, experimental vision of urban transformation.
In France, the most important legacy of Lefebvre’s concept of everyday life undoubtedly resides in the extraordinary events surrounding May 1968. His sociology lectures at the University of Nanterre, which were typically crammed with a thousand or so students, helped energize a young, dissatisfied generation to action. But more significant, his long-standing critique of the systematization of everyday life, and his vision of social transformation, gave the dissident groups a framework for their own proclamations. Lefebvre’s emphasis on experience, on everyday life as festival, on liberation in all spheres of existence—in conjunction with his rejection of global economic forces as a precondition for revolutionary change—all were fundamental to the emergence of the euphoric moment, which seemed, at least briefly, to fulfill his vision of collectivity, community, spontaneity, and play. Today, it is common to speak of the failures of 1968, the rapid absorption of reforms into new systems and bureaucracies. But 1968 also marked a significant shift toward the democratization of French society, and this brought a new series of conflicts and potentials. In some respects, 1968 clarifies the limits and strengths of Lefebvre’s notion of everyday life. On the positive side, it reveals the significant role of everyday life as a motivating force for social change; the necessity of engaging such elements of commodity culture as advertising, rock music, slogans, and the media in order to transform everyday life; and the potential of new forms of conviviality and sociability in breaking down class lines, functional divisions, and spatial ghettos. On the negative side, though, 1968 reveals the difficulty of an open model that resists systematization. Although participants pressed and succeeded in obtaining significant reforms (including the decentralization of the École des Beaux Arts) and contributed to a gradual political shift to the left culminating in the Socialists’ victory in 1981, they could hardly sustain the “festival” of daily life, the shortened work day, and the endless experiments in personal development that affected a small number of people at best. This invites comparison to the American student-led protest movement of the 1960s. In both cases, the sense of euphoria was short-lived. Nonetheless, a vision of personal and social liberation entered mass consciousness, one that contributed to changes in social mores, sexual practices, family life, class distinctions, notions of gender and race, and to the emergence of identity politics in the decades to come. In the cultural sphere, 1968, like Lefebvre’s notion of everyday life, blurred distinctions between high and low culture, between avant-garde transgression and popular pleasure.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

What seems most relevant to architects today is the cultural dimension of Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life. His rich, complex, and joyous vision of transformation serves to counter, on the one hand, the banality and mediocrity of most of the built environment—the product of technical rationalization and market forces—and, on the other hand, the escapism, heroicism, and machismo of so much contemporary architectural thought. From the perspective of everyday life, such neo-avant-garde strategies as “folding,” “disjunction,” and “bigness” deny the energy, humanity, and creativity embodied in the humble, prosaic details of daily existence. Architecture’s “star system” validates novelty and arrogance (even as big-name architects have become standardized and repetitive commodities), at the expense of what Lefebvre saw as the initial value of modernity: its relentless questioning of social life. In this context, Lefebvre’s desire to ground philosophy and culture in the everyday—in the ethics of ordinary choices—offers an important check to the deracinated rhetoric and mystical claims that continue to be propagated by the neo-avant-garde.

It is perhaps paradoxical, but not entirely coincidental, that the emergence of this neo-avant-garde parallels a cultural revival of surrealism and situationism, which has made them newly fashionable. These movements are heralded for providing alternatives to modernism’s formal autonomy and to postmodernism’s commodification and political passivity, and for heroically attempting to bridge art and everyday life. Yet, this revival has largely ignored the critique that Lefebvre preferred: the extent to which mysticism, escapism, transgression, and the short-
term event serve as substitutes for more rigorous analysis and sustained transformation. Moreover, architects and critics recycling surrealistic and situationist concepts (notably, chance, event, transgression, and displacement) have largely ignored the sexism and puerile tendencies so pervasive in these earlier movements.

However, the notion of everyday life carries its own risks of commodification. Except for a brief period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the height of the advocacy planning movement, rarely have people associated it in an Anglo-American context with social transformation, as Lefebvre and (for all their shortcomings) the Situationists did. Instead, everyday life usually becomes a justification for the status quo or for a nostalgic return to humanist assumptions, such as those propagated by the New Empiricians in Britain in the 1950s. Although the radical aesthetic programs of the Independent Group in the 1950s and of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in the 1960s and ’70s come closer to Lefebvre’s vision of “the extraordinary in the ordinary,” their critique rarely extended beyond the aesthetic sphere. Too often, as the evolution of postmodern architecture revealed, mass culture became either part of high art (as a formal source) or alternatively, and more frequently, a justification for the excesses of capitalism.

Admittedly, it is difficult today to sustain the optimism of Lefebvre’s vision. However, his emphasis on the concrete and the real, the humble and the ordinary, as reservoirs of transformation would seem to carry more potential than a recycling of tired avant-gardism. Perhaps an even more compelling dimension of Lefebvre’s work, one that is problematic but strategically important in this postmodern moment, is his simultaneous insistence on contradiction and totality. His critique of everyday life reveals a world of conflicts, tensions, cracks, and fissures—a shifting ground that continually opens to new potentials—and at the same time it presents a historical picture that posits distinctions, hierarchies, and causality in a commitment to political agency and action. Specifically, this critique is a rejection of bourgeois humanism, of universal rationality, and of the suppression of difference. It is also a refusal to accept the death of subjectivity, the endless proliferation of signs, and the celebration of commodity forces—the “anything goes” mentality. If these poles seem irreconcilable, it is, as Lefebvre suggests, because we need another, larger “reason”—and, more important, another practice.

I wish to thank John Odegard and Jean-Louis Cohen for their insightful criticism of an earlier version of this article.
THE EVERYDAY AND EVERYDAYNESS

HENRI LEFEBVRE

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTINE LEVICH WITH
THE EDITORS OF YALE FRENCH STUDIES

Before the series of revolutions which ushered in what is called the modern era, housing, modes of dress, eating and drinking—in short, living—presented a prodigious diversity. Not subordinate to any one system, living varied according to region and country, levels and classes of the population, available natural resources, season, climate, profession, age, and sex. This diversity has never been well acknowledged or recognized as such; it has resisted a rational kind of interpretation which has only come about in our own time by interfering with and destroying that diversity. Today we see a worldwide tendency to uniformity. Rationality dominates, accompanied but not diversified by irrationality; signs, rational in their way, are attached to things in order to convey the prestige of their possessors and their place in the hierarchy.

FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES

What has happened? There were, and there always have been forms, functions and structures. Things as well as institutions, “objects” as well as “subjects” offered up to the senses accessible and recognizable forms. People, whether individually or in groups, performed various functions, some of them physiological (eating, drinking, sleeping), others social (working, travelling). Structures, some of them natural and others constructed, allowed for the public or private performance of these functions, but with a radical—a root—difference: those forms, functions and structures were not known as such, not named. At once connected and distinct, they were part of an undifferentiated whole. Post-Cartesian analytic thought has often challenged these concrete “totalities”: every analysis of objective or social reality has come up with some residue resisting analysis, and the sum of such realities as seemed irreducible by human thought became a matter for infinite analysis, a reserve of divine thought. Every complex “whole,” from the smallest tool to the greatest works of art and learning, therefore possessed a symbolic value linking them to meaning at its most vast: to divinity and humanity, power and wisdom, good and evil, happiness and misery, the perennial and the ephemeral. These immense values were themselves mutable according to historical circumstance, to social classes, to rulers and mentors. Each object (an armchair just as much as a piece of clothing, a kitchen utensil as much as a house) was thus linked to some “style” and therefore, as a work, contained while masking the larger functions and structures which were integral parts of its form.

What happened to change the situation? The functional element was itself disengaged, rationalized, then industrially produced, and finally imposed by constraint and persuasion: that is to say, by means of advertising and by powerful economic and political lobbies. The relationship of form to function to structure has not disappeared. On the contrary, it has become a declared relationship, produced as such, more and more visible and readable, announced and displayed in a transparency of the three terms. A modern object clearly states what it is, its role and its place. This does not prevent its oversating or reproducing the signs of its meaningfulness: signs of satisfaction, of happiness, of quality, of wealth. From the modern armchair or coffee grinder to the automobile, the form—function—structure triumvirate is at once evident and legible.

Within these parameters, there come to be constructed multiple systems or subsystems, each establishing in its own way a more or less coherent set of more or less durable objects. For example, in the domain of architecture, a variety of local, regional, and national architectural styles has given way to “architectural urbanism,” a universalizing system
of structures and functions in supposedly rational geometric forms. The
same thing is true of industrially produced food: a system groups prod-
ucts around various functionally specific household appliances such as
the refrigerator, freezer, electric oven, etc. And of course the totallizing
system that has been constructed around the automobile seems ready to
sacrifice all of society to its dominion. It so happens that these systems
and subsystems tend to deteriorate or blow out. Are even the days of car
travel numbered?

Whatever the case may be, housing, fashion and food have tended
and still tend to constitute autonomous subsystems, closed off from one
another. Each of them appears to present as great a diversity as the old
modes of living of the premodern era. This diversity is only apparent. It
is only arranged. Once the dominant forces making it possible for these
elements to combine with one another is understood, the artificial mecha-
nism of their grouping is recognized and the fatuousness of their diver-
sity becomes intolerable. The system breaks down.

All such systems have in common a general law of functionalism.
The everyday can therefore be defined as a set of functions which connect
and join together systems that might appear to be distinct. Thus defined,
the everyday is a product, the most general of products in an era where
production engenders consumption, and where consumption is manipu-
lated by producers: not by "workers," but by the managers and owners of
the means of production (intellectual, instrumental, scientific). The
everyday is therefore the most universal and the most unique condition,
the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best
hidden. A condition stipulated for the legibility of forms, ordained by
means of functions, inscribed within structures, the everyday constitutes
the platform upon which the bureaucratic society of controlled con-
sumerism is erected.

A COMMON DENOMINATOR

The everyday is therefore a concept. In order for it to have ever been
engaged as a concept, the reality it designated had to have become dom-
ineant, and the old obsessions about shortages—"Give us this day our
daily bread..."—had to disappear. Until recently, things, furniture and
buildings were built one by one, and each existed in relation to accepted
moral and social references, to symbols. From the twentieth century
onward, all these references collapse, including the greatest and oldest
figure of them all, that of the Father (eternal or temporal, divine or
human). How can we grasp this extraordinary and still so poorly under-
stood configuration of facts? The collapse of the referent in morality, his-
tory, nature, religion, cities, space, the collapse even of perspective in its
classical spatial sense or the collapse of tonality in music... Abundance—
a rational, programmed abundance and planned obsolescence—replac-
ing shortage in the first world, destructive colonization of the third world
and finally of nature itself... The prevalence of signs, omnipresent war
and violence, revolutions which follow one after another only to be cut
short or to turn back against themselves...

The everyday, established and consolidated, remains a sole surviv-
ing common sense referent and point of reference. "Intellectuals," on the
other hand, seek their systems of reference elsewhere: in language and
discourse, or sometimes in a political party. The proposition here is to
decode the modern world, that bloody riddle, according to the everyday.

The concept of everydayness does not therefore designate a sys-
tem, but rather a denominator common to existing systems including
judicial, contractual, pedagogical, fiscal, and police systems. Banality?
Why should the study of the banal itself be banal? Are not the surreal, the
extraordinary, the surprising, even the magical, also part of the real? Why
wouldn't the concept of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the
ordinary?
REPETITION AND CHANGE

Thus formulated, the concept of the everyday illuminates the past. Everyday life has always existed, even if in ways vastly different from our own. The character of the everyday has always been repetitive and veiled by obsession and fear. In the study of the everyday we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the most difficult problems facing us. The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as "rational." The everyday implies on the one hand cycles, nights and days, seasons and harvests, activity and rest, hunger and satisfaction, desire and its fulfillment, life and death, and it implies on the other hand the repetitive gestures of work and consumption.

In modern life, the repetitive gestures tend to mask and to crush the cycles. The everyday imposes its monotony. It is the invariable constant of the variations it envelops. The days follow one after another and resemble one another, and yet—here lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness—everything changes. But the change is programmed: obsolescence is planned. Production anticipates reproduction, production produces change in such a way as to superimpose the impression of speed onto that of monotony. Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They're both right.

GENERAL AND DIVERSIFIED PASSIVITY

Common denominator of activities, locus and milieu of human functions, the everyday can also be analysed as the uniform aspect of the major sectors of social life: work, family, private life, leisure. These sectors, though distinct as forms, are imposed upon in their practice by a structure allowing us to discover what they share: organized passivity. This means, in leisure activities, the passivity of the spectator faced with images and landscapes; in the workplace, it means passivity when faced with decisions in which the worker takes no part; in private life, it means the imposition of consumption, since the available choices are directed and the needs of the consumer created by advertising and market stud-

ies. This generalized passivity is moreover distributed unequally. It weighs more heavily on women, who are sentenced to everyday life, on the working class, on employees who are not technocrats, on youth—in short, on the majority of people—yet never in the same way, at the same time, never all at once.

MODERNITY

The everyday is covered by a surface: that of modernity. News stories and the turbulent affectations of art, fashion, and event veil without ever eradicating the everyday blahs. Images, the cinema and television divert the everyday by at times offering up to it its own spectacle, or sometimes the spectacle of the distinctly noneveryday: violence, death, catastrophe, the lives of kings and stars—those who we are led to believe defy everydayness. Modernity and everydayness constitute a deep structure that a critical analysis can work to uncover.

Such a critical analysis of the everyday has itself been articulated in several conflicting ways. Some treat the everyday with impatience; they want to "change life" and do it quickly; they want it all and they want it now! Others believe that lived experience is neither important nor interesting, and that instead of trying to understand it, it should be minimized, bracketed, to make way for science, technology, economic growth, etc.

To the former, we might reply that transforming the everyday requires certain conditions. A break with the everyday by means of festive—violent or peaceful—cannot endure. In order to change life, society, space, architecture, even the city must change. To the latter, we might reply that it is monstrous to reduce "lived experience," that a recognition of the inadequacy of pious humanism does not authorize the assimilation of people to insects. Given the colossal technical means at our disposal and the terrifying dangers which lie in wait for us, we would risk, in that case, abandoning humanism only to enter into "superhumanism."
THOUGHTS ON THE EVERYDAY

DEBORAH BERKE

We exist in a culture where heroes have been replaced by celebrities, and fifteen minutes of fame are valued over a lifetime of patient work. In this climate the architect must become a celebrity in order to gain the opportunity to build (or else must loudly proclaim a refusal to build in order to become established as a critical force). Those who do build tend to produce signature buildings designed to attract the attention of the media and sustain the public's focus, for under these rules architecture can only emanate from the hand of the name-brand architect. The built environment is strewn with these high-profile celebrity products—heroic gestures neither made nor commissioned by heroes.

What should architects do instead? A simple and direct response: acknowledge the needs of the many rather than the few; address diversity of class, race, culture, and gender; design without allegiance to a priori architectural styles or formulas, and with concern for program and construction.

We may call the result an architecture of the everyday, though an architecture of the everyday resists strict definition; any rigorous attempt at a concise delineation will inevitably lead to contradictions. Nonetheless, here are some points that may be related to it.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY BE GENERIC AND ANONYMOUS.

Much like the package in the supermarket with the black letters on the white ground that does not carry a brand name—but is still a perfectly good container for its contents—the generic does not flaunt its maker. It is straightforward. Unostentatious, it can lurk, loiter, slip beneath the surface, and bypass the controls of institutionally regulated life.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY BE BANAL OR COMMON.

It does not seek distinction by trying to be extraordinary, which in any case usually results in a fake or substitute for the truly extraordinary. In its mute refusal to say "look at me," it does not tell you what to think. It permits you to provide your own meaning.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY THEREFORE BE QUITE ORDINARY.

It is blunt, direct, and unselicious. It celebrates the potential for inventiveness within the ordinary and is thereby genuinely "of its moment." It may be influenced by market trends, but it resists being defined or consumed by them.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY BE CRUDE.

There is a freshness to things that are raw and unrefined. Buildings that are conceived without polish may be rough, but "rough and ready."

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY BE SENSUAL.

The everyday world is sensual. It not only provokes sight but also touch, hearing, smell. The architecture of the everyday encompasses places known by their aroma, surfaces recognizable by their tactile qualities, positions established by echo and reverberation.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY ALSO BE VULGAR AND VISCERAL.

While vulgarity may seem the opposite of anonymity, both are often oblivious to external standards. This is not necessarily bad: standards of
taste serve to legislate and perpetuate an approved set of objects. The vulgar rejects good taste and the unthinking obedience it demands.

In architecture, standards of good taste seem to dictate that the presence of the body not be acknowledged in or by buildings. Architectural photographs rarely show people, and the true user is often ignored by the architect. The result is sterility. Visceral presence cannot be denied.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY ACKNOWLEDGES DOMESTIC LIFE.

There is poetry and consolation in the repetition of familiar things. This is not to romanticize dreary and oppressive routine; events need not be dictated and programmed by architects. An architecture of the everyday allows for personal rites but avoids prescribing rituals.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY TAKE ON COLLECTIVE AND SYMBOLIC MEANING BUT IT IS NOT NECESSARILY MONUMENTAL.

Without denying the need for monuments, it questions whether every building need be one.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY RESPONDS TO PROGRAM AND IS FUNCTIONAL.

It is a form of design in which program contributes meaning, and function is a requirement to satisfy rather than a style to emulate. It resists debasement into winsome reproductions of another time in the name of "the vernacular" or simplistic contextualism.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY MAY CHANGE AS QUICKLY AS FASHION, BUT IT IS NOT ALWAYS FASHIONABLE.

If the idea of an architecture of the everyday currently seems both a little too fashionable and a little too much like fashion, note that the real architecture of the everyday is subject to different forces of change from those that drive fashion. The forms, materials, and images of innovation in everyday life are often unpredictable. The next everyday cannot be discovered through focus groups and market analysis.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY IS BUILT.

The initial impetus to search for a definition of an architecture of the everyday evolved from an ongoing conversation I had with Steven Harris as we traveled together to New Haven from New York City and back, twice a week, for nine years. Having been friends for almost twenty years, our conversations were familiar and comfortable, often filled with gossip or reminiscences. Our commute took us on Interstate-95, the easternmost north-south run of the grid of interstates that define long-distance automobile travel in the United States.

In retrospect, I-95 was a pretty good place to have a twice-a-week conversation on the everyday, it being such an everyday condition itself; a wide asphalt line on the ground for the transport of people and goods. Over the years of our shared commute, the nameless food and fuel stops became McDonald's and Mobil stations—a transformation to blandness apparently sanctioned by some turnpike authority. Similarly, the exclusive suburban residential developments just off the highway grew evermore extravagant as the ready dollars of the 1980s purchased houses that were absurd amalgams of aspirational imagery and bombastic size. Our ongoing observation seemed to find that the banal landscape, the fuel for our conversation on (and subsequent teaching of) the everyday, was each day becoming less anonymous and certainly less banal.

We realized that the replacement of the ordinary by the brand-nameable was not an innocent transformation of the everyday, but rather the usurpation of the everyday by advertising. To confuse ubiquitous
logos with generic identity was to mistake successful marketing for "popular" culture. Indeed, today even the idea of popular culture bears an ambiguous relationship to the everyday. So often it seems to be merely the way the everyday appears on high culture's radar screen.

Of course, every aspect of reality is mediated in some way. But the everyday may still be the place that is least mediated by the forces that seek to limit or absorb its vitality. This is the promise it holds. For architects this is a cautionary tale and a genuine opportunity. We are invited to enter into the real and the good aspects of everyday life, but we must do so without destroying it.

In the opening paragraphs of her 1964 essay "Notes on Camp," Susan Sontag writes: "It's embarrassing to be solemn and treatise-like about Camp. One runs the risk of having, oneself, produced a very inferior piece of Camp." I feel that the same could be said of trying to make or write about an architecture of the everyday. The difference between an "architecture of the everyday" and everyday buildings lies precisely in the consciousness of the act of making architecture. This is precisely where the strategy I am proposing is most susceptible to criticism, a fact of which I am well aware. An architect cannot pretend to be naive. Architecture is not innocent. Likewise, the making of architecture is a highly conscious, indeed a self-conscious, act. But the everyday is also not naive. To assume so would be to confuse it with a sugary and debased notion of the vernacular—with nostalgia for some state of original purity or innocence. The everyday flirts, dangerously at times, with mass culture. But the everyday remains that which has not yet been co-opted.