UNFOLDING THE OBLIQUE
ARCHITECTURE'S TRAJECTORY FROM 1963 TO THE PRESENT

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submitted by **ERTUĞ ERPEK** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Architecture in Architecture, Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Naci Emre Altun
Dean, Graduate School of **Natural and Applied Sciences** _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşem Berrin Çakmaklı
Head of the Department, **Architecture** _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu
Supervisor, **Architecture, METU** _____

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Ayşen Savaş Sargın
Architecture, METU _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu
Architecture, METU _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Başak Uçar Kırmızıgül
Architecture, TEDU _____

Date: 26.06.2024

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Last name : Ertuğ Erpek

Signature :

ABSTRACT

UNFOLDING THE OBLIQUE ARCHITECTURE'S TRAJECTORY FROM 1963 TO THE PRESENT

Erpek, Ertuğ
Master of Architecture, Architecture
Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu

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This thesis unfolds the understudied trajectory of the Oblique Function Theory developed by French architect Claude Parent (1923-2016) and philosopher Paul Virilio (1932-2018) of the Architecture Principe Groupe (1963-1968) from its initial manifestation in 1963 to its contemporary reflections. Detailed in nine issues of the Architecture Principe manifesto magazine in 1966, Parent and Virilio criticized horizontal pre-industrial and vertical industrial urban forms of Rationalism and Modernism but drew inspiration from the latter's focus on circulation, as seen in Le Corbusier's work. They articulated that conventional architectural forms were inadequate to meet the contemporary urban complexities and mobilities. Instead, they proposed a "third urban order" on oblique planes, breaking away from Euclidean spaces that inhibit movement and separate it from habitation. They emphasized the inclined variations, fractured forms, and fluid compositions, introducing concepts like "habitable circulation." The oblique function theory influenced Deconstructivism, The Fold, and Landscape Urbanism. However, the connection between the theory and these remains obscured due to the theory's sporadic trajectory. This research aims to reclaim the theory's role in shaping

contemporary architecture by reconstructing its interwoven and latent trajectory. Utilizing archival documents and case studies, it seeks to elucidate how the oblique function theory has been inherited by subsequent architectural approaches and transformed through different paradigms. Additionally, this study attempts to bridge the gap between modernism and deconstructivism, revealing the oblique's progress as an architectural element. Ultimately, it aspires to renew the understanding of the oblique and serve as a foundational study for future inquiries into oblique architecture.

Keywords: The Oblique Function Theory, Architecture Principe, Claude Parent, Paul Virilio, Contemporary Oblique Architecture

ÖZ

1963'DEN GÜNÜMÜZE OBLİK MİMARİNİN YÖRÜNGESİNİ ORTAYA ÇIKARMAK

Erpek, Ertuğ
Yüksek Lisans, Mimarlık
Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu

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Bu tez, Fransız mimar Claude Parent (1923-2016) ve filozof Paul Virilio (1932-2018) tarafından Architecture Principe Groupe (1963-1968) bünyesinde geliştirilen Oblik İşlev Kuramı'nın 1963'deki ilk tezahüründen günümüzdeki yansımalarına kadar olan ve üzerinde yeterince çalışılmamış yörüngesini gözler önüne sermektedir. Parent ve Virilio, 1966 yılında Architecture Principe manifesto dergisinin dokuz sayısında detaylandırdıkları makalelerinde, Rasyonalizm ve Modernizm'in yatay sanayi öncesi ve dikey sanayi kent formlarını eleştirirken, Le Corbusier'nin çalışmalarında görüldüğü gibi, Modernizm'in sirkülasyona odaklanmasından ilham almışlardır. Geleneksel mimari formların çağdaş kentsel karmaşıklıkları ve hareketlilikleri karşılamakta yetersiz kaldığını ifade etmişlerdir. Bunun yerine, hareketi engelleyen ve yaşam alanından ayıran Öklidyen mekanlardan koparak oblik düzlemler üzerinde "üçüncü bir kentsel düzen" önermişlerdir. Eğimli varyasyonları, parçalı formları ve akışkan kompozisyonları vurgulayarak "yaşanabilir dolaşım" gibi kavramları ortaya atmışlardır. Oblik işlev kuramı Dekonstrüktivizm, The Fold ve Peyzaj Şehirciliği'ni etkilemiştir. Ancak, kuramın düzensiz yörüngesi nedeniyle kuram ile bunlar arasındaki bağlantı karanlıkta kalmıştır. Bu araştırma, kuramın iç içe geçmiş ve gizli yörüngesini yeniden inşa ederek çağdaş mimariyi

şekillendirmedeki rolünü geri kazanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Arşiv belgelerini ve vaka çalışmalarını kullanarak, oblik işlev kuramının sonraki mimari yaklaşımlar tarafından nasıl miras alındığını ve farklı paradigmalarla nasıl dönüştürüldüğünü aydınlatmayı hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, modernizm ve dekonstrüktivizm arasındaki boşluğu doldurmaya çalışarak oblikliğin mimari bir unsur olarak gelişimini ortaya koymaktadır. Nihayetinde, oblik anlayışını yeniden yorumlamayı ve oblik mimariye ilişkin gelecekteki araştırmalar için temel bir çalışma olarak hizmet etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oblik İşlev Kuramı, Architecture Principe, Claude Parent, Paul Virilio, Çağdaş Oblik Mimari

To my beloved parents and İpek

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

FOA: Foreign Office Architects

GEAM: Groupe d'Etudes d'Architecture Mobile

IDEA: International Dialogue of Experimental Architecture

OMA: Office for Metropolitan Architecture

SCI-Arc: Southern California Institute of Architecture

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION[1]

In her seminal book *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, architectural historian Joan Ockman underlines that "architecture culture" has faced revolutionary progress from Modernism to Postmodernism from 1943 to 1968. According to her, even though Modernist architecture became prevalent in those years in "the context of reconstruction and rehousing," it was also "subjected to increasingly intense questioning."[2] From her account, the prewar perspective of modernism began to be reinterpreted concerning modernization, like increased mobilities and technological advancements and the major changes it posed in every aspect of life.[3] While some

[1] The research outputs of this study were presented at various international and national conferences: Symposium of Urban Design History and Theory organized by TU Delft between November 1-3, 2023, hybrid (Delft, Netherlands/Online); LivenARCH 2023: Re/De/Generation(s) in Architecture organized by Karadeniz Technical University between September 27-29, 2023, online; ACSA/EAAE Teachers Conference: Educating the Cosmopolitan Architect between June 22-24, 2023, Reykjavik, Iceland; IV. Kentsel Morfoloji Sempozyumu: Morfolojinin Evrimi: Geçmişten Geleceğe, Teoriden Pratiğe, organized by Konya Technical University between May 31-June 2, 2023, Konya, Turkey. Manuscripts titled "Designing Urban Topologies Through the Oblique Function Theory: A Novel Agenda for Contemporary Urban Re/De/Generation" and "Dinamik ve Akışkan bir Kentsel Form Arayışında Oblik İşlev Teorisi" were published at the conference proceedings of LivenARCH 2023 and IV. Kentsel Morfoloji Sempozyumu, respectively. The manuscript titled "Unfolding the Potentials of the Oblique Function Theory in Educating the Cosmopolitan Architect" will be published in the upcoming months at the conference proceedings of ACSA/EAAE Teachers Conference. The research outputs have also been published in several international and national journals: *Thresholds* 52, an architectural journal published by MIT Architecture and MIT Press, and *Journal of Design for Resilience in Architecture & Planning.* Respectively, manuscripts titled "The Disappearance of the Oblique Function Theory" and "The Oblique Function Theory in Search of a Dynamic and Fluid Urban Morphology" appeared in these journals. See: Ertuğ Erpek, and Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Disappearance of the Oblique Function Theory," *Thresholds* 52 (April 2024): 96-107, https://doi.org/10.1162/thld_a_00818; Ertuğ Erpek, and Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Oblique Function Theory in Search of a Dynamic and Fluid Urban Morphology," *Journal of Design for Resilience in Architecture & Planning* 4, no. 2 (August 2023): 148-59, https://doi.org/10.47818/DRArch.2023.v4i2089.

[2] Joan Ockman, and Edward Eigen, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 13.

[3] Ockman, and Eigen.

architects followed the principles of modernist architecture with imbuing humanistic values, some straightforwardly rejected it as problematic against new postwar conditions. Within that context, the postwar period encompassed avant-garde architectural experiments, where their authors utilized new methods to respond to the "new imperatives of the postwar world."[4] In these experiments, reinventing the architecture in the context of cities within new architectural paradigms revolving around mobility, flexibility, and fluidity - themes highly gained popularity after Team X's criticism towards Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM)- was a dominant line of thought. Embodying radical and utopian ideology, architects and architectural groups such as Metabolists, Archigram, and Archizoom proposed novel schemes, drawing inspiration from early 20th-century avant-garde art and architectural movements like Futurism, Constructivism, and Neo-Plasticism. They utilized technology to their benefit to extrapolate unprecedented approaches like envisioning cities on megastructures. Despite their common sense in changing architecture by experimenting and speculating new methods, architects Matthew Butcher and Luke Pearson underline that avant-garde architecture "was not singular in its formal, conceptual and political ambitions."[5] In that regard, we can say that mutual themes of modernity were the driving force for these experiments, with all unique ways of representing and materializing their ideas. Butcher and Pearson describe them as "enduring experiments" while arguing why architects keep aligning their designs with a particular historical era and its specific stylistic elements.[6]

In fact, avant-garde architectural experiments build upon each other with a retrospection. Thus, understanding a contemporary avant-garde approach, which derives from the past, requires a historical analysis of preceding avant-garde

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[4] Marco De Michelis, "Aldo Rossi and Autonomous Architecture," in *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawing from the Howard Gilman Collection,* eds. Paola Antonelli and Terence Riley (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), p. 90 cited by Matthew Butcher, and Luke Pearson, "Enduring Experiments: How the Architectural Avant-Garde Lives On," *Architectural Design* 89, no. 4 (July 2019): 7, https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2451.
[5] Butcher, and Pearson.
[6] Butcher, and Pearson.

architectures. One such trajectory was maintained by using oblique, elliptical, and skewed lines, starting from Futurism, Constructivism, and Suprematism to now permeating over contemporary architecture. These historical avant-garde movements utilized oblique multidirectional lines and their compositional abilities to challenge the traditional forms of architecture restricted to two directions and represent dynamism over static to mirror society's inexorable change, mobility, and speed.[7] The theorization of dynamism in that regard and its association with oblique lines, thus, became a nuanced approach in the postwar condition and later developments. Discovering the potential of such lines and one of the first to materialize them three-dimensionally in architecture, the French architectural group Architecture Principe*,* founded by French architect Claude Parent (1923-2016) and urban philosopher Paul Virilio (1932-2018), put forward *La Théorie de la Fonction Oblique* (The Oblique Function Theory). They build their theory on rejecting modernist and rationalist architecture, especially the orthodoxies of horizontal and vertical forms ill-suited to urban mobility. More than the visual dynamism predominantly depicted in historical avant-garde movements of oblique, they practiced tactile dynamism, encouraging the movement of people through oblique spatial compositions. Ramps, the only inclined element with a spatial value in architecture until that day, were used as the main element by Parent and Virilio, unlike Le Corbusier's sole utilization of them to guide circulation. Still, Corbusier's attitude influenced them to guide the users' movement. They did not create an architectural object but a dynamic setting mediating habitation and circulation. In accordance, Parent implied that they "did not invent the ramp; we proposed to inhabit it."[8]

Despite being one of the milestones in oblique architecture's trajectory, significantly translating oblique into architectural forms and spaces, the oblique function theory

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[7] Erpek and Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Disappearance of the Oblique Function Theory," 97.
[8] Diego Fullaondo Buigas de Dalmau, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," trans. the author with the aid of DeepL (PhD diss., Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2011), 203.

has not been incorporated in the formulation of similar architectural movements like Deconstructivism, The Fold, and Landscape Urbanism but ironically recognized by the architects working within these paradigms. This trend persisted from those movements from the 1960s, when the oblique function theory, compared to its avant-garde contemporaries such as Metabolists, Archigram, and Yona Friedman, was rendered unknown and underexplored. Neglecting the theory inevitably created a gap within the trajectory of oblique architecture in architectural history and theory between modernism, postmodernism, deconstructivism, and subsequent oblique approaches. Marked first by deconstructivism, overall, oblique architectural attitudes illustrated that they were inspired by historical oblique avant-garde movements of the early 20th century and preceding approaches. However, they refrained from mentioning the oblique function theory, bypassing decades of the oblique evolution. For instance, deconstructivism was initially formulated as an extension of Russian constructivism with Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction, portraying dynamic compositions comprised of multidirectional architectural elements, which were tilted, fragmented, and skewed. Indeed, the spatialization of such angular elements and operations was first experimented with ramps and inclined planes by Parent and Virilio. More than introducing a dynamic composition with diagonals, architectural researcher Diego Fullaondo implies what the oblique function theory was exclusive to "was the complete substitution of the basic system of geometrical references in architectural space."[9] Parent and Virilio's total distortion and reinvention of architectural space was one of a kind, which one could not see in historical avant-garde movements. Deconstructivist architecture also achieved similar architecture much later than the oblique function theory, making its historical and theoretical development substantially missing. Practicing architects involved in deconstructivist architecture, such as Zaha Hadid, underlined how the oblique function theory

[9] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique."

foresaw their approaches. However, exactly how the theory fed her approach remains unexplained, which was also true for other deconstructivist architects.

After that, the oblique approaches built onto each other. Architect Greg Lynn laid the groundwork for *Folding in Architecture* by criticizing the formal strategies of deconstructivism.[10] Over the sharp and conflicting forms, Lynn followed philosopher Gilles Deleuze's The Fold concept, espousing smooth and topological surfaces in creating architectural spaces. Despite rejecting deconstructivism, we see a flow and certain evolution of ideas regarding oblique architecture, yet again not tackling the oblique function theory's influence. Virilio has always emphasized that the oblique function theory was a topological attempt to conceive architecture, resonating with Deleuze's understanding.[11] Undeniably, the diagonals practiced under the fold were shaped by the capabilities of computational technologies. Notwithstanding, they also drew significant inspiration from futurism. The oblique trajectory in folding in architecture continued with landscape urbanism with a topological viewpoint and "landform buildings," utilizing a myriad of inclined planes to mediate topographical ground with architecture. Again, the oblique function theory was nowhere to be seen despite its wide range of concepts directly related to these discussions.

Within the spatial narratives of these architectural paradigms and architects, the oblique function theory's indelible influence could be traced, but the first question research seeks to answer is why the impact has not been demonstrated explicitly. Architectural researchers, critics, and historians such as Neil Leach, Joseph Giovannini, and Joan Ockman briefly touched upon the oblique function theory's prefiguration of deconstructivism.[12] Yet they did not fully picture how the oblique

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[10] Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple," in *Folding in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2004).
[11] See: Sylvère Lotringer and Paul Virilio, "After Architecture: A Conversation," trans. Michael Taormina, *Grey Room* 39, no.3 (2001): 39, https://doi.org/10.1162/152638101300138530.
[12] Neil Leach, "Virilio and Architecture," in *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond*, ed. John Armitage (London: SAGE, 2000), 82; Joseph Giovannini, "Claude Parent," in

function theory's development from 1963 evolved into concepts of deconstructivism. Similarly, Virilio, Isabella Moretti, and Sandra Schramke, among others, demonstrated the oblique function theory as a preceding work to the fold and early digital architecture in the 1990s, but, again shortly, they mentioned how it prefigured the fold and fluid forms without entirely elucidating its trajectory leading to that influence.[13] This applies to the research of Andreas Ruby, André Bideau, and Béatrice Simonot, who illuminated the oblique function theory's connection to landscape urbanism and infrastructural spaces.[14] Anyway, despite 'fragments' showing minor portions of the oblique architecture's trajectory, these researchers' work clarified the oblique function theory's underlying influence on contemporary architecture. Unlike these researchers, why did authors of deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism refrain from or minimally showing the oblique function theory's heritage in their work? Additionally, why was the oblique function theory, once influential and named alongside well-known avant-garde architecture of the 1960s, forgotten and restricted only to Francophone circles, limited to few citations in contemporary architecture?

Since existing research has not provided the complete trajectory of the oblique function theory, its evolution leading to its decline, disappearance, obscurity, and revival remains unclear. This research aims to chart the whole trajectory of oblique architecture, considering all these scholarly works and fragments to construct an unequivocal oblique trajectory. By doing so, it seeks an enriched urban and

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Architecture Unbound: A Century of the Disruptive Avant-Garde (New York: Rizzoli, 2021), 138; Ockman and Eigen, *Architecture Culture*, 409.

[13] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39; Isabella Moretti. "*The Oblique Condition: Towards an Understanding of Somatic Architecture (without Falling),*" (Master's diss, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2015), 6-7; Sandra Schramke, "3D Code: Folding in the Architecture of Peter Eisenman," in *On Folding*, eds. Michael Friedman and Wolfgang Schäffner (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016), 118–119.

[14] Andreas Ruby, "Informed Surfaces," trans. Rory O'Donovan, *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen* 89 (2002): 73–5, https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-66469; André Bideau, "Grounding Space: Parent, Virilio and the Theory Platform Architecture Principe," trans. Rory O'Donovan, *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen* 89 (2002): 70-3; Béatrice Simonot, "Claude Parent: Present in Posterity," in *Nevers: Architecture Principe*, ed. Frédéric Migayrou (Orléans: HYX & FRAC Centre, 2010), 162-70.

architectural reformulation of the oblique function theory, acknowledging its contribution as a springboard for subsequent architectural styles. This study not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also underscores the importance of oblique theories, concepts, and practices in shaping contemporary architecture. Moreover, it sheds light on how an architectural entity like the oblique is interconnected with social, cultural, political, and historical developments and paradigm shifts, which considerably alter its recognition, apprehension, and practice in architectural circles. In this context, the research demonstrates how the theoretical and practical oblique frameworks have become a mixture of diverse perspectives, totally foregrounding an image of a heterogeneous oblique narrative that encompasses similarities and differences within itself.

Theoretically, the research is also grounded in the oblique function theory, primarily through the lens of Claude Parent, Paul Virilio, and Architecture Principe's extrapolations. The study examines contemporary architecture theories, concepts, practices, themes, and projects that resonate with the oblique function theory. It scrutinizes these by applying its theoretical lens, subjecting them to its concepts such as "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," and "the third urban order" to observe their evolution and varied applications. Furthermore, the research intersects and mediates the oblique function theory's framework with deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism. This intersection aims to reveal the similarities and differences between these movements and the oblique and to elucidate how the principles of the oblique function theory are incepted within their formulation, which has not been clearly defined or provided by these movements.

The research methodologically adopts a qualitative and historical approach to unfold the underexplored *oeuvre* and trajectory of the oblique function theory. To achieve this, it utilizes archival material from Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Claude Parent Archives, FRAC Centre, Médiathèque de l'architecture et du Patrimoine, and RMN, as well as the collections of the architects featured in the thesis to analyze case studies. The selected materials are utilized to reconstruct a novel oblique architecture timeline, emphasizing the

development of the oblique function theory into subsequent approaches. The study analyzes the most significant buildings, drawings, publications, and conferences from 1963 to the present to trace how oblique architecture has evolved, enhancing fragmented and missing narratives within the existing research. The timeline ensures a multifaceted methodological approach, unfolding the layered impact of the oblique function theory. Furthermore, this methodological framework inform the thesis structure by marking significant milestones, paradigm shifts, and epistemological breaks, building upon each other chronologically. The thesis engages with these to understand the oblique's origins, rise, fall, and revival sequentially and incrementally. By this, the goal is to chronologically reclaim the oblique function theory's critical role throughout architectural history, theory, and practice since 1963 with remarkable incidents, projects, figures, events, collaborations, publications, and conferences.

Chapter 2 revisits the foundations and frameworks of the oblique function theory. It introduces Claude Parent and Paul Virilio's background and the establishment of the Architecture Principe group in 1963. It covers how their diverse backgrounds evolved as a mutual critique against the prevailing paradigms of Rationalism and Modernism revolving around pre-industrial horizontal and industrial vertical architecture. Against the urban mobility problems in 1960s France, the chapter investigates how Parent and Virilio formulate the oblique function theory, proposing an architecture that accommodates movement and integrates it with habitation. It dwells on primary oblique concepts of "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," "the third urban order," "potentialism," and "topotonic elements." Doing so reinstates the overall framework for the oblique function theory. Later, the chapter moves on to analyze architectural diagrams, models, drawings, and buildings by Parent and Virilio, demonstrating the wide range of scales at which the oblique is conceived. As a result, the analysis puts forward contradictions, conflicts, and inconsistencies within their work because of the incompatibilities between the manifesto's concepts and its practical applications. Technological difficulties, embodiment of bunker aesthetics, and rigidity of Parent and Virilio's ideas cause

such a result. These are discussed in the chapter's final part, along with the harsh criticism Parent and Virilio received in those years. Drawing upon these, the chapter ends with Architecture Principe's dissociation, marking the start of its diminishing influence.

Stemming from Architecture Principe's dissociation, Chapter 3 focuses on Claude Parent's individual work on oblique architecture. During this period, oblique architecture declined because of the dissociation and absence of Paul Virilio, and Parent endeavored to revitalize it through manifestos, projects, drawings, and exhibitions. This chapter emphasizes Parent's concept of "Living on the Oblique," which builds upon Architecture Principe's oblique principles but, in a distinct way, addressing contradictions such as bunker aesthetics by reformulating them. Although Architecture Principe designed oblique dwellings, Parent continued this tradition more effectively and visibly with new additions. Encompassing both built and unbuilt oblique houses, the chapter tackles Parent's intentions and aspirations in creating living spaces on oblique planes. His utopic urban drawings carry forward this approach, experimenting with the potential of inhabiting the inclined planes, and this chapter articulates these efforts with examples and commentary. Despite these attempts, the chapter illustrates that Parent's oblique architecture could not surpass the foundational work of Architecture Principe. Issues such as the rigidity of the manifesto, resistance to external paradigm shifts like the oil crisis and the fall of megastructures, and a never-changing formalist viewpoint persisted. Parent's involvement in projects like shopping malls and nuclear power plants, which contradicted the humanistic and environmentally conscious atmosphere, marked a turning point. The chapter identifies this period, from 1975 to 1996, as the beginning of the oblique's marginalization and exclusion from mainstream architectural theory and history, confining it mainly to Francophone circles.

Chapter 4 problematizes the gap regarding the oblique function theory's absence between 1975 and 1996, tracing its influence within this period and beyond in contemporary architecture. It explains the characteristics of three architectural movements related to oblique architecture: deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape

urbanism. By defining their primary principles, the chapter elucidates which terms of the oblique function theory guided these architectural approaches and how these terms evolved within them. Although each has their viewpoint regarding the oblique, they root in mutual backgrounds and build onto each other. However, they omitted the lineage of the oblique function theory. To reintegrate the theory's role, the chapter intersects its theoretical and practical framework encompassing concepts of "habitable circulation," "the third urban order," "the mediate city," and "topotonic elements" with these architectural approaches. For the cause, it utilizes significant events, collaborations, actors, and projects, which link the oblique function theory to them, to unearth the theory's overlooked and embedded impact. Given that these approaches are not clear-cut from each other in contemporary architecture, it is crucial to trace back to the ostensibly first emergence of oblique architecture within deconstructivism and demonstrate its original roots in the oblique function theory. By building upon the parallels and deviations between deconstructivism, the fold, landscape urbanism, and the oblique function theory, the chapter analyzes various selected case studies that majorly showcase the tenets of the oblique function theory and its renewed understanding in contemporary architecture after subsequent architectural approaches. This section, highlighting "contemporary oblique architecture," reconstructs the oblique architecture's trajectory, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how the oblique evolved from the oblique function theory to the present. Ultimately, it aims for a more cohesive and continuous knowledge of oblique architecture, which stems from Parent and Virilio's first conceptualizations in 1963.

Lastly, the thesis concludes with Chapter 5, which revisits the critical points of the oblique architecture's trajectory. It includes a commentary on research findings and restates the significance of scrutinizing the oblique function theory in understanding and reading contemporary architecture. Additionally, it underlines how the research methodology formulated for this study can be utilized to uncover marginalized yet deeply fundamental theories, concepts, and themes in architecture. The chapter concludes with inquiries and implications for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

ARCHITECTURE PRINCIPE AND THE OBLIQUE FUNCTION THEORY 1963-1968

> An urbanism must be designed so that circulation may become habitable, an architecture in which the oblique function of animation will hold sway over that neutralizing function represented by the permanent horizontal plane, an architecture in which [people] will be put in movement by the very profile of his habitat, the city thereby becoming a gigantic projector, a cascade for every activity and every fluidity.[15]

This chapter revisits the initial manifestation of the *La Théorie de la Fonction Oblique* (The Oblique Function Theory) by French architect Claude Parent and philosopher Paul Virilio, as presented in the Architecture Principe manifesto magazine published in 1966. It deals with the epistemological, theoretical, and practical frameworks of the oblique architecture and form developed by Parent and Virilio as a solution to urban mobility issues. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the oblique function theory serves as both the method for analyzing case studies as well as the subject of the research. Therefore, this chapter, along with Chapter 3, defines the formulation of the oblique function theory alongside its practical applications by its original authors. This particular period between 1963 and 1968 has been selected as it marks the establishment of the Architecture Principe group and its eventual dissociation, a crucial turning point in the history of oblique architecture also presented as one of the fragments in the oblique timeline. The fluctuations and

[15] Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.3: Habitable Circulation," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), X.

pivotal moments in the evolution of oblique architecture during this period are detailed, as they play a critical role in its trajectory.

2.1 Mobility Paradigm in 1960s France and The Oblique Function Theory

In the 1960s, France experienced rapid growth and modernization in every field under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, known as the peak of *les trentes glorieuses*- thirty glorious years of economic boom between 1945 and 1975. This era witnessed a significant shift from rural to urban living as society embraced industrialization and extensive urbanization. Especially in Paris, art historian Larry Busbea articulated that "things were coming together," generating a congested urban space filled with people, objects, and information, where the city was "completely inadequate to manage them and their movement."[16] The rigid structures of traditional architectural forms, rather than promoting this fluidity and movement, impeded urban mobility. Against this problematic status quo, many architects, including Yona Friedman, Paul Maymont, and Nicholas Schöffer, and architectural groups like *Groupe d'Études d'Architecture Mobile* (GEAM) proposed novel and avant-garde urban schemes such as Vertical City by Maymont based on flexibility, openness, and mobility, themes promoted highly by Team 10. For instance, in such a context, GEAM put forward the "Programme for a Mobile Architecture," informed by the group's founder, Friedman's previous manifesto: *L'Architecture Mobile.*[17] They emphasized the inadaptability of existing rigid construction techniques and urban planning to everyday life and urban congestion, proposing mobile elements and interchangeable building components dynamically

[16] Larry Busbea, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960–1970* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 10.
[17] See for more information: Larry Busbea, "Yona Friedman and The Groupe D'Études D'Architecture Mobile," in *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 62-73.

responding to the needs of their inhabitants.[18] Without new urban schemes considering mobility as GEAM did, French architects and architectural groups realized that managing such an overflow of dynamism and complexity would be impossible.

Rooted in such a context, in 1963, French architect Claude Parent and philosopher Paul Virilio founded the Architecture Principe group along with artists Michel Carrade (1923-2021) and Morice Lipsi (1898-1986). Previously, Parent was a student at École des Beaux-Arts, first in Toulouse in 1942 and then in Paris starting in 1947, but eventually rejected the school, turning down its diploma because of the unchanging rationalist architecture still focusing on older architectural applications.[19] While in the school, he met a like-minded colleague, Ionel Schein, and they, together, as art historian Christian Sander noted, harshly criticized the architectural education at the school with their articles.[20] Not satisfied with the condition, Parent then briefly worked at Le Corbusier's office for around six months for the project Unité d'habitation in Nantes-Rezé (completed in 1953). Le Corbusier highly inspired one of his first works with Schein, Maison G in Ville d'Avray (1952-3), a classic modernist architecture with orthogonal forms and functional purity. However, according to architect Joseph Giovannini, he left that approach shortly due to "Corbusier's emphasis on the machine and the purity of form."[21] More than Corbusier, art historian Hans Ulrich Obrist states that "the major influence on Parent came from French sculptor Andrè Bloc..."[22] Bloc was the founder and editor of the seminal French magazine *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and the founder of the artist group Group Espace, where he invited Parent and Schein. Parent and Bloc

[18] GEAM, "Programme for a Mobile Architecture," in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-century Architecture,* ed. Ulrich Conrads, trans. Michael Bullock (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970), 167-8.
[19] See: Audrey Jeanroy, *Claude Parent: Les Desseins d'un Architecte* (Marseille: Éditions Parenthéses, 2022).
[20] Christian Sander, *Claude Parent, Paul Virilio – Architecture Principe: Formen und Antiformen in der Architektur der Moderne* (Zurich: Park Books, 2022), 61.
[21] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 138.
[22] Claude Parent,"Parent, Claude," interview by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, in *Hans-Ulrich Obrist: Interviews* (Milano: Edizioni Charta, 2003), 679.

collaborated between 1951 and 1966 until Bloc's death, during which he got accustomed to the works of Nicholas Schöffer, Yves Klein, and Roberto Matta. These exposed him to Neo-Plasticism, "the idea of dynamic geometry," and "the architecture of disequilibrium."[23] He practiced these tropes with Bloc in projects like The Cafè du Rond Point in Champs-Elysèes (1955-1957), exploring the dynamic composition and juxtaposition of angled forms in an interior space. This line of thought culminated in his two built "oblique" projects: Maison Drusch in Versailles (1963-1965) [Figure 2.1] and Maison Bordeaux-le-Pecq in Bois-le-Roi (1963-1966).

Figure 2.1. Maison Drusch, Claude Parent, Versailles, 1963-1965.

Source: Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969,* ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 36.

[23] Claude Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," interview by Irénée Scalbert and Mohsen Mostafavi, in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 51.

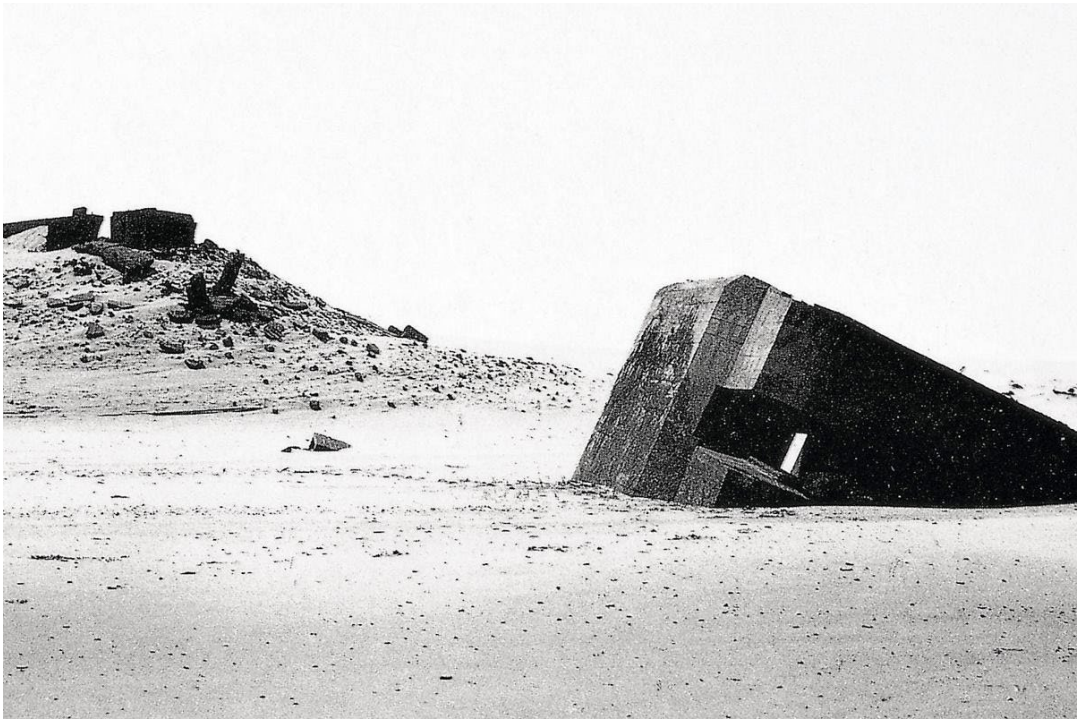

Figure 2.2. Sinking Bunker Ruin, Paul Virilio, 1958-1965.

Source: Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*, 177.

Virilio explored themes similar to those of Parent in his study of bunker ruins [Figure 2.2] left from World War II along the Atlantic Wall with the glance of Gestalt psychology and Merleau Ponty's phenomenology of perception, called *Bunker Archeology*.[24] Armitage propounds that for Virilio, "these ruins, now oblique remnants of a formerly horizontal–vertical architecture – are contradictory aesthetic spaces, sites of continuous if ambiguous pleasure, destruction, and archeological negotiation."[25]

[24] See: Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*, trans. George Collins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007).
[25] John Armitage, *Virilio for Architects* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 30.

The collaboration between Parent and Virilio started by chance, despite their mutual friend Michel Carrade. Virilio purchased an apartment designed by Parent, which he later called his "first big project," without specifying which project it was.[26] Originally a stained-glass painter and not formally trained as an architect, Virilio had been appointed to construct a church in Nevers and asked for Parent's architectural expertise. Parent and Virilio's similar approaches quickly solidified their partnership, leading to the formation of the Architecture Principe group in 1963, coinciding with the design of the Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers, which took place from 1963 to 1966. Together, they developed *La Théorie de la Fonction Oblique* (The Oblique Function Theory), which was presented in the Architecture Principe manifesto magazine and published in nine issues in 1966. These issues were thematically distinct, having a non-linear structure, as architectural researcher Diego Fullaondo highlighted.[27] The oblique function theory's theoretical core, outlined in issues; *No. 1: The Oblique Function* (*La Fonction Oblique*); *No. 2: The Third Urban Order* (*Le Troisiéme Ordre Urbain*); *No. 3: Potentialism* (*Le Potentialisme*); *No. 5: Habitable Circulation* (*Circulation Habitable*); and *No. 6: The Mediate City* (*La Cité Médiate*). Meanwhile, *No. 4: The Nevers Work Site* (*Nevers Chantier*) and *No. 9: A Blueprint for Charleville* (*Charleville Étude*) were devoted to the practical applications of the oblique function theory, covering project details for Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers (1963-1966), and Charleville Cultural Center in Charleville (1966-1967). The remaining *No .7: Bunker Archaeology (Bunker Archéologie)* integrates Virilio's previous studies on bunker ruins with the theory, and *No. 8: Power and Imagination (Pouvoir et Imagination)* comprises speeches from Parent and Virilio at various venues [Figure 2.3].

[26] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 49.
[27] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 24.

Figure 2.3. Covers of Nine Issues of Architecture Principe Manifesto-Magazine, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1966.

The duo manifested a "third urban order" on inclined planes, calling for the "total reinvention of architectural vocabulary" against the pre-industrial horizontal and industrial vertical orders.[28] For them, the new order was urgent since:

> The mobile in all its forms has become the destructive agent of cities: whether it be the social element with its major mass movements, or the various forms of energies used by industrial civilization, scientific arms, to say nothing of natural agents, the modern city appears incapable of mastering fluidity.[29]

[28] Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.1: The Oblique Function," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), V.
[29] Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.3," IX.

Parent propounded that horizontal order was potent for towns and villages, yet, against the over-dimensioning of cities due to enabling urban mobility, it fails since it has to expand beyond its territorial limits, if not had to be reorganized as Haussmann did with Paris with his *Renovation de Paris* project (1853-70). According to him, these problems led to the emergence of verticality. However, the verticality was also ill-suited for him.[30] Virilio stressed that vertical elevation is not inhabitable and compartmentalizes the habitation from circulation.[31] Both horizontal and vertical orders drew a strict barrier between habitation and circulation. According to Parent, since they utilized traditional architectural elements like walls, they inevitably caused impediments to movement and segregation of spaces from one another.[32] Unlike horizontal and vertical orders, they advocated for a "habitable circulation" by creating wall-free space made out of inclined planes, blurring Cartesian space's clear-cut distinction. They "[ensured] that the building was no longer a barrier to communication."[33] With these, Parent and Virilio highlighted a concept of "the mediate city," where the oblique planes would have the potential to mediate opposites like solidity and fluidity, assuring their spatial continuity. By reconfiguring the space with "slopes leading to other slopes," Giovannini implies that Parent and Virilio "bred fluidity of movement," conceiving inclined variations for different functions to get accommodated [Figure 2.4].[34]

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[30] Claude Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique* (Paris: Bernard Chauveau Édition, 2023), 13-7.
[31] Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 12.
[32] Claude Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion* (Paris: Bernard Chauveau Édition, 2023), 45.
[33] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 52.
[34] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 149.

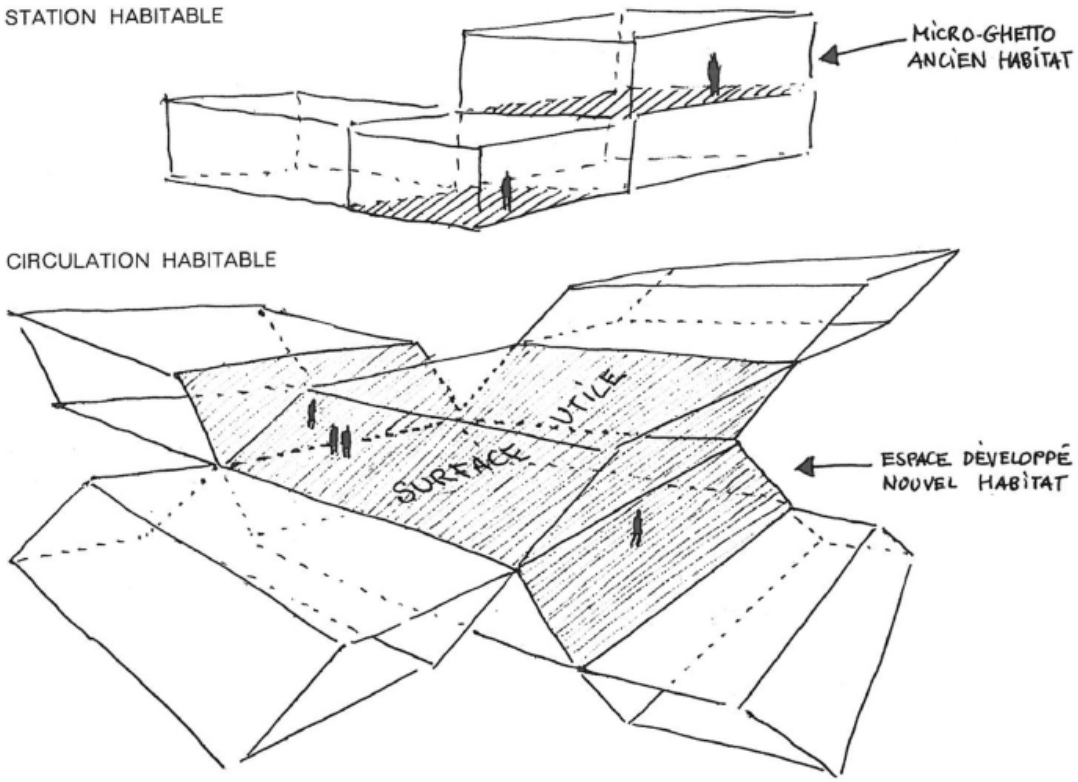

Figure 2.4. Habitable Statis to Habitable Circulation, drawn by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1966.

Source: Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.5: Circulation Habitable," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996).

Despite their rejection of modernist orthodoxy, Parent and Virilio were highly inspired by Le Corbusier's concept of architectural promenade [Figures 2.5 and 2.6]. Virilio underscored that in their work, the "making of the object was superseded by the making of the journey."[35] Besides, their use of ramps to interrelate spaces resonated with Corbusier's utilization in some of his buildings, like Villa Savoye in Poissy (1929-1931) and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts in Cambridge (1963). Indeed, circulation was also fundamental for Corbusier, where in Villa

[35] Virilio, "Architecture Principe," 13.

Savoye, he aimed to interrelate circulation on ramps with internal functions to create a seamless flow of spaces. He describes the experience:

> A ramp provides gradual ascent from the pilotis, creating totally different sensations than those felt when climbing stairs. A staircase separates one floor from another: a ramp links them together.[36]

Figure 2.5. Ramp Inside Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier, Poissy, 1929-1931.

Source: Sbriglio, *Le Corbusier*, 29.

[36] Jacques Sbriglio, *Le Corbusier: Villa Savoye* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 53.

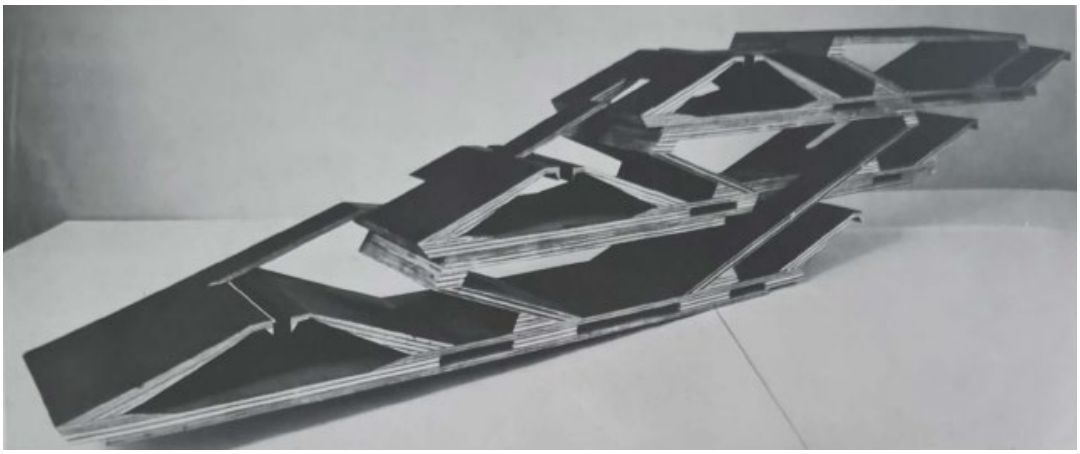

Figure 2.6. Dètail de l'Inclisite (Details of Inclisite), architectural model by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1966-1968.

Source: Claude Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique* (Paris: Èditions du Moniteur, 1981), 66.

This approach echoes Virilio's critique of vertical architecture that "often take refuge in the staircase" as well as "the elevator," "remaining doomed to the most absolute passivity."[37] In addition to Corbusier's work with ramps, Frederick Kiesler's The Endless House (1950) and Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York (1943-59) by utilizing ramps as the backbone of circulation and space organization informed the work of Parent and Virilio. According to Virilio, inclined planes in the past were "only used for automobiles," which was a "disaster," unlike these projects.[38] Sander remarks that "with the oblique function," the duo "focused on the phenomenological body," where "the goal was to "reconnect" the city dweller with the physical urban space by forcing him to move around on foot."[39]According to Parent, when standing on an inclined plane, users either had to ascent (fatigue) or

[37] Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.3," IX.
[38] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39.
[39] Christian Sander, "Slow Movement on the Slope," in *Spatial Transformations*, eds. Angela Million, Christian Haid, Ignacio Castillo Ulloa and Nina Baur (London: Routledge, 2021), 74, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036159-7.

descent (euphoria) but never remain still, challenging the neutrality.[40] He stated users are in a state of "potential change" [Figure 2.7].

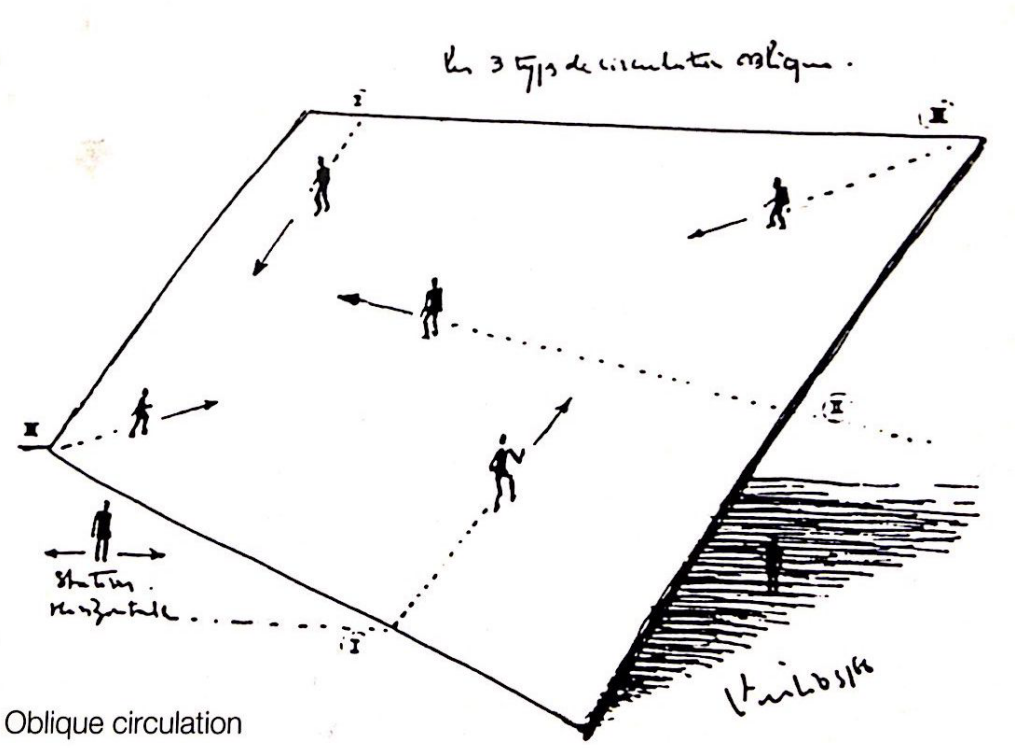

Figure 2.7. Oblique Circulation, showing different types of movements on a ramp, sketched by Paul Virilio, 1966.

Source: Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique*, 12.

Despite having significant resemblances with the approaches of Corbusier, Kiesler, and Wright, the oblique function theory stands out in its distinctiveness in treating

[40] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.3: Structure," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XI.

the architectural space. Parent defined some of the tenets, especially distinguishing it from modernism, under the newly developed concept of "Critical Modernity": [41]

- the mobilization of form
- the use of fracture
- the expression of disequilibrium cantilevered masses
- the recurrent sensation of instability
- the use of inclined planes disrupts the classic to orthogonal system

'Topology' is another essential concept that demystifies the oblique function theory's framework developed towards mobility. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "the way the parts of something are organized or connected."[42] In that manner, Busbea comprises the "mobile architectural applications of the 1960s" in France under the term topology, where the era was pretty much occupied with concepts: network, layer, connectivity, fabric, and combination.[43] In line, in his seminal essay, "The New Brutalism," in 1955, architectural historian Reyner Banham claims "topology becomes the dominant [discipline]," underlining "penetration, circulation, and in and out."[44] This topological paradigm laid the groundwork for the oblique function theory and its concepts, such as "habitable circulation." In fact, Virilio claimed, "the oblique is an architectonic implementation of topology... to architecture as a whole and not only to parking garages or to the Guggenheim Museum."[45] He also suggested that "Architecture Principe is based on topology, in

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[41] Claude Parent, "A Critical Modernity," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 15.
[42] "Topology," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed June 15, 2024, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/topology.
[43] Busbea, *Topologies,* trans. Author, 4.
[44] Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," *The Architectural Review* 118 (1955): 361.
[45] Paul Virilio, "Paul Virilio and the Oblique: Interview with Enrique Limon," interview by Enrique Limon, in *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. John Armitage (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 53.

other words, on breaking the orthogonal in every way."[46] To put it another way, it opened itself to interrelate its internal systems with external conditions, searching for new ways to mediate the static and the fluidity. This was also a strategy to increase usable spaces, which they dissented in horizontal and vertical architecture. The oblique for Virilio is a "topotonic" element, which he wrapped up its relation to topology:

> At a time of multiplication of levels of constraint, when alienation has become an ordinary risk, we owe it to ourselves to develop the maximum capacities of the use of space for the inhabitant, through the inclined plane, the curve, the topological or rather topotonic travel schema.[47]

2.2 Parent and Virilio's Works on Oblique Urbanism and Architecture

During their collaboration, Parent and Virilio developed both built and ready-to-be-built projects on an architectural scale and produced speculative and utopian drawings of oblique urbanism to concretize their ideas and theoretical framework. The former was such as Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers (1963-1966), Charleville Cultural Center in Charleville (1966-1967), and Maison Mariotti in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1967-1970). The latter incorporated, but not limited to, a series of drawings with overarching titles: *Les Turbines* (1965), *Les Vagues* (1965), and *Les Inclisites* (1966-8). Parent and Virilio engaged with some of these projects in their Architecture Principe manifesto magazine, relating directly to their oblique concepts, which I will elaborate on in the coming paragraphs and demonstrate further how the ideas above were reified.

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[46] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39.
[47] Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.6: The Mediate City," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XVII.

The group's first conceived oblique architecture was the Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers [Figure 2.8]. Once a stained glass painter, Virilio was commissioned to design a church. However, since he did not have any formal training in architecture, he asked Parent's cooperation. On that occasion, the Architecture Principe group was founded, and the church was designed alongside the formulation of the oblique function theory, which would find its final form in 1966 with the publication of the Architecture Principe manifesto.[48] The church amalgamates Virilio's research on *Bunker Archaeology* and the oblique function theory. According to Parent, embodying the bunker aesthetics with the architectural form "came at a late stage of the project's development, long after [they] defined the fractured hexagonal plan, the double inverse slope of the nave, the light slots in the walls, and the side and central entrances."[49] Although Parent describes the bunker form as a "secondary element," it dominates the spatial quality of the church, championing the bunker imagery over the oblique concepts. Parent and Virilio dedicated the fourth issue of their Architecture Principe manifesto to the church, *No. 4: Nevers Work Site (Nevers Chantier).* There, Parent mentioned their goal of creating a "cryptic space closed off from the exterior, enclosed world."[50] This approach, along with inclined spaces on both naves, acutely gives the sensation of bunker. It echoes Parent's experience in bunkers:

> Inside [bunker], you tumbled through a strange room; the floor was so sloped that you couldn't tell whether what you were standing on was a slanted floor or a former wall.[51]

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[48] See: Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 49-57.
[49] Claude Parent, "Church of Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 19.
[50] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.4: The Nevers Work Site," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XII.
[51] Niklas Maak, "Claude Parent: The Supermodernist,"032c, last modified July 27, 2011. https://032c.com/magazine/the-supermodernist-architect-claude-parent.

Despite successfully giving the peculiar feeling of disequilibrium, instability, and uprootedness alongside bunker-derived oblique concepts of activation, vertigo, confinement, depolarization, canalization, and continuum, the church fails to demonstrate topological concepts like “habitable circulation.” The bunker envelope strictly separates the interior space from the exterior urban circulation. This way, the building becomes an obstruction, not facilitating the movement but blocking it like criticized vertical and horizontal architecture. Only the interior oblique planes are habitable, as Parent implied.[52] However, the church's vertical façade does not grant any usable surface. Besides, the mediator role of the oblique is nowhere to be seen.

Figure 2.8. Eglise Sainte-Bernadette-du-Banlay (Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church), Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, Nevers, 1963-1966.

Source: Gilles Ehrmann (photographer), “Eglise Sainte-Bernadette-du-Banlay,” Ministère de la Culture - Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/22-543069-2C6NU0AYZON23.html.

[52] Parent, “Architecture Principe No.4,” XII.

Unlike the church, Charleville Cultural Center [Figure 2.9] mediates the building with the topography through its oblique roof, extending the surroundings with its oblique form. The roof floor is directly connected to the lower floors with spiral ramps. Parent underlines that "the creation of such an uninterrupted flow between exterior and interior is a key advantage of the principle of inclined planes."[53] Here, we clearly see the topological concepts of "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," and "topotonic elements." Like the church, the center has a brutalist envelope, resembling the bunkers. Parent and Virilio articulated the oblique concepts achieved by the project in Architecture Principe's *No. 9: A Blueprint for Charleville (Charleville Étude).* There, Parent emphasizes the importance of context, which modernism has been glossing over for 50 years. Instead, the erected oblique of the center "modifies the pre-existing hierarchy and creates new relationships without engendering anarchy in the former ones."[54] By focusing on the existing elements and their connectivity, the center opened up new horizons for architecture. Yet, since it was not built despite its construction drawings being made and the project being engineered, its effect on architectural discourse somehow remained limited, making the church the 'signature project' of the oblique function theory.

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[53] Claude Parent, "Charleville Cultural Centre," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 33.
[54] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.9: "Inclisite"-Inclined Site," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XVI.

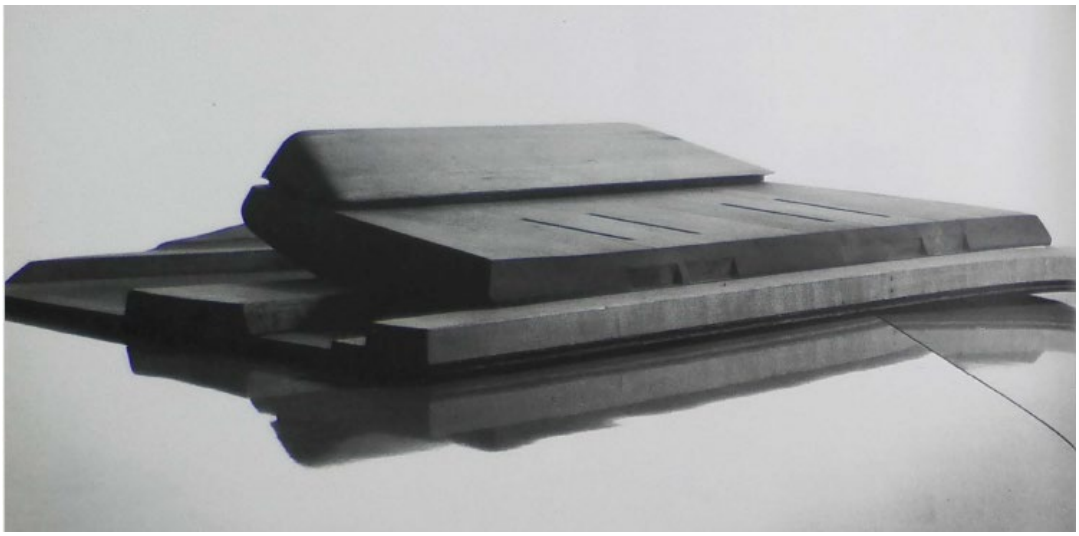

Figure 2.9. Charleville Cultural Center, Architectural Model, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, Charleville, 1966-1967.

Source: Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique*, 32.

In a similar vein, Architecture Principe's Maison Mariotti [Figure 2.10] was not constructed despite reflecting the oblique concepts much more accurately than the church. During those years, Parent had already completed his preceding work, Maison Drusch in Versailles, yet, despite seeming to be made out of the rotated cube, it was only an unusable diagonal form, giving the misleading expression of dynamism nothing like the oblique function theory. That was probably why Parent states, "Mariotti was the first house to be designed on the oblique."[55] Sitting on a sloped site, Maison Mariotti is composed of various angled ramps interrelated to each other. The group achieves a walkable mass where the dynamic oblique planes prompt mobilization of ground, façade, and coverage. Architectural researcher María Pura Moreno remarks that the building has no inner separations with vertical walls

[55] Claude Parent, "Mariotti House, Saint-Germain" in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 38.

and stairs, preempting the possible disruption in the continuum that legitimatizes the group's intentions.[56] Within that sense, Maison Mariotti aligns with conceptual drawings made by Virilio, such as *Civilisation* (1966), reflecting their intention mainly on the "habitable circulation." Besides, Mariotti follows the overarching tenets of the oblique function theory: mediate structure, topotonic quality, mobile architecture, flexibility, continuity, fluidity, disequilibrium, and inclined variations.

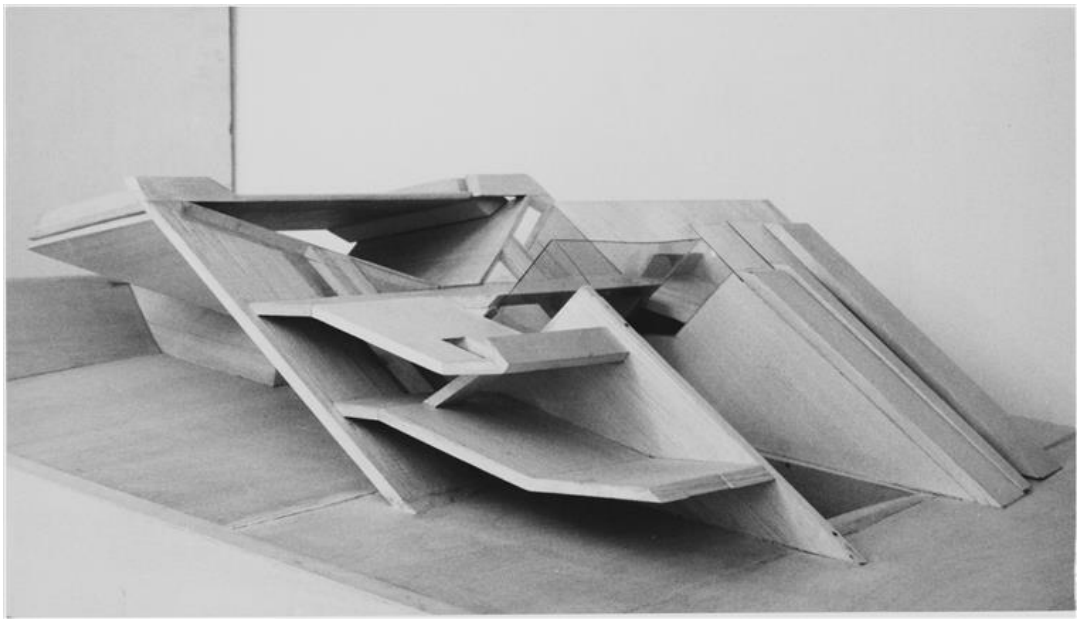

Figure 2.10. Maquette de la Maison Oblique [Mariotti] (Model of the Oblique [Mariotti] House), Architecture Principe, 1967.

Source: Jean Pottier (photographer), "Maquette de la maison oblique," Ministère de la Culture - Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/22-543080-2C6NU0AYZORTA.html.

[56] María Pura Moreno Moreno, "The Fonction Oblique through Domestic Ritual: Inhabiting the Utopia of Instability," *BAC Boletín Académico: Revista de Investigación y Arquitectura Contemporánea* 10 (2020): 32-3, https://doi.org/10.17979/bac.2020.10.0.5768.

In addition to these projects, Parent and Virilio worked with oblique cities showcased in speculative drawings to test the utmost limits and potentials of the oblique function theory.[57] These drawings drew vivid inspiration from Futurist drawings by Antonio Sant'Elia and the megastructure paradigm of the period shown in the projects and representations of Archigram and Metabolism, among others. In a way, the resemblance led architect Juan Daniel Fullaondo, the editor of *Nueva Forma* in the 1960s, to write an article entitled "Claude Parent, Le Corbusier or Sant'Elia?."[58] In a way, this question positioned Parent and Virilio's approach in the middle of modernism and futurism, which is crucial to understanding their architectural viewpoint. Since Parent mainly dealt with the group's architectural concerns, he wrote short texts on some of these oblique cities in Architecture Principe manifesto magazine. The first of this type was *Les Turbines* (1965) [Figure 2.11], included in *Architecture Principe No. 1: The Oblique Function.* There, Parent summarized the project as such:

> Anchored to the earth, attached to the ground, they express a surge, translate a kinetic will in the toppling of the relationship to the vertical. They establish no equilibrium but engender a dynamic.[59]

Les Turbines propounds an unprecedented urban scheme on the oblique by demonstrating gigantic oblique structures made of smaller stacked inclined planes. Despite their concern about the context, it seems removed in Parent and Virilio's oblique cities, unlike their architectural works, leaving their church out. Les Turbines has no context, no ground, or no specific location. It can be built anywhere and anytime, reminding Le Corbusier's cities envisioned on a *tabula rasa*. Parent implied

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[57] Despite the dissociation of the group in 1968, Parent has never stopped drawing on oblique, developing it from 1965 to 2016 until the day he died.
[58] Juan Daniel Fullaondo,''Claude Parent: ¿ Le Corbusier o Sant'Elia?,'' *Nueva Forma* 13 (February 1967).
[59] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.1: The Turbines," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), III.

to architectural critic Bruno Zevi that "his pamphlets" were not meant to be a utopian work but rather an incubator of ideas that propose alternative ways of re-reading the city through the oblique.[60] In a similar vein, Virilio indicated that "the illustrations in Architecture Principe magazine were obviously not of architectural or even urbanistic projects but were simply statements of principle concepts..."[61] Contradicting their claims, oblique cities, including *Les Turbines* as well as *Les Vagues*, were precisely concretized and completed in their drawings, making them hard to be representative of a set of abstract ideas as if in their texts. Erected monolithically and monumentally at an angle from the topography, *Les Vagues*, despite instantiating concepts like "habitable circulation," misses other concepts like flexibility and inclined variations. The frozen image cemented in these two particular cities, unlike Parent and Virilio's statements that these are set for generating new ideas, could not contribute to their theoretical framework and prompt novel solutions on the oblique. Due to the lack of technological advancements of the period, many of them could not be realized and remained on paper, a faith megastructures of the period faced like Lower Manhattan Expressway (1967) by Paul Rudolph.

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[60] Manfredi Nicoletti, *Claude Parent: La Funzione Obliqua* (Torino: Testo & Immagine, 2003). Cited in Alice Monacelli, "Claude Parent: The Epistemological Shift from the Modernism to the Metabolism," in *Digital Modernism Heritage Lexicon*, eds. Cristiana Bartolomei, Alfonso Ippolito and Simone Helena Tanoue Vizioli (Cham: Springer Tracts in Civil Engineering, 2021), 1363, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76239-1_60.
[61] Virilio, "Architecture Principe," 13.

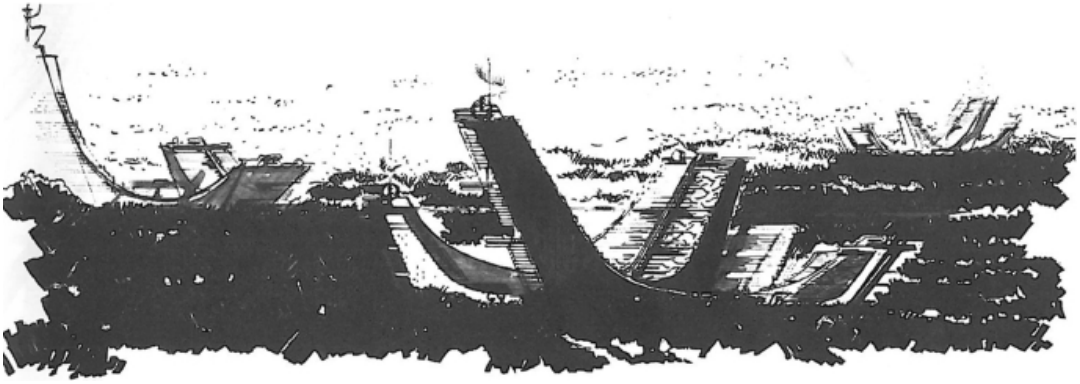

Figure 2.11. *Les Turbines*, drawn by Claude Parent, 1965.

Source: Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.1: La Fonction Oblique," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996).

A series of archival materials, including drawings and architectural models entitled *Les Inclisites* (1966-8), bring much more light to Parent and Virilio's ideas on inclined planes since they closely show how different oblique surfaces form an oblique configuration. Transcending the utopian imagery, these drawings demonstrate how oblique planes could be exploited to create a new scheme for cities and buildings. In the section drawing, *L'Inclisite: Coupe* (1966) [Figure 2.12], Parent and Virilio proliferate a hexagonal module, constructed with inclined planes on the sides and horizontal planes on top – called "The Threshold of Reestablishment."[62] Modules coming side by side create a fluid and mediate surface on the top. In *No. 6: The Mediate City (La Cité Médiate)*, the duo sheds light on how *Les Inclisites* materializes these concepts, where Parent formulates:

> The oblique is the support of spatial continuity. It is continuity. Its development permits partitioning without opposition to displacement.

[62] For more information on the project, see: Erpek and Dağlıoğlu, "The Oblique Function Theory," 148-59.

> As structural support, the oblique is thus linked to all movement of fluids engendered by man or by nature.[63]

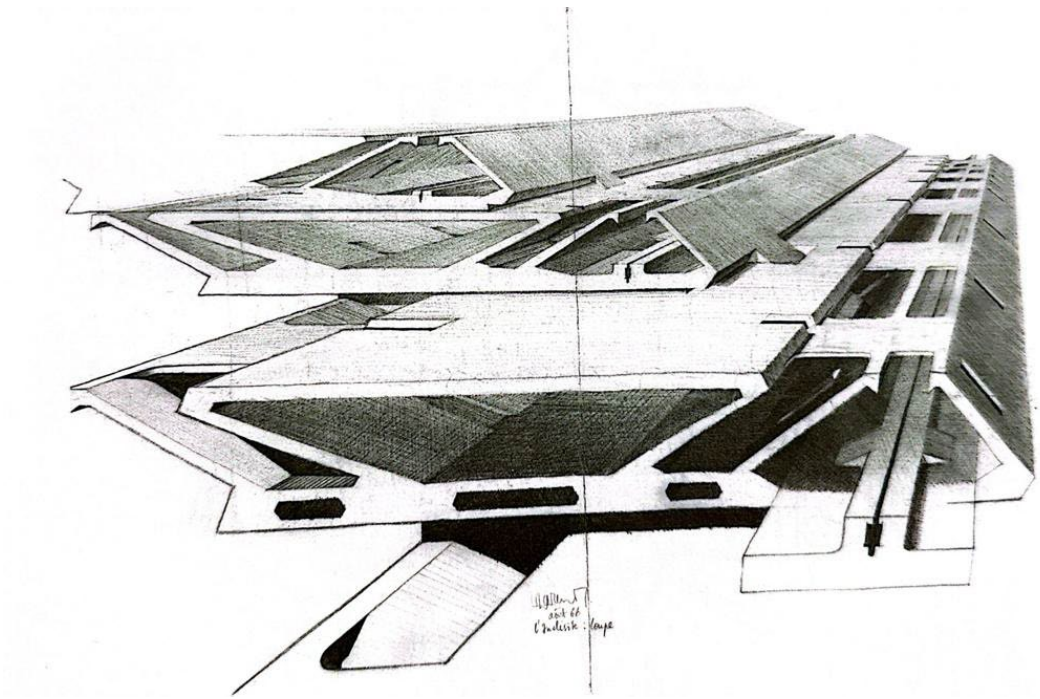

Figure 2.12. *L'Inclisite: Coupe* (Inclisite: Section), drawn by Claude Parent, 1966.

Source: Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019), 43.

2.3 The Dissociation of Architecture Principe

In the 1960s, Parent and Virilio introduced their theory to a broader audience multiple times. They participated in many conferences and organized exhibitions around Europe between 1965 and 1966, including England, Italy, Spain, and France,

[63] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.6: Fluidity," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XVI.

to disseminate their ideas while getting acquainted with other avant-garde and utopist approaches. Parent and Virilio dedicated Architecture Principe manifesto's issue *No.8: Power and Imagination (Pouvoir et Imagination)* to these conferences and speeches they made at those. These conferences were especially crucial for defining oblique architecture's trajectory, which was, in fact, rendered its fallacies, contradictions, and unmediated visions when compared with the era's other prevailing architects and their approaches. In 1965, Claude Parent organized an exhibition at Salines d'Arc et Senans, bringing together Archigram, Metabolists, and Paolo Soleri.[64] This event led Archigram to invite Parent and Virilio, alongside Reyner Banham, Frei Otto, and Arata Isozaki, among others, to the International Dialogue of Experimental Architecture (IDEA) Conference at Folkestone in 1966 to present their oblique function theory, mainly through their "oblique cities." The conference was a disaster for them, where they were saluted by the audience with Nazi gestures due to the obstinate bunker image their projects portrayed. Though oblique held an innovative potential with its concepts posed against mobility problems, it was overlooked. Even this unfavorable exchange led to the exclusion of the oblique function theory from mainstream architectural historiography, confining it to the Francophone circles for many years with few exceptions, like *Nueva Forma* magazine. According to architectural critic Frédéric Migayrou, the ideas of Parent and Virilio "were difficult for many European architects to assimilate," which he underlines that "the polemical reception" of them at IDEA Conference made it overt.[65] This was even made more explicit with comments from Julien Gracq, who stated that "*le diable c'est l'oblique"*; "the devil is oblique."[66]

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[64] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 52.
[65] Frédéric Migayrou, "Introduction," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 62-3.
[66] Quoted in Francis Rambert, "Absolument Atypique, Résolument Modern," in *Claude Parent: L'oeuvre Construite/L'oeuvre Graphique,* eds. Frèdèric Migayrou and Francis Rambert, trans. the author (Orlèans: HYX, 2010), 24.

This difficulty in apprehending their ideas was, I believe, profoundly because of the stark contrast between the bunker image and the oblique concepts. As their church hindered "habitable circulation," the bunker image overall impeded the development of oblique, consolidating a dilemma within their approach. However, this is not to say that the bunker analysis of Virilio did not inform the works of the oblique function theory. Indeed, Virilio "revealed the extreme importance of logistics (and fluxes) of circulation during the Blitzkrieg" through the "Gestalt theory and phenomenology of perception" and how these matters shape "contemporary military architecture."[67] This approach was later translated into the oblique function theory, which revolves around inhabiting the circulation. Nonetheless, the inscrutable and brute carapace of bunkers documented by Virilio with photographs flowing in the tides of rapidly shifting landscape and circulation genuinely demonstrated a contrast with this dynamic movement. Thus, the bunker aesthetics found, especially in Architecture Principe's built projects, taken for granted, did not complement the oblique architecture's core theories, concepts, and themes. Virilio recalled that sociologist Henri Lefebvre was not fond of his work with the oblique because he believed it was too "formalist."[68] Indeed, the oblique function theory is a theory of form in which Parent and Virilio express all their ideas basically through formal representations. In such an agenda, the image it created became even more substantial in defining its intention, so the bunker image had direct and, unfortunately, detrimental consequences to its legacy.

Despite all the problems around the reception of their ideas by others, Parent and Virilio did not exactly part ways with each other due to these. The group planned to evince livability on the oblique planes in 1968, the year of Architecture Principe's dissociation. Authorities highly questioned the life on the oblique.[69] Until that day,

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[67] Virilio, "Architecture Principe," 11. Also, see his later work: Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, trans. Marc Polizotti (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007).
[68] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39.
[69] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 54.

the duo received such criticisms because although they produced projects with finished construction drawings like Maison Mariotti, they did not materialize their ideas on 'oblique dwelling' in real life. To prove these claims wrong, Parent and Virilio designed an experimental project called Instabilisateur Pendulaire [Figure 2.13].[70] Giovannini outlines the procedure, that would take place at the University of Nanterre in 1968 as such:

> The two partners would live in their separate halves for a month under observation by psychologists, sociologists, and doctors to test the effects of living on varying degrees of the oblique, the inclined planes taking the place of furniture.[71]

Architectural researcher Diego Fullaondo formulated that the project had three fundamental objectives: "scientific, artistic, and advertising."[72] Even though everything was ready for the execution of the experiment, in May 1968, due to the social and political upheavals known as student movements, the experiment came to a halt and was never carried out. More than marking the project's end, these events caused Parent and Virilio to separate, eventually leading to the dissociation of the Architecture Principe group. During the events, Virilio developed a leftist political stance and wanted to incorporate oblique architecture and their group with matters of politics. However, Parent was against this intention, claiming that "the oblique function theory was not a political movement; it had no political agenda."[73] He also added that he "does not have the stomach for [leftist extremism]."[74] As a result,

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[70] Virilio resembles the experiment to Michael Siffre and his experiments in the cave to live outside of time. Virilio mentions that Siffre wanted to lose his circadian rhythms and relation to the real world and time. In that manner, the Pendular Destabilizer no.1 would also test the oblique, measuring it in spatiotemporal aspects. Virilio finds this warrant to produce non-Euclidean spaces. See: Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 40.
[71] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 153.
[72] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 99-100.
[73] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent," 55.
[74] Parent, "Interview with Claude Parent." Redhead claims that Parent "was simply not prepared to go along with any of this ultra-leftism and wanted to maintain his position as a modernist social

inevitably, the group dissociated because of these unresolvable chasms.[75] The group's dissociation left the oblique function theory an undeveloped and utopian approach that has not yet proved itself through projects enough. Additionally, the dissent against it further rendered it irrelevant misguidingly. However, despite these, Parent and Virilio did not easily give up on their ideas. They continued to work on the oblique, feeling the urge to develop it more architecturally and theoretically.

Figure 2.13. IP 1, Instabilisateur Pendulaire, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1968.

Source: Retrieved from FRAC Centre Archives © Philippe Magnon.

critic through his architectural practice." See: Steve Redhead, "Post-Space," in *We Have Never Been Postmodern: Theory at the Speed of Light* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 57.

[75] These chasms deepened even further after Parent designed the government's nuclear plants. Virilio peppers Parent: "[Parent] ended up constructing nuclear reactors, which I would never have consented to do because I was against nuclear power. So that's where we really split up." See Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 41.

CHAPTER 3

OBLIQUE ARCHITECTURE BY CLAUDE PARENT 1968-1975

> Claude Parent was one of architecture's most radical and audacious visionaries, audacious enough to question the horizontal plane as architecture's natural plane of inscription and to propose the tilted plane as an engine of invention and surprisingly fertile basis of an alternative architectural scenario.[76]

After the Architecture Principe group disbanded, both Parent and Virilio carried out their works on the oblique from different viewpoints, extending the eponymous magazine's ideas separately. In 1972, Virilio became a co-director of Ecole Specialé d'Architecture, where he experimented with his students the "development of technical research into the organization and the precise morphology of oblique volumes."[77] However, shortly after, he left these endeavors because of "the overwhelming difficulties of building an oblique habitat."[78] Thereafter, he left his endeavors on the oblique and focused on his later works around the dromology concept. Despite his early departure from the oblique horizons, in 2001, Virilio implied that although many years have passed, the oblique function theory still "works quite well."[79] Thus, Virilio's shift in his works was mainly due to the technological and economic restrictions of those days building on the oblique. It is important to note that this underscores one of the reasons for the oblique's marginalization in the architectural realm.

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[76] Eleanor Gibson and Zaha Hadid, "Radical and Audacious French Architect Claude Parent Dies Aged 93," Dezeen, last modified March 1, 2016, https://www.dezeen.com/2016/03/01/claude-parent-french-architect-dies-aged-93-tributes-zaha-hadid-daniel-libeskind-jean-nouvel/.
[77] Virilio, "Architecture Principe," 13.
[78] Virilio, "Architecture Principe."
[79] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 41.

Unlike Virilio, Parent advanced the oblique function theory until he died in 2016 through manifestos, drawings, exhibitions, and buildings. Dissenting Virilio's activist political and social thoughts and filtering the bold formal reifications of bunkers, he articulated and experimented with the oblique's potential to create architectural spaces primarily. He substantially preserved the theory's core methodologies and frameworks formulated in the Architecture Principe manifesto yet worked more on solving the interstices between the theory and its practical applications. The previous oblique outputs were mainly unrecognized, and the ones recognized, like Sainte-Bernadette du Church and Thomas-Houston Study Centre in Vellizy-Villacoublay (1966-69), showcased contradictions with their theories due to technological and economic limitations as well as the dominant bunker aesthetics. Besides, many of Architecture Principe's ideas were on an urban scale; however, due to few drawings considered somewhat utopian, scant projects were delving deeper into this scale. Against these, Parent felt it was imperative to introduce new variations and innovations to the oblique architecture, enhancing the previous concepts, such as "habitable circulation." In doing so, as Jeanroy dubbed as "constructive collaborations,"[80] he exploited his previous partnerships with Virilio, Ionel Schein, André Bloc, and Yves Klein, the amalgamation of Futurism, Spatialism, Phenomenology, and the oblique.[81] He built upon their ideas in a series of new manifestos, adding depth to the oblique's theoretical framework from an architectural viewpoint.

[80] Audrey Jeanroy, "Claude Parent, Opponent and Follower of a Modernity in Disgrace," in *Claude Parent: Subversive Thinking/Disruptive Work,* ed. by Richard Klein (Paris: Docomomo France, 2017), 5.
[81] Actors were always crucial for Parent's architectural career. He was involved with their work and inherited various styles, broadening his vision of architecture and the world.

3.1 Living on the Oblique

One of the first of these manifestos was *Vivre à l'Oblique*, 1970, "Living Obliquely," in which Parent aimed to reconfigure architectural discourse, theory, and praxis in the refreshed light of the oblique function theory.[82] He divided architectural epochs into three predominant approaches and correlated them with historical periods: the horizontal instantiates the agricultural period in rural settlements, the advent of industrialization, and urban congestions represented by the vertical, while the oblique the modernity.[83] Monacelli states that the post-industrialization period started after the advent of the Moon landing, rocket launches, and subsequent events that manifested the intention to bail out from the restrictions of gravity and the permanent horizontal plane of Earth.[84] Under this scope, Parent firmed his oblique architectural position, proving that human consciousness demands a gravitational shift, further prompting a search for disequilibrium, instability, and disruption. This approach was also informed by his previous collaborator Yves Klein and his work like the photograph *Saut dans le Vide* (Leap into the Void) (1960). There, Klein took a photograph of himself jumping from the ceiling to be free from the restrictions of gravity, exploring a new relationship between the body and ground, just like the oblique function theory. Metonymically, these warrant a free architecture of the Moon on Earth, where the dwelling and the circulation merge into one, extrapolating a structure where everything is fluid and continuous.

In *Vivre à l'Oblique*, Parent engaged more with the architectural relationship between dwelling and circulation, and problems arose due to their incompatibilities. Rather than concentrating directly on the theory, Parent stated that he "emphasized the process of living on inclined planes."[85] He drew a series of new diagrams to show

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[82] Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique.*
[83] Monacelli, "Claude Parent,"1364.
[84] Monacelli, 1364.
[85] Claude Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique* (Paris: Èditions du Moniteur, 1981), 48.

why the horizontal and vertical orders were ineffective against urban mobilities. Unlike the predominant textual materials of Architecture Principe magazine due to Virilio, Parent included as much architectural representation as possible to demonstrate these problems and clarify how the oblique form emerged out of these criticisms. In these drawings, he showcased that the private space, following the construction of the enclosure, leads to obstacles in the urban fabric, where the individual is constrained to journey between the open spaces along the confined and restricted circulation paths.[86] In that circumstance, the horizontal urban order could not accommodate the complex circulation network, causing awash agglomerations due to its limited capacity of open spaces, nodes, and circulation routes. It needs to expand considerably to accommodate the fluid movement. He points out that the significant interventions that opened new paths for circulation, like Georges Eugène Haussmann's *Renovation de Paris* project, only temporarily solved the problems, where he claims that the problem's core lies within the horizontality itself.[87]

For Parent, the vertical urban order came forward to repair the horizontal dysfunctions, which proposed a third dimension by the elevation axis to spread the urban density on this axis. However, although the footprint of the private enclosures is alleviated since vertical dwellings accommodate a large population, the intensity of the circulation at this time caused serious problems. Like its counterpart, vertical order does not increase the usable circulation spaces but instead proliferates the unusable circulation spaces with its façades that hamper communication, integration, and interrelation. According to Parent, this engendered an unsurpassable barrier between dwelling and circulation, where the dwelling became somehow a "microghetto" isolated from the existing urban fabric.[88] We see strong opposition to his former teacher, Le Corbusier, and his insistence on creating vertical cities.

[86] Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique.*
[87] Parent, 13-15.
[88] Parent.

Against both problematic orders, Parent espouses the relevance of the oblique order [Figure 3.1]. Monacelli defines his intentions as such:

> …he expresses the will to go beyond the wall, both in the vertical and the horizontal senses. In fact, the oblique does no necessary create a unique way from point A to point B but allows the many directions to be combined together and to be seen as a complex route from many points of view, difficult to be perceived as the mere sum of single elements.[89]

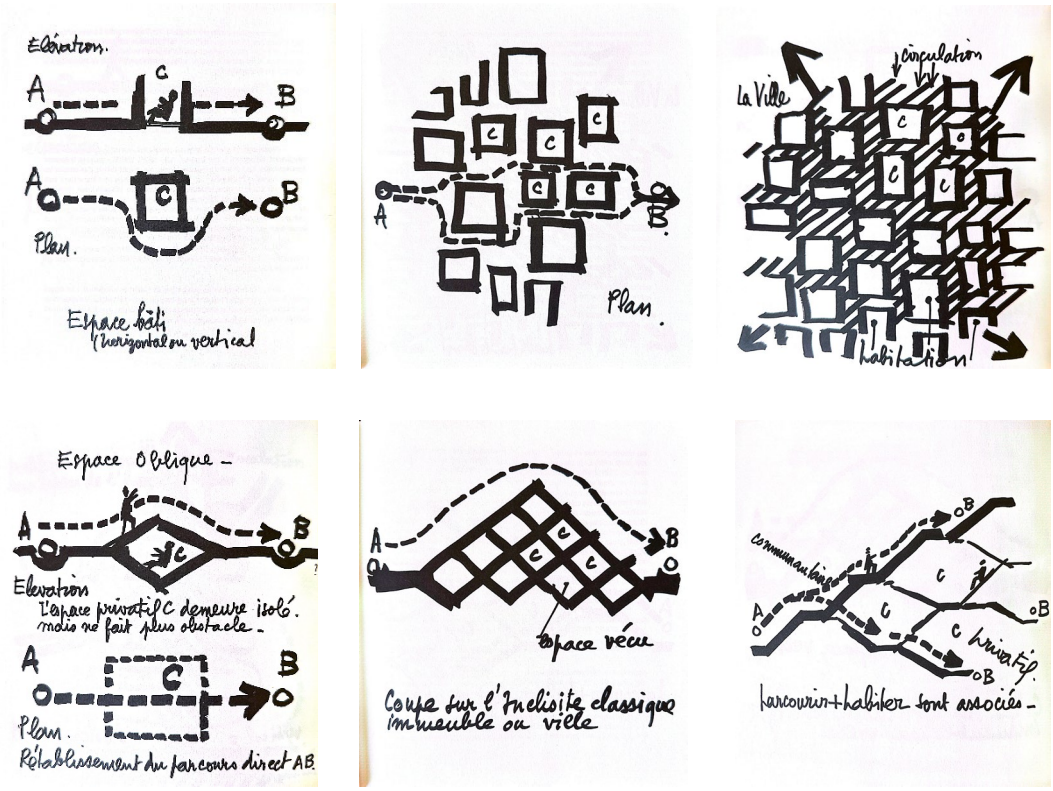

Figure 3.1. Circulation and Habitation in Vertical and Horizontal Spaces (upper row) contrasted with Oblique Spaces (lower row), drawn by Claude Parent, 1970.

Source: Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique.* 7-23.

[89] Monacelli, "Claude Parent'' ,1364.

Progressing the heritage of Architecture Principe and honing it with architectural elaborations, Parent initially executed this renewed line of thought individually in the French Pavilion for the 35th Venice Biennale in 1970 [Figure 3.2].[90] Virilio was also commissioned to design the pavilion, but due to his continuing leftist position from May 1968, he refused to participate in a governmental project. Thus, the pavilion marked the beginning of Parent's oblique function theory. Parent designed dynamizing oblique planes in various angles to prompt a dissolved flowscape, interweaving the habitation with circulation. The project showcased a multidirectional composition of oblique planes overflowing onto each other. Architectural researcher Maria Pura Moreno draws parallels between the pavilion's design and dynamic compositions by Theo Van Doesburg and Kazmir Malevich in their explorations of "diagonals" and "floating geometries."[91] Inside the pavilion were neither vertical nor unsurmountable barriers disrupting the spatial continuity. By the rapid change of angles through the circulation within, Parent aspired the users to experience different perspectives, inducing an anamorphic lens while engaging with their bodily receptions.[92] Rapid alterations in the view allowed people to stay alert since the complex network of ramps arouses constant discomfort, preempting oblivion.[93] According to Giovannini, the pavilion underscores "the space and the

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[90] The project later influenced many architectural projects, including Plasma Studio's Hotel Puerta America, where the interior space warped around a corridor, blurring the distinction between floor, wall, and ceiling. Here, the goal is to achieve kinesthetic and proprioceptive perceptions through visual and bodily receptions. See Douglas Spencer, "When a Moving Body Meets a New Formation: Plasma Studio and the Fourth Floor of the Hotel Puerta América," *AA Files*, no. 53 (Spring 2006): 14–19, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29544814.

[91] María Pura Moreno Moreno, "El Pabellón De Venecia De Claude Parent (1970): Huellas Teóricas y Legado Conceptual De La Fonction Oblique," *ZARCH* 13 (December 2019): 202, https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2019133942.

[92] Here, Merleau Pontian notion of "the body as receptive totality," the pertinent connection between body and mind, inspires Parent.

[93] Engendering discomfort for the activation of people to trigger resistance is one of the fundamental tenets of the oblique function theory, known as Potentialism. Parent comments on Hans Scharoun's complex planned network in Philarmonie Berlin: "In the interior spaces, one is at times faced with such a complex network of paths and circulation that one's attention is necessarily in a state of permanent alert." See for Parent's comments on the complex: Claude Parent, "Scharoun Ou L'Espace Dynamique," *Aujourd'Hui: Art et Architecture* 57 (1967): 38-9 cited in Sander, "Slow Movement on the Slope," 81.

experience of the dwelling and habitation rather than solely taking the building as an object."[94] The Pavilion was so potent that in 2014, the curator of the Venice Biennale, Rem Koolhaas, dedicated a retrospective section to the portion of it, resuscitating its legacy.[95]

Figure 3.2. French Pavilion for the 35th Venice Biennale, Claude Parent, 1970.

Source: Gilles Ehrmann (photographer), "Série : 35e Biennale de Venise, pavillon Français, 1970," Ministère de la Culture - Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/22-528467-2C6NU0AYF5566.html (left photograph), https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/22-528470-2C6NU0AYF5S40.html (right photograph).

Although the pavilion's scale was negligible compared to Parent's urban oblique conceptualizations, the design exemplified the primary goals he aimed to achieve in *Vivre à L'Oblique.* However, according to Fullaondo, the small scale added to the programmatic simplicity, and Virilio's absence led to a reduced understanding of the oblique's universal tenets, which could not be possibly conceived with such a narrow scope.[96] Still, for an initial experiment of materializing the oblique, the pavilion illustrated more accurately the oblique concepts, such as "habitable circulation,"

[94] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 154.
[95] Rem Koolhaas and Claude Parent, "Ramp," in *Elements of Architecture,* eds. James Westcott and Stephan Petermann (Köln: Taschen, 2018), 50–73.
[96] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 173-4.

"mediated structures," and "topotonic elements," than the previously built projects on the oblique. It also drew significant influence from Parent's diagrammatic drawings at *Vivre à L'Oblique*, unlike the irreconcilable contrast between drawings in Architecture Principe and the church's final form. Despite its certain level of success, Giovannini reports that "critics and the government itself called it a failure."[97] This caused Parent and his work not to be seen again for decades internationally, contributing to the fading influence of the oblique.

1970 was also crucial for Parent to test his ideas on the urban scale with the construction of several shopping centers commissioned by Societe Anonyme Immobiliere des Grands Magasins d'Approvisionnement General (SAIGMAG). One of those projects was Centre Commercial in Sens (1968-1970) [Figure 3.3], which substantially shaped the subsequent development of oblique architecture and prefiguring upcoming projects. Bringing three inclined axes and "interlacing the oblique"[98] together, Parent formed a vibrant spine, benefitting from various heights and their connection with ramps, resembling an artificial hill. Jeanroy delineates the building as "a landscape, a relief emerging from the site."[99] In that sense, it praises the notion of a promenade and its integration with internal functions, an idea significantly inspired by Parent's former teacher, Le Corbusier. The building is considerably responsive to its urban context, connecting different parts of the site through its inclined axes reflected both in the interior and exterior topologically. These characteristics also remind Parent and Virilio's unbuilt project, Charleville Cultural Centre. In 1981, Parent commented on the project as the closest "built" and "used" example of the oblique function theory until that day.[100] Concerning the

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[97] Giovannini,"Claude Parent," 154.
[98] Jacques Lucan, "Introduction," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 5.
[99] Audrey Jeanroy, "Claude Parent: Commercial Center, Sens, 1968-1970," trans. the author, FRAC Centre, accessed May 22, 2024, https://collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/parent-claude/centre-commercial-sens-64.html?authID=143&ensembleID=370.
[100] Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique*, 75.

architectural form, it was successful in reaching the oblique's core objectives. However, functionally, it fell short of tackling the issues of 'oblique dwelling,' which is how people would live in a third urban order and oblique cities. Besides, it was highly criticized for its consumerist function, unintentionally politicizing the oblique, which was against Parent's philosophy.

Figure 3.3. Centre Commercial Sens, Claude Parent, Sens, 1968-1970.

Source: Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 176.

Despite controversies around it, these could not hold back Centre Commercial to prefigure Parent's upcoming urban projects. Basically, Centre Commercial, by connecting urban precincts, acted like a bridge with multiple axes.[101] In a series of

[101] Busbea (2007) refers to the quotation by Ragon (1986) to underline the concept of bridges in housing and dwelling: "The development of *unités d'habitation* of sufficient size and significance to constitute cities in and of themselves: buildings in the form of bridges; interchangeable containers [that] can circulate, fly, float; floating buildings; climatization of large spaces." Following this FRAC center comments on the idea of a bridge to unveil the trope of Parent in doing '*Les Ponts Urbains*: "Often present in experimental architecture in the 1960s, the bridge theme was favored by experimental architects as a way of freeing up space on the ground, thereby leaving it to nature or for use as circulation, as Yona Friedman did with the Spatial City (1958-1960) or like Paul Maymont's Hanging Bridges." See, respectively, Busbea, *Topologies,* 64; Michel Ragon. *Prospective Et Futurologie* (Paris: Casterman, 1986); "Les Ponts Urbains," FRAC Centre, accessed May 22, 2024, trans. author with the aid of Google Translate, https://collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/parent-claude/les-ponts-urbains-64.html?authID=143&ensembleID=371.

drawings revolving around the archetype of the bridge, Parent multiplied these axes and allocated dwelling units on them to create oblique cities. For instance, *Les Ponts Urbains III* (Urban Bridge) (1971) [Figure 3.4] was one of the drawings that used this overarching theme.[102] Parent composed the project with two layers, the first being the inclined axes acting like the main avenues and oblique dwelling modules located on these axes following the slopes of the underlying circulation. This amalgamation resulted in a "habitable circulation" and the dissolution of borders between private and public spaces. Besides, Parent always wanted a pedestrianized city, so the city must entail movement by decreasing distances and allowing free displacement where it is no longer a burden.[103] Armengaud reviews Parent's *Vivre à l'Oblique* in cities as such:

> Living obliquely, on the scale of a city, implies that cities will be built on inclined planes which must always respect the natural site and take advantage of it …These terraces also allow the construction of an artificial hilly landscape to walk through and live in...On the other hand, it means that the faces of the city become infrastructures and circulation spaces and implies a contraction of the city.[104]

Other drawings of this category, such as *La Colline* (1971), *Les Ondes (Ponts Urbains)* (1971), and *Les Ponts II (Les Villes-Ponts)* (1972), also bore common characteristics. Although these projects were successful as the precedents of the oblique function theory, shortly after the oil crisis of 1973-74, which exposed environmental concerns, megastructure applications were rendered too expensive

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[102] I explored this drawing more in detail in my article: Erpek and Dağlıoğlu, "The Oblique Function Theory," 153-4.
[103] Sander, "Slow Movement on the Slope", 79.
[104] Marc Armengaud, "Vivre à l'oblique – Claude Parent," trans. the author with the aid of Google Translate, Sous Les Jupes de la Metropole #2, accessed May 22, 2024, https://souslesjupesdelametropole.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/vivre-a-loblique-claude-parent/.

and wasteful to build.[105] Inevitably, these oblique cities became irrelevant and outdated despite being the best examples of oblique architecture.

Figure 3.4. *Les Ponts Urbains III* (Urban Bridge), drawn by Claude Parent, 1971.

Source: Retrieved from FRAC Centre Archives © Philippe Magnon.

[105] See: Zhongjie Lin, "Metabolist Utopias and Their Global Influence: Three Paradigms of Urbanism," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no.3 (March 2016): 605, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144216635169; Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

3.2 Oblique Dwellings

Parent also worked extensively on the oblique dwellings, a trend for him persisted from Architecture Principe. However, interestingly, he did not get any of their oblique houses built during his involvement with the group; thus, the gap created by the lack of experiments on living obliquely was still a fundamental concern for him. Some of the houses he worked on after were Maison Woog in Lake Geneva (1969-70), Maison Illes in Cap d'Antibes (1971-72), Maison Bellaguet in Neuilly-sur-Seine (Interior Design) (1971), and Villa Parent in Neilly-sur-Seine (1974), where only the latter two project was built. His protégés Jean Nouvel and François Seigneur, who worked in his office, also conceived an oblique dwelling, Maison Delbigot, in Villeneuve-sur-Lot (1970-73). In her article, "The Fonction Oblique through Domestic Ritual: Inhabiting the Utopia of Instability," Moreno analyzes how the oblique was utilized to create a novel scheme for dwelling, challenging the ground plane to enforce instability, disequilibrium, and discomfort. For her, the new oblique ground plane has the potential to "introduce a new spatiality in the future."[106] Virilio predicts that, in the future, "we will see completely oblique houses."[107] Perhaps this viewpoint was foregrounded because, in a world filled with dynamism, fluidity, and mobility, the flatness of the orthogonal forms is ill-suited to encourage bodily movements. Indeed, in 1974, sociologist Henri Lefebvre suggested that the house's "image of immobility" is replaced by "a complex of mobilities, a nexus in and out conduits" like water, gas, and electricity.[108] Metaphorically, this alteration in dwelling informed the oblique function theory and engendered the perspective that oblique dwelling would become an incubator of movement. Against these galore-changing paradigms, historian Barry Higman underlines that "the fundamental plane

[106] Moreno, "The Fonction Oblique," 42.
[107] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 41.
[108] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 92–3.

-the floor- remains defiantly flat."[109] This was the mindset of Architecture Principe, continued with Parent, that against the mobility paradigm and changing conditions, they thought it was implausible to preserve the same spatiality repeatedly.

In light, Parent first designed Maison Woog in Geneva, which would be located on the shores of Lake Geneva. The project was for Swiss millionaire Philippe Woog, who demanded stacked terraces that reached a height of fifteen meters from the ground level while integrating with the landscape.[110] Being one of the architects he consulted, Parent produced three unique schemes for the project, each exploring distinguished ways to organize oblique ground planes and relating them to topography. In Maison Woog No.1: Traditional [Figure 3.5], Parent designed a central spiral ramp taking its users from the ground to the peak of fifteen meters. According to Moreno, this echoes with Samarrah Mosque.[111] The central mass extends to the sides with additional oblique planes, merging the other programmatic elements and topography. By devising multidirectional oblique planes, Parent achieved a complex circulation scheme integrated with internal functions and exterior landscape based on "habitable circulation," establishing a fluid and mobile scheme not confined only within the building's envelope.[112] The other variations, No.2 Mobile and No.3 Double Ascension, also used the central organization. Yet, Parent removed the spiral ramp and configured them in different typologies. In No.2, he suspended an oblique mass from the ground and flanked inclined surfaces, creating a kind of tower. Meanwhile, in No. 3, he arranged stacked inclined planes one floor at another in the center, similar to previous oblique dwellings like Maison Mariotti. Despite neither of these proposals being built, they demonstrated the

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[109] Barry Higman, *Flatness* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017) cited by Yannis Zavoleas and Mark Taylor, "From Cartesian to Topological Geometry: Challenging Flatness in Architecture," *Nexus Network Journal* 21, no. 1 (2018): 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00004-018-0414-8.
[110] Claude Parent, "Woog Houses," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 45.
[111] Moreno, "The Fonction Oblique," 37.
[112] See for more details: Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique,* 130-3.

flexibility and diversity of oblique designs and alternative scenarios of living obliquely on a particular site.

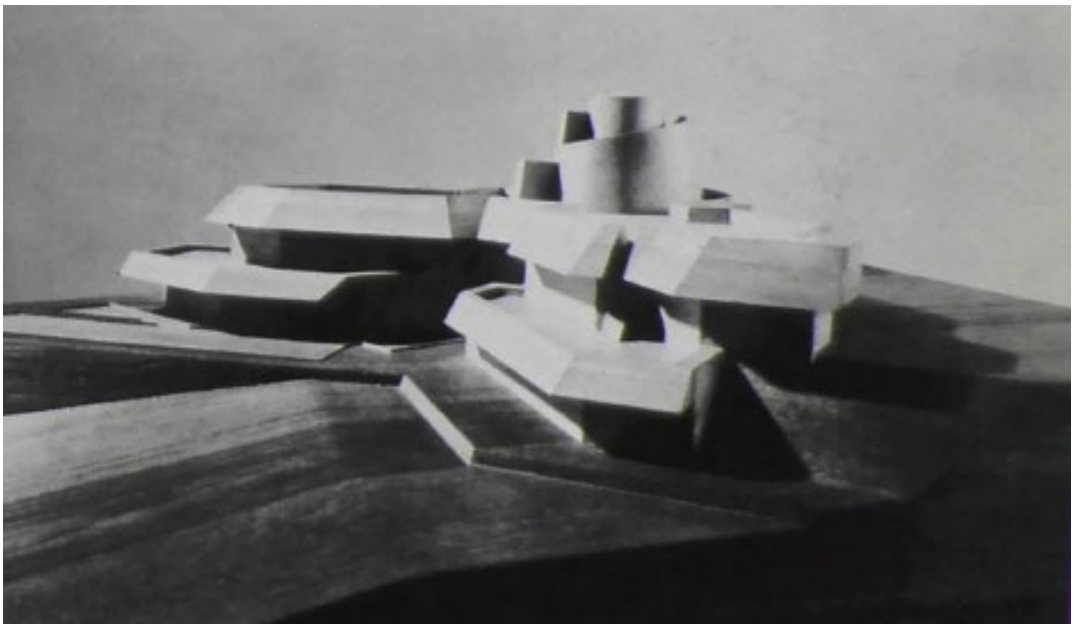

Figure 3.5. Maison Woog No.1: Traditional, Claude Parent, Geneva, 1969-1970.

Source: Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique*, 45.

Oblique dwellings continued with Maison Illes in Cap d'Antibes (1971-72). Jeanroy highlighted that the project was "little known and little documented."[113] It was a typical oblique house, where the oblique planes were used strategically to articulate interior spatial configuration and exterior landscape. The building stood on the ground as if sinking into the earth, reminding the decaying bunkers along the Atlantic Wall. Maison Illes drew significant formal and functional influence from Centre

[113] Audrey Jeanroy, "Maison Illès, Cap d'Antibes, 1971-1972," FRAC Centre, accessed June 15, 2024, trans. author, https://collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/parent-claude/maison-illes-cap-antibes-64.html?authID=143&ensembleID=372.

Commercial in Sens. Unfortunately, it shared the same faith with previous projects and ended up not being built.

The long-demanded empirical verification of oblique dwelling sprouted first with Instabilisateur Pendulaire, achieved with Parent's two projects: the interior design of Maison Bellaguet in Neuilly-sur-Seine (Interior Design) (1971) and Villa Parent in Neilly-sur-Seine (1974). Parent designed various inclined planes painted in different colors for the former, promoting open and flexible architecture by reinterpreting building components akin to the French Venice Pavilion, 1970. Giovannini illustrates that the unique aspect of the design was the involvement of painter Andre Bellaguet, who used the planes as his canvas, depicting an "illusionistic space" by emphasizing the obliquity even more dominantly.[114] However, there was no information on how life had gone on these oblique planes [Figure 3.6].

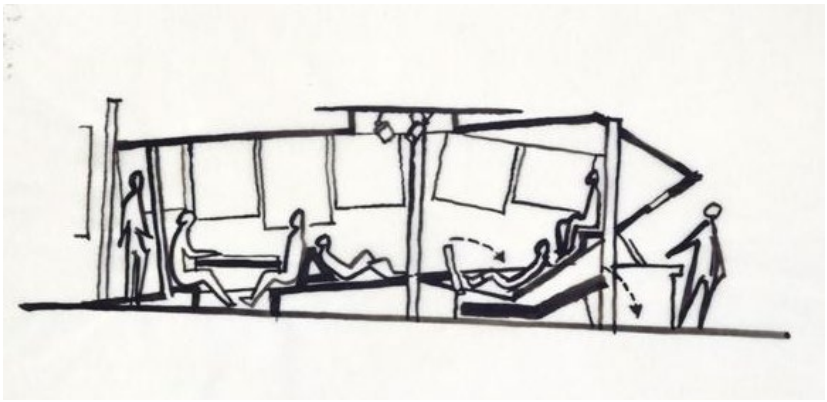

Figure 3.6. Maison Bellaguet, drawn by Claude Parent, 1971.

Source: Claude Parent, "Appartement Bellaguet," Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/13-518558-2C6NU0DWNK07.html, edited by the author.

[114] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 157.

Unlike Maison Bellaguet, Villa Parent illustrated how it felt to live on inclined planes since it was Parent's house and his family had lived there for decades. The building reflected the direct materialization of Parent's oblique thoughts that evolved through the years, ranging from neoplasticism to inclined variations. He also decided to add an intervention in 1999-2002, depicting his developed work on the oblique.[115] In 1974, he created a dynamic oblique floor, where each angled inclined plane incorporated a set of activities that were not exactly predefined. Without further change and functionally defined prefiguration, the inclined forms generate copious spatial possibilities, resulting in a polyvalence spatiality [Figures 3.7 and 3.8]. Hertzberger defines the term polyvalence as such:

> … a form that can be put to different uses without having to undergo changes itself, so that a minimal flexibility can still produce an optimal solution. … entails introducing the greatest number of spatial conditions that can play a part in every situation whatever the function and can simply be put to use on each new occasion.[116]

Living Obliquely, according to Parent, progressively affects the "state of mind" initially by "receptiveness, then by participation and ultimately by a sense of belonging."[117] Parent's daughter and the resident of Villa Parent, Chloé Parent, extolled the oblique dwelling, implying it was one of "the most dynamic, mobile, progressive, renewable, interactive, natural, and healthy way of living."[118] Rather than just about an incorporeal concept or an aesthetical scenography, the oblique

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[115] Check for the project's design process: "Réaménagement de la maison de Claude Parent, Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1952-2003," FRAC Centre, accessed June 15, 2024, https://collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/parent-claude/reamenagement-la-maison-claude-parent-neuilly-sur-seine-64.html?authID=143&ensembleID=782.
[116] Herman Hertzberger, "Polyvalence: The Competence of Form and Space with Regard to Different Interpretations," *Architectural Design* 84, no. 5 (2014): 109, https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.1816.
[117] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe: Potentialism," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 67.
[118] Chloé Parent, "Privilègiée," in *Claude Parent: L'oeuvre Construite/L'oeuvre Graphique,* eds. Frèdèric Migayrou and Francis Rambert, trans. the author (Orlèans: HYX, 2010), 17-8.

function theory makes the inhabitants rethink the usual ways of designing spaces, deploying a new relationship between users and space.[119] Consequentially, the novel oblique dwelling hypothesized in Villa Parent engenders an aberrant understanding of architecture for the zeitgeist, concentrating on the flexibility of the architectural program rather than the functional zonings.[120] This, *per se*, demonstrates that the oblique function theory aims to deconstruct the conventional architectural limits that the practice imposes and obliquely reconstruct them with a *sui generis* approach.

Figure 3.7. Oblique Living Room of Claude Parent's Home, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Claude Parent, 1973.

Source: Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, 211.

[119] See: Parent, "Privilègiée."
[120] This was a breakthrough from the functional zoning ideas of Le Corbusier, acquiring a fluid and non-standardized architectural program.

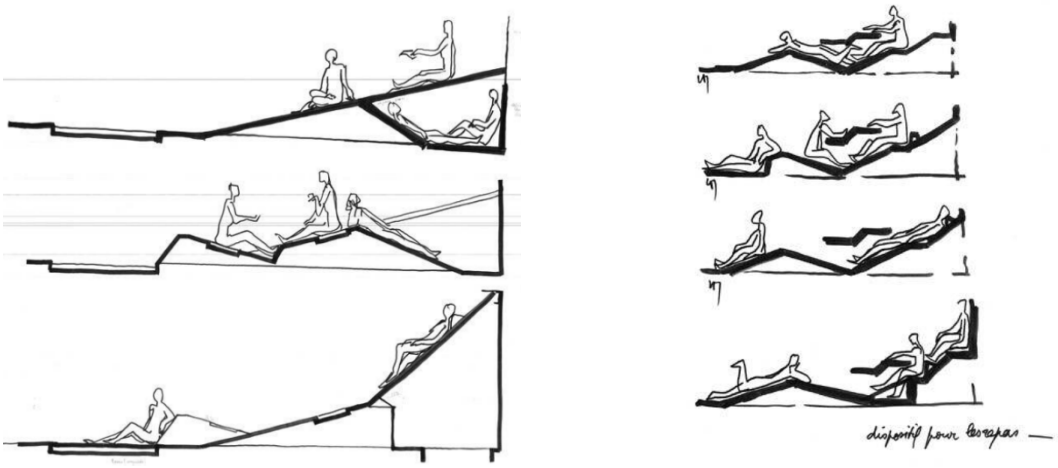

Figure 3.8. Inclined Variations in Claude Parent's Home, drawn by Claude Parent, 1973.

Source: Retrieved from Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine Claude Parent Fonds.

Although Parent culminated his ideas on a real-life project, his work on oblique housing majorly failed to influence a broader audience because of the polemical condition of the oblique. Consequently, it could not have become a potent typology in architectural history and theory, with only a few built examples to date. One of those examples was Maison Delbigot, in Villeneuve-sur-Lot (1970-73) by Jean Nouvel and François Seigner alongside Roland Baltèra, the first project built on the oblique function theory without directly including either Parent or Virilio.[121] Nouvel describes the project:

> A house buries itself in the ground to forget its neighbors… The House turns into landscape and disappears beneath the plant assailing it.[122]

[121] I selected this project since it vividly illuminates the connection between Nouvel's architecture and the oblique function theory. Nouvel always pays tribute to Parent, exalting him as one of the main pillars that prefigures contemporary architecture.
[122] Jean Nouvel, "Maison Delbigot," Ateliers Jean Nouvel, accessed June 15, 2024, https://www.jeannouvel.com/en/projects/maison-delbigot/.

The scale of all these oblique housing projects did not match Parent's urban drawings. However, as Moreno underlines, nevertheless, Parent utilized the same inclisite element to fuse living and movement in these dwellings, which appears "linear" and "infinite" in urban schemes.[123] By adjusting the number of inclined planes, their varied angles, and lengths, Parent achieved different scales and programs. Along with exploiting the inclined planes as they are, he also designed 'oblique modules/capsules' as he did with Virilio in *Les Inclisites*. However, not until his proposal "Inclipan" [Figure 3.9] alongside Pierre Aïoutz and Irene Labeyrie for the sixth Programme Architecture Nouvelle (New Architecture Program) (1974) did he detail these modules and precisely define their architectural space.[124] The program asked for urban housing alternatives, where the Parent's team multiplied oblique living units while adjusting their inclinations to provide a hill-like complex. Despite not aligning himself with the other architects and approaches of the era, Parent's design had commonalities with Yona Friedman, Archigram, and Metabolism's capsules coming together in clusters to create a greater architectural scheme. [125] Yet, Inclipan had apparent differences, and there was no universal structure. For French proposals in this category, Busbea described that these structures were made out of space frames, allowing the flexibility of fabricated modules while ensuring a top-down scheme designed by the architect. For Busbea,

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[123] Moreno, "The Fonction Oblique," 43.

[124] For more information on Programme Architecture Nouvelle, see: "PAN - Programme Architecture Nouvelle (1972-1987)," Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture, last modified July 30, 2018, https://www.urbanisme-puca.gouv.fr/pan-programme-architecture-nouvelle-1972-1987-a736.html?lang=fr. See for the project: Audrey Jeanroy, "Programme Architecture Nouvelle, Inclipan, 1974," FRAC Centre, trans. the author, accessed May 22, 2024, https://collections.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/parent-claude/programme-architecture-nouvelle-inclipan-64.html?authID=143&ensembleID=790.

[125] This design process resembles the ideogram of Metabolist architecture. Monacelli acutely illuminates the pertinent relationship between the oblique function theory and Metabolism, constituting an epistemological development from Modernism to Metabolism, marking the oblique approach as the mediator. In addition, according to FRAC Centre archives, Parent's former partner, Ionel Schein, significantly predefined Metabolism with his cyborg architecture before Kurokawa's capsule habitat in 1970 at the Osaka World Fair, promoting new typologies like hotel guest pods and mobile libraries. See: Monacelli, "Claude Parent."

Architecture Principe's approach was an "anti-space frame."[126] We can assume that this was because there was no macro structure dictating an order but rather an emergent relationship between micro parts unfolding differently in each case based on inclinations, creating the whole organically. This distinguished character echoes more with Moshe Safdie's Habitat 67 in Montréal (1967).

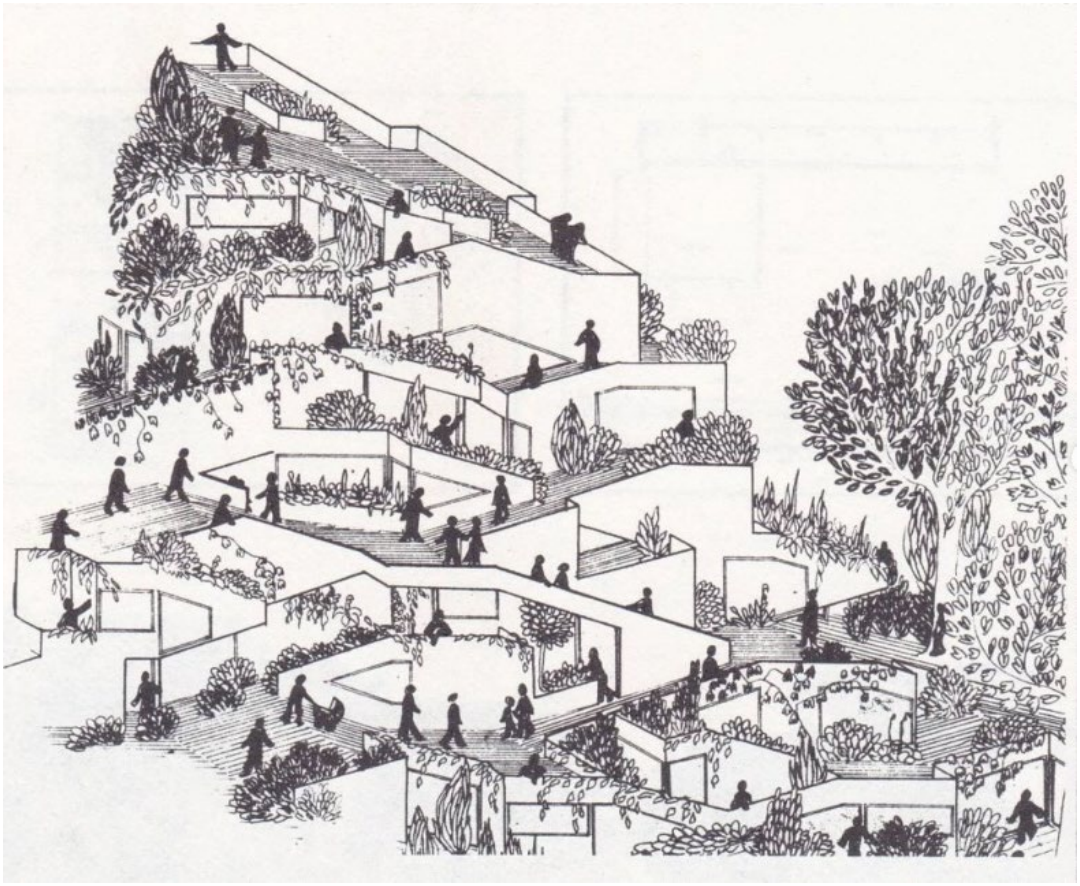

Figure 3.9. Inclipan, Sixth Programme Architecture Nouvelle (PAN), Claude Parent, Pierre Aïoutz and Irene Labeyrie, 1974.

Source: Migayrou and Rambert, *Claude Parent*: *L'oeuvre Construite/L'oeuvre Graphique,* 274.

[126] Busbea, *Topologies*.

While designing with the oblique, Parent emphasized the correlation of the upper and lower surfaces. For him, the upper surface accommodates public circulation and functions, while the lower isolates the private dwelling units.[127] Due to the mediator role of inclined planes, these two interrelate with each other continuously without any strict border, ensuring "habitable circulation." Following *Les Inclisites*, Inclipan outlines how these two distinct surfaces could potentially coexist seamlessly and harmoniously, which is much more architecturally detailed than *Les Inclisites*. In his drawing, *Surface de l'oblique (1972-74),* Parent continues studying the flow between public and private "surfaces" by juxtaposing multidirectional oblique planes. Here, he creates mezzanines, courtyards, and galleries to accurately demonstrate how such an oblique architecture could be materialized concerning the complexities of the architectural program and spatial quality. Profoundly, this idea of bringing together opposites smoothly showcases a topological understanding, exploring how the distinguished parts of the mutual whole can interrelate with each other.

Until now, I examined two dominant approaches that Parent embraced in materializing his oblique dwellings: first, using the inclined planes as they are and experimenting with their relations, and second, creating oblique modules and multiplying them.[128] Thirdly, he devised gigantic oblique structures that reminded him of his utopian drawings like *Les Vagues*, which he aspired to integrate with existing orthogonal architectures. Although Parent did not design such a dwelling except in drawings, he developed an unbuilt office called Immeuble de Bureaux in Libreville (1973) [Figure 3.10], where a gigantic inclined plane created an artificial

[127] Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique*, 47.
[128] Even though Parent had a chance to merely conceive building scale oblique projects instead of urban scale between 1963-1975, the oblique function theory with and without its foundational interlocutor Virilio is autochthonously a synecdoche which explains the whole systematic intention just with simple usage of the inclined landscape. Within that sense, it is scaleless and limitless.

landscape converged with two orthogonal office blocks. [129] Parent utilized the inclined plane's role as a mediating element between the urban circulation and the internal functions of the office blocks, imbuing the "habitable circulation" and "the mediate city." Besides, we see the strategies Parent developed in *Architecture Principe No.1: The Oblique Function*, under the chapter entitled "Dominating the Site": [130]

- leave behind existing towns and promote the creation of new urban communities
- dominate the site, become the equivalent of a natural relief
- change its dimensions, become an artificial relief, landscape

The distinguished aspect of the project was its stark contrast between the artificial landscape created by the inclined plane and the office blocks. Here, we recognize Parent's attempt to design the formal conflict between solidity and fluidity, a concept he engaged more later in his manifesto, *Errer dans l'illusion,* in 2003.[131] This understanding reflected Parent's dichotomic mindset since the orthogonal mass intersects with the oblique landscape, where the orthogonal orthodoxies that he had to study in Ecole des Beaux-Arts and under Le Corbusier and the oblique function theory collide and battle with each other, engendering a constant anathema.[132] However, Parent still defines the emergent encounter as a fierce productive dialogue

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[129] The project influenced many by the creation of an artificial landscape, allowing nature to mediate with the architecture.
[130] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.1: Dominating the Site," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), IV.
[131] Claude Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion.*
[132] Parent thoroughly examines the fruitful confrontation between orthogonal architecture subsuming horizontal and vertical orders through a set of drawings and subtexts in his book *Coléres*. There, he intends to alter the unwieldy traditions of architecture, promoting aberrant oblique as a tool to reformulate the prevailing paradigm. See: Claude Parent, *Coléres* (Michel Schedef Èditions, 1982).

and mentions that the oblique function theory left its "splendid theoretical isolation" by this.[133]

Figure 3.10. Immeuble de Bureaux, Architectural Model, Claude Parent, Libreville, 1973.

Source: Retrieved from FRAC Centre Archives © François Lauginie.

3.3 The Decline and Fall of the Oblique Architecture

Against the already established hostility towards the oblique function theory, Parent endeavored to recuperate its influence between 1970 and 73 by re-disseminating its legacy in architectural and public media through exhibitions, conferences, and urban displays. His works in oblique dwellings, in addition to his urban speculative drawings during these years, played a significant role, and they substantially enhanced the previous oblique theories, themes, and concepts of the Architecture

[133] Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique*, 165.

Principe group. However, unlike Architecture Principe's international presentation, these works, except the French Pavilion at Venice and a few brief appearances, were only showcased within France to a much smaller audience group, evincing the diminishing influence of oblique architecture. The following selected exhibitions and urban displays fall under this category. In 1970, Parent showcased his work at l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'architecture et des Arts Visuels de Bruxelles with the masthead Claude Parent Architecture Oblique Imagination ou Utopie? (Claude Parent Architecture Oblique Imagination or Utopia?). The exhibition's main poster presented the oblique city drawing Parent made under the Architecture Principe group, *Turbosite III- Un Cratére* (1966). This testified that, outside of France, Parent was still known for his work in the group. Subsequently, in 1971, Parent organized an exhibition in Maison de la Culture de Nevers entitled Urbanisme Architecture: Claude Parent La Fonction Oblique (Urban Architecture: Claude Parent The Oblique Function). According to the archival legend on the exhibition's poster residing at Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, the presented material on *5 cours sur l'architecture et l'urbanisme contemporains* (5 courses on contemporary architecture and urban planning) laid the groundwork for Parent's lesser-known book, *Cinq Réflexions sur l'architecture* (1972).[134] Following these, in 1972, he arranged a convention at the Toulouse Cultural Center, concentrating on the oblique function theory's manifestation and living obliquely. At last, in 1973, he demonstrated oblique as a *Cadre de Vie*, meaning living medium in Maison de la Culture de D'Amiens.

Aside from exhibition posters, there is not much information in archives regarding these exhibitions. Therefore, how the audience received the presented oblique outputs and the exhibition's direct implications on the oblique architecture's future

[134] Claude Parent, "Document AJ-29-07-08-05," 8 June - 31 July 1971, PARCL-A-2, Claude Parent Fonds, Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine, accessed July 11, 2024, https://archiwebture.citedelarchitecture.fr/archive/resultats/simple/n:153?RECH_S=AJ-29-07-08-05.&RECH_TYP=and&type=simple.

are unknown. However, we can imply that they did not elicit much interest from national or international circles since they were not mentioned or recognized in academic and architectural sources. More than these exhibitions, Parent's unprecedented method of disseminating his ideas through advertisements, mainly on urban displays, such as billboards, was recognized. These urban displays, which included a drawing of an oblique city -not from Architecture Principe years, though- alongside a written 'manifesto' note by Parent, were installed in 1972 at various locations in Paris. Giovannini described this process as Parent embarking on a "public cultural campaign."[135] One of these urban displays was located in Rue Marignan, entitled "Troisième Affichage Urbain" (Third Urban Display) [Figure 3.11], derived from the concept of "third urban order." The manifesto note by Parent read as follows:

> Tomorrow the city ... People who live in the suburbs say that you live in the cities that you hate... Answer no! Or they say that the architects are happy to build these houses in the desert...It's not true! Break this misunderstanding. Demand that nature enter your city. Out of the pavement, the tar, the cement... Plant! Your city is the balance between trees and concrete, between jumping and protection.[136]

Next to this text was a drawing by Parent showing a quintessential composition of inclined planes and their flow on the topography, visually demonstrating how the oblique could bring nature by integrating it into cities. Despite all these nuanced efforts by Parent to elucidate why the oblique order was necessary to water down the problems of the era, the oblique failed to be embraced by the public and architectural

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[135] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 155.

[136] The original text by Parent written on the third urban display: 'Demain la ville ... Habitant des banlieues on dit que tu habites les villes que tu mierites... Repondo non! Ou le dit que les architectes sout satisfaito de construine ces casermes dans des deserto...C'est faux! Brise ce quiproquo. Exige que la nature penetre daus ta ville. Daus le pave, le goudron, le ciment... Plante! Ta Ville, c'est l'equilibre eutre les arbres et le beton entre la saute et la protection.' Translated by the author with the aid of DeepL. There could be mistakes in the text, because of hand-written parts were hard to identify.

circles. This marked the start of the oblique's fall in 1975, which had already been declining after the dissociation of the Architecture Principe group.[137]

Figure 3.11. Troisième Affichage Urbain (Third Urban Display), Claude Parent, Rue de Marignan, Paris 8e, 1972-1973.

Source: Retrieved from Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine Claude Parent Fonds.

There were several reasons we can identify leading to this consequence. Firstly, both Architecture Principe and Parent's oblique architecture tried to be a panacea only through architectural form despite being more responsive to real-life conditions in the latter. This was also highlighted by Lefebvre, who criticized Virilio's oblique work as being too "formalist." Indeed, as architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri

[137] For a detailed account of the oblique's disappearance, see: Erpek and Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Disappearance of the Oblique Function Theory," 97.

postulates, the architectural form inevitably becomes "a regressive utopia," a static structure reducing the "city's open structure."[138] Against the complexity of the city's social, political, and cultural structure, the oblique form *per se* was incapable of fulfilling the expectations, which also went for other avant-garde approaches based solely on form. In the climate of the 1968 May student movements, it was hard for the top-down oblique form to find correspondence in society, a conflict leading to a break-up between Virilio and Parent.

Secondly, due to technological and economic inadequacies, it was nearly impossible to construct the oblique forms as precisely as manifested in Architecture Principe magazine and Parent's drawings. Due to these, all examples of oblique from Architecture Principe and Parent were restricted to small-scale applications, partially reflecting the manifesto's ideals. Architectural researcher Zhongjie (Jeffrey) Lin argues that the materialization of megastructures in the real world does not fulfill the "theoretical promises."[139] Against this backdrop, the oblique megastructures and their practical applications developed a gap between theory and practice, resulting in the downfall of oblique architecture.

Moreover, the oil crisis between 1973 and 1974 and the evolving consciousness of climate change exposed megastructures to harsh criticism, which led to their popularity fading among architects, as Lin outlines.[140] Banham also criticized megastructures as "dinosaurs of modern movement" with few examples proving their incongruity.[141] Startlingly, Parent did not recognize the departure of his colleagues and discipline from megastructures and continued designing mega oblique cities even if it was on paper. This closedness of outer influences came from the Architecture Principe manifesto's rigid structure inherited from the "manifesto"

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[138] Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigi La Penta (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976), 42.
[139] Lin, "Metabolist Utopias and Their Global Influence: Three Paradigms of Urbanism," 605.
[140] Lin, 605.
[141] Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*.

culture. According to architectural historian Craig Buckley, manifestos are uncompleted projects that their architects "chase for years before being conceived in built form."[142] Since Parent's project could not fulfil his and Virilio's expectations concerning the practical reification of their ideas in the Architecture Principe manifesto, he followed the same path of the oblique until the day he died. These ideas froze in time when the manifesto was completed; therefore, they did not change and were not open to outer influence, eventually damaging the oblique form's plausibility against shifting paradigms, isolating and reducing it. For instance, Parent never dealt with other architectural approaches having similar qualities to the oblique architecture, such as 'oblique' works of French architects Jean Renaduie and Renée Gailhoustet, like the redevelopment of the Ivry-sur-Seine town center and Bruno Zevi's concept of Organicism.[143]

Despite his oblique ideas being ignorant of the changing conditions, Parent realized that he had to produce architectural projects to generate revenue, which was impossible with the oblique. During those years, the French government and its power utility, Electricité de France, against the oil crisis, searched for new energy alternatives to compensate for the energy deficit. They opted for nuclear power and hired architects to design new plants. Parent was one of those architects who previously decided to shift his primary attention to other architectural endeavors, relegating oblique architecture to a secondary occupation. However, more than Parent's decision, the diminishing reputation of his work sparked the oblique's disappearance. According to Giovannini, added to the shopping malls that took many criticisms from leftists, the nuclear power plants caused Parent's reputation to hit more bottom.[144] This conclusive reaction amplified and consolidated the already

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[142] Craig Buckley, "After the Manifesto," in *After the Manifesto*, ed. Craig Buckley (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
[143] See for the concept of organicism: Bruno Zevi, *Towards an Organic Architecture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1950).
[144] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 161.

developing anathema, prohibiting both Parent and his oblique architecture from being realized in the mainstream urban and architectural realm for decades.

Between 1975 and 1996, Parent's oblique architecture faced marginalization, which only Francophone architectural circles recognized. During these years, few French publications on the oblique and Parent appeared. These documents were overlooked because of the condition of the oblique in those years. Yet, they provided the overall and acute picture of Parent and Virilio's oblique function theory and its applications before 1975, which was missing in the literature, enriching the oblique understanding and framework. In 1981, Parent published an anthological reference book, *Entrelacs de l'oblique* (Interlacing the Oblique), dedicated to his oblique works between 1963 and 1975, with a few drawing additions from his latest projects.[145] There, Parent reevaluated his projects with a refreshed viewpoint while comprising previously unseen architectural drawings and models. In addition to *Entrelacs de l'oblique*, architectural critic Michel Ragon's publication *Claude Parent: Monographie Critique d'un Architecte* in 1982 also contributed substantially to the oblique's understanding, showcasing the unknown sides of Parent's thought process and the oblique's development through the years.[146] It is essential to mention these two documents since, in the 1990s, when many contemporary architects revisited the oblique, they allowed these architects to connect their work with the oblique and comprehend its influence.

Aside from these two publications and Parent's few drawings -which were at a sketch level rather than a project- nothing salient was produced regarding the oblique architecture. This claim could only be made from the perspective of Parent's oblique architecture since new architects were appearing in the international scenery with similar approaches. As many architectural researchers enlightened, the oblique

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[145] Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique.*
[146] Michel Ragon, *Claude Parent: Monographie Critique d'un Architecte* (Paris: Éditions Dunod, 1982).

function theory and its outputs resemble the works done under deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism. Among others, Giovannini, Leach, and Ockman illuminate the association of the oblique function theory to deconstructivism by demystifying how the theory's concepts evolved into deconstructivism.[147] Meanwhile, Moretti, Schramke, Virilio, and others elucidate through the framework of topology how the oblique drew parallels with digital applications of folding in architecture after the digital turn in the 1990s.[148] By emphasizing topology and its applications with and on the ground, landscape urbanism is also inspired by the oblique function theory in proposing a new architectural and urban morphology, as Bideau, Ruby, and Simonot revealed.[149] Despite these academic works, to this day, there has been no unequivocal research bringing together the distinct evolution of oblique along the trajectory of deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism. By this methodology of comparing different accounts of the oblique, I seek to understand how, from a mutual root, the understanding of the oblique in architecture sprouted new theories, themes, and concepts. Besides, deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism have copious literature and research, while the oblique has scant. Exploiting the existing research will assist us in providing a more comprehensive picture and understanding of the oblique.

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[147] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 138; Neil Leach, "Virilio and Architecture," 74; Ockman and Eigen, *Architecture Culture*, 409.
[148] Moretti, "The Oblique Condition," 6-7; Schramke,"3D Code," 118-9; Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39.
[149] Ruby, "Informed Surfaces," 73-5; Bideau,"Grounding Space," 70-3; Simonot, "Claude Parent," 162-70.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEMPORARY OBLIQUE ARCHITECTURE

> The immediate disappearance of the oblique dwelling [architecture], or its rejection with comments such as Julien Gracq's "le diable c'est l'oblique" (the devil is the oblique) confirm the logical lack of synchronicity between the innovative proposals and their scant assimilation by the society to which they were formulated.[150]

For many decades, the oblique architecture of Parent and Virilio transpired as petty, having ineffectual reflections on contemporary architectural discourse and theory. Parent's attempts to reclaim the oblique architecture between 1968 and 1975 ultimately failed to suspend the hostility highlighted by Moreno in her quotation above. Parent and Virilio's obstinate comprehension of the Architecture Principe manifesto and its ideals, not changing and engaging with ongoing transformations in architectural paradigms enough, alienated their theory from mainstream architecture even more. Giovannini narrates that Parent tried to introduce the oblique function theory to the Architectural Association's director of the time, Alvin Boyarsky, yet could not produce any results since Boyarsky pointed out the pictures of Zaha Hadid's work and implied that they already have diagonals so why they would need the oblique.[151] According to Giovannini, the period was a "long-maintained official blind spot," highlighting the reticent position against the oblique.[152] Indeed, apparently, deconstructivism, which uses oblique lines and inclined planes, has much in common with oblique. However, its initial presentation at MoMA's Deconstructivist Architecture Exhibition and its catalog in 1988 did not mention

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[150] Moreno, "La Fonction Oblique," 41.
[151] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 164.
[152] Giovannini.

anything about the oblique but instead utilized words like "tilted" or "angled."[153] We can argue that the oblique's disappearance happened due to reciprocal factors: Parent and Virilio's rigid and irreconcilable theories and the resistance of prominent architectural circles to recept it.

Oblique's approximately 30 years of obscurity started to fade away in the 1990s, with exhibitions organized by Frédéric Migayrou, who was working with Parent then. Migayrou was the director of the FRAC Center in Orléans. According to Giovannini, Migayrou collected many drawings of Parent and exhibited them on various occasions in the 1990s.[154] The series of events introduced Parent's oblique architecture to a new generation of architects dealing with similar forms, including but not limited to Odile Decq, Bernard Tschumi, Greg Lynn, Hani Rashid, and many others.[155] In an interview with Giovannini, Bernard Tschumi implied that even though he did not develop his architectural approach being conscious of the oblique function theory, he later recognized that it was the precursor of many ideas shaping the architecture of the 1990s.[156] However, neither of these architects outlined how the oblique function theory informed their architectural approach, highlighting a gap in the study of the oblique architecture's trajectory. Due to this, the theory's influence on the subsequent styles and avant-garde figures latently remained in an obscured state of limbo.

Despite not precisely clarifying how the oblique function theory became fundamental for contemporary architecture, Migayrou's exhibitions, which gathered these architects, sparked a huge interest. 1996 was a milestone for the revival of the oblique function theory, encompassing a series of international events that aimed to

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[153] Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, ed. James Leggio (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988).
[154] Joseph Giovannini and Bernard Tschumi, "Claude Parent - Visionary Architect", filmed June 2019 at Rizzoli Bookstore, New York, NY, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQJJdbptvbk.
[155] Joseph Giovannini, "Remembering Claude Parent," Architect, last modified March 2, 2016, https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/remembering-claude-parent_o.
[156] Giovannini and Tschumi, "Claude Parent - Visionary Architect."

reclaim the theory. Under the guidance of architect Mohsen Mostafavi, the Architectural Association, which previously ignored the oblique function theory, published a book, *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio 1963-1969*, collated texts and interviews on the oblique from Claude Parent, Paul Virilio, Jacques Lucan, and Frédéric Migayrou.[157] The publication was followed by the organization of the French Pavilion in Venice, curated by Migayrou with the company of Claude Parent, Odile Decq, and Benoît Cornette.[158] A special book, *BLOC: Le Monolithe Fracturé*, was also published for the occasion.[159] Lastly, in 1996, the Architecture Principe manifesto magazine's original nine issues of 1966 were translated into English and German and republished, along with the tenth issue dedicated to the 30th year of the magazine. The tenth issue featured texts written by Claude Parent, Paul Virilio, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Daniel Liebskind, Bernard Tschumi, François Seigneur, and Jean Nouvel (among others).[160] Notwithstanding, this productive spate of 1996 could not consolidate the oblique's relevance in architectural circles. Since more than engaging with the relationship between the Parent and Virilio's oblique architecture and their contemporary reflections, these acted like a mere tribute to their work, only accepting their efforts in developing paraphernalia of concepts such as the inclined, tilted, and skewed.

In 2010, Migayrou and Francis Rambert's retrospective exhibition and an archival book, *Claude Parent: L'ouevre Construite/L'ouevre Graphique* with the collaboration of Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, coalesced the whole oblique *oeuvre*.[161] Although it also did not affiliate Parent's oblique architecture to contemporary architecture that much, providing a reference book allowed further

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[157] Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969,* ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996).
[158] For more information, see: Giovannini, "Claude Parent.", 161-3.
[159] Frédéric Migayrou, *BLOC: Le Monolithe Fracturé* (Orléans: HYX, 1996).
[160] Paul Virilio et al., "Architecture Principe: Disorientation or Dislocation," in *Architecture Principe: 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), 152–92.
[161] Frèdèric Migayrou and Francis Rambert eds., *Claude Parent: L'oeuvre Construite/L'oeuvre Graphique* (Orlèans: HYX, 2010).

inquiry into this affiliation. Following it was the 2014 Venice Pavilion by Rem Koolhaas, where a section was dedicated to the ramps of the theory.[162] At last, in 2019, SCI-Arc's exhibition on Claude Parent's visionary drawings was presented to a broader audience.[163]

These were some of the international events I have selected to put forward the bereft of an unequivocal theoretical framework for contemporary oblique architecture, also showing how it gained a significant interest after the 1990s. Among others, these events foregrounded rather a fragmented understanding of the oblique, *tout court* epitomizing what oblique function theory was instead of what it is and will be. However, they also referenced other scholarly publications where researchers illustrated the oblique function theory's reflections on contemporary architecture. Using these references alongside academic publications derived from them, we can unfold the overt line of thoughts the oblique function theory influenced more comprehensively: deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism. Revealing the oblique nexus also explains why the oblique function theory was revived after being in obscurity for so long. Methodologically, by engaging with deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism's theoretical, epistemological, and practical tenets through oblique discourse, we can acquire a synchronous resonation of architectural reifications under mutual positions of oblique architecture.

4.1 Oblique Architecture and Deconstructivism

> His approach [the oblique function theory] fractured form, fluid space, dynamic disequilibrium, speed, habitable topographies- prefigured Deconstructivism by a generation.[164]

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[162] Koolhaas and Parent, "Ramp," 50-73.
[163] Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019).
[164] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 138.

In 1988, architect Philip Johnson, as the lead curator, alongside architect Mark Wigley, associate curator, curated the Deconstructivist Architecture Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For the occasion, Johnson and Wigley gathered the works of seven architects: Frank Gehry's Gehry House (1978-1988), Daniel Libeskind's City Edge (1987), Rem Koolhaas's Apartment Building and Observation Tower (1982), Peter Eisenman's Biocenter for the University of Frankfurt (1987), Zaha Hadid's The Peak (1982), Coop Himmelb(l)au's Rooftop Remodeling (1985), Apartment Building (1986), Skyline (1985), and Bernard Tschumi's Parc de le Villette (1982-1985). These projects happened to come together because of their "similar approaches with very similar forms as an outcome," as described by Johnson.[165] By utilizing tilted planes, fractured forms, and skewed lines, these projects were highly inspired by Russian Constructivism, yet they did not define either a style or were restricted to seven architects, according to Wigley.[166] He added that deconstructivism challenged traditional architectural intentions, such as constructing a pure form through harmonious, rhythmic, and coherent order.[167] Although not emphasized in the exhibition's catalog, deconstructivism also drew significant inspiration from Kazmir Malevich's Suprematism and Neo-Plasticism by Theo Van Doesburg, like the oblique function theory. In general, deconstructivism interrogated the atavistic heritage of architecture that established a static and indisputable structural order through deviational disruptions and dislocations, aiming to free architecture from the repressive limits of its discourse, theory, and praxis. Tschumi explained his viewpoint on architecture in those years, which could also be related to the deconstructivist aim despite his rejection of the label:[168]

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[165] Philip Johnson, "Preface," in *Deconstructivist Architecture,* ed. James Leggio (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 7.
[166] Mark Wigley, "Deconstructivist Architecture," in *Deconstructivist Architecture,* ed. James Leggio (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 10-20.
[167] Wigley, "Deconstructivist Architecture."
[168] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 253.

> …the design of conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way.[169]

According to architectural critic Neil Leach, deconstructivism was foreseen by Parent and Virilio's oblique function theory, which, through the example of Tschumi he highlighted both challenged "the hegemony of concepts such as rectilinearity, order, symmetry, and compositional hierarchy, some of the basic tenets of traditional architectural aesthetics."[170] By reinterpreting the architectonic elements -floors, walls, roofs- and freeing them from architectural prescriptions, the oblique function theory had already entailed a breakthrough from architectural limits long before deconstructivism. Despite having solid commonalities, deconstructivist architects were indifferent to the oblique function theory at the time of the exhibition. This was proven by missing the oblique name in their work and the exhibition catalog. Eventually, although the angled planes breaking the orthogonality of architecture on a form basis were similar, their practical applications and theoretical frameworks were distinguished. For example, glossing over a few exceptions like Daniel Libeskind's City Edge project, the presented deconstructivist outputs exploited angled planes to achieve a visual dynamism rather than proposing a scheme allowing people to use them directly, like moving. Indeed, one of the featured "deconstructivist" architects, Frank Gehry, retrospectively remarked that Claude Parent and he "shared an obsession with movement but differed in their approach."[171] For example, Parent's French Venice Pavilion (1970) and Gehry's Gehry House (1978-88) differ in materializing and organizing the movement through inclined planes. In the former, we see various angled floors, which Lucan describes as the "tangible sign" of the oblique function theory [Figure 4.1].[172] The floor is flat

[169] Tschumi, 259.
[170] Leach, "Virilio and Architecture," 74.
[171] Frank Gehry, "Claude Parent," in *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019), 17.
[172] Lucan, " Introduction," 5.

in the latter, but the building envelope is tilted, achieving visual dynamism rather than tactile [Figure 4.2].

Figure 4.1. French Pavilion for the 35th Venice Biennale, Claude Parent, 1970.

Source: Gilles Ehrmann (photographer), “Série : 35e Biennale de Venise, pavillon Français, 1970,” Ministère de la Culture - Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/22-528471-2C6NU0AYF5QSZ.html.

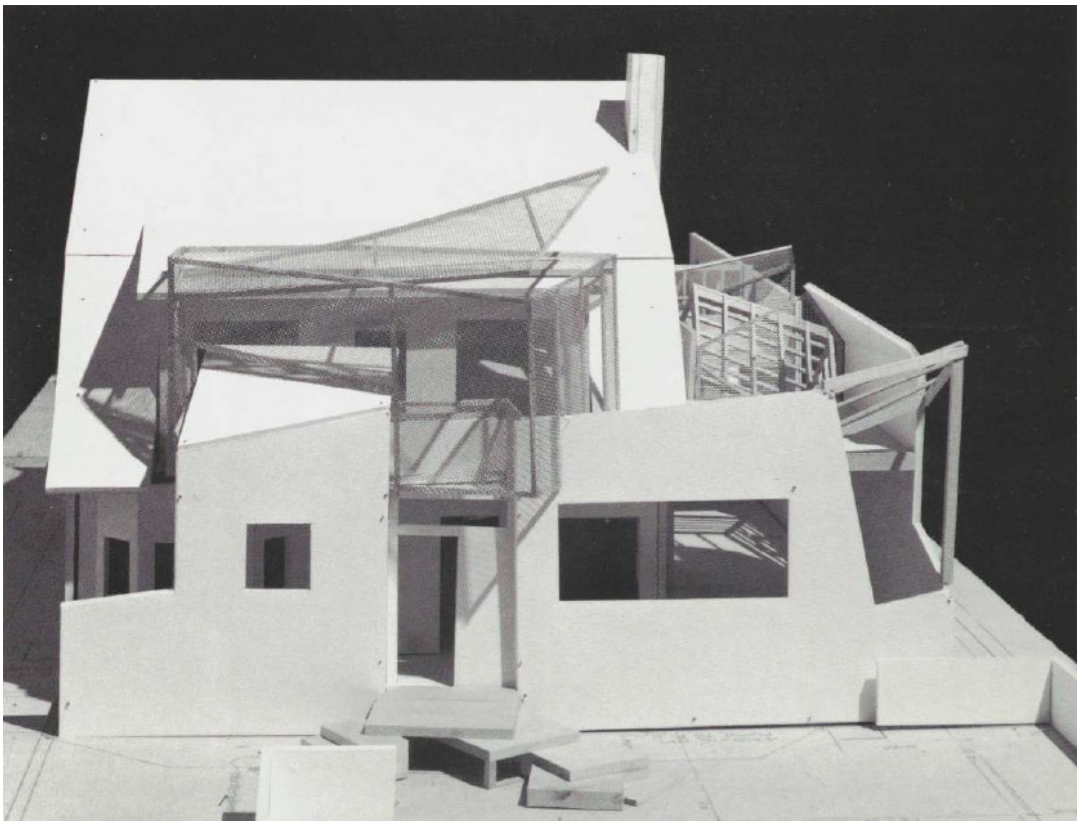

Figure 4.2. Gehry Residence, Frank Gehry, Santa Monica, 1978-1988.

Source: Johnson and Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 25.

Another perceivable difference between the oblique function theory and deconstructivism was the number, direction, and complexity of oblique forms used in projects. In deconstructivist projects, architects utilized non-linear compositions with a myriad of multidirectional lines and planes conflicting with each other in numerous ways [Figure 4.3]. This was due to the domestication of computer technologies and the rise of cheap processing power in that period, sprouting computer-aided drafting and modeling in the architectural profession.[173] Despite

[173] See for a more detailed history of computers and their introduction to architecture: Mario Carpo, *The Digital Turn in Architecture: 1992-2012* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013).

some of Parent's drawings also illustrating non-linear compositions prior, these projects remained on paper due to undeveloped technology. Even there, the drawings' complexity was no match for deconstructivist projects since designing the complex intersection of multidimensional architectural elements was impossible back then. Besides, the materialization of such architecture was unimaginable, so Parent and Virilio had to simplify their oblique compositions, constructing them with a few amalgamating oblique planes with restricted options to interrelate [Figure 4.4]. As a result, unlike deconstructivism, the lack of technological and computational tools prevented Parent and Virilio from showcasing and reifying their ideas precisely as in their aimed visions.

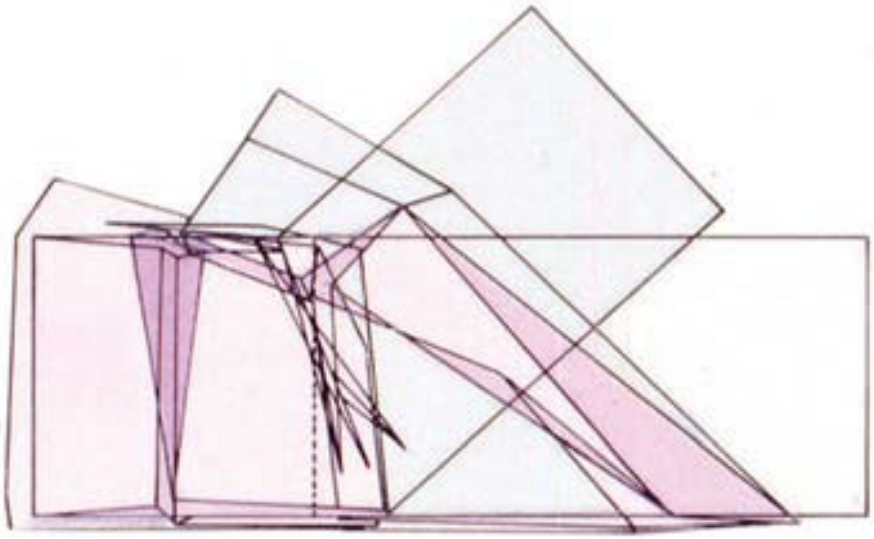

Figure 4.3. Alteka Office Building, diagram by Eisenman Architects, Tokyo, 1991.

Source: Carpo, *The Digital Turn in Architecture*, 21. © Peter Eisenman.

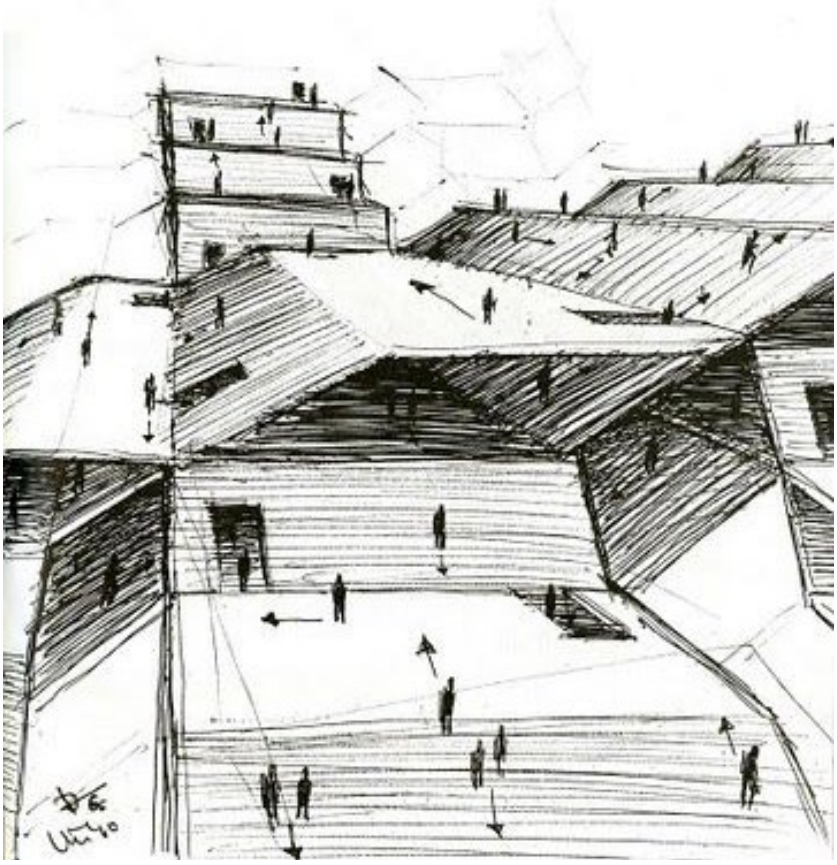

Figure 4.4. *Civilisation*, drawing by Paul Virilio, 1966.

Source: Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe No.4: La Fonction Oblique," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996).

One way or another, Parent and Virilio's Architecture Principe manifesto and the oblique function theory, by being the predecessor of oblique architecture, played a crucial role in deconstructivist architects' later careers. With the early 1990s revival of Parent's work by Migayrou, these architects got accustomed to the oblique function theory and Architecture Principe, culminating in many collaborating with Parent. One was the collaboration between Parent and Coop Himmelb(l)au. They cooperated in an architectural competition project, Centre de Création Contemporaine de Tours (1993). For the project, they applied the "exquisite corpse" method, where they took turns adding threads to drawings without seeing each other

by folding the paper, as Wolf D. Prix describes.[174] The final drawing showcased a harmonious flow of multidirectional oblique lines, demonstrating the alignment between Parent's and Prix's architectural philosophies. However, in this drawing, it was also possible to observe the contrast through their lines, in which Parent's were more geometric and linear, while Prix's were scattering in non-linear dynamics [Figure 4.5].

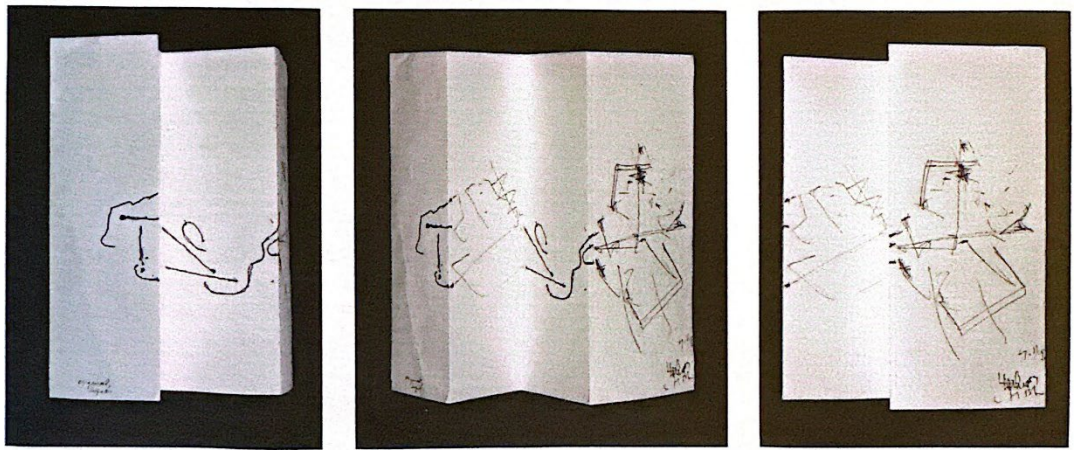

Figure 4.5. The "Exquisite Corpse" method used for the design of Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours, starting with Parent's sketch from left, Claude Parent, and Wolf D. Prix, 1993.

Source: Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, 99.

This contrast hinted by this project was rendered more visible in the publication of Architecture Principe's tenth issue, "Disorientation or Dislocation," in 1996. Alongside internationally exposing the oblique function theory's unrecognized connection with deconstructivism by featuring some of the deconstructivist architects, Wolf D. Prix and Helmut Swiczinsky of Coop Himmelb(l)au, Bernard

[174] Wolf D. Prix, "Claude Parent," in *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019), 99.

Tschumi and Daniel Libeskind, along with Jean Nouvel and François Seigneur, it also demonstrated how the oblique function theory and these architects' approaches deviate in their architectural understanding.[175] Wigley noted that deconstructivist architects are the ones "who locate inherent dilemmas within the building," not destroying or dismantling it.[176] Indeed, in Architecture Principe's tenth issue, Himmelb(l)au, Tschumi, and Libeskind all aspired to reveal the intrinsic discontinuities and disorientations within the city -transcending the building- to provide novel schemes, tackling the tension between order and chaos. Contrarily, Parent and Virilio's oblique architecture, until then rooted in the reading of the contemporary city's horizontal and vertical orders, does not directly engage with the existing city and tries to relate the oblique form with it even though their concepts say otherwise. For instance, in his text, "Traces of the Unborn," Libeskind, by using oblique lines to integrate new and old city elements by reorganizing "discontinuities of the city,"[177] contrasts with Parent and Virilio, whose projects, like Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church (1963-1966), often lacked this integration or reorganization [Figures 4.6 and 4.7].[178] Despite similarities with Parent and Virilio, Libeskind conceived his projects in real-life scenarios against Parent and Virilio's few, thanks to embodying them with the surrounding urban context. Parent and Virilio's ideas, such as "habitable circulation" and "mediated structures," often contradicted the practical execution seen in their projects. Libeskind's work, however, precisely manifests these concepts, consolidating his influence in contemporary urbanism and distinguishing his approach from the harshly criticized and challenged works of Parent and Virilio.

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[175] Paul Virilio et al., "Architecture Principe: Disorientation or Dislocation."
[176] Wigley, "Deconstructivist Architecture," 11.
[177] Daniel Libeskind, "Traces of the Unborn," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), 158.
[178] This is proven by Parent and Virilio's violent and destructive attitude towards the urban context. Parent states that in order to further architecture, we should eliminate "heritage cities." Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion*.

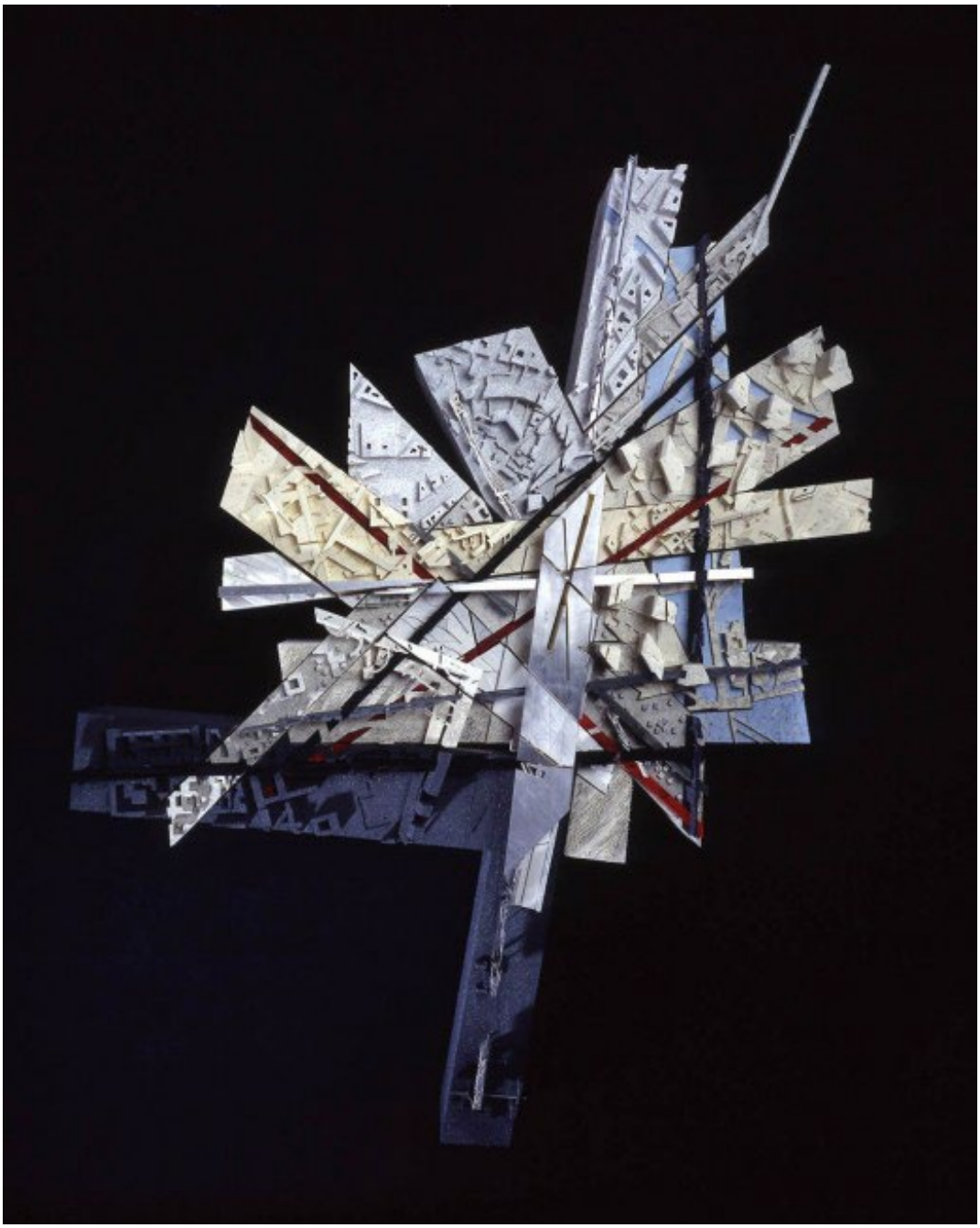

Figure 4.6. Postdamer Platz Plan, Daniel Libeskind, Berlin, 1991.

Source: “Postdamerplatz,” Studio Libeskind, accessed June 17, 2024, https://libeskind.com/work/postdamer-platz/. Although Libeskind did not refer to his project Postdamer Platz in “Traces of the Unborn,” the concepts he touched upon could be perceived in it.

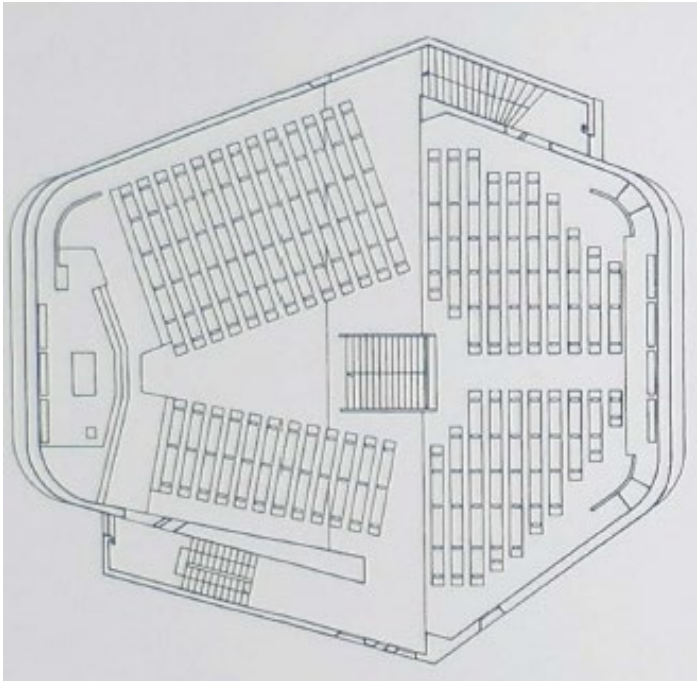

Figure 4.7. Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church's Plan, Claude Parent, Nevers, 1963-1966.

Source: Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique*, 45.

Having fewer differences, deconstructivism's reflection on France was highly informed by Parent's work since many French architects were already familiar with his understanding.[179] Regarding that, unlike deconstructivist architects, these architects' work developed in between the oblique function theory and deconstructivism. Architects Odile Decq, Dominique Perrault, and Frédéric Borel were notable among many. Significantly, alongside pursuing a deconstructivist path, in her works, Decq utilized the oblique planes as usable, configuring them as ramps guiding both the internal and external circulation of the building while relating them to habitation, like in the Neuhaus Museum (2007). Like deconstructivist architects' exposure to Parent, after seeing an exhibition on the oblique function theory, which

[179] See: Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 165.

she was fascinated by, Decq met with Claude Parent in 1984.[180] Thereon, she was influenced by his works, culminating in their collaboration in France's Venice Pavilion in 1996, curated by Frédéric Migayrou. Decq's involvement with the oblique, alongside other French 'deconstructivist' architects, was crucial as they helped mediate Parent's works and thinking with contemporary architecture through their essays, drawings, and buildings. Perrault underscored that "oblique thinking is part of the heritage of the history of architecture." However, for him, "its fate remains an open question." [181] Linking oblique thinking with its contemporary counterparts through French deconstructivism and delving into its archeology contributes to finding the answer.

Studying the oblique function theory brings a fresh perspective within architectural trajectory by epistemologically connecting early 1900s oblique architectural understandings, like suprematism, with modernism and deconstructivism. Unveiling this obscured hypothesis contributes to the identification of contemporary oblique architecture since the majority of the modern outputs of the oblique were latently instantiated with deconstructivism. Architects who participated in MoMA's Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition in 1988: Gehry, Daniel, Koolhaas, Eisenman, Hadid, Himmelb(l)au and Tschumi, along with Jean Nouvel, Thom Mayne, Steven Holl, and Odile Decq who involved in deconstructivist discourse hither and thither way, all produced salient oblique outputs, echoing the tenets of the oblique function theory with using architectural operations such as disorientation, dislocation, and distortion.[182] Many of these architects also produced urban and architectural projects under the influence of the Fold, another influential architectural

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[180] Odile Decq, "Architecture Must Help the World: Interview with Odile Decq," interview by Petar Bojanić and Vesnić Snežana, *Khōrein: Journal for Architecture and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (May 2023): 99, https://khorein.ifdt.bg.ac.rs/index.php/ch/ article/view/22.
[181] Dominique Perrault, "La pensée oblique fait partie de l'héritage de l'histoire de l'architecture," in *Claude Parent: Les Desseins d'un Architecte*, ed. Audrey Jeanroy, trans. author with the aid of DeepL (Marseille: Éditions Parenthéses, 2022), 9.
[182] Paul Virilio et al., "Architecture Principe: Disorientation or Dislocation."

paradigm related to the oblique function theory. That is why they did not want to be merely called deconstructivists but rather contemporary architects.

4.2 Oblique Architecture and The Fold

> Entering into topology -you can say into "the fold" even if at the time Deleuze had not yet written his essay on the baroque- we did a lot of work on.[183]

According to architectural historian Mario Carpo, the architectural paradigm encountered a radical shift, a digital turn, in 1992 after architect Peter Eisenman's two introductory essays, which mediates the digital discourse with architecture by "highlighting the continuity between Deconstructivism and the first age of digital design"[184]: "Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media" and "The Affects of Singularity."[185] In those, Eisenman enunciated the new age of architecture, arduously challenging the "classical visions" and "gridded cartesian order," embodying Deleuze's ideology to disappear the strict separation between vertical and horizontal.[186] Following Eisenman, the book *The Folding in Architecture* by Greg Lynn developed the Deleuzian implications in architecture even further, demystifying Deleuze's philosophy of reifying flux, movement, and continuity.[187] Unlike deconstructivism's objective to instantiate the internal conflicts

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[183] Lotringer and Virilio, "After Architecture," 39.
[184] Mario Carpo, and Peter Eisenman, "Architecture After the Age of Printing," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture: 1992-2012*, ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 15-27.
[185] Peter Eisenman, "Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 16-22; Peter Eisenmann, "The Affects of Singularity," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 23-7.
[186] The resemblance between the oblique function theory and the folding architecture is demonstrated here in refuting Euclidean understanding. Eisenman, "Visions Unfolding;" Eisenman, "The Affects of Singularity;" Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
[187] Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple," in *Folding in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2004).

and contradictions in urban and architectural hodgepodge through building form, Lynn postulates that the Fold "curves away from Deconstructivism" by promoting a continuous flexible topological system,[188] which the oblique function theory experimented with decades ago according to Virilio. Carpo states that:

> Forms do not fold (actually, in all Eisenman's projects featured in *Folding in Architecture* in 1993 they fracture and break), because most buildings do not move: when built, architectural forms can at *best* only represent, symbolize, or somehow evoke the continuity of change or motion.[189]

The oblique function theory decries the static, inert, and idle geometrical fixity of the Cartesian order, which does not trigger any movement in dwellers.[190] As a response, it conceives metastability through building form, engendering "the human body in motion, in tune with the rhythms of life."[191] In light of this, Schramke underscores the theory as a precursor of Deleuze's Fold.[192] She emphasizes that it unifies the discrete activities by realizing continuous and fluid topological surfaces, which allows the creation of smoothness by warping space and time into one single formal body, prefiguring the basic tenets of the fold. This topological interpretation of urbanism and architecture necessitates an epistemological and ontological recognition of sectional sequences and narratives rather than plans and elevations, reproaching the generic standardization of vertical and horizontal built forms. Digitalization allows the design of complex topological systems, shifting architectural form from "typologically coded to infrastructurally."[193] Carpo illuminates in his book *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* that the mass production of identical architectural typologies in the 19th and 20th centuries of modern

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[188] Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity," 25.
[189] Mario Carpo, "Ten Years of Folding," in *Folding in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2004), 15.
[190] Zavoleas and Taylor, "From Cartesian to Topological Geometry, "5-18.
[191] Virilio, "Architecture Principe," 13.
[192] Schramke, "3D Code," 118-9.
[193] Bideau, "Grounding Space," 70.

architecture ended after the breakthrough of digitalization in architecture.[194] According to him, digital tools foster a variability and non-standardization of urban and architectural outputs through copious iterations while avoiding simulacra since the final form is shaped due to infrastructural fluxes, which were impossible before. However, by leapfrogging the technological restrictions of its period, the oblique function theory, through the inclined variations designed by sections and three-dimensional drawings, genuinely indurates the piers of digital drafting and architecture of our age. Indeed, Frazer remarks on the digital relevance of the theory, affiliating it to the main masthead, "computing without computers."[195]

Despite preconditioning topological applications in contemporary architecture in the 1990s, the oblique function theory was distinguished from this understanding since it had an urbanistic intention. However, it was not seen in its many built examples. To begin with, according to Virilio, the oblique function theory is significantly related to urbanism because it aims to foster a third urban order as an alternative to vertical and horizontal urban orders.[196] Therefore, many of its concepts, including "habitable circulation" and "the mediate city," are about interrelating the urban strands. However, after the digital turn, the topological applications were majorly demoted from urbanism to iconic buildings, where creating eye-catching forms and aesthetical expressions became much more critical. For instance, although Lynn explicates how the folding would alter urbanism since he associates this transformation to the "internalization of external forces,"[197] his projects, like the Yokohama Pier competition entry in 1994 [Figure 4.8], are confined to the existing urban plots, avoiding challenging the urban system. Architectural critic Douglas Spencer implies that folding "smoothes out the existence of contradiction," "renouncing critical opposition," and "it can only endorse what works well within

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[194] Mario Carpo, *Alphabet, and the Algorithm* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).
[195] John Frazer, "Computing without Computers," *Architectural Design* 75, no. 2 (July 2005): 34–43, https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.44.
[196] Virilio, "Paul Virilio and the Oblique," 54.
[197] Greg Lynn, "Architectural Curvilinearity," 26.

the framework of existing relations."[198] But, how possibly can such an architecture survive, taking granted every aspect of the context without ever criticizing? Does this mean that everything is perfect and that architecture needs to flourish in this perfection with elegant forms? Despite shifting the scale to yet again urbanism in some projects, like Kartal Masterplan by Zaha Hadid Architects (2006), Parametricism, a term put forward by architect Patrik Schumacher and successor of folding applications in digital architecture, pursued the same tradition. Architects Matthew Poole and Manuel Shvartzberg propound that most parametricists "tacitly accept the subjacent and normative processes of contemporary neoliberal democrasies as their natural or inevitable playing field."[199] This rekindles the criticism of Virilio, deviating from what topological urbanism initially aspires: "The function of the oblique is the application of topology to architecture as a whole, and not only to parking garages or to the Guggenheim Museum."[200]

[198] Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance* (London: Routledge, 2020), 105-6.
[199] Matthew Poole and Manuel Shvartzberg, eds. *The Politics of Parametricism: Digital Technologies in Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2015), 3.
[200] Virilio,"Paul Virilio and the Oblique," 53.

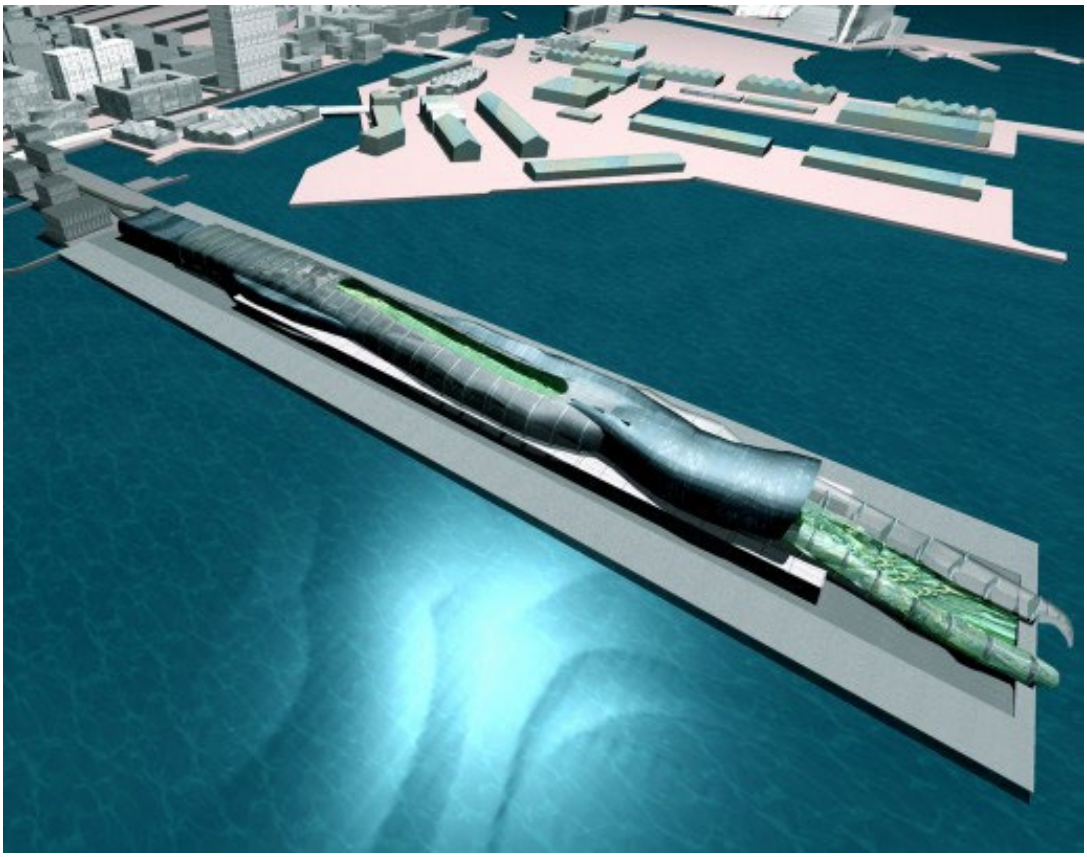

Figure 4.8. Yokohama Pier Passenger Terminal Competition Submission, render by Greg Lynn Form, 1994.

Source: "Yokohama Japan 1994," Greg Lynn Form, accessed July 10, 2024, https://glform.com/buildings/yokohama-pier/.

In 2003, Parent put forward twelve subversive acts in his seminal book *Errer dans l'illusion*: "to open the imaginary; to operate in illusion; to dislodge the immobile; to think continuity; to surf on the surface; to live in obliqueness; to destabilize; to use the fall; to fracture; to practice inversion; to orchestrate conflict and to limit without closing."[201] The latter two acts were directly opposing topological understanding of the 1990s and onwards, where Parent aimed to exhaust the concept

[201] Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion*. Also see: Erpek and Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Oblique Function."

of "habitable circulation," where he defines stabilities and fluidities within the urban systems; the former is the horizontal and vertical habitation while the latter is the oblique and the circulation. He illustrates with *Open Limit* (1999-2000) [Figure 4.9] drawings that these two continuously clash; thus, according to him, architecture must reveal and engage with these conflicts to preempt the long-running problems of the established urban practices.[202] Parent's emphasis on the conflictual zone reminds diptych paintings like the *Wilton Diptych* and the topological theory of architects Peter Eisenman and Miroslava Brooks.[203] In addition, it also resembles Deleuze's *Baroque House,* where the two distinct folds -the closed, private room and common rooms with small openings- flow into each other heterogeneously.[204]

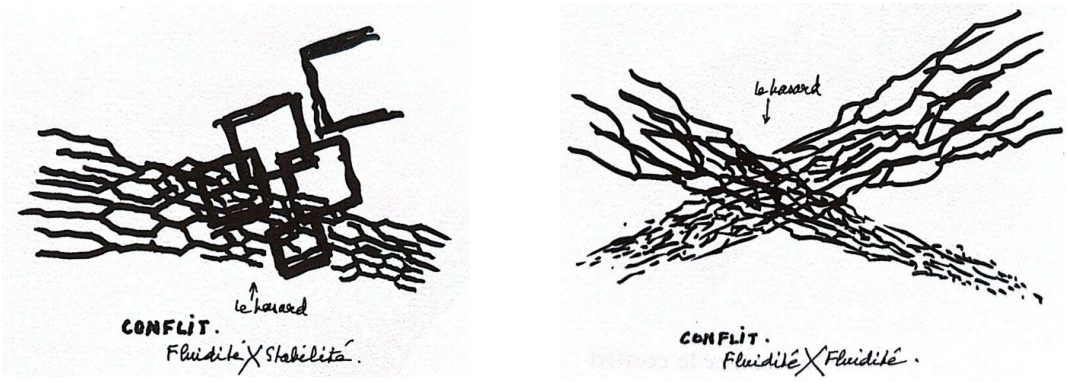

Figure 4.9. Left: Conflict between stability and fluidity, Right: Conflict between two fluidities, *Open Limit* diagrams, drawn by Claude Parent, 2001.

Source: Claude Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion*, 72.

[202] Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion,* 73-9.
[203] See: Peter Eisenman and Miroslava Brooks, "Diagrammatic Analysis: The Diptych as a Topological Diagram," accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.architecture.yale.edu/courses/23816-diagrammatic-analysis-the-diptych-as-a-topological-diagram.
[204] Gilles Deleuze and Jonathan Strauss, "The Fold," *Yale French Studies*, no. 80 (1991): 227–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/2930269.

In addition to the difference in urban scale and topological understanding, the oblique function theory and the fold also distinguish in exploiting the design's angled elements. In the fold, architects including Lynn, Eisenman, and Shoei Yoh utilized "diagonal" lines to optimize topological surfaces, where the line *per se* has no spatial value because of its dissolution within the whole. Unlike the diagonal, the oblique plane, without a need to be part of a grander scheme, can define an architectural space, as also highlighted by Giovannini.[205] Therefore, the oblique plane over the diagonal line had more potency in shaping the urban and architectural space by relating it to social, political, and economic issues. For instance, to demonstrate the folding in architecture more elaborately, Lynn investigates Yoh's Prefectura Gymnasium's Roof Structure (1991) [Figure 4.10]. According to his examinations, the roof structure comprises "discontinuous" and "disparate" parts, each locally adjusted on a grid, merging to form the whole. He suggests that the system is flexible, in which changing parts do not alter the "global organization."[206] We can foreground that this global organization is the primary element manifesting the space, composed of various diagonal lines. In that manner, lines do not have spatiality but act as drivers to reify the general architectural form. Similarly, having a part-whole relationship, Parent and Virilio's *Les Inclisites* (1966-1968) [Figure 4.11] project is constructed with oblique living units coming together to form a topological surface. In contrast with the roof structure, the oblique planes, unlike diagonal lines, directly affect the spatial configuration, where their angles, positions, and directions alter the spatial quality within. While both projects exploited angled elements, their application highly differentiates and, thus, influences their overall understanding.

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[205] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 164.
[206] Greg Lynn, "Shoei Yoh, Prefectura Gymnasium," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 45-7.

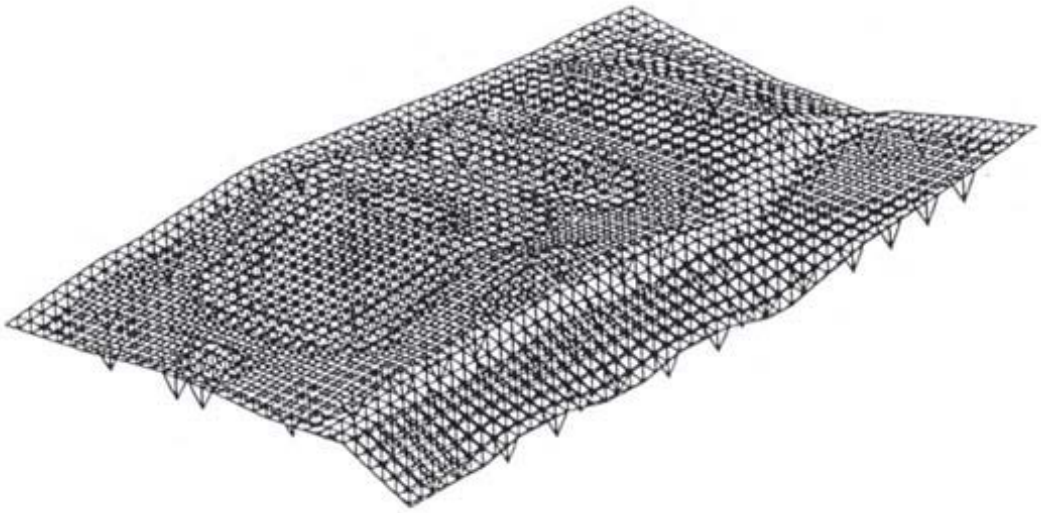

Figure 4.10. Prefectura Gymnasium roof structure, Shoei Yoh, Odawara, 1991.

Source: Mario Carpo, *The Digital Turn in Architecture: 1992-2012,* 47. © Shoei Yoh, Hamura.

Figure 4.11. *Les Inclisites*, the section of modules and ensembles, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1966.

Source: Parent, *Entrelacs de l'oblique*, 66.

In line with this difference, it is also important to mention how the fold and the oblique function theory came from distinct 'topological' reasonings regarding using angled elements. According to architect Stephen Perrella, architect Bernard Cache's theories were the only ones concerning architecture mentioned by Deleuze in his publication, *The Fold*. As Perrella underlined in his short essay, "Bernard Cache/Objectile: Topological Architecture and the Ambiguous Sign," Cache "reworked the fundamental geometry of architecture," where he replaced the conventional forms like the square, "with the frame, vector, and inflection." Parella pointed out that having such a mindset, Cache "translated the fundamental dynamics of curvature" to "describe topological relationships between geography and architecture."[207] It was important to mention Cache's viewpoint to underline how Deleuze's philosophy became a tool for generating a topological architectural form recognizing curvature phenomena, which was not exactly the case for the oblique. Architectural critic Neil Leach criticizes that architects tend to "architecturalise" philosophical concepts they encounter "even though they have nothing to do with form and architecture," like Deleuze's fold.[208] Regardless of the oblique function theory also being form-basis, despite its controversial outputs, it derived heavily from the surrounding flows and their topological interrelationships, a perspective that came from the logistical studies in the formulation of the oblique by Virilio. Therefore, topology transcends just being a form based on the fold but an intention to reify the complex networks, emphasized by Parent, of "displacements, trajectories, and routes."[209] In other words, it reifies the invisible flows visible through urban systems, as architectural theorist Mark Wigley conceptualized for such approaches.[210]

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[207] Stephen Perrella, "Bernard Cache/Objectile: Topological Architecture and the Ambiguous Sign," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 149.
[208] Neil Leach, *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Introduction to AI for Architects* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 91.
[209] Parent, *Errer dans l'illusion*, trans. the author, 46.
[210] Mark Wigley, "Network Fever," *Grey Room* 39, no.4 (June 2001): 82-122, https://doi.org/10.1162/152638101750420825.

The apparent connection between the oblique function theory and the first applications of digital architecture under the folding in architecture elucidates how the oblique as an architectural element evolved through architectural trajectory. Thus, it assists us in recognizing the latent implications of the theory within contemporary architecture. Concerns brought about by the oblique reconstruct the heritage of curves, angles, tilted planes, and similar paraphernalia from a topological understanding. In 2006, in a book, *Claude Parent vu par...* (Claude Parent, as seen by...), many architects who dealt with topology and its materialization through computational tools, like Lynn, Hani Rashid, Frank Gehry, François Roche, and Lars Spuybroek (among many), paid tribute to Parent.[211] Lynn underlined that Parent's oblique architecture inspired many of his generation through "sloped floors" and "inclined walls."[212] These tributes were given due to Migayrou's series of exhibitions on Parent and, later on, digital architecture in various venues like FRAC Centre and Centre Pompidou, sequentially proving the oblique architecture's historical and architectural development.[213] Parent's visions significantly impacted 'digital architects' but mainly on a form basis. They did not publicly address Parent's primary ideas derived from urban, social, and political issues like "habitable circulation" leading to the oblique form. This was due to their approach to producing architectural forms, which mainly relied on mathematical models and mimicry of nature's complex surfaces, testing the utmost abilities of computers. Therefore, the topological architecture of Parent, Virilio, and Architecture Principe does not fully resonate with folding in architecture but is echoed more with another approach: Landscape Urbanism.

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[211] Chloé Parent, ed., *Claude Parent vu par...* (New York: Éditions Le Moniteur, 2006).
[212] Joseph Giovannini, "Claude Parent, Visionary Architect of the Oblique, Dies at 93," The New York Times, last modified February 29, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/01/arts/design/claude-parent-architect-of-the-oblique-dies-at-93.html.
[213] Migayrou organized a series of exhibitions on digital applications in architecture in the following years, such as "Non-Standard Architectures" with Zeynep Mennan. He is now the director of UCL Bartlett School of Architecture's B-Pro alongside the Architecture & Digital Theory program, both known for their innovative environments fostering the utilization of computational tools theoretically and practically to research and design unprecedented architectural spaces.

4.3 Oblique Architecture and Landscape Urbanism

> The dimensions of new units of urbanization must be sought. and especially the relations of these dimensions with those of landscape must be explored. The study of the principle of site domination. A study that remains to be done.[214]

Along with Digital Architecture, Landscape Urbanism is also broadly related to oblique architecture, especially tackling the site-based topological qualities of the topographical ground and its informing extension to architecture. In other words, landscape urbanism studies and designs the mediation of architectural ground with the natural. In the study of ground and architecture, architectural critic Kenneth Frampton put forward the concept of "megaform." He describes its features in five primary points, but two of them clearly highlight its main concern and relation to the Oblique Function Theory:

> …a form capable of inflecting the existing urban landscape as found because of its strong topographical character… a form that is not freestanding but rather insinuates itself as a continuation of the surrounding topography…[215]

Through a set of examples from Modernism and Postmodernism, including Le Corbusier's Plan Obus in Algiers (1931), Frampton demystified how the building as an artificial form integrates with the landscape and bears topographical features in configuring its spatial narrative. Although this echoes the oblique function theory, Frampton exemplifies megaforms by scrutinizing Euclidean architecture that does not accurately follow the landscape's fluid, dynamic, and flexible forms. In contrast, the oblique function theory abstracts the topography's topological features with

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[214] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.8: Power and Imagination," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XXV.
[215] Kenneth Frampton, *Megaform as Urban Landscape*, ed. Brian Carter (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1999), 20.

inclined planes by removing any verticality and horizontality to propose an "artificial relief" equal to the landscape.[216] In Architecture Principe manifesto's *No.6 Mediate City* under the chapter, "Fluidity," Parent refers to nature's elements like water to describe how the oblique function theory complements and supports the fluidities of nature as a spatial backbone and an artificial ground by carrying on its movement through architecture.[217] According to architectural researcher Diego Fullaondo, this new interpretation of ground by Parent and Virilio gained an audience in the 1980s and 1990s in architectural circles.[218] He claims that by collating hundreds of projects from 1985 to 2000, in their seminal book *Groundscapes: Reencountering the Ground in Contemporary Architecture*, architectural critics Ilka and Andreas Ruby demonstrate how contemporary architecture unprecedently treats and manipulates the ground by introducing variations of inclined planes as in the oblique function theory, abandoning Cartesian principles.[219] Some of these projects were OMA's Agadir Convention Center in Morocco (1990), Dominique Perrault's Velodrome, and the Olympic Swimming Pool (1992-1999), and MVRDV's Stacked Floor, Expo Pavilion in Germany (2000) [Figure 4.12]. The oblique function theory highly informs this renewed practical application to mediate with the ground [Figure 4.13]. Architect Frank Gehry comments on Parent's oblique architecture:

> …the legacy of Claude Parent is in front of us today: cities of fluidity and continual movement, blurred boundaries between public and private space, and interconnected structures resembling landscapes more than singular buildings.[220]

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[216] Parent, "Architecture Principe No.1: Dominating the Site," IV.
[217] Claude Parent, "Architecture Principe No.6: Fluidity," in *Architecture Principe 1966 and 1996*, trans. George Collins (Besancon: Les Éditions de L'Imprimeur, 1996), XVI.
[218] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 181-4.
[219] Fullaondo; Ilka Ruby and Andreas Ruby, *Groundscapes: The Rediscovery of the Ground in Contemporary Landscape* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2006).
[220] Frank Gehry, "Claude Parent," in *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 2019), 17.

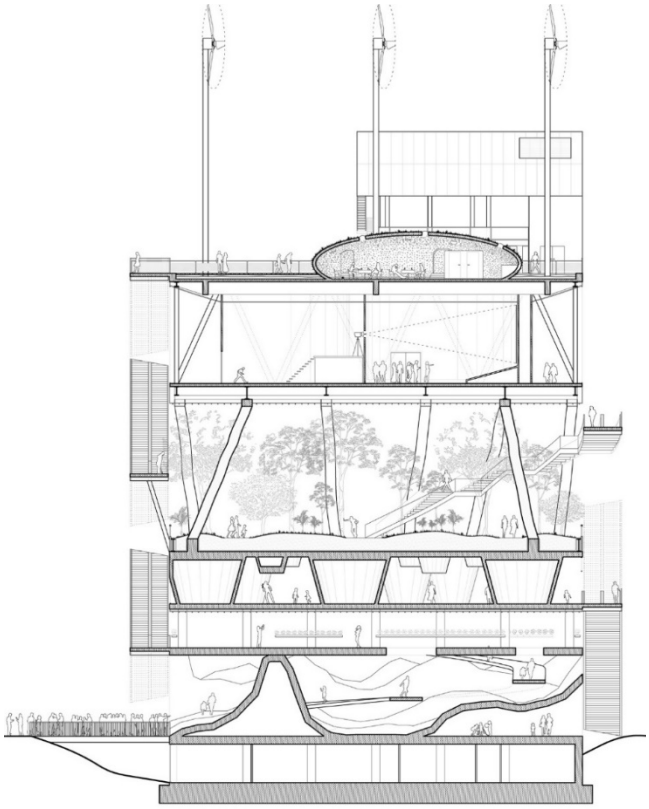

Figure 4.12. Expo 2000's Section, MVRDV, Hannover, 2000.

Source: "Expo 2000," MVRDV, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.mvrdv.com/projects/158/expo-2000.

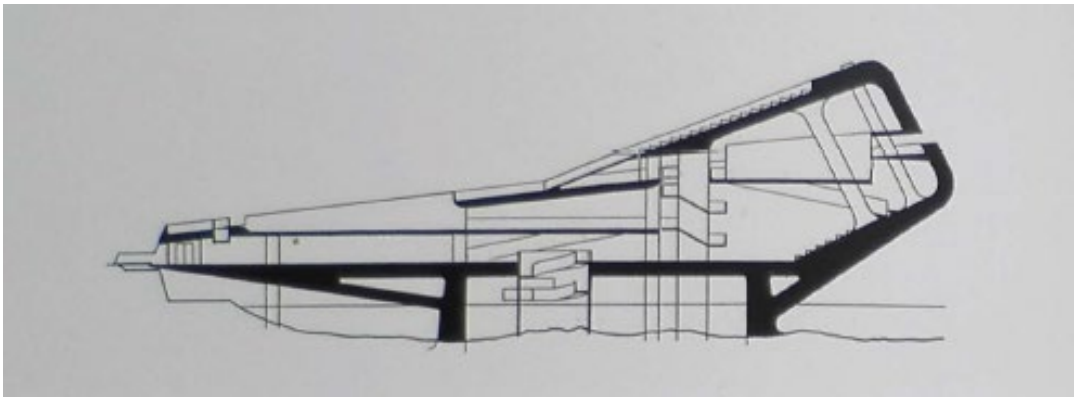

Figure 4.13. Charleville Cultural Centre's Section, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1966-1967.

Source: Claude Parent et al., *The Function of the Oblique*, 34.

Another comprehensive concept that helps to identify the oblique's relation to landscape urbanism is the "landform" formulated by Charles Jencks, which defined such approaches as those of the 1980s and 1990s.[221] Under the influence of "digital turn" and developing paradigms of non-linearity and complexity, Jencks delineates the "landform building" as an "architecture as articulated landscape…landscape as a site of tectonic activity."[222] Among the examples he identified as the landform approach, he engages with Enric Miralles's section method by conceptualizing it as "cinematic sectioning," in which Miralles takes a series of sequential sections from the landscape to analyze and understand its topographical inflections, later merging them to generate the building form [Figure 4.14].[223] According to Frampton, Miralles's approach, portrayed by Igualada Cemetery in Barcelona (1994), blends landscape with architecture so seamlessly that it is hard to identify "where landscape ends, and building begins."[224] In a way, the distinction between the building and its surroundings dissolved, leading to a new typological and morphological understanding.

[221] Landform was also mentioned by Frampton and conceptualized by Stan Allen and Marc McQuade. Their book, *Landform Building: Architecture's New Terrain*, comprises many projects that rethink "architecture's traditional relationship to the ground." See: Stan Allen and Marc McQuade, eds., *Landform Building: Architecture's New Terrain* (Basel: Lars Müller Publishers, 2011).
[222] Charles Jencks, "Landform Architecture: Emergent in the Nineties," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 88.
[223] Jencks, 95-6.
[224] Frampton, *Megaform as Urban Landscape*, 36.

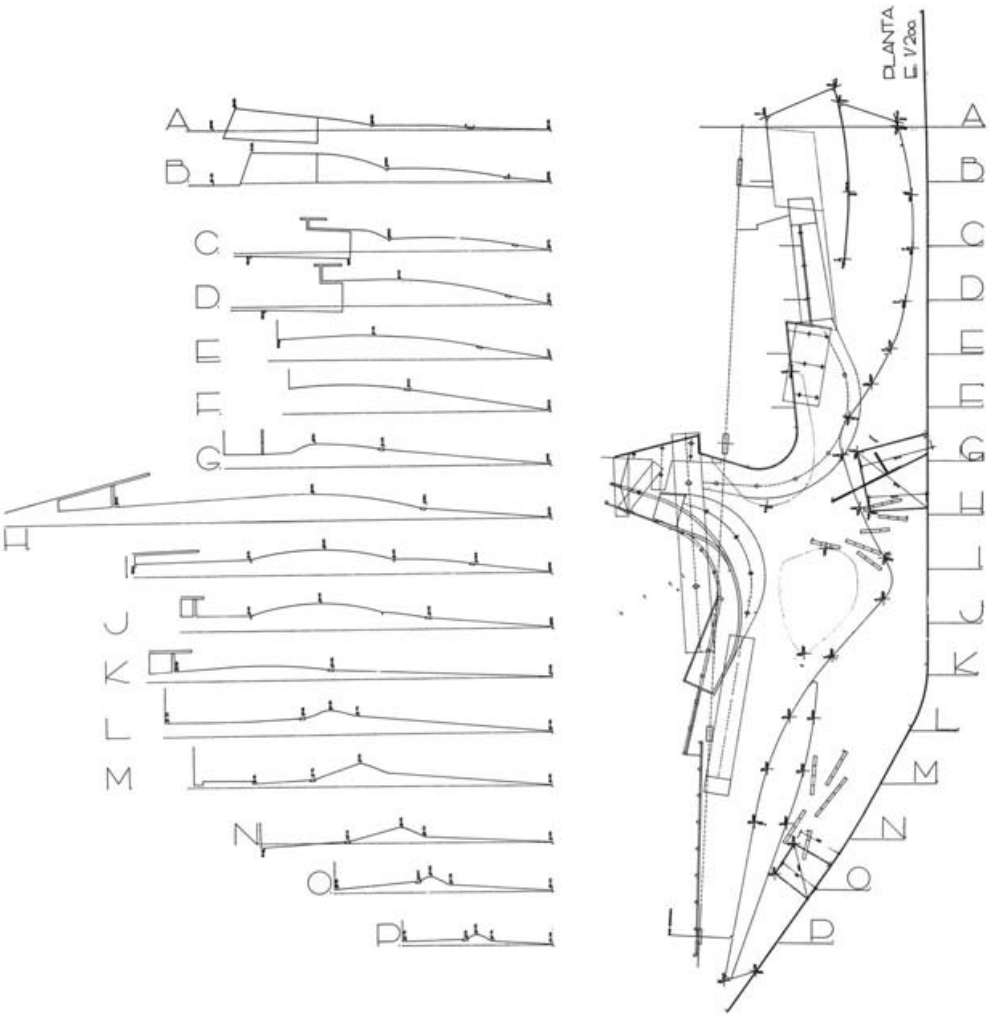

Figure 4.14. Sections of Eurhythmics Centre, Enric Miralles, Alicante, 1993-1994.

Source: Carpo, *The Digital Turn in Architecture: 1992-2012,* 94. © Miralles Tagliabue EMBT Studio.

To describe these typologies and morphologies, landscape urbanism literature came up with various concepts linked to the oblique function theory in 1999. That year, Ruby edited Daidalos's 73rd issue with an overarching theme of "Architecture Goes Landscape," stressing the theoretical and practical connection between the building

and its site.[225] "Architecture Vanishing into Landscape, Landscape Invading the City, Hybrid Morphologies, Infrastructure, Architecture, and Landscape Converging Applied Nature" were the concepts that authors like Anthony Vidler, Marc Angélil, and Anna Klingmann elaborated on in their articles. The manuscripts were accompanied by projects by Zaha Hadid, Foreign Office Architects (FOA), Paul Virilio, and Claude Parent, among others, exposing oblique architecture and its relation to landscape urbanism. In their manuscript for the issue, architects Marc Angélil and Anna Klingmann articulate that in that era, "architecture, landscape and infrastructure" were so interwoven that they posed a fluid and hybrid morphology, unlike traditional and closed geometries of architecture. They underlined the old techniques of analyzing the urban form, like figure-ground, became obsolete.[226] More generally, the plan over the section lost its value as the main design and representational tool for architects. Foreseeing such a transformation, Parent and Virilio have already utilized sectional narratives as Miralles did with "cinematic sectioning," which inform similar approaches both in the folding in architecture and landscape urbanism. Architectural researcher André Bideau described their viewpoint regarding sections as "tomography."[227] One can imply that he unveils the juxtaposition of sections in proposing an architectural form concerning the topographical and topological qualities of the space in Parent and Virilio's architecture [Figure 4.15].[228]

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[225] Andreas Ruby, ed., *Architecture Goes Landscape* (London: Gordon+Breach Publishing Group, 1999).
[226] Marc Angélil and Anna Klingmann, "Hybrid Morphologies: Infrastructure, Architecture, Landscape," *Daidalos,* no.73 (October 1999): 24.
[227] Bideau, "Grounding Space," 70.
[228] For a more comprehensive analysis of the shift from plans to sections, see: Erpek and Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Oblique Function," 155-7.

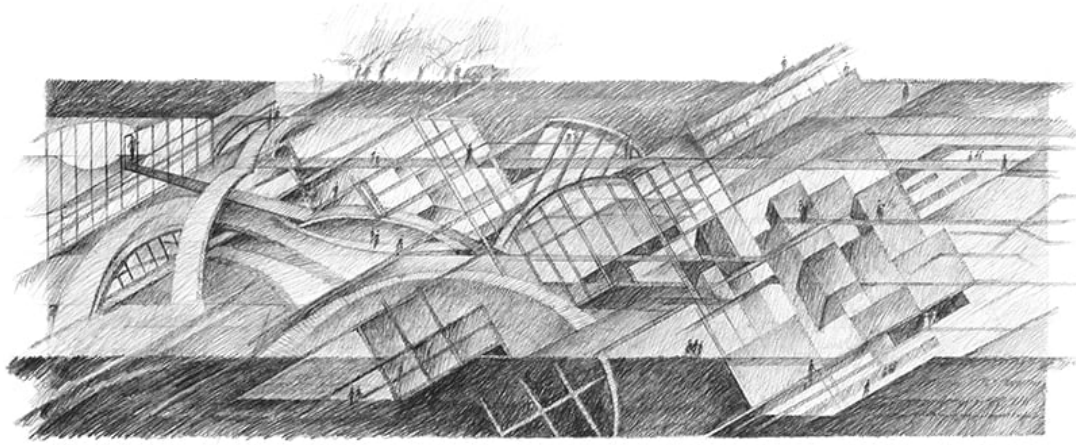

Figure 4.15. Incision Urbaine à Langages Multiples (Façade) (Urban Incision with Multiple Languages (Facade), drawn by Claude Parent, 2006.

Source: Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, 126.

Landscape urbanism's approach resembles the oblique function theory in terms of integrating with the ground mainly on its form and its spatial premises. In the Architecture Principe manifesto, Parent's later writings, and their oblique outputs, we cannot observe how exactly they responded to the programmatic elements of the context, the landscape's local and site-specific ecologies apart from its form, and infrastructural fluidities. For instance, in *Vivre à l'oblique,* Parent articulates the creation of upper and lower surfaces in quintessential oblique architecture, where the former is dedicated to public functions fostering meetings, social cohesion, and community life.[229] This free-obstacle surface allows various programs to take on, but how it is configured programmatically by Parent and extends the existing program of the site remains unresolved. In fact, it echoes landscape architect Alex Wall's conceptual framework regarding "variable and flexible programming of the urban

[229] Parent, *Vivre á l'oblique*, 47.

surface."[230] However, the surfaces of the oblique architecture are left as blank canvas open to further speculation and waiting to be filled not by its architect but by its users [Figure 4.16].

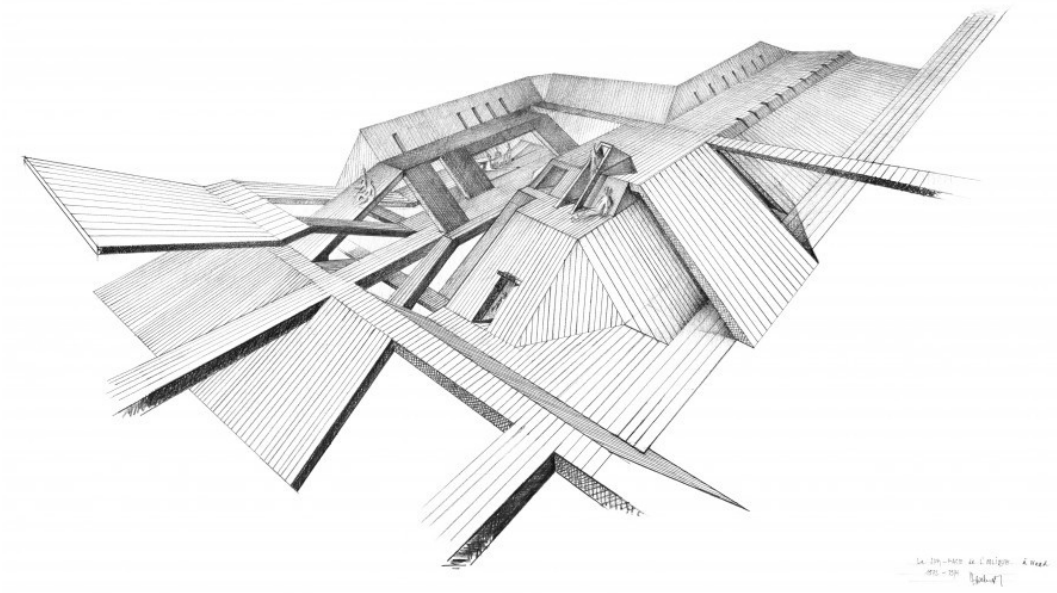

Figure 4.16. *La Surface de L'Oblique,* drawn by Claude Parent, 1972-1974.

Source: Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, 73.

Moreover, Parent states that "architecture is not incorporated into the site," suggesting that the oblique function theory will refuse to blend within its surroundings seamlessly, preserving its formal autonomy.[231] Although oblique architecture extends the topography and aims to accommodate the fluidities in its immediate surroundings, it refuses to pull the landscape onto its roof or ecologies

[230] Alex Wall, "Programming the Urban Surface," in *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*, ed. James Corner (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 233-49.
[231] Parent, "Architecture Principe No.1: Dominating the Site," IV.

within its program, unlike seen in many applications of landscape urbanism. The oblique form accompanies the fluidity, dissolves the strict distinction between outside and inside, and avoids disrupting movement. However, by being constructed with raw concrete at a scale of landforms like hills, it expresses the presence of architecture and stays distinct from its site in these terms.

Additionally, only a few built examples of oblique architecture, like Centre Commercial in Sens (1967-1970), are located in an urban context, where schemes in drawings illustrate oblique cities without contexts. Therefore, how the infrastructural realities of the site, like greenery and transportation, informed Parent and Virilio remains perplexing despite their concepts and projects' direct connotations from infrastructural logistics and their organization. They consider infrastructural flows in their Architecture Principe manifesto, but how exactly these are translated into an architecture like Foreign Office Architects's Yokohama International Port Terminal, which I will elaborate upon in the coming paragraphs, is unclear. Overall, we may imply that landscape urbanism is built upon these gaps lying within the oblique function theory and enhances its aspirations more accurately than its original authors. Examples recognizing the intersection between infrastructure, landscape, and architecture reach an advanced and materialized oblique function theory, which Parent and Virilio's architecture could not achieve [Figure 4.17].

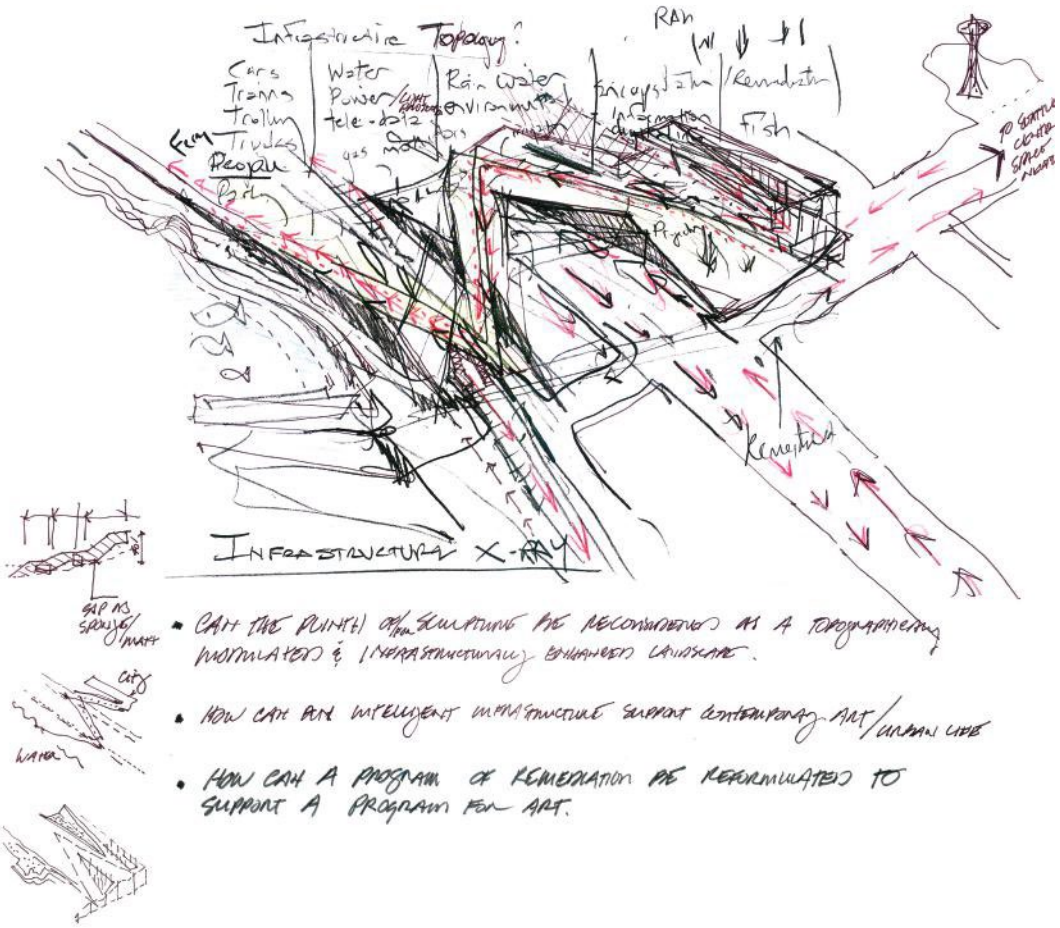

Figure 4.17. Initial sketches of the Olympic Structure Park, showing the surrounding infrastructural flows, Weiss/Manfredi, Seattle, 2001-2007.

Source: “Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Sculpture Park,” Weiss/Manfredi, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.weissmanfredi.com/projects/386-seattle-art-museum-olympic-sculpture-park.

4.4 Precedents of Oblique in Contemporary Architecture

> The purpose of scrutinizing the ideas and the works of this duo is because their ideas come as a precursor to a lot of the forms and ideas that contemporary architecture does or claims to do.[232]

Jencks describes the contemporary as a "complex paradigm" where multiple theories and manifestoes intersect under the inclusive notion of contemporaneity.[233] Contemporary architecture, therefore, requires a diverse perspective that embraces a multitude of architectural styles and discourses. Within this context, the Oblique Function Theory should not be confined to a single style or paradigm. Instead, examining its influence within Deconstructivism, The Fold, and Landscape Urbanism helps us grasp how the oblique has latently permeated various architectural theories and practices. All these perspectives collectively contribute to what we can define as contemporary oblique architecture. By comparing the similarities and differences between the oblique function theory and these architectural movements, we may determine which projects, practices, and theories align more closely with the original framework of the oblique function theory and which do not. To demonstrate and explore this, I have selected architectural projects not limited to them from the 1990s onwards, also identified by scholarly research, that substantially reflect and advance the principles of the oblique function theory. These projects exploit the concepts of "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," "the third urban order," and "topotonic elements." They also reflect how these concepts have evolved within the 'oblique' frameworks of deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism. Potentially, by analyzing selected projects through the glance of the oblique viewpoint, these projects could bridge the gap between the

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[232] Harry Musson, "The Contemporary Function of the Oblique," (Master's diss., University of Westminster, 2019), 24.
[233] Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf, eds., *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture* (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1997).

original oblique function theory and its broader, often unconscious and overlooked, assimilation into architectural thought and praxis.

One of the first contemporary oblique projects was architect Rem Koolhaas's Kunsthal Library in Rotterdam (1987-1992) [Figure 4.18]. Koolhaas designed a modernist orthogonal building envelope for the project, then broke it with a series of intersecting and overlapping ramps. On OMA's website, it is described that one of these ramps was for pedestrians divided by a glass wall, separating the outside area, open to public access, from the inside, a part of the circulation. According to the website, the other ramp, named the second ramp, goes parallel to the pedestrian ramp yet is reversed, terraced to function as an auditorium, and beneath it defines the restaurant space.[234] These ramps encounter and create the main entrance. Also, a third ramp was designed to reach the roof garden directly. The pedestrian ramp instantiates the oblique function theory's concept of "habitable circulation," where it extends the continuity of urban movement into the building, linking the opposite ends: highway and museum park.[235] With the ramp, Koolhaas blurs the distinction between public and private spaces. According to Ruby, thereby Koolhaas intends to coalesce urban infrastructure with the architectural program, creating an "infrastructural landscape" to stifle the categorical isolation that restricts the engagement and interchange between "architecture" and "urban planning."[236] In a similar vein, Fullaondo characterizes Koolhaas's approach as "[materializing] an infrastructural organization."[237] These also remark on the influence of the oblique function theory on landscape urbanism. Furthermore, the inclinations continuously change through the building's axes, which architectural researcher Maria Kuzma suggests "controls the user's experience." Alongside, Kuzma identified thresholds inserted through one's movement on these axes, altering spatial perceptions through

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[234] "Kunsthal," OMA, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.oma.com/projects/kunsthal.
[235] The general scheme of the building reminds the drawings of Claude Parent in his book Colérés. See Parent, *Colérés.*
[236] Andreas Ruby, "Informed Surfaces," 73.
[237] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 187.

the journey.[238] During the occasion of the 2014 Venice Architectural Biennale, Koolhaas, who was the leading curator, interviewed Parent and expressed his strong fascination with Parent's adherence diagram in *Architecture Principe No.5: Habitable Circulation*, where Parent tested the usability of various degrees of inclination and their functional capabilities based on degrees. Genuinely, in Kunsthal, we see Koolhaas doing the same experiment, playing with the ramps' angles to configure architectural space variations and programs.

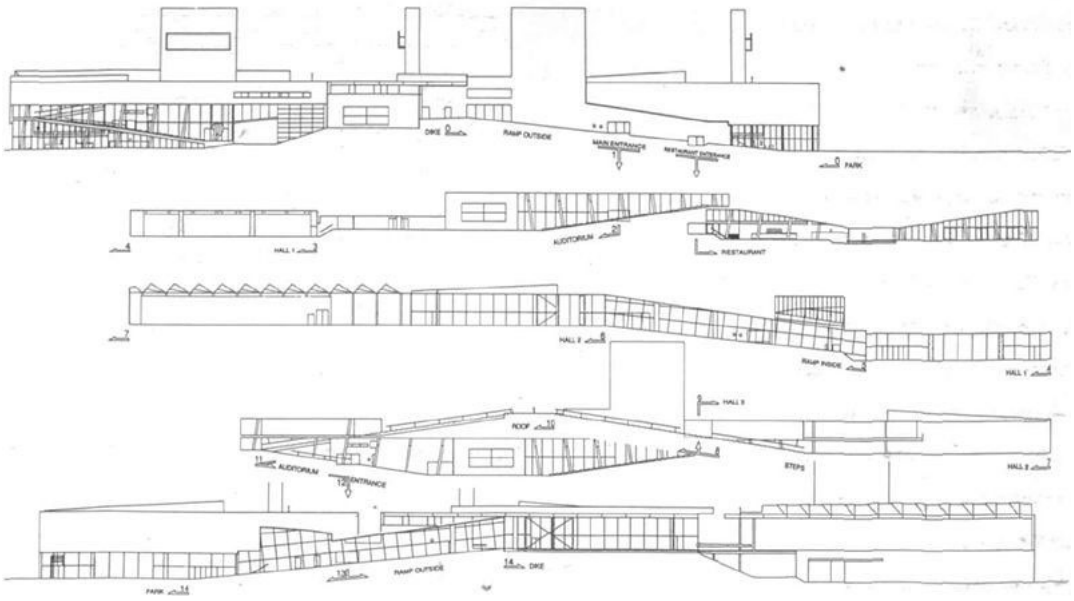

Figure 4.18. Elevations of Kunsthal, OMA, Rotterdam, 1987-1992.

Source: "AD Classics: Kunsthal /OMA," Archdaily, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.archdaily.com/102825/ad-classics-kunsthal-oma.

Subsequently, Koolhaas and OMA continued experimenting with the oblique in a competition project, Two Libraries at Jussieu, in Paris (1992) [Figure 4.19]. Like

[238] Maria Kuzma, "Oblique Inclinations: Re-Establishing the Function of the Oblique," (Master's diss., Unitec Institute of Technology, 2015), 69.

Kunsthal Library, Koolhaas brought the urban movement into the building by extending the nearby boulevard. In doing so, he and his team worked on a conceptual model in which they cut, folded, and warped a single sheet of paper to define an uninterrupted trajectory and circuit for space. This design strategy achieved a topological system of inclined planes seamlessly connecting to perpetuate spatial movement. OMA's website delineated this newly generated oblique network as a "vertical, intensified landscape." According to them, the continuation of the boulevard inside "urbanized" the whole structure. [239] This, yet again, broke the limits between public and private, solidity and fluidity, and habitation and circulation. According to Ruby, Koolhaas's approach enabled "trans-programming of the building into an incubator of public space."[240] Landscape architect Daniel Jauslin analyzed the project through the landscape design strategies it embraced in 4 layers: "ground form, spatial form, image form, and program form." Respectively, he underlined connective artificial topography, dynamic routes "spiraling up and down," landscape-like complex "geological image," and the building like the city's flexible programming.[241] These layers facilitate the clarification of the oblique function theory's influence on the building. Koolhaas's architectural approach embodies the usage of ramps not only in these two projects but also in the Agadir Convention Center in Agadir (1990), The Educatorium in Utrecht (1992-1995), and The Netherlands Embassy in Berlin (1997-2003).

[239] "Jussieu – Two Libraries," OMA, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.oma.com/projects/jussieu-two-libraries.
[240] Ruby, "Informed Surfaces," 73.
[241] Daniel Jauslin, *Landscape Strategies in Architecture* (Delft: TU Delft BK Books, 2019), 191, https://doi.org/10.7480/abe.2019.13.4288.

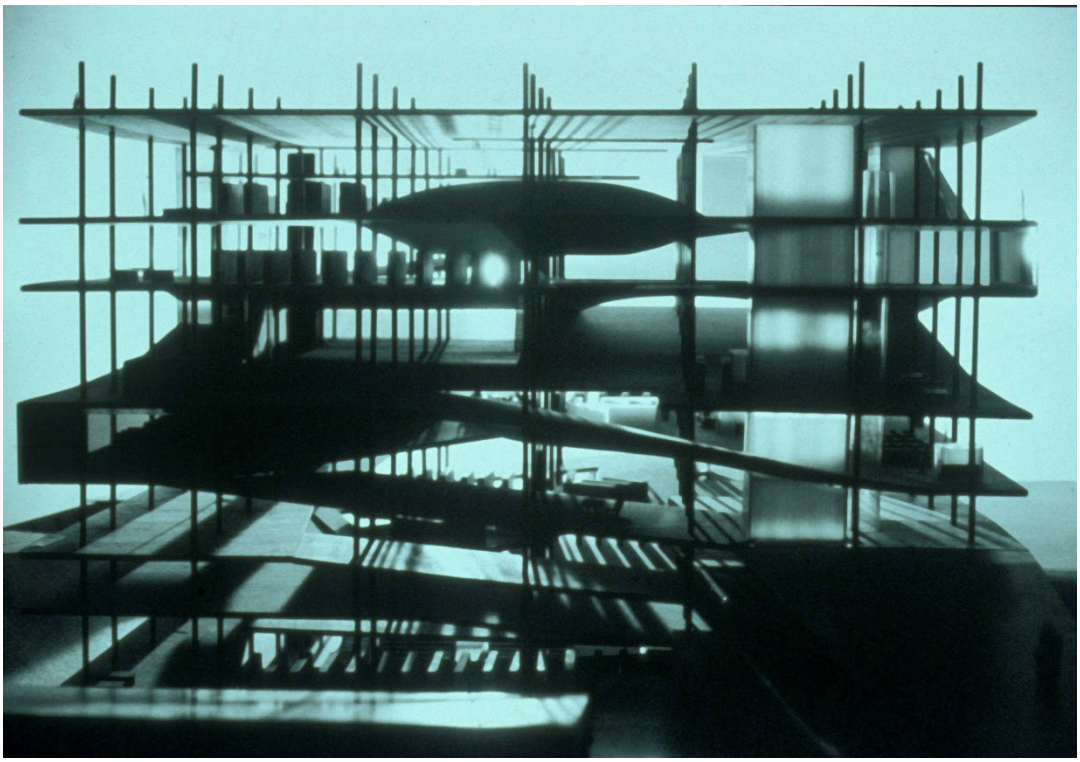

Figure 4.19. Architectural Model of Jussieu – Two Libraries, OMA, Paris, 1992.

Source: Hans Werlemann (photographer), "Jussieu – Two Libraries."

During the 1990s, conceived and well-known oblique outputs were mainly from architects other than Claude Parent.[242] However, as explained before, this temporarily changed in 1996, when Parent was again invited to the scenery of contemporary oblique architecture by Frédéric Migayrou to design the grand entrance of the Venice Pavilion of France. For the occasion, Parent designed two monolith oblique blocks leaning toward each other, defining a fractural void in between, allowing visitors to enter. Instead of utilizing oblique elements on the ground typical of the oblique function theory, he availed them as if in

[242] Parent had concentrated on developing the theory with his drawings. However, his drawings were not prominent in the mainstream architectural circles.

deconstructivism, illustrating a visual dynamism over a tactile one. We can speculate that as much as the oblique function theory influenced deconstructivism, deconstructivism influenced the oblique function theory in this instance. However, such a usage is still found few in Parent's vast portfolio of projects. Architects Benoît Cornette and Odile Decq designed the pavilion's interior, availing oblique planes to settle a dynamized ground and exhibition podiums [Figure 4.20], reminiscing Parent's installation for France's Venice Pavilion in 1970.[243] On podiums, they exhibited architectural models of oblique-minded projects such as Bernard Tschumi's Glass Pavilion in Groningen (1990) and Frédéric Borel's Pelleport in Paris (1996-2000). Venice Pavilion of French in 1996 was paramount in palpably evincing the epistemological and theoretical continuity between the oblique function theory and deconstructivism.

Figure 4.20. French Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, Benoît Cornette and Odile Decq, Venice, 1996.

Source: Odile Decq (photographer), "BLOC, « Le monolithe fracturé »," Studio Odile Decq, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.odiledecq.com/projets/bloc-le-monolithe-fracture/.

[243] This approach using oblique in display environments extends to Koolhaas's exhibition on ramps in 2014 at Venice Biennale and Parent's La Colline de l'Art (Hill of Art) for Wolfson Gallery at the Tate Liverpool in 2014.

In 1999, one of the pioneers of deconstructivist architecture, Bernard Tschumi, manifested an oblique architecture in Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center at Columbia University in New York (1994 -1999) [Figure 4.21]. Tschumi designed multistory ramps, guiding the circulation through the project while linking its various interior and exterior functions like the previous projects did. Architectural researcher Lee Stickells compares this project with Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts in Cambridge (1963), where, for him, the ramp's usage starkly contrasts. He illustrates that in the latter, the ramp was a part of the *promenade architecturale,* shaping mobile viewers' understanding of interwoven spaces, while in the former, ramps were directly interlinked with architectural and circulatory spaces to "generate a sociable, active space."[244] In other words, Stickells suggests that the ramps in Corbusier's project were restricted to being a "discrete and linear route."[245] Indeed, Tschumi's design follows the concepts of the oblique function theory, where the ramp has a spatial value rather than being only a circulatory element. As Bernard Tschumi Architects also described, the ramp connects the activities more than just connecting the levels.[246] Despite Tschumi being featured in Architecture Principe's tenth issue in 1996 and organized an exhibition on the oblique function theory in 1997 at Columbia University, apart from his brief conversation with Joseph Giovannini for the release of Claude Parent: Visionary Architect, he did not reflect on how the oblique function theory resonates with his work. Thus, looking at his work like Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center from the viewpoint of the oblique function theory reveals hidden theories, concepts, and themes defining contemporary oblique architecture.

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[244] Lee Stickells, "Conceiving an Architecture of Movement," Architectural Research Quarterly 14, no.1 (March 2010): 48, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135510000564.
[245] Stickells, 49.
[246] "Lerner Hall Student Center: New York, 1994-1999," Bernard Tschumi Architects, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.tschumi.com/projects/13.

Figure 4.21. Alfred Lerner Hall Student Center, Bernard Tschumi Architects, Columbia University, New York, 1994-1999.

Source: "Lerner Hall Student Center: New York, 1994-1999."

Followingly, one of the most prominent contemporary oblique projects, the Yokohama International Port Terminal, was designed by Foreign Office Architects (FOA) and inaugurated in 2002 [Figure 4.22]. The project resembled an artificial urban landscape, where infrastructural flows materialized. FOA defines its design as "a material manipulated by the force field" of urban flows and represents it with a "no-return diagram."[247] One could not perceive a strict separation between the

[247] Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "Roller-Coaster Construction (Foreign-Office-Architects' Project for the Yokohama- International-Port-Terminal in Japan)," *Architectural Design* (January 2002).

interior and exterior since the terminal warped the urban movement with the internal function topologically and seamlessly, pursuing the tenets of both the fold and landscape urbanism. According to architectural researcher Béatrice Simonot, "the manipulation of the floor [ground] is a constant in [FOA's] work." [248] By manipulating the floor, FOA achieves a "continuous surface scheme," an overarching term architects Michael U. Hensel and Jeffrey P. Turko utilized to underline the oblique function theory's influence on contemporary architecture.[249] Indeed, Parent and Virilio's Charleville Cultural Center, by extending the topographical surface through its roof, acts as a precursor to such approaches, including the terminal [Figure 4.23]. Drawing the parallels between the two projects, Fullaondo underlines that the terminal becomes an "inhabited topography," where along its axis "tilts, warps, perforates, and specializes," but it never loses its quality of being a continuous surface.[250] Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's postulations on smooth surfaces are also directly related to the projects. They propound:

> The smooth is the continuous variation, continuous development of form; it is the fusion of harmony and melody in favor of the production of properly rhythmic values, the pure act of the drawing of a diagonal across the vertical and the horizontal.[251]

The rough and uncompleted intentions of Charleville Cultural Center are inherited and then developed by the Yokohama International Port Terminal, demonstrating "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," and "topotonic elements." Another critical aspect of the project is its primary concept, "ni-wa-minato, suggesting a

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[248] Simonot, "Claude Parent," 167.
[249] Michael U. Hensel and Jeffrey P. Turko, *Grounds and Envelopes: Reshaping Architecture and the Built Environment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 14.
[250] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 197.
[251] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesotta: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 478.

mediation between garden and harbour," defined by FOA.[252] Mediating the opposites through seamless surfaces is highly influential in contemporary oblique architecture derived from the Architecture Principe manifesto's *No.6: The Mediate City*, which also links to landscape urbanism.

Figure 4.22. Yokohama International Port Terminal, Foreign Office Architects, Yokohama, 1995-2002.

Source: Hensel and Turko, *Grounds and Envelopes,* 139. Photograph by Satoru Mishima.

[252] Foreign Office Architects, "Yokohama International Port Terminal," in *The Digital Turn in Architecture 1992-2012,* ed. Mario Carpo (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 61.

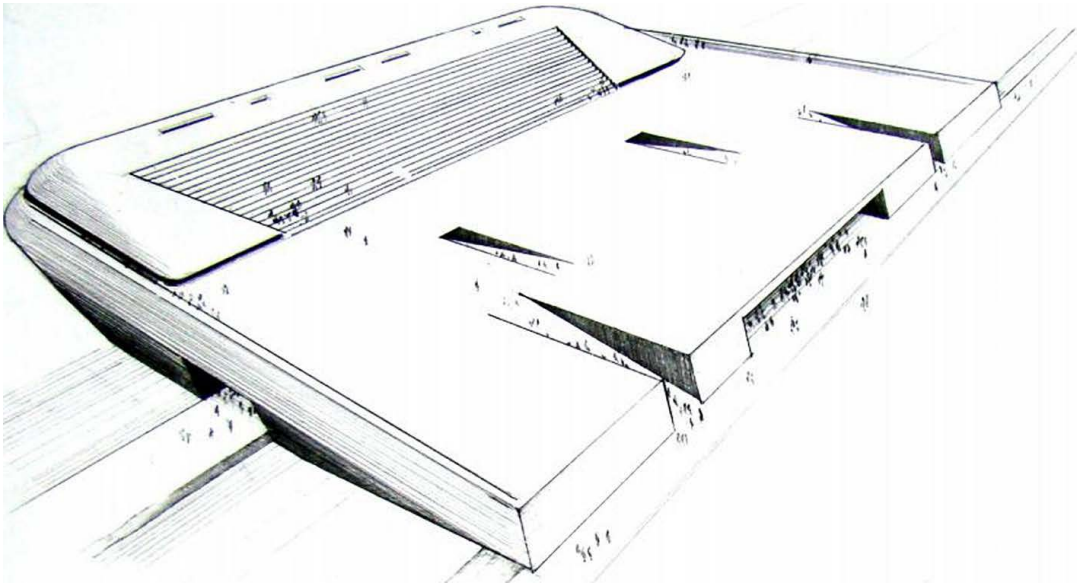

Figure 4.23. Charleville Cultural Centre, drawing by Claude Parent, 1966-1967.

Source: Jeanroy, "Claude Parent, Opponent and Follower of a Modernity in Disgrace," 10. Claude Parent Private Archives, Neuilly-sur-Seine, © Audrey Jeanroy.

During the 1990s and 2000s, despite his oblique architecture being relegated and handed over to his contemporary fellows, Parent drew urban scale drawings, persisting Architecture Principe's endeavors in speculating the future of cities on oblique. As mentioned earlier, Parent and Virilio have always considered oblique a meta-narrative to the existing urban orders and realized it as a way of creating meta-cities, even though many materialized examples were confined to building scale. In the 1990s and 2000s, the sole architect's diminishing power and the fall of architectural utopianism amplified the resistance against the top-down design of urban schemes even more. Against this backdrop, Parent obstinately followed Architecture Principe's path in many of his urban drawings, especially ones after the 1990s, causing them to become unknown and perhaps irrelevant by many to this day. However, these drawings genuinely illustrate critical points regarding the oblique function theory and its reflections on contemporary architecture, especially in their response to the century's issues like immigration. *Incisions Urbaines* (Urban

Incisions), incorporating a series of projects with a mutual theme, was an example of such drawings drafted by Parent between 2004-2007. Within the series, like in the drawing *Dans la Nature Vierge* (2007) [Figure 4.24], he proposed a buried network of oblique connections, an underground city defined by the potential movement patterns of its occupants. Urban Incisions' main concern was to wash over the movement of large populations without making the city a center of excessive congestion. This series of drawings later laid the groundwork for his oblique *Stop and Go City* (2010) drawings, alongside others concerning the migration of thousands, an awash human movement. Architectural journalist Cyrille Poy dubs these urban proposals, referring to Architecture Principe as Urbanisme Principe, highlighting Parent and Virilio's understanding of envisioning the future of urban processes in the face of "mass immigration, climate change, and geopolitical reshuffling."[253] According to Parent, setting boundaries, like in the Mexican Wall, "does not work."[254] In line, Virilio underscores that nothing can withstand a "tsunami of panicked masses in need of repopulation."[255] To resolve these problems, from an architectural perspective, Parent's urban envisions of the 1990s were much more than utopian images but potentially operative solutions that could treat the ongoing problems revolving around mobilities. However, since Parent intended to reconstruct the city, which is for him to "destroy all buildings that block the free circulation of [people],"[256] his envisioning was rendered unnuanced and incompatible with the paradigm of the 1990s and 2000s. Due to this understanding, the core that seeks solutions for urban mobility issues was glossed over. In the projects scrutinized in this chapter, we see how this core is reformulated to integrate and adapt more effectively to contemporary conditions.

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[253] Claude Parent, Cyrille Poy, and Paul Virilio, "Urbanisme Principe," *L'architecture D'aujourd'hui* 370 (January 2010): 99.
[254] Parent et al., "Urbanisme Principe," 99.
[255] Parent et al., "Urbanisme Principe."
[256] Claude Parent, "2000s Rediscovering the Heart of Nature: The Incisions," in *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019), 119.

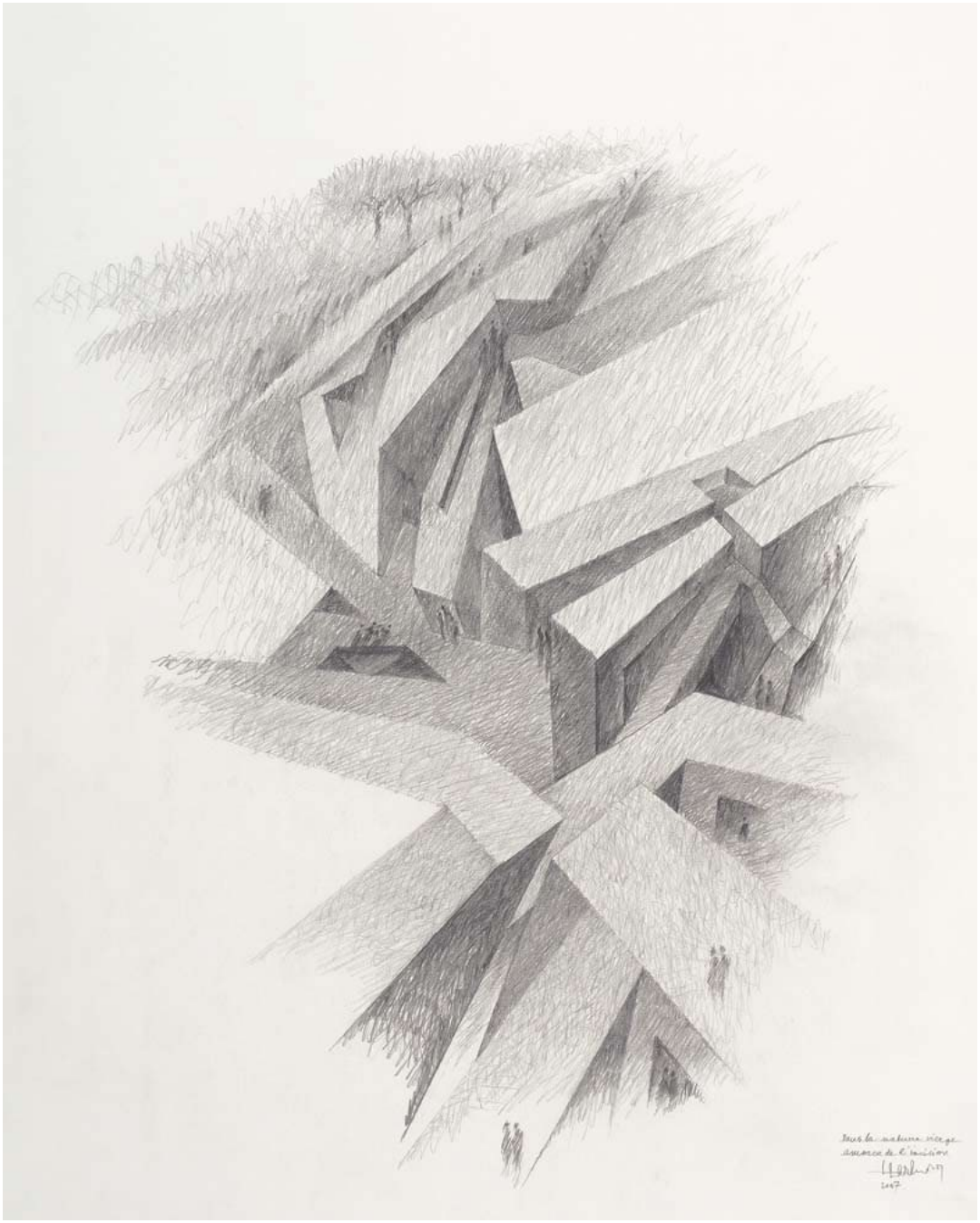

Figure 4.24. *Dans la Nature Vierge*, drawn by Claude Parent, 2007.

Source: Retrieved from FRAC Centre Archives © François Lauginie.

While Parent was dealing with urban scale and gigantic oblique structures accommodating the movement of millions to be a panacea, contemporary oblique architecture continued to materialize oblique outputs on a building scale with an integrative and mediative attitude. 2007 hosted two significant oblique projects, contrasting with Parent's oblique approach those years in their ways: Greenland Pavilion by Odile Decq in Shanghai (2007) and Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Structure Park by Weiss/Manfredi in Seattle (2001-2007). In the former [Figure 4.25], Decq utilizes skewed elements for the building envelope while exploiting the ramps for the ground to create a dynamic atmosphere, like the unbuilt project Open House by Coop Himmelb(l)au (1983). The building's distorted and inclined spatial quality prompts kinesthetic and proprioceptive perception, embodying the body as a receptive totality. It also demonstrates Decq's line of thought between deconstructivism and the oblique function theory since, respectively, she achieved a visual dynamism with tilted building components while also gearing usable oblique floors to allow the movement of people multi-directionally. According to Giovannini, Decq "optimized the three-dimensional potential of the oblique."[257] Within the same year, Decq also instantiated this approach in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome (2007), where, this time, she exploited the flexibility of oblique planes more to configure a dynamic circulation scheme, connecting all activities and spaces within the museum along their route. Examining how the oblique was used in such a broad spectrum of scales from Decq's work to Parent's is telling to see how it evolved from its immanent formulation by Parent to its contemporary fellows.

[257] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 169.

Figure 4.25. Greenland Pavilion, Studio Odile Decq, Shanghai, 2007.

Source: Odile Decq (photographer), "Greenland Pavilion," Studio Odile Decq, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.odiledecq.com/projets/greenland-pavilion/.

For the Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Structure Park [Figure 4.26], Weiss/Manfredi analyzes and utilizes existing infrastructural flows demonstrated in initial project sketches, such as transportation, to provide a scheme that links disrupted flows due to roads and railway lines around the site [Figure 4.17]. To ensure the fluidity of these fluxes, they designed inclined planes emerging from the ground to extend their topological features, connecting two sides of a road. Their website underlines that the building comprises "constructed landforms," exploiting shifting inclined planes to hold various topographies.[258] Here, rather than just varying the experience, these inclined planes react and adapt to the site's ecologies, like nearby water mass, biodiversity, and landscape features, to completely immerse into the site, not just with formal strategies seen in the oblique function theory's outputs. However, it

[258] "Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Sculpture Park," Weiss/Manfredi, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.weissmanfredi.com/projects/386-seattle-art-museum-olympic-sculpture-park.

utilizes sequences of site sections to understand the topographical ground and proposes inclined planes accordingly to match it like the sectional narratives of Parent and Virilio. The project also resonates with Parent and Virilio's mediate city, which they envision as such:

> The function of urbanism is to create mediated structures that establish a link between a portion of the lithosphere and a layer of the atmosphere… mediated structures that incorporate both habitation and circulation.[259]

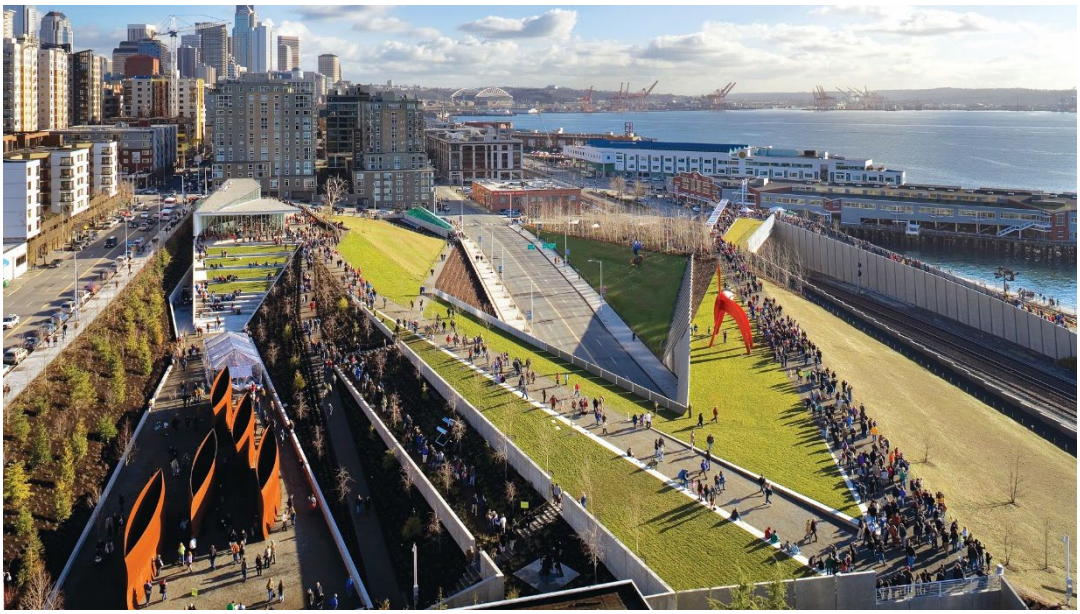

Figure 4.26. Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Structure Park, Weiss/Manfredi, Seattle, 2001-2007.

Source: "Seattle Art Museum: Olympic Sculpture Park."

Perhaps the most apparent example showing the oblique function theory's tenets, especially "habitable circulation," was Norwegian architectural firm Snøhetta's Oslo

[259] Paul Virilio, "Architecture Principe: The Mediated City," in *The Function of the Oblique: The Architecture of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, 1963–1969*, ed. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 1996), 70.

Opera House in Oslo (2000-2008) [Figure 4.27]. Fullaondo states that the segregation between private and public spaces, habitation, and circulation, in Parent and Virilio's terms, was "brilliantly [resolved]" by Oslo Opera House, which is, for him, the only way to build "large singular buildings" that city gives away much of its surface area.[260] Snøhetta figured out how to integrate habitation and circulation by providing multiple multidirectional urban ramps that lift the strict borders between the interior and exterior. Giovannini states these ramps form a "participatory public landscape," conceiving "habitable circulation."[261] Ramps also give the sense of a building sinking to its ground, referencing *Bunker Archaeology* by Virilio, dissolving the monumentality. Simonot, as if epitomizing all these qualities of the building, illustrates that the building "is a landscape linking with the hills, connecting with the fjord, restoring the city's maritime image."[262] Using an urban ramp in large complexes became a signature of Snøhetta's architecture, as seen later in their project: Shanghai Grand Opera House in Shanghai (2017-2015). Notwithstanding, they did not mention any concepts from the oblique function theory. They did not even pay tribute to Parent and Virilio, that this once more pointed out asynchronous understanding of the oblique in architectural history and theory. Scholars like Fullaondo, Simonot, and Giovannini revealed this connection, though many similar projects still await such uncovering.

[260] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 188.
[261] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 182.
[262] Simonot, "Claude Parent," 168.

Figure 4.27. Oslo Opera House, Snøhetta, Oslo, 2000-2008.

Source: "Norwegian National Opera and Ballet," Snøhetta, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.snohetta.com/projects/norwegian-national-opera-and-ballet.

One of the influential architects of contemporary oblique architecture who recognized Parent as a precursor to his architectural approach was Thom Mayne. Mayne founded Morphosis, his architectural office, and co-founded the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), which both are known for their innovative and experimental architectural approaches, holding a broad portfolio of oblique architectures. In 2009, Mayne conceived the Academic Building at the Cooper Union in New York (2004-2009) [Figure 4.28]. The building was one of the pioneers of contemporary oblique architecture since it conflates deconstructivism with computational design to engender a twisted and cascaded gallery space wrapped with multidirectional inclined surfaces and staircases. The project describes this gesture in gallery space as "a stacked vertical piazza, organized around a central

atrium."[263] The gallery space provokes an oblique anamorphic view that perpetually changes according to the body's position, prompting revolving movement around the atrium. This oblique composition resonates with Parent's oblique concept of "use the fall," one of the twelve subversive acts he elaborated on in his book *Errer dans l'illusion.* These twelve subversive acts will later be presented at SCI-Arc in 2019, illuminating the connection. Furthermore, the gallery space is also a fracture introduced to conventional orthogonal architecture. According to Giovannini, this understanding resembles Parent's monolithic design for France's Venice Pavilion entrance in 1996.[264] Like "use the fall," the "fracture" was also one of the twelve subversive acts, which dates back to Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers (1963-1966) and the "Critical Modernity" concept by Parent. Transcending these two, all twelve acts can be observed throughout Mayne's vast portfolio.

[263] "41 Cooper Square," Morphosis, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.morphosis.com/architecture/4/.
[264] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 166.

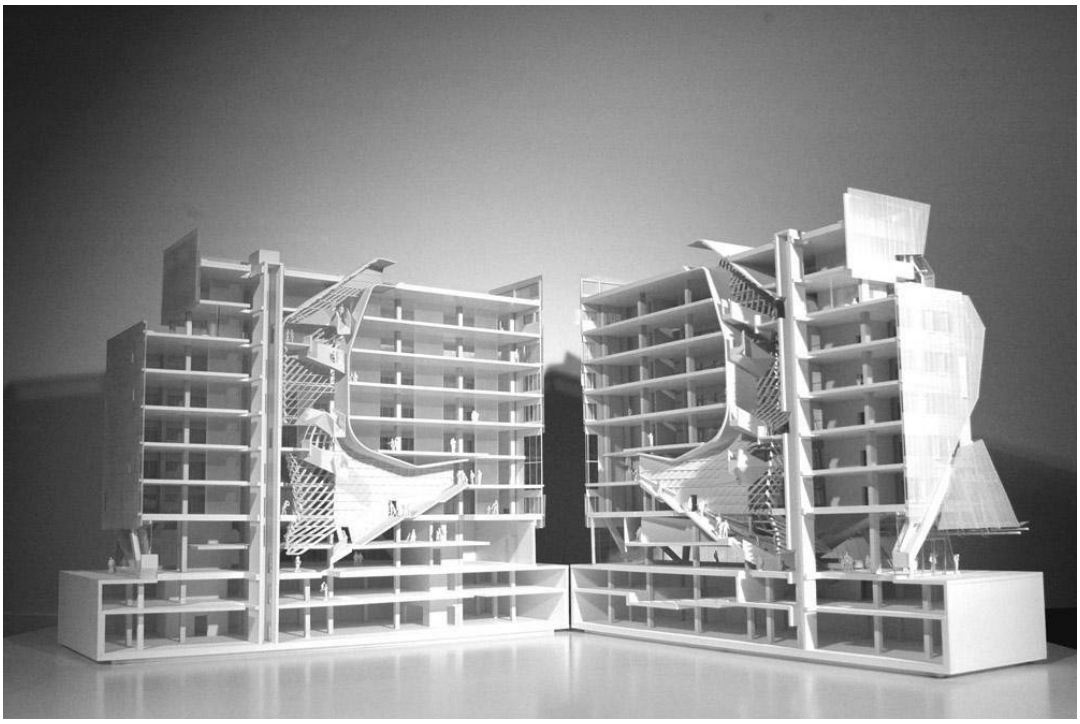

Figure 4.28. Architectural Model of the Academic Building at the Cooper Union, showing the ‘fractured’ atrium space, Morphosis, New York, 2004-2009.

Source: “The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art / Morphosis Architects,” Archdaily, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.archdaily.com/40471/the-cooper-union-for-the-advancement-of-science-and-art-morphosis-architects.

Despite these years being productive for contemporary oblique architecture, neither Parent and Virilio nor the oblique function theory were mentioned by the architects of these projects. Instead, scholars cited before analyzed contemporary works by exploiting the oblique theories, concepts, and frameworks, activating the dormant oblique core in these works. However, in 2010, the oblique function theory and Parent’s projects, drawings, and diagrams were revived once more, even though this revival barely reached Anglophone architectural circles. In that year, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine organized a monographic exhibition devoted to Claude Parent, designed by Parent’s former pupil Jean Nouvel and curated by his long-term advocate Migayrou and Francis Rambert, which was followed up by the

book *Claude Parent: l'oeuvre Construite, l'oeuvre Graphique*.[265] On the website of Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, the exhibition is introduced as follows, remarking on the uncharted portfolio of Parent:

> Recognized today by younger generations, Claude Parent was long forgotten, marginalized in a utopia that still fascinates outside our borders, in America as well as in Asia. A "territorial utopian", as Paul Virilio, his accomplice in the "Oblique Function" adventure, recently described him, Claude Parent is one of the heroes of modernity.[266]

Although discerning the marginalization of Parent and his ideas alongside his recognition by younger architects, the book and the exhibition's aim to illuminate how his oblique theories, concepts, and themes find reflections on contemporary oblique architecture remained somewhat limited. However, by gathering nearly the whole *oeuvre* of Parent, they prompted architects and scholars to reflect on Parent's dense body of work, draw inspiration and methodologies, and utilize them in their projects and research. Notwithstanding, since they were in French, it could not foster that much interest and recognition in a larger context.[267] Still, after them, there was an increase in scholarly works that aspired to deal with this massive umbrella of the oblique architecture showcased. For instance, in the same year, Migayrou published a book entitled *Nevers: Architecture Principe,* in which, like Ruby and Bideau's manuscripts in *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen*, 2002, Simonot related the oblique function

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[265] Migayrou and Rambert, *Claude Parent*: *L'oeuvre Construite/L'oeuvre Graphique.*

[266] Original text: Reconnu aujourd'hui par les jeunes générations, Claude Parent fut longtemps oublié, marginalisé dans une utopie qui fascine encore hors de nos frontières, en Amérique comme en Asie. "Utopiste du territoire", comme le qualifiait récemment Paul Virilio, son complice dans l'aventure de la "Fonction oblique", Claude Parent est l'un des héros de la modernité. "Claude Parent: l'oeuvre construite, l'oeuvre graphique," Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, accessed June 16, 2024, trans. the author with the aid of DeepL, https://www.citedelarchitecture.fr/fr/exposition/claude-parent-loeuvre-construite-loeuvre-graphique.

[267] Claude Parent's grandson Laszlo Parent told me that they are now translating the whole publications by and about Parent to English.

theory to contemporary oblique architecture, searching for its tenets in the works of FOA, Daniel Libeskind, Snøhetta and Odile Decq.

Alongside FOA's Yokohama International Passenger Terminal and Oslo Opera House, SANAA's Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne (2010) [Figure 4.29] was among the most cited projects in demonstrating the oblique function theory's contemporary adaptations. Here, again, we see a building treated as a landscape, where its ground floor is a continuous undulating surface, fluctuating through the building to accommodate various functions comprised of changing spatial sequences. While defining their project, SANAA uses landform terms such as valleys, humps, and hills, directly referring to Parent's style of describing his oblique architecture. SANAA adds that the center is designed "as a single space."[268] Considering their descriptions of the building as a landscape, inclined variations throughout the building play a critical role in differentiating this "single space."[269] According to architect Igor Siddiqui, Rolex Learning Center epitomizes oblique architecture's principles of unrestricted movement and unlimited activity that "mirror the dynamic nature of today's society."[270] Even though they have not clearly stated, SANAA was probably inspired by Parent after his influential book *Vivre à l'Oblique* was translated into Japanese in 2008.[271] Rolex Learning Center strongly instantiates the book's principles by experimenting with moving on the oblique surface while inhabiting it. However, as architectural researcher Julie Cattant

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[268] SANAA, "Rolex Learning Center," Archello, accessed June 16, 2024, https://archello.com/project/rolex-learning-center-2.

[269] Testing inclinations effects on spaces were also one of the tools of Parent. Parent worked on adhesion limits during the days of his exhaustive work on the oblique function theory. He clarifies what he aimed to do in an interview with Koolhaas. Koolhaas and Parent, "Ramp," 57-61.

[270] Igor Siddiqui, "Oblique Interior," *Interiors* 8, no. 1-2 (April 2017): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/20419112.2017.1324554.

[271] Little documented why exactly Japanese architectural circles reached a level of interest in translating Parent's books. This was probably due to an exhibition, "Archilab: New Experiments in Architecture, Art and the City, 1950-2005," organized by the collaboration between FRAC Centre, Centre Pompidou in France, and Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. Migayrou was involved in the curatorship of the exhibition since he was the director of FRAC Centre and Centre Pompidou then. Knowing Parent's works, perhaps he included his works to get exhibited.

emphasizes, a building creates its landscape without getting any references from its surroundings.[272] In that terms, it was also distinguished from the oblique function theory, which seeks mediation with the ground despite being against getting dissolved by it.

Figure 4.29. Rolex Learning Center, SANAA, Lausanne, 2010.

Source: "Rolex Learning Center," image cropped by the author.

In 2010, another forerunner of organic forms and continuous folding surfaces, Zaha Hadid, conceived the Guangzhou Opera House in Guangzhou (2010) [Figure 4.30]. Unlike Rolex Learning Center, it sought to integrate with its surroundings by using the interplay of topological surfaces connecting the different parts of the site. Fullaondo highlights that the building exemplifies Parent and Virilio's envisioned oblique space's "symbiotic relationship between monumentality and movement."[273] Indeed, the building amalgamated two masses accommodating opera halls with a dynamic topological ground containing multidirectional ramps and staircases,

[272] Julie Cattant, "L'horizon matière de l'habiter," trans. the author with the aid of DeepL, *Projets de Paysage* 9 (2013): 4, https://doi.org/10.4000/paysage.12302.
[273] Fullaondo, "La Invención de La Fonction Oblique," 195.

showcasing the intersection between the habitation and circulation. Not just in Guangzhou Opera House but in many of Hadid's designs, like MAXXI Museum in Rome (2010), we can perceive the dynamic usage of changing angles ushering the movement while also defining the architectural spaces. Undoubtedly, this approach is fed by Hadid's proposal for a "new kind of urbanism, composed of streams or flows of movement that cut through the city fabric," which highly aligns with the ideals of Parent and the oblique function theory, despite not Hadid directly being influenced by them but mutual roots of futurism, and neo-plasticism.[274]

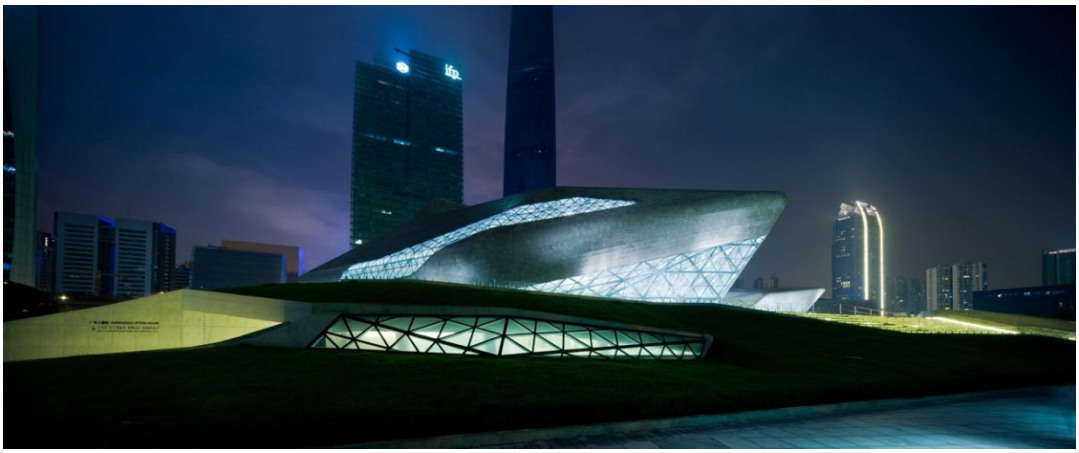

Figure 4.30. Guangzhou Opera House, Zaha Hadid Architects, Guangzhou, 2010.

Source: Iwan Baan (photographer), "Guangzhou Opera House / Zaha Hadid Architects," Archdaily, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.archdaily.com/115949/guangzhou-opera-house-zaha-hadid-architects.

2014 was another defining year for contemporary oblique architecture in international scenery because of the Venice Biennale: Fundamentals, directed by Koolhaas. Even before his and his office's projects like Kunsthal Library (1992) and

[274] Zaha Hadid, "Movement and Porosity," in *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the* 21*st Century*, eds. Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003), 71 quoted in Stickells, "Conceiving an Architecture of Movement," 43.

Jussieu Library (1992), Koolhaas had been involved in designing with tilted, skewed, and leaning elements like seen in Torenstraat in The Hague (1985) or Apartment Building and Observation Tower in Rotterdam (1982) showcased in Deconstructivist Architects Exhibition. This fascination culminated in the Biennale, where he chose the theme "Fundamentals," followed by the book *Elements of Architecture*, which was also the central pavilion's name.[275] The exhibition and the book unfolded the architectural chronology through the building components that any architect uses: "the floor, the wall, the ceiling, the roof, the door, the window, the façade, the balcony, the corridor, the fireplace, the toilet, the stair, the escalator, the elevator, the ramp."[276] By establishing each element's architectural trajectory, Koolhaas and his team endeavored to apprehend how contemporary architectural edifices came to their current condition and would proceed in the future. On behalf of the ramp, Koolhaas reinvigorated Parent's Venice Pavilion of French (1970) and Villa Parent in Neuilly (1974) by reconstructing their dynamized inclined surfaces, recreating the oblique dwelling's setting. For the occasion, Koolhaas interviewed Parent, manifesting the importance of oblique trajectory in the architectural sphere, mainly reflected by the building element: the ramp.[277] Unfortunately, Koolhaas did not bring in his vast portfolio building upon the ramps during the interview, which, in a way, firmed the gap between Parent and contemporary oblique architecture.

Architect Jean Nouvel was one of the most influential figures who contributed to bridging this gap between Parent and contemporary oblique architecture. Nouvel was a *protégé* of Claude Parent and worked in his office in the late 1960s. Directly exposed to the oblique function theory and Architecture Principe manifesto, he played a role in the projects Thomson-Houston Study Centre in Vellizy-Vacoublay (1966-1969), Parc de Marly residency in Marly-le-Roy (1966) and Shopping Centre

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[275] Rem Koolhaas, *Elements of Architecture,* eds. James Westcott and Stephan Petermann (Köln: Taschen, 2018).
[276] "Venice Biennale 2014: Fundamentals," OMA, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.oma.com/projects/venice-biennale-2014-fundamentals.
[277] Koolhaas, "Ramp," 50-73.

in Pierry (1967-1970). After working in pertinent proximity, Nouvel left Parent's office and continued his career by founding Ateliers Jean Nouvel, whose first realized project was an oblique dwelling Maison Delbigot in Villeneuve-sur-Lot (1973). According to Giovannini, shortly after this project, Nouvel deviated from his sole focus on the oblique, instead designing various buildings "with uneven results."[278] However, they have never broken their relationship ever since, as Parent stated in an interview.[279] Giovannini claims that the long years devoid of the oblique for Nouvel ended with the design of Philharmonie de Paris in Paris (2007-2015) [Figure 4.31]. In fact, despite his writing appearing in Architecture Principe's tenth issue in 1996, he did not tackle or mention anything about either Parent or oblique.

Figure 4.31. Philharmonie de Paris, render by Ateliers Jean Nouvel, Paris, 2007-2015.

Source: "Philharmonie De Paris," Ateliers Jean Nouvel, accessed June 18, 2024, http://www.jeannouvel.com/en/projects/philharmonie-de-paris/.

[278] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 170.
[279] Parent, "Parent, Claude," 689.

By explicitly demonstrating the oblique function theory, architectural researcher Lucía C. Pérez Moreno claims it was a homage to Parent.[280] Indeed, it is the apotheosis of the oblique architecture, showing nearly all the aspirations of Parent and Virilio's theories, concepts, and themes. According to Nouvel, the project aims to elicit urban harmony with four contexts, amplifying the Philarmonie concept: "harmony with Parisian weather, Parc de la Villette and Tschumian themes, Cité de la Musique, and ring road." [281] To harmonize these four distinct qualities of the site, Nouvel utilizes multidirectional inclined planes outside, connected to the solid mass of the Philharmonie, while penetrating it to ensure the fluidity between the interior and exterior. Giovannini describes the building as a "landform," which, according to him, Nouvel "incised and carved with inclined terraces, plateaus, ramps, and climbing pathways, some switchback."[282] These design operations pertinently remind of Parent's, as Migayrou defines:

> Claude Parent incises; he slashes the space, cuts it up into strips and ribbons; he stretches it, rips it and mends it, pierces it with improbable axialities in order to project huge "topographies," to make hypothetical topos appear in the far reaches of the "geo-metric."[283]

It is essential to mention that many of these could not be conceived by Parent and Virilio, except in drawings due to technological inabilities. However, according to architect William Layzell, in Philharmonie de Paris, Nouvel utilized computer algorithms to generate complex geometries and systems.[284] With computer-aided design tools, Nouvel achieved a "habitable circulation." In doing so, he inputs

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[280] Lucía C. Pérez Moreno, "Claude Parent en Nueva Forma: La Recepción de Architecture Principe en España," *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura,* no. 11 (November 2014): 88, https://doi.org/10.12795/ppa.2014.i11.06.
[281] See: Jean Nouvel, "Philharmonie De Paris," Ateliers Jean Nouvel, accessed June 16, 2024, http://www.jeannouvel.com/en/projects/philharmonie-de-paris/.
[282] Giovannini, "Claude Parent," 170.
[283] Frédéric Migayrou, "In One Stroke," in *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*, eds. Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent (New York: Rizzoli, 2019), 117.
[284] William Layzell, *Oblique Function: Dead or Alive?* (FBUA Bursary Report, 2010): 30.

surrounding flows and potential movement patterns, transforming them into a spatial-dynamic mass [Figure 4.32]. The building, *per se*, laconically epitomized the oblique trajectory, stemming from the works of Parent and Virilio to the latest computational oblique, illuminating its architect's architectural journey as well as the oblique function theory to its successor paradigms.

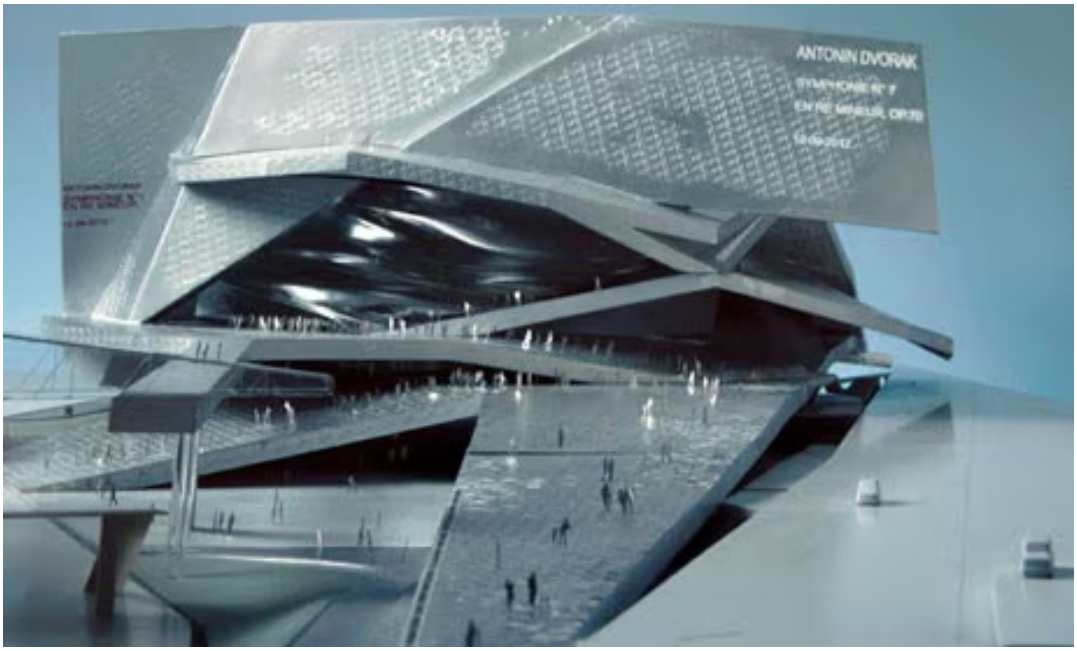

Figure 4.32. Architectural Model of Philarmonie de Paris, Ateliers Jean Nouvel, Paris, 2007-2015.

Source: Jean Ayissi (photographer), "A model of the Philharmonie de Paris concert hall," Ateliers Jean Nouvel, accessed June 18, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/30/philharmonie-de-paris-bottomless-pit.

Following the building's inauguration in 2016, Nouvel and Parent's partnership again revived with the exhibition in Galerie Azzedine Alaïa between January 14 to February 28: Musées à Venir translated as Museums to Come, with also an

eponymous book.[285] Parent had always been involved in architectural representation and display environments through exhibitions of the oblique function theory as well as their design and curation with the oblique seen in his project for Tate Liverpool. Musées à Venir excavated the role of oblique architecture in museum design, integrating the visions of two architects. Unfortunately, Parent died during the convention period. The exhibition marked his last contribution to oblique architecture.

Until then, Parent's influence on contemporary oblique architecture was recognized, yet it still disappeared from one time to another because of the lack of affiliation of his works to their contemporaries.[286] Besides, a considerable portion of research on the oblique function theory was mainly covered by Virilio, whose popularity was much greater than that of Parent due to his later works in the philosophy of technology. As a result, this scholarly research only covered the period of the Architecture Principe group, which Virilio had still been experimenting with the oblique. This started to change with Migayrou's emphasis on Claude Parent as an essential architectural figure. Especially after 2010, Parent's daughter, Chloé Parent, his grandson, Laszlo Parent, and Audrey Jeanroy also played an active role. According to art historian Christian Sander, Jeanroy, who was involved in Migayrou's retrospective exhibition on Parent at Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, digitized thousands of archival materials about Parent.[287] That allowed more people to engage with Parent's work and construct logical reasoning on his influence in contemporary architecture. Christian Sander's book, *Claude Parent, Paul Virilio: Architecture Principe*, 2022; Audrey Jeanroy's book, *Claude Parent: Les Desseins d'un Architecte,* 2022; Joseph Giovannini's book, *Architecture Unbound: A Century of the Disruptive Avant-Garde,* chapter ''Claude Parent,''2021,

[285] Donatien Grau, Jean Nouvel, and Claude Parent, *Jean Nouvel, Claude Parent: Musées à Venir* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2016).
[286] For more information, see: Erpek and Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Disappearance of the Oblique Function Theory."
[287] Sander, "Claude Parent, Paul Virilio – Architecture Principe," 48.

Alice Monacelli's, Maria Pura Moreno Moreno's and Julie Cattant's journal articles were among the many remarkable research sprouted after 2010 enriched by these archives.

In addition, Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent also organized exhibitions at well-known institutions, along with publications incorporating eminent architects. One such event, in 2019, SCI-Arc, in collaboration with Chloé Parent and Laszlo Parent, held an exhibition entitled "Claude Parent: Visionary Architect." Co-founder of SCI-Arc, architect Thom Mayne's connection to Parent was already established then, which we detailed in previous paragraphs. Parent also lectured at SCI-Arc in 1998, so his work was not entirely new for its community.[288] Building on this association, the exhibition displayed a derivative of the oblique landscape in French Venice Pavilions in 1970 and 1996 and Villa Parent (1974), partially implemented in the exhibition space. Alongside that oblique installation, not just Parent's old drawings but also his recent drawings, such as *Incisions Urbaines* (2004-2007), were also exhibited, demonstrating the over fifty years of his oblique architecture. Also, the twelve subversive acts he elaborated on in his book *Errer dans l'illusion* were showcased. The exhibition was followed by a book with the same name devoted to Parent's visionary drawings, sketches, and projects, involving excerpts from architects and designers featuring Azzedine Alaïa, Odile Decq, Frank Gehry, Wolf D. Prix, and Jean Nouvel, among many. [289] In these excerpts, their writers' comment on Parent's indelible influence on contemporary architecture by reflecting on his oblique approach from their perspectives. The book was presented in top-notch venues, including MAXXI Museum and Rizzoli Bookstore, enriched by conversations with architects Patrik Schumacher and Bernard Tschumi.[290] Chloé Parent and Laszlo

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[288] Claude Parent, "Claude Parent," filmed October 1998 at SCI-Arc, Los Angeles, LA, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Jrdhnu_lrw&t=10s.
[289] Azzedine Alaïa et al., *Claude Parent: Visionary Architect*.
[290] Patrik Schumacher, "Patrik Schumacher on Claude Parent," filmed 2019 at MAXXI Museum, Rome, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EiRnjcGdIA&t=640s; Giovannini and Tschumi, "Claude Parent - Visionary Architect."

Parent's endeavors to display and disseminate Claude Parent's work persist today. They recently conducted an architectural competition, "Le Prix Claude Parent," which sought portfolios from architects who demonstrated visionary and innovative architecture.[291]

[291] "Le Prix Claude Parent," Claude Parent Archives & École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Montpellier, accessed June 16, 2024, https://www.prixclaudeparent.org/.

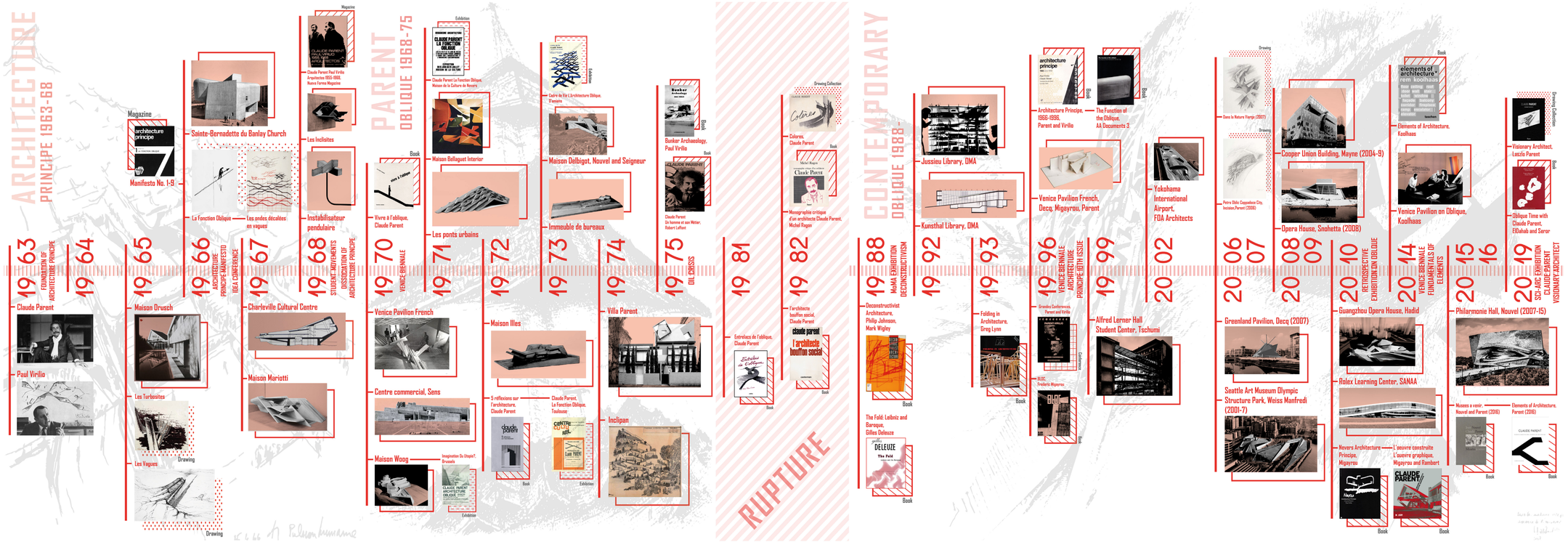

Figure 4.33. The Reconstructed Oblique Trajectory, created by the author.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> Apparently right now and it doesn't bother me at all-the oblique, as a substrate of architectural thought, has been completely quashed. No one mentions it anymore. No one will say my name.[292]

Despite being the precursor of many ideas dominant in contemporary architecture, developed from Deconstructivism, the Fold, and Landscape Urbanism, the Oblique Function Theory, Claude Parent, and the Architecture Principe group have always been marginalized. Initially, between 1963 and 1968, the Architecture Principe group and their manifesto on oblique architecture were potent in architectural circles, appearing in international events on avant-garde architecture like the International Dialogue of Experimental Architecture in 1966. Their visions on oblique planes were highly differentiated from other approaches speculating the future of cities against urban mobilities, making them unique in their understanding. In addition, due to Claude Parent's involvement with various figures from different schools of thought ranging from Le Corbusier to Nicholas Schöffer, the oblique was multidimensionally nurtured by each paradigm and built its architectural position considerably immersed with the contemporary condition of the era. Their ideas were developed concerning these outer influences and collaborations, sprouting many concepts, theories, and themes related to oblique in their manifesto. However, soon after their manifesto was released, this productive exchange abruptly stopped; in a way, their ideas froze in 1966. After that, Parent and Virilio only aspired to reach the architecture they

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[292] Claude Parent, "Claude Parent: Architecture for the Future," interview by Donatien Grau and Oliver Zahm, Purple Magazine, 2013, https://purple.fr/magazine/fw-2013-issue-20/claude-parent/.

envisioned in their rigid manifesto, isolating them from the changing paradigms and expectations.

Since they could not genuinely achieve such an oblique architecture as architectural historian Craig Buckey commented on for all manifestos, the oblique became an uncompleted project "[their] architectural imagination [would] chase for years before being conceived in built form."[293] In that regard, technological and economic restrictions initially challenged them to conceive their oblique architectures as if they were in their drawings. Their ideas were formulated and showcased in manifestos, architectural drawings, models, and diagrams, and they were mainly based on an urban scale. Notwithstanding, technological and economic difficulties reduced these ideas to building scale with a few oblique planes, exemplified by their first built project, Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay Church in Nevers (1963-1966). More than that, their works' embodiment of bunker aesthetics, espousing closed architecture, substantially contradicted their oblique concepts such as "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," and "topotonic elements." Since they were inscrutable toward outer viewpoints due to the manifesto's closedness, they did not realize how bunker imagery damaged their intentions. Although it was due to recalling horrible memories of World War II, the audience harshly refuted the bunker depictions of Parent and Virilio at the IDEA Conference. Obliviously, Parent and Virilio's on-paper oblique cities presented in the conference's catalog had nothing to do with bunkers. However, they could not give up using bunker envelopes when materializing these tropes. Still, they neglected to reflect on these criticisms of bunkers, as seen in *Architecture Principe No.8: Power and Imagination*, where the IDEA Conference was enlisted but never mentioned, so they could not discern its leading problems. Eventually, this consolidated a conflicting and misleading image of their work by others, diminishing their architectural influence.

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[293] Buckley, "After the Manifesto."

Many of their concepts had to wait decades to get recognized because they were overlooked and relegated due to this hindering image. In 1968, student movements struck the theory, where Virilio wanted to encompass political issues in defining oblique architecture. Parent did not accept his intentions, eventually leading to their breakup. Shortly after, Virilio quit his study on the oblique because of overwhelming technological difficulties. Unlike Virilio, Parent continued to develop oblique architecture. However, his attachment to the Architecture Principe manifesto endured despite all these breakthroughs, with new additions later, like the oil crisis of 1973-1974, rendering megastructures, architectural utopianism, and formalism irrelevant. Oblique cities with mega-inclined planes, utopian urban schemes without existing cities, and small scale against the urbanistic value of oblique persisted in Parent's work, unaffected by anything happening outside the manifesto. His shift to designing shopping malls and nuclear power plans added a final keystone, entirely removing the oblique and him as an architectural figure from international architectural scenery, confining them to Francophone circles.

Regardless of exclusion, throughout the following decades, many theories, concepts, and themes sprouted utilizing the oblique against a critic of modernist architecture; a small group of French architects mentioned Parent and the oblique function theory's influence, while a bigger group of mainstream architects did not. Although not mentioned then, many mainstream architects later acknowledged the oblique, affirming that it preceded their architectural understanding. This acknowledgment, however, could not go beyond paying tribute to Parent, Virilio, and the oblique function theory without demonstrating how truly they shaped contemporary practices, theories, and frameworks. For instance, despite resonating with these, deconstructivist architecture, which basically comprised architects having similar approaches to manipulating architectural spaces by exploiting tilted planes, conflicting forms, and fractured composition rooted in Russian Constructivism and Suprematism, never mentioned the oblique. Their architects, such as Frank Gehry, later recognized the oblique, but how exactly the connection between his approach and the oblique maintained remained unanswered. This was also the case for the fold

and landscape urbanism, with few exceptions. Inevitably, this created an epistemological chasm regarding oblique trajectory, where Parent, Virilio, and Architecture Principe's myriad of concepts, such as "habitable circulation," "the mediate city," and "topotonic elements" that enlighten contemporary oblique architecture, remained latently dissolved within the current architectural theory, research, and practice. One should remark that this primarily occurred due to the revolving skepticism around the oblique function theory as a whole, which was exactly not seen when one thinks of its concepts.

This thesis aimed to bridge the gap in oblique architecture's trajectory by reclaiming its role in defining contemporary architecture. Doing so, it focused on deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism, whose architectural concepts, themes, and theories drew significant parallels with the oblique function theory. By constituting a reconstructed timeline concentrating on actors, styles, projects, publications, and events, it revealed the latent and unseen influence of the theory. The research demonstrated that the oblique's primary concepts, which were formulated vividly in the Architecture Principe manifesto, were utilized and advanced by contemporary architects. Comparing and contrasting the oblique function theory with subsequent approaches shed light on its limits of impact. In line, it is seen that manipulation of the topographical ground by proposing topological forms, utilization of sectional narratives, consideration of infrastructural spaces, the amalgamation of habitation and circulation, and mediation of the private and public spaces to ensure uninterrupted flow of spaces were the main themes that mark the oblique function theory's influence on following similar understandings. However, the thesis determined that these are instead found in fragments and distinguished from each other, which deepened the comprehension of how the oblique evolved, mutated, and transplanted by integrating them. Respectively, the research showcased that in deconstructivist architecture, the "angled elements" were used to manifest visual dynamism without necessarily ensuring the tactile movement of people. In the fold, they turned into "diagonals," whereby they lost their spatial value as a singular element. Instead, they became a part of a topological whole, where their minor

changes did not directly affect the spatiality. Additionally, the fold produced architectural objects against the oblique's emphasis on anti-objects. Finally, landscape urbanism aligns with many of oblique's concepts, especially with its urbanistic perspective in contrast to the previous ones. However, it considers ecological and site-specific conditions contrary to the oblique function theory and aims to integrate with its surroundings even if it needs to dissolve, unlike the theory.

Considering these similarities and differences, the research traced the precedents of contemporary architecture, which were discernibly indifferent to the oblique, based on deconstructivism, the fold, and landscape urbanism from the oblique function theory's viewpoint. Once the impossible architecture, the research illuminated that the oblique now became quintessential for contemporary architecture owing to developments in computational and constructional technologies. However, the study illustrated that more than the product of these tools proving the technical abilities, the oblique was a fundamental element in architectural thinking, culture, and theory and emerged as a third alternative to existing Cartesian architectural practices. This filled the gap between modernism and deconstructivism, entailing it to experiment in contemporary architecture. Despite materializing a few projects like Charleville Culture Centre, which comprehend their concepts, overall, Parent and Virilio's real-life architecture fell short compared to their architectural imagination. They were too formal and devoid of programmatic, contextual, and social connotations of their concepts, such as "habitable circulation." Therefore, rather than focusing on these oblique forms, grasping what oblique concepts suggested was utilized by the research to analyze precedents of contemporary oblique architecture. Indeed, this thesis put forward a new methodological framework to scrutinize oblique architectural forms as well, not due solely to their formal qualities but also their social, cultural, and political implications, prompting future inquiry.

Not limited only to the oblique, one of the research's outcomes was epitomizing how an architectural theory, which was influential yet disregarded, could be revisited and reclaimed. Embracing a multifaceted approach, not just relying on the oblique forms but complex relationships between actors, styles, projects, and events, the research

revealed how deep inside Parent, Virilio, and Architecture Principe's approaches remained visible marks on many. This research methodology could be utilized for many other marginalized or glossed-over theories, themes, and architectural concepts to elicit a more comprehensive approach to architectural history and theory research. As the oblique function theory introduces a novel perspective of reading contemporary architecture, excavating latent architectural fragments could sprout new methodologies and the potential to advance how we think and reify architecture.

The research also illustrated through the evolution of the oblique how the one-sided understandings that emerge from mono-architectural figures, such as Parent, were no longer valid. In a world where exchange between society and disciplines is potent in defining the architectural agenda, we see that theories like the oblique, which are closed to external interpretations, purely form-basis, and eventually, do not progress, are challenging to stand on their own, even though they have a lot of potential and impact on other theories. It is also possible to say that in the case of the oblique, rather than the potential of it, it was recognized through the spread of Parent's collaboration with other people rather than the Architecture Principe manifesto *per se,* and they modified their version of the oblique not akin to Parent but continuously developed and diversified manner. Within that sense, the thesis mirrors, through the oblique evolution, the architectural discipline's changing agenda, which is more open to external forces than ever before.

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