

# The Whites vs the Grays: re-examining the 1970s avant-garde

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Architectural culture was not immune to the ideological battles of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but the politics and agendas that came into play were more complex than they appeared from the published discourse. Oversimplified media packaging of the architectural theory of 1970s America has not only inhibited understanding of the discourse itself, but also limited what is accepted as the history of New York's now-famous 1970s avant-garde.

## Introduction

It is widely perceived that the 1970s represented a high point of activity in the United States in terms of the expansion and debate of architectural theory. It has been argued that an elite dialogue became focused on New York during this period, in part due to the activities surrounding the journal *Oppositions*. The group of architects involved, most prolifically Peter Eisenman, were identified as a kind of contemporary American avant-garde. The independent Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment (CASE) and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS), through its journal *Oppositions*, actively developed architectural criticism and culture.

In 1969, work by five of the architects involved in CASE, including Eisenman, was presented at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in an exhibition entitled 'The New York Five'. The book *Five Architects* appeared in 1972, cataloguing and promoting the work exhibited. These architects were held to constitute a "New York School",<sup>1</sup> and became known as the 'Whites' because of the Corbusian references in their built work. Their ideology involved the autonomy of architecture, the idea of an architecture that, "...transcends history and culture; and architecture which is a force in itself, a language that speaks about itself and which does not communicate ideas other than its own."<sup>2</sup>

In 1973 a collection of criticisms of *Five Architects*, entitled 'Five on Five', was published in *Architectural Forum*. The analyses came from architects representative of a group based largely in Philadelphia, and associated with Yale University (Yale), the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) and the architect Robert Venturi. They were interested in a more complex, historical and cultural architecture which was "based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience",<sup>3</sup> and so became known as the 'Grays'.<sup>4</sup>

Architectural theory of the 1970s largely surrounded perceived antagonism between White and Gray ideologies. There was considerable public debate between the two loosely defined groups. Charles Jencks cited several examples of public criticism by each group of the other, and there was substantial published retaliation.

The IAUS journal *Oppositions* (1973-84) played an important role in promoting architectural discourse during this period, including the dialogue between these groups. Commentary on the theory of the period suggested that the New York group became an increasingly elite circle during the late 1970s, and *Oppositions* a promotion tool for their ideology.<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested that this may have arisen from social mechanisms, such as heavy editorial intervention, selective publication and support of material, public criticism and limited invited input to discussions.

The 1960s and 1970s in America are accepted as a turbulent political context<sup>6</sup> that had a direct impact on architectural theory and education.<sup>7</sup> Kate Nesbitt's introduction to *Theorising a New Agenda for Architecture* provided an exceptional overview of academic activity in this period. It is widely agreed that a shift in the nature of society triggered upheaval of the education system.<sup>8</sup> The definition of, and the role played by, the architectural avant-garde thus changed in response, to position itself in "this new and evolving condition".<sup>9</sup>

Joan Ockman's 'Resurrecting the Avant-garde' is the only documented history of the IAUS and its journal *Oppositions*. It examined the relationships between the editors, not only in terms of influence but also the background and role of each in the editorial board, and the causes of editorial dissension.<sup>10</sup> Ockman and Vincent Pecora agreed that the intention of the journal's founders was to produce a deliberately avant-garde publication to oppose conventions of architectural discourse and publishing, and to develop new models for theory that challenged the larger history of architecture.<sup>11</sup> Ockman also contended that editorial intervention evidenced the journal's "intentional exclusivity".

There is at present a limited amount of evidence about the relationships between individuals, institutions and organisations, which facilitated not only the apparent sudden proliferation of activity in architectural theory in the 1970s, but also the development of the group directing it into an increasingly elite circle. Most scholarship on the subject is anecdotal rather than academic in nature.

The intention of this study is to reveal the political climate of architecture in New York in the 1970s by exploring beyond its notoriety as being simply confrontational and focused on the promotion of specific ideologies. It questions conventional understandings of personal agendas and revisits forgotten details of complex relationships between the groups of architects, architectural theorists and others involved in *Oppositions*. Drawing on the work of historians who have commented firsthand on these relationships, and on interview analysis, it explores to what extent the definition of these groups, and the dynamics within and between them, reveal *Oppositions* as a medium through which to promote ideology and reconstruct the social capital of architecture as a discipline.

The study challenges the widely held belief that the central intention of the elite directing the IAUS, and producing the journal, was the endorsement of its own

ideology within the field of architecture, as opposed to the promotion of architecture as a cultural discipline within educated society. It demonstrates both the power and limitation of the media to portray the concerns and statements of divergent groups and to promote architectural ideologies.

### The beginning of the debate

In the late 1960s, Eisenman and Michael Graves, who had taught together for a year, initiated CASE. Architects from various schools were included, but wider involvement in the group eventually diminished until only the New York Five remained. At this stage the discussions were not media oriented. Architects were invited from across the country and overseas, but nothing was published.<sup>12</sup> Krista Sykes argued that the New York Five set themselves in opposition to Vincent Scully with the publication of *Five Architects*.<sup>13</sup> However, according to Graves, the early departure from the CASE group of Venturi and Scully, before the New York Five exhibition took place, was due to their desire to work alone.<sup>14</sup>

The New York Five exhibition and CASE meeting were initiated by an invitation from Arthur Drexler at MoMA, for the group to use a room there for a weekend, and was intended to provoke criticism of the work. The publication that followed was the result of an offer made to Eisenman by George Wittenborn (publisher, bookstore owner and friend of the group) to publish the recorded content of the discussions.<sup>15</sup>

The critical article 'Five on Five' was published by *Architectural Forum* at the suggestion of Graves and Eisenman. The written introduction to the piece implied that Robert Stern initiated it because the *Forum's* editors believed that "confrontations between various philosophical camps are much needed".<sup>16</sup> However, according to Graves, this initial published criticism of the Whites, from the Grays, was at the request of the New York Five themselves, who saw such criticism as an opportunity for increased exposure of their work. Graves recalls that he was friendly with an associate editor at the *Forum*, and suggested criticism be published in a different format than that of a book review.<sup>17</sup> Graves wrote,

This was really the first time that any of us had been published. Publication had been a kind of dead end for us. It was Catch 22—you couldn't build one until you'd done one, and you couldn't do one, we thought, until somebody knew you were out there to do it—unless you worked in the old-boy network, and very few of us were connected with ready-made clients.<sup>18</sup>

This is not to suggest that the criticisms were not genuine. Of the five authors organised to participate, Stern described *Five Architects* as "heavily burdened with so much...inflation of so little that seems really vital or important".<sup>19</sup> Jaquelin Robertson and Charles Moore criticised the architects for treating architecture as "high art," for creating "...not architecture at all, but some other art form closer to painting".<sup>20</sup> This was reinforced by Romaldo Giurgola's comment that "their buildings tend to dissolve into images in search of an intellectual status".<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of the fact that it was invited, the criticism levelled at the New York Five focused clearly on their perceived obsession with formalism and imagery, at

the expense of other architectural concerns. Giurgola observed that, “[o]ne of the slogan[s] of the ‘Whites’ in rejecting the multiple factors that influence the making of architecture was: ‘let’s talk of architecture only’”.<sup>22</sup> The Whites aspired to create an architecture that was autonomous, with its own culture and debate.

### Definition of the groups: blurring the White and Gray

Conventional depictions of 1970s theory were predominantly of fierce opposition between the Whites and the Grays, particularly regarding the historical critique of modern architecture. Despite institutional associations and links between individuals within each group, the Whites and Grays were only loosely defined through media groupings such as the article ‘Five on Five’. Their public dialogue suggested clearer division between the two sides, and greater unity of shared ideology within each, than was evidenced by relationships between individuals, or reflected in perceptions of those who were personally involved. Jencks depiction of the two groups as representing ‘Late Modernism’ and ‘Post Modernism’<sup>23</sup> was problematic, in that whilst much of the built work appeared to belong to one genre or the other, many of the architects involved resisted not only their own categorisation but the oversimplification of their discussion.<sup>24</sup>

There is no doubt in the existence of the two groups. They are classified more or less by their involvement in the publication of *Five Architects* and ‘Five on Five’, and connections and patterns of influence can be found within each of them. The architects whose work was exhibited at MoMA as the New York Five, and published in *Five Architects*, were Eisenman, Graves, John Hedjuk, Charles Gwathmey (with partner Robert Seigel) and Richard Meier. Others involved in the exhibition and publication include Kenneth Frampton, who presented the work, Drexler (preface) Colin Rowe (introduction) and Philip Johnson (postscript in the later edition). Key figures within the IAUS were executive directors Eisenman, Anthony Vidler (1982) and Mario Gandelsonas (1983).<sup>25</sup> Those who played critical roles in the production of *Oppositions* include the editors, Eisenman, Frampton, Gandelsonas, Vidler (from issue 6) and, later, Kurt Forster (from issue 12).<sup>26</sup> Eisenman was particularly central to this study, due to his long period as director of the IAUS.

The formalist tradition of the New York Five was associated with Rowe, and Graves cites the influence of Rowe on the New York Five, who had read all of his papers and encouraged him to publish them. Eisenman had travelled with and studied under Rowe at Cambridge in the 1960s, before Rowe moved back to the United States.<sup>27</sup> Graves and Eisenman studied at Princeton at the same time, under Jean Labatut. Graves and Eisenman had also collaborated on competition projects throughout the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> Vidler had been Eisenmans’ student at Cambridge.<sup>29</sup>

The authors involved in the critical piece ‘Five on Five’, and introduced as representative of a position more or less opposed to that of the New York Five, were Stern, Jaquelin Robertson, Moore, Giurgola and Alan Greenberg. Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Scully were also generally accepted as being influential within the Grays.<sup>30</sup>

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Institutional associations within the Grays were also pronounced. A significant proportion of them had taught or studied at the same institutions in the late 1950s,<sup>31</sup> and consequently nominate the same influences. Many were based in Philadelphia. Venturi, Scully and Moore (as Dean of Architecture) taught at Yale.<sup>32</sup> Stern studied at Yale and, as student editor of the journal *Perspecta*, had published part of Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* before the book was released. Scully introduced the text as the most important writing on architecture since Le Corbusier. Yale also educated Paul Rudolph, Moore, Robertson, Stern and Scully.<sup>33</sup>

*Complexity and Contradiction* developed out of a course Venturi began teaching at the Penn in 1957.<sup>34</sup> Giurgola was a professor at Penn at this time, a colleague of Louis Kahn's from 1954 to 1966. During the 1960s and 70s, Scully and Giurgola both published books on Kahn, who had a notable influence on the group, having taught many of them.<sup>35</sup>

Despite close associations within the groups, the debate between the Whites and the Grays, often portrayed as exclusive promotion by each group of its own clearly defined and uniting ideology, appeared to be in fact, an open discussion between ambiguously grouped theorists. The popular explicit definition of the groups may be seen as a media construct to promote architecture as a discipline, by 'making news', rather than to rally support for chosen sides. The terms Whites and Grays were believed by Ockman to have been coined as a publicity device by Stern, who was the author of the first piece in 'Five on Five'. Ockman wrote, "[w]hile it purportedly described two opposed positions with respect to pop culture, history, American versus European architecture, etc at a specific moment...it also served to package or 'brand' the two camps stylistically".<sup>36</sup>

Not only were there many influential architects practicing at the time whose work does not fall into one side or other of the polarity, but the media depiction of the debate suggests too precise a division between the Whites and the Grays, and too great a coherence within each group. Paul Goldberger, in his account of the debate, raised this point as early as 1974, yet the reality of the 'two-sided battle' image is rarely questioned. Goldberger wrote,

each group is not at all made up of like-minded architects. It is a long way from Peter Eisenman to Richard Meier, not only in terms of formal solution, but also... in terms of intent. Similarly it is a long way from Robert Venturi to Romaldo Giurgola, or to Charles Moore.<sup>37</sup>

The architects who contributed to 'Five on Five', although usually linked with Yale and Philadelphia, were teaching at various institutions at the time. Giurgola and Stern were both teaching at Columbia, and Robertson, representing private practice, was not aligned with any university.<sup>38</sup>

Even students of the time at the University of Pennsylvania questioned the common perception that there was a connection between Yale and Penn. This observation was notably included as a 'Postscript' in an *Oppositions* issue, where Mimi Lobell wrote:

There have been many references lately to a 'Yale-Penn Axis'. As a graduate of this alleged axis, I must say that the link never occurred to me, nor has it occurred, to my knowledge, to my fellow colleagues of Penn's 'golden age' which is generally

thought to have ended by the mid-sixties when many who were teaching there went off to become deans or heads of other schools...I think that the current attempts to identify a 'Yale-Penn Axis' have been grossly one sided.<sup>39</sup>

There is also evidence of many links and associations between the groups, which indicates that the precise media distinction of them is oversimplified. For example, Gwathmey, despite being known as one of the New York Five, studied at both Penn and Yale and worked for both Kahn and Venturi, and was even included in Scully's *The Shingle Style Today, or The Historian's Revenge* (1974) which unites his work with that of Venturi, Moore, Stern, Robertson and Giurgola.<sup>40</sup>

Despite his contribution to 'Five on Five', Stern was believed by some to have been a peripheral member of the New York Five.<sup>41</sup> Giurgola and Stern were teaching at Columbia in 1973, along with Frampton. Stern supported the early CASE meetings of the 1960s, and was an active member of the Architectural League of New York, one of the organisations that sponsored the New York Five exhibition. Eisenman and Robertson worked in practice together from 1980 and, while they each worked on separate buildings and regard their relationship as unusual, they describe the process as including critique on the work, a "happy marriage".<sup>42</sup>

### The aim of *Oppositions*: not just promoting the New York Five

Published commentary on *Oppositions* suggests that the journal was characterised by intentional exclusivity through forceful editorial intervention and self-promotion of the New York Five. Theoretical discourse in architecture has lagged behind other disciplines until the late 1960s. This lack of theory, along with the professional rather than social focus of design education at the time, meant that architecture was no longer perceived as highly cultured and intellectual discipline as it had been in the context of the 1920s European avant-garde. Therefore architectural theorists sought to develop a fresh dialogue and culture. *Oppositions*, although crucial to this developing discourse, has been described as a platform for promotion of White ideology because its editorial positions, and directorship of the Institute, were held by those critically involved in the original promotion of the New York Five.

*Oppositions* was concerned with the autonomy of architecture as a discipline, and a culturally significant role for architects. It was intended as an independent critical voice to encourage discourse and debate of issues relating to contemporary practice, rather than simply to promote the architecture of the Whites. The journal was a means to satisfy what Rowe perceived as "desire to institute a 'high' art and culture within architecture", evident in the formalism of the White architecture.<sup>43</sup> *Oppositions*, described by Tom Wolfe as one of the "two major organs of the Whites",<sup>44</sup> was not simply a promotional tool for White ideology, despite their control of its content.

The journal aimed to create a position of critique, independent of both the universities and the profession. Further, it aimed to develop a new understanding of the relationship between criticism, theory and history and to inform

contemporary practice.<sup>45</sup> The independent position of European journals was used as a model.<sup>46</sup> The name *Oppositions* was intended to reflect opposition to the mainstream profession and academia, and “with its outline second letter P”, to suggest position-taking.<sup>47</sup> Ockman proposed that this could also lead the title to be read as “zero positions”, implying association with Modernist avant-garde magazines of the 1920s, and their intention, “...to be new...to return a stagnant architectural culture to its ABC’s”.<sup>48</sup>

There was some doubt as to how independent the journal really was. Mitchell Schwartz argued that none of the three founding editors held university positions when the journal was launched in 1973,<sup>49</sup> and it was true that Eisenman did not take on the role of Adjunct Professor at the Cooper Union until 1975.<sup>50</sup> Frampton, however, was Associate Professor at Columbia University at the time of the journal’s launch,<sup>51</sup> and *Oppositions* came to rely on financial support from mainstream organisations including a number of universities.<sup>52</sup>

At the outset the editors did not intend *Oppositions* to represent a univocal editorial position, but rather to reflect a range of concerns for architectural discourse.<sup>53</sup> They indicated with issue 1 that, “no attempt will be made to establish a single editorial line”.<sup>54</sup> As individuals, the editors had different interests which overlapped. The dominant themes of the journal were of the contradiction between architecture’s autonomy and its dependence on historical influences, and the conflict between formalism and determinism, characteristic of the decade.<sup>55</sup> In the joint editorial of issue 9, the editors indicated a specific focus on the issues surrounding the White/Gray debate, but did not state their position within it:

the journal has set itself the task of examining the roots and manifestations of modernism in architecture and the related arts and the debates that have ensued since the end of the eighteenth century over the specific relations between architecture and society. This underlying inquiry will continue to inform future issues and our detailed examination of the nature of ‘formalism’, ‘realism’, ‘modernism’, and ‘post-modernism’ will be undertaken on many different levels—critical, theoretical and historical.<sup>56</sup>

Manfredo Tafuri, in ‘L’Architecture dans le Boudoir’,<sup>57</sup> described the promotion of the White architecture of the New York Five (and the Italian Tendenza), as an attempt to “construct myths of architecture’s potency and autonomy” to combat its perceived lack of importance to society, and create a sense of its independence as a discipline.<sup>58</sup> Rem Koolhaas, one of the invited architects at a small and exclusive conference held in 1982 at Charlottesville, described the gathering as nostalgic not for a style or period, but for a particular role for architecture and image of the architect.<sup>59</sup> *Oppositions* played a vital role in promoting architectural criticism, and consequently in developing a highly cultured and intellectual public image for architecture.<sup>60</sup> Pecora portrayed the contributions of many to the journal as evidence of their “ubiquitous fear of socio-cultural castration, that played itself out in the critical rhetoric of an architectural avant-garde”.<sup>61</sup>

There is insight in Tafuri’s reading, which focused on the built, or at least documented, work of the New York Five. However, the IAUS attempted to promote the profession of architecture through its forums, and publication of

*Oppositions*, not just through (White) built work. The Editorial Statement of *Oppositions*' first issue stated that, "...we, as editors, will...concentrate on issues which...must necessarily affect the future status of architecture and design".<sup>62</sup> It also made clear the intention to generate a "climate of opinion" which developed architectural culture, and the "renewed statement of intent" in issue 9 elaborated that amongst the critical issues of the time was, "the specific nature of ideology and its role in the creation of culture [of architecture]".<sup>63</sup> This indicated that their intention was to develop firstly an intellectual culture within architecture, and subsequently society's perception of the field as one of culture.

### White propaganda or impartial forum: involvement of Grays in *Oppositions*

Despite the control the Whites had through their directorship of the IAUS, many leading architects and architectural theorists from Philadelphia schools were actively involved in activities of the Institute and in *Oppositions* itself. Their inclusion in the publication enabled a provoking forum, but their participation declined about the time of the editors' review of their objectives for the journal. If we accept the proposal that journal content reflected the editors' desire to raise awareness of architecture as a highly cultured field, the 'middle-class' references in the 'Gray' work may be considered as at odds with editorial intent.

Sykes suggested that, for reasons such as the choice of cited texts, certain authors were excluded from the dialogue that centred on New York at this time.<sup>64</sup> She described contemporary architectural theory as "an increasingly elite club during the late 1970s and 1980s that seemed to enforce a strict but unspoken code demanding reference to prerequisite theoretical sources".<sup>65</sup> This argument was framed in terms of the debate between the New York-based Whites and the Philadelphia-based Grays. However, there was not clear evidence to suggest that *Oppositions* constructed a forum that excluded content counter to the White position.

It is clear that the matter of how exclusive the group was is a question of personal perception. Lobell, associated with the Grays, commented on "the parochial concentration on politics and promotion in the New York architectural community".<sup>66</sup> However, the article in which this appeared was published in *Oppositions*, by that same New York architectural community, with an introduction which suggested that a further piece on the Grays could be expected to appear in a forthcoming issue.

While there is not available evidence of what submissions (from both sides of the debate) may have been excluded from publication, it is noted that Moore, Scott Brown, Scully and Stern all published in *Oppositions*.<sup>67</sup> Moore's paper 'After a New Architecture' appeared in issue 3, and his comments on Venturi's Yale Mathematics Building, along with Vincent Scully's 'The Yale Mathematics Building: Some Remarks on Siting' in issue 6. Stern also had two historical documents published: an article on 'Yale 1950-65' (in the same as issue as Paul Rudolph's 'Alumni Day Speech: Yale School of Architecture, February 1958') and 'The Evolution of Philip Johnson's Glass House, 1947-1948'.<sup>68</sup> Scott Brown's 'On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern: A Discourse for Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects' was included in issue 5. Venturi,

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Moore, Robertson, Stern, Scully, Giurgola and Scott Brown were also financial sponsors of the journal, and participated in the regular forums held.<sup>69</sup>

Representatives from both White and Gray groups critique the work of Venturi in a number of issues. *Oppositions* papers focusing on his work, and that of his partners and co-authors, Scott Brown, Steven Izenour and John Rauch, were written by Rowe (issue 6), Moore (issue 6), Scully (issue 6), Alan Colquhoun (issue 14) and Fred Koetter (issue 3).<sup>70</sup> Eisenman, in his introduction to the papers relating to the Yale Mathematics Building competition, was clearly concerned with Yale University Press' apparent preference for "the Venturi position".<sup>71</sup> The piece was followed, however, by essays on the building from not only Rowe, but Moore and Scully, and referred readers to Venturi and Scott Brown's *Learning from Las Vegas*. This suggests that Eisenman's editorial concern was likely to have been with continuing an open debate between the two viewpoints.

It is clear that publication of articles from and about the Grays dropped off dramatically by one third of the way through the journal's eleven-year life. This change in balance occurred within six months of the revised 'Statement of Intent' in the joint editorial of issue 9 (1977). Only two *Oppositions* papers were contributed by, or reviewed the work of, the leaders of the Grays after issue 6 (1976), the first issue with editorial input from Vidler. The only article on Venturi's work published in *Oppositions* after issue 12, when Forster joined the editorial board in 1978, was a criticism by Colquhoun examining internal contradictions in Venturi's work.<sup>72</sup>

Ockman described editorial introductions to papers published as insistent intervention.<sup>73</sup> However, the majority of the early editorial introductions, up to and including issue 7, in which an introduction or postscript was provided for most pieces, concentrate on contextualising the paper within the discourse, rather than claiming to be for or against each piece. In the jointly written editorial for issue 9, which marked a change in format, the editors indicated that the introductions previously written for each article would, from that point on, be reserved for those that were of special interest to one or more of the editors.<sup>74</sup> As shown, there was very little involvement of the Grays in publication after this point, so the highlighting of texts through introduction revealed little more about the contribution of the group.

The decline in publication of Gray texts in *Oppositions* suggests either that later editors were not in favour of the Venturi position, or that the subtle shift in focus in the Grays', particularly Venturi's, work tainted editorial perception of it as relevant, or valuable to the discourse of the journal. Colquhoun explained the adjustment in focus, evident in comparing Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) with *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972): "[f]irst, populism, which is a mere undercurrent in *Complexity and Contradiction*, becomes a main theme", and "the architectural act is no longer seen as aiming at an integral aesthetic act, but at an object whose aesthetic unity is a priori impossible".<sup>75</sup>

Scott Brown's 'On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern' (1976) addressed the value gap between architects and social planners, and the question

of whether architects' concern for aesthetics can be reconciled with their social idealism.<sup>76</sup> The paper proposed that criticisms of Gray work lay in the "middle class symbolism of the forms of Las Vegas and Levittown that are offensive to the upper middle class tastes of many architects".<sup>77</sup> This shed some light on questions about the group's lack of contribution to *Oppositions* after issue 11 (of 26) (1977). While there is not evidence as to whether they were deliberately excluded or chose no longer to be involved, the elimination of perceived middle class references would likely have been regarded by the editors as removing a threat to the social status of architectural theory.

Commentary by the editors on this later work from Venturi and Scott Brown, implied that it was considered neither cultured nor (more importantly) avant-garde. Frampton contended that the symbolism of Venturi and Scott Brown's paper 'A Significance of A & P Parking Lots or Learning from Las Vegas', later published as the book *Learning from Las Vegas*, flirted with not only kitsch, but with what Ada Louise Huxtable, in the New York Times, had described as the "cult of the 'dumb and ordinary'".<sup>78</sup> He wrote of Venturi, "[t]he cavalier attitude to material, the monumental gesture that dissolves into historicism, ...the overt use of out-sized Pop imagery...all testify to a 'popular' wit that is ultimately conservative".<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

The media separation of White and Gray ideologies generated publicity for the developing, and far more complex, debates regarding contemporary practice in the 1970s. While there were certainly two, albeit loosely defined, groups involved in public debate, the criticism between them appears to be in the spirit of encouraging architectural discourse, rather than the exclusive promotion by each party of a clearly defined ideology. The groups can only be defined by examining the positions taken, and criticisms made, in the few journal papers which explicitly state a position on the debate. Media criticism of the New York Five, by Gray architects, was initiated by the New York Five themselves to increase exposure of both their built work and the architectural discourse of the time.

Despite suggestions that *Oppositions* was a 'mouth-organ' for the Whites, published content of the journal does not indicate exclusion of those authors who did not support the ideology of the New York Five. The Grays were actively involved in the journal, by way of publication, forum participation and financial support. However, publication of articles from the Grays had dropped off dramatically within four years. It is likely that this is due to editorial refocus in terms of content, as the group's use of perceived middle-class references in their work, which was the basis of much criticism against it, appears to be in conflict with the editors' aim of improving the social status of architecture.

The activities of New York's 1970s architectural avant-garde demonstrated the power of the media to represent architectural culture, in two ways: firstly, the exaggerated media portrayal of White and Gray factions is revealed as a means to generate publicity for what was in fact genuine and complex ideological debate. Secondly, *Oppositions* promoted architecture as a cultured and intellectual discipline, not by focusing exclusively on the work of the New York

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Five, but by developing theoretical discourse. By centring themselves within this critical discourse, the editors of the journal distinguished themselves as the influential elite of an autonomous and scholarly discipline. As a case study, this exemplified the manner in which media representation affects not only immediate public perception of architectural culture and politics, but also its historical record.

- <sup>1</sup> Arthur Drexler, 'Preface', in *Five Architects*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, p 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Mario Gandelsonas, 'Neo-Functionalism', *Oppositions*, 5 (1976) p 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966, p 16.
- <sup>4</sup> From this point on the Whites and Grays are referred to without inverted commas, as they are terms commonly used to describe these groups. American spelling for the term Gray is adopted throughout this study because the term itself, as well as most of the texts which reference it, developed in the United States.
- <sup>5</sup> Joan Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of Oppositions', in Beatriz Colomina (ed), *Architecture Production*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988, p 192. Jorge Silvetti, 'After Words', *Assemblage*, 27 (1995) p. 76; Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno & Robert Connolly, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987, p 293. p
- <sup>6</sup> See Frank Freidel, *America in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1970; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Cultural Calendar of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1979; David Steigerwald, Louise Waller (ed), *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1995.
- <sup>7</sup> Kate Nesbitt, 'Introduction', in Kate Nesbitt (ed), *Theorising a New Agenda for Architecture: an Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996, p 22. Mary McLeod, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism', *Assemblage*, 8 (1989): 22-59.
- <sup>8</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory Essays 1971-1986*, 2, in Wlad Godzich & Jochen Schulte-Sasse (eds), 49, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988; Tony Owen, 'On Critical Process and the Contemporary Avant-Garde', *Architectural Theory Review: journal of the Department of Architecture, the University of Sydney*, 3, 1 (1998): 74-87.
- <sup>9</sup> Owen, 'On Critical Process and the Contemporary Avant-Garde', p 81.
- <sup>10</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 187.
- <sup>11</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 183; Vincent Pecora, 'Towers of Babel', in Diane Ghirardo (ed), *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1991, p 54.
- <sup>12</sup> See transcript of an interview with Michael Graves in 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', *Transition*, 1, 4, (1980): 4-23.
- <sup>13</sup> Krista Sykes, 'A Portrait of the Scholar as a Truffle Dog: A Re-Evaluation of Vincent Scully', in John Macarthur & Antony Moulis (eds), *Additions to Architectural History XIXth Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane, 2002, np.
- <sup>14</sup> Graves 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', p 7.
- <sup>15</sup> Graves 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', p 7.

- <sup>16</sup> 'Five on Five', *Architectural Forum*, 138, 4 (1973) p. 46.
- <sup>17</sup> Graves recalled in an interview for the journal *Transition* that through his friendship with Suzanne Stevens, an associate editor at *Architectural Forum*, they suggested that *Forum* invite architects from the 'other side of the fence' to debate the book. 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', p 7.
- <sup>18</sup> Graves 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', p 7.
- <sup>19</sup> Robert Stern in 'Five on Five', *Architectural Forum*, 138, 4 (1973): 48.
- <sup>20</sup> Charles Moore in 'Five on Five', *Architectural Forum*, 138, 4 (1973): 54.
- <sup>21</sup> Romaldo Giurgola in 'Five on Five', *Architectural Forum*, p 57.
- <sup>22</sup> Comments by Romaldo Giurgola in an unpublished interview for this study.
- <sup>23</sup> Charles Jencks & Karl Kropf (eds), *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1997, passim.
- <sup>24</sup> See transcript of interview with George Baird, in 'The Pleasures of Architecture Conference 1980: The Interviews', p 19.
- <sup>25</sup> Stephen Peterson is excluded from this study due to his IAUS leadership, in 1984, being beyond the timeframe of *Oppositions*.
- <sup>26</sup> Diana Agrest is also nominated as an editor, but this was only for the final issue (26). See K Michael Hays (ed), *Oppositions Reader*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.
- <sup>27</sup> Muriel Emanuel, Colin Naylor & Craig Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*, London: Macmillan, 1980. Joan Ockman, 'Venice and New York', *Casabella*, 59, 619-621 (1995): 61; *Eisenman Architects: Selected and Current Works, The Master Architects Series*, Mulgrave, Victoria: Images Publishing Group, 1995.
- <sup>28</sup> These include the Boston Architectural Center (1963), AIA Headquarters, Washington DC (1964), and the University of California Arts Center, Berkeley, amongst others. See Emanuel, Naylor & Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*, p 304.
- <sup>29</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 187.
- <sup>30</sup> Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House*, p 104; Paul Goldberger, 'Should Anyone Care About the 'New York Five'? ... Or About Their Critics, the 'Five on Five'?', *Architectural Record*, (February 1974): 113-16.
- <sup>31</sup> Most were involved with Yale or the University of Pennsylvania (in some cases both) and, less often, Princeton. See Emanuel, Naylor & Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*, p 285, 409, 555.
- <sup>32</sup> Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House*, pp 106, 15. Emanuel, Naylor & Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*, p 557.
- <sup>33</sup> Mimi Lobell, 'Postscript: Kahn, Penn, and the Philadelphia School', *Oppositions*, 4 (1974), p 63.
- <sup>34</sup> Randall J Van Vynckt (ed), *International Dictionary of Architects and Architecture*, Detroit: St James Press, 1993, p 945.
- <sup>35</sup> Incidentally both entitled *Louis I Kahn*, Scully's in 1962, and Giurgola's, with Jaimini Mehta, in 1975, after Kahn's death. Emanuel, Naylor & Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*, pp 410-11.
- <sup>36</sup> Comments by Joan Ockman in an unpublished interview for this study.
- <sup>37</sup> Goldberger, 'Should Anyone Care About the 'New York Five'?', p 114.

- <sup>38</sup> 'Five on Five', p 49.
- <sup>39</sup> Lobell, 'Postscript: Kahn, Penn, and the Philadelphia School', p 63.
- <sup>40</sup> Roxanne Kuter Williamson, *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- <sup>41</sup> Williamson, *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame*.
- <sup>42</sup> See Robertson's response to a question about the partnership in *The Charlottesville Tapes*, University of Virginia School of Architecture, 1985, p 135.
- <sup>43</sup> Ockman, 'Venice and New York', p 59.
- <sup>44</sup> Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House*, p 121.
- <sup>45</sup> Mitchell Schwarzer, 'History and Theory in Architectural Periodicals: Assembling Oppositions', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 58 (1999): 344.
- <sup>46</sup> Schwartz, 'History and Theory in Architectural Periodicals', p 344.
- <sup>47</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 184.
- <sup>48</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 184.
- <sup>49</sup> Schwartz, 'History and Theory in Architectural Periodicals', p 344.
- <sup>50</sup> Emanuel, Naylor & Lerner (eds), *Contemporary Architects*.
- <sup>51</sup> See editorial introduction to Kenneth Frampton, 'Industrialisation and the Crisis in Architecture', *Oppositions*, 1 (1973): np.
- <sup>52</sup> In a study on architectural discourse, Crysler questioned how the practice of writing "theory for theory's sake" related to the contributors' positions at a small number of architecture schools in some of America's wealthiest universities. See Crysler, 'Spaces of Representation/Representations of Space: Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism and the Built Environment, 1960-1995', PhD, State University of New York, p 97.
- <sup>53</sup> Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton & Mario Gandelsonas, 'Editorial Statement', *Oppositions*, 1 (1973): np; Pecora, 'Towers of Babel', p 55.
- <sup>54</sup> Eisenman, Frampton & Gandelsonas, 'Editorial Statement', np.
- <sup>55</sup> Hays (ed), *Oppositions Reader*, p ix.
- <sup>56</sup> Peter Eisenman et al, 'Editorial', *Oppositions*, 9 (1977): 1-2.
- <sup>57</sup> Published in *Oppositions*, 3 (1974): 37-62. And later as part of *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987.
- <sup>58</sup> Ockman, 'Untitled', *Assemblage*, 41 (2000): 61.
- <sup>59</sup> 'Nostalgia... for the role of the architect as some kind of gentleman who appears and unfolds a drawing.' 'The Charlottesville Tapes', p 186.
- <sup>60</sup> Ockman, 'Untitled', p 61.
- <sup>61</sup> Pecora, 'Towers of Babel', p. 73
- <sup>62</sup> Eisenman, Frampton & Gandelsonas, 'Editorial Statement', np.
- <sup>63</sup> Eisenman et al, 'Editorial', p 2.
- <sup>64</sup> Sykes, 'A Portrait of the Scholar as a Truffle Dog' np.
- <sup>65</sup> Sykes, 'A Portrait of the Scholar as a Truffle Dog', np.
- <sup>66</sup> Lobell, 'Postscript: Kahn, Penn, and the Philadelphia School', p 63.
- <sup>67</sup> See Hays (ed), *Oppositions Reader*, p 690.
- <sup>68</sup> *Oppositions*, 4 (1974): 35-62, and *Oppositions*, 10 (1977): 57-68 respectively.

- <sup>69</sup> This information was sourced primarily from photograph captions within the 'Forum' section of the journal, and from sponsors' lists inside gatefolds of the journal. See *Oppositions*, 18 (1979).
- <sup>70</sup> See Hays (ed), *Oppositions Reader*, pp 689-96, for complete contents of all issues of the journal.
- <sup>71</sup> The original proposal for the publication, of selected submissions to the competition, was argued by Eisenman not to be true representation of the scope of entries. See Eisenman's introduction to the 'Oppositions' section of *Oppositions* 6 (1976): 1, which begins with Colin Rowe's, 'Robert Venturi and the Yale Mathematics Building'.
- <sup>72</sup> Colquhoun, 'Sign and Substance: Reflections on Complexity, Las Vegas, and Oberlin', *Oppositions*, 14 (1978): 26-37.
- <sup>73</sup> Ockman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde', p 193.
- <sup>74</sup> Eisenman et al, 'Editorial', np.
- <sup>75</sup> Colquhoun, 'Sign and Substance'. '
- <sup>76</sup> *Oppositions*, 5 (1976): 99-109.
- <sup>77</sup> Denise Scott Brown, 'On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern: A Discourse for Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects', *Oppositions* (1976): 99
- <sup>78</sup> Frampton, 'America 1960-1970, Notes on Urban Images and Theory', *Casabella*, 359-60 (1971): 33.
- <sup>79</sup> Frampton, 'America 1960-1970, Notes on Urban Images and Theory', p 33.