Sylvia Lavin. In a way – and I hope he will understand that I’m saying this will a great deal of affection – François’s problem is that he’s not dead yet.

Bart Lootsma. In Roche’s work, the archaic and the modern, nature and technology, the West and the Orient, myth and reality, intuition and calculation are intrinsically linked in rhizomatic chains that can be as material as they are associative (like the relationship between the orchid and the wasp in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus)

Stephanie Lavaux. “She” didn’t think of that... even if the avatar is a constituent part of it... but now that you pose the question so clearly... yes... maybe so... yes... in reality... François Roche might well be Me...

Jeff Kipnis. His work is extremely interesting and important. He took surrealist principles and a détournement theory and married them to realism. That’s not really an exceptional formulation, but the thing he did was exceptional. In fact, I’ve never seen anything as original.

Greg Lynn. Like many of the French heroes, which I think he for sure is and will be, it’s important that those people get pushed out, to then be brought back in when it’s too late.

Cynthia Davidson. I have to give François a lot of credit, because it takes a lot of psychological energy to maintain this kind of position of the impostor, or the position of the resister.

Hans-Ulrich Obrist. He has achieved the freedom to produce a very 21st-century reality. François Roche is an oxymoron: he is both resilience and resistance.

Benoit Durandin. Take a gaseous solution...

Bruce Sterling. The idea of an open-ended building that’s constantly reformatting itself by some kinds of sensors that surround the inhabitants is of interest to me; I like the idea that the building is fluid.

Chris Younès. François Roche’s work is invaluable because he makes improbable, indeterminate environments that give way to the possible.

Jérôme Anzolle. François Roche wants to be an author. That’s incompatible with a profession that takes orders.

S/k/n. It was that “contact with the world” that made François Roche eminently dirty, a filthiness that made him burn his French passport, that gives him permission, seriously, to take nothing seriously, that utterly ruins our preconceived idea of the architect, of his pedantry, a raggedy-ass dens ex machina, corrupting ideas, expectations and situations, slandering his peers, contaminating the critique, destroying the discourse...

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Fragments of Who are you, François Roche? An investigation conducted by Marie Vic
I was a desert that gave up monologuing. Numb, mouth dry and skin like a lizard. The noise outside was muffled. The others? I don’t know where they were. I didn’t really worry about it. *Loneliness is Fun.*

A fragile, nice glimmer began to shine in my wakefulness and in my sleep. I wanted to get closer but suddenly the sky went dark. The others also tried to grab it, without success. *Extreme body failure.*

It was a will-o’-the-wisp. The ghost of the swamps wasn’t real. What a relief. It was comforting to think that everything is unique and lost forever. Instead of worrying, might as well distance yourself from it.

The glimmer kept coming back, seductive. Its flickering light seemed to burst into song, a sacrificial round whose charm was to spread confusion. Your dreams of war alarm you.

I began to become obsessed with the will-o’-the-wisp.
The phenomenon was great and absurd. A misunderstanding that revealed the indecipherability of the world in which we crystallized our desires, anger and frustrations. It was our common illness, our symptom. Since I was blind, I asked the others what they saw. Who are you, François Roche? I asked them.

– I am baroque and delicateness, they told me. Because the most unique and bizarre fantasy, when correctly analyzed, always goes back to the principle of delicateness.

– I am the marriage of all human and robotic pathologies.

– A narrative principle… I am One Thousand and One Nights, a maze, a web, a network, a river with infinite tributaries, a series of boxes within boxes, a bottomless pool. It turns endlessly on itself, A STORY ABOUT STORYTELLING.

– I am a subversion. A possible. There are no absolute beginnings. Beginnings flow from everywhere, like winding rivers. I am a Deleuzian interrogation. An architecture of synthesis, a chaos world.

– I am your fantasy, the projection of a melancholic affectivity.

Oh… all right.

– I am a living thing, hybrid and ambiguous, multiple. A network of uncertain exchanges.

– If you want to know the truth about François Roche, you should know that you won’t get it from him.

– I am a ventriloquist, the voice of an avatar…

– I am Mephisto, whispering into Faust’s ear, All theory is gray, my friend, but forever green is the tree of life.

The will-o’-the wisp whistled in my desert like a sirocco. It would have driven me crazy without the help of the others, without their monologue voice. They told me about this sibylline, masochistic, fanciful character who insulted beauty. Everyone saw him as a possible justification, a forbidden antidote and an impossible tool. His disenchantment, tenderness and aesthetic ability to eroticize our ills have made him our martyr. His infinite work, with no subject or possible accomplishment, was our symptom.

Let us each grab hold of it.
Who are you, François Roche?
A case study & investigations conducted by MarieVic
A Borromini
There’s a long tradition of crazy, troubled, flamboyant architects. Probably the most famous and in some ways the one that perhaps has a great deal of resonance with François Roche would be Borromini, who did exactly the same kind of things: he was constantly insulting the pope, losing commissions, impaling himself on swords; he had a kind of disastrous life because of his inability to operate within certain protocols, and particularly because he was in a constant conflict with a single competitor – Bernini. And this dynamic of one and the other, which would be another form of one plus one, on a psychological level, undid Borromini. He wasn’t able to compete. Bernini would come out at the last moment and substitute models in competitions made out of silver, things Borromini was incapable of. On the other hand, historically speaking, Borromini has been the most beloved by architectural history. So what he lost in his own lifetime, he made up for in a kind of endless series of heroic reinventions. Not by himself but by historians.
and critics. In some way, this is a terrible thing to say and I hope that François will understand that I mean it with great affection but, part of the problem is: he isn’t dead yet. He’s still there and so he’s not yet fully available to be reinvented by criticism. The other thing about François is I always imagine him as clever enough to know this. Perhaps this is part of his own tragedy — there is a big and potentially ultimate cost in the kind of road he’s traveling. But at any rate, there is a tradition of architects who profoundly change things but not through typical means of practice; I think of François is one of those guys.

I also think he is practicing at a complicated moment. When he first came to my attention, he belonged to a generation of people who were interested in theoretical issues, interested in the relationship between computation and form, computation and construction, who were thinking about computing less as job-management or information-management — they were not really interested in what has become more predominant today, which is to say the aesthetics of administration by means of a computer. That generation emerged from the generation of the ‘70s and ‘80s but we think of them as the early 1990s people. People who put a new kind of value on theoretical work. There was a generation that was almost lulled into a sense of security, that you could have a meaningful and contributory life through an alternative form of practice. Somewhere in there, I don’t know whether it was just because there started to be too much money involved, I’m not entirely sure what the explanation would be, but a lot of those people ended up pursuing pretty typical forms of practice. The forms of their buildings might have changed in some way, but the structure of the field and practice stayed the same. The rules of the game changed around a certain set of figures. Some of them decided to go along with the new rule set, which looked a whole lot like professional practices of the fifties, and some of them didn’t. And I would say that François is one of those people who didn’t. In a certain sense he’s a kind of futuristic anachronism. He’s somebody who seemed to enter the world as one who thought about radical ways of changing the future. And his own commitment to architecture’s potential to change the future has made him kind of outdated, in a conceptual way. So François is really out of sync, which, I think, is why he is not in the position one might have predicted 15 years ago. But if he were given the job of doing the City Hall of Lyon, would he want to do that? I don’t know… I’m not his analyst, but there is an underlying question: is there a psychological bloc that makes it impossible for him to complete things that he would want to complete? Or is not completing precisely his form of resistance? But in that case, he has to pay the consequences. When I think of Thailand… I can’t tell whether it’s an escape or alternative. My feeling about François is that his commitment (I’m not sure to what) — the ethos of commitment and the willingness to pay a significant cost for it — is an essential part of the ecology. I think
it’s unfortunate that isn’t a more constant pressure on the field. When he disappears, a certain potentiality for architects disappears with him. I don’t know of anybody else who is willing to do the acupressure in the way that he does. And this is a little bit what I mean when I say he’s out of sync, too. I think that there are other people who want to apply pressure. It’s just that the way of applying pressure these days is generally understood to be more from within. People who want to work with industries, who want to work with institutions, who want to work with these kind of things because they feel that you could really make more effective change if you work from within rather than from outside. And they may be correct. But there’s nothing to compare it to. I think the field misses him. I’m acting as if he didn’t exist anymore, but he is not as frequent a reference as he once was.

Laboratory vs. Fieldwork
If you think about François’s work… This is a totally gross oversimplification, but just for the sake or argument let’s say that there were two modalities of work production. That, given the kind of scientific experiment quality of François’s work as a whole, we might liken it to a sort of Bruno Latour discussion about the laboratory and fieldwork. In the case of François, I think in some ways he treated the gallery as the laboratory in which certain forms of experiments were done, and fieldwork was where materials were developed. Let’s say the gallery and fieldwork were different forms of demonstration of architectural principles and produced different forms of inscription. In one of Latour’s discussions of the laboratory, he goes into some detail about trying to understand about how it was that the average cost of a paper was 60,000 euros, read by four or five people, four or five people generally already in the laboratory. Now it’s an interesting question when you place that in the gallery, because normally, when you think of the gallery, unlike the laboratory, it is a site for making work accessible to lots of people. But there is a sense of the gallery as being a site that puts the notion of value in crisis. And there was a period when a kind of experimentation got funded, making a certain kind of work possible, and I think that those funds don’t exist anymore; those funds are being spent in other ways, they simply don’t exist anymore. Is that something to be mourned? I’m not entirely sure. It has had devastating effects for some people but I’m not sure I would mourn it for a variety of reasons.

Bricoleur

Hybrid Muscle was a very different kind of project. I’m making those very stupid polarities, but the laboratory work of François was more like Levi-Strauss’s notion of the Engineer, whereas the Hybrid Muscle was more the work of the Bricoleur, which means it has a different relationship to context, to money, to all kinds of things. That work is probably where his form of resistance could be the most interesting. Of course, on some fundamental level, there is no distinction between the lab and the fieldwork; whether
you think of the workshop as a kind of way station between the two, it’s interesting to think of the workshop institutionally as a different kind of financial structure. Even that becomes fieldwork in a certain sense. But the Hybrid Muscle very specifically had the ability to demonstrate a range of premises that are advanced with minimal means and I mean that very explicitly with a traditional sense of what architecture’s responsibility is, to do the most with the least, let’s say. It’s a really interesting combination of a sort of excess and restraint, which to me continues to make it one of his most interesting projects. Some of his gallery things, I think, have more excess than restraint. Unlike some people, I don’t take a moral position on excess. I don’t think excess is wrong. I just think that at certain moments there is no funding for excess. I think he was the most popular before, in relation to the laboratory work. And I’m not criticizing that work at all. But I think that if he thought of that work as work that was done, and therefore available to be re-invented by critics, given away, it would have come to life in the hands of others, but he went back to the field. I think it would be interesting to see him emerge as a father figure to some of the other people that are doing that kind of work now, in other words as a precedent to a generation; that would be a rich terrain for him.

On In-definitude
Let’s look at FRAC Centre (Regional Contemporary Art Fund). First of all, it’s important to know why it didn’t get built. Which is to say, if the reasons are super-personal to François, then it’s a little bit more complicated to read the refusal to build it as a historical symptom. My instinct would be to say, if they got that far down the road with François, they must have known what his character was about, and therefore there could only be other reasons for it not to be built. Which is to say the conditions just don’t exist yet for such a building to be built. So if that’s the case, it preserves a kind of potentiality in the project; then it is not a failed endeavor. When the difference between lab and field begin to collapse in a building, that is, not in terms of its program but in terms of its constantly unfolding actualization, I think there is simply no precedent for that. There are plenty of buildings that mimic that aesthetically. If you go back to the 1970s, for instance, Lucien Kroll’s faculty housing for the school of medicine in Belgium, that was definitely a process building meant to...
be unfolded in time. So in other words if you think about the discipline and its unfolding, there’s been a lot of interest in the complex, in the indefinite. There is an architecture of “in-definitude” but it’s always been aborted because it becomes a representation of it rather than its actualization. And the minute you would start to try to actualize it, you’re immediately running into all kinds of problems of liability and real estate – in an instant, it shows how architecture is the thing that holds things together, like Tito in Yugoslavia. And if you let it go, you would get a total regime collapse, a total anarchy. So is François right, that they couldn’t do it politically? Yes, but not in relation to him; in relation to the state of the world for sure. Do I think the world is going to be ready for that in the next couple years? Unlikely. I would imagine that such things would be easier in China because the relationship between capitalism and the state is different.

Anachronism

Did’t Mark Twain say, “The rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated”? We figure the reverse – “Rumors of his death have been underreported.” Well, for me, whenever I see François, just on a social level, he is always a kind of wormhole. I imagine him as a figure of the historical avant-garde who I’m too young to have ever met and yet I also imagine him on some weird future planet as well. One of these interesting architecture figures who have been able to be deeply historically resonant because in some ways they don’t belong in the present: they belong in a past that never existed and a future that we don’t know about, and they’re fundamentally anachronisms.

Oration-Ovation

He was the first, or the last (?) architect to combine thinking about the potentiality of form (form in a philosophical sense) and politics. The world, over the last 25 years, has cleaved and there continues to be a kind of formalist thing, and in some parts of Europe it’s even re-emerging, although the character of the form is very different that it was 30 years ago. So you have a lot of neo-rationalists doing nine square grids and so forth, but nevertheless... And then you have a kind of politics and social engagement and problems of participation. I can’t really think of many people who have combined these two things. In the really profound sense, a profound sense in terms of Russian formalism, etc., in its early historical avant-garde phase, formalism was always an instrument for social change. But I think that at various moments, particularly as it became associated with a kind of semiotics, it transformed into something more meta-social rather than directly socially engaged. So I think of François as a Russian formalist whose work could not be addressed without close attention to the particularities of the things that he makes and how he makes them and so forth, and I think of that as a kind of critical response that form requires. And yet he has also, always as far as I have understood, been interested in the socially and transformative capacity...
of architecture, both on the level of the subjectivity of individuals and of social relations. I don’t really know that many other people of his generation who were interested in both of those things. But the combination is particular to him.

It’s the first thing architect François Roche shows me when I visit his Bangkok studio – even before introducing me to Vong, his right-hand man who sits quietly behind an altar of computers, next to a small six-axis robot. The studio, hidden in Bangkok’s Chinatown on the Chao Phraya River, is a light structure, and once inside, one has the feeling one is actually in the hold of a ship. Roche leads me up a stepladder that lets out onto a narrow deck. “Don’t fall! It will end badly!” he warns. “Shhh! Do not make too much noise or you’ll wake them!” Pointing at a narrow void between the studio and the neighboring building, he says, “There are crocodiles living under the studio floor!” Indeed, among the rubble, the rubbish and the wreckage, I see an eight-foot-long lump of blubber covered by dirty, scaly skin. It’s disturbing to think that there are more crocodiles just inches away, beneath the thin wooden floor. The studio scene is indicative of Roche and his collaborative work creat-
ed under R&Sie(n), [əlf/ʌtʃ], and New Territories. Some partners, like Stéphanie Lavaux in R&Sie(n) and Camille Lacadée in [əlf/ʌtʃ], both through New Territories, frequently reappear, though most evaporate. In the humid warmth of Bangkok, the scene reminds me of “Shark Fin Blues” by The Drones, the epic title song of the TV series True Detective, in which a sailor on a lost ship sees sharks “out in the water like slicks of ink,” one even “bigger than a submarine.” As the shark circles, the sailor looks in his eye and sees “Jonah in his belly by the campfire light.”

The image of a European man on a ship on a river in the tropics and the atmosphere of imminent danger also bring to mind Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. Conrad’s mentor, Edward Garnett, characterized the book like this: “The art of Heart of Darkness — as in every psychological masterpiece — lies in the relation of the things of the spirit to the things of the flesh, of the invisible life to the visible, of the subconscious life within us, our obscure motives and instincts, to our conscious actions, feelings and outlook.” This applies to Roche’s work, as psychology plays an important part in it.

Roche’s collaborative practice has led him to refuse official portraits for a long time, representing R&Sie(n) as a somewhat creepy androgynous avatar with a computer voice. It was a reaction to the personality cult that emerged in architecture in the late 1980s. Roche could have easily become such a figure himself. Whereas in private, he can be warm and open, in public, he is as charismatic as he is edgy, jumping from one idea to another, moving effortlessly from philosophy to art and from architecture to media criticism. In the end, this produces constellations of thoughts and things with unusual hierarchies between what one would expect to be central or peripheral and with unexpected coherences. The content can be dark, and often plays with desire, sexuality, aggression and death. Roche can leave one baffled after a lecture, an effect he reinforces with provocative one-liners.

In Roche’s work, the archaic and the modern, nature and technology, the West and the Orient, myth and reality, intuition and calculation are intrinsically linked in rhizomatic chains that can be as material as they are associative (like the relationship between the orchid and the wasp in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus). The objects and buildings Roche designs do not seem to have a classical one-dimensional purpose. Instead, they are part of stories. Sometimes objects are the protagonists of his videos; other times they appear almost parenthetically, like a McGuffin, in quasi-mythical contexts, guarded by people that seem as poor as they are wise. Bodies, animals, natural phenomena, things
and robots are all in a constant state of flux, a state of becoming. It is a world like that of Alice in Wonderland as invoked by Deleuze in The Logic of Sense.

On the first floor of Roche’s studio, in front of a large open window overlooking the river, I find a strange apparatus consisting of glass bottles suspended from thin wires. It is an installation from New Territories’ 2013 video Although (in) hapnea, a 14-minute work inspired by the French myth of Vouivre, a female wyvern who is thought to live by a river. Lacadée, the video’s co-director, appears as a chimera that can live on land and in water. Initially, she’s a journalist, sporting a moustache and short hair and dressed in an elegant gray suit. Later, she appears as Ophelia, with long, curly hair. In between, we see her disappearing into a river, her long hair dissolving as it meets the water. In the video, the bottles are a kind of chimera as well – something between river, land and air. Roche tells me that they are shaped like the little fish that eat mosquito larvae in the water of Thai Buddhist monasteries, but they are much bigger. Some of the bottles contain colorful fish. The installation looks like a wave in a frozen river. At the end of the video, a Thai man eats one of these beautiful fish raw, in an act suggesting a form of cannibalism. Roche recommends I watch Cannibal Holocaust, the 1980 film by Ruggero Deodato. Its quasi-documentary style and the way it treats the mythologies of an imaginary alien culture have greatly influenced New Territories. Cannibal Holocaust contains extreme violence, rape and cannibalism. The film seems to be about the relation between “primitive” and “civilized” societies, but eventually it becomes clear that it is a critique of media. The plot centers on a search for a documentary film crew that has gone missing while seeking out cannibals. The crew is found dead, but their films are recovered. The reels contain shocking images of what seem to be primitive rituals involving rape and cannibalism. A TV station wants to broadcast the films, but after watching them, the search team leader, Harold Monroe, discovers that many of the actions thought to be “primitive” were in fact staged by the Western crew. He recommends the documentary not be broadcast, and the executives of the television station order the films to be burned. Watching Monroe leave the station, we can only wonder who the real cannibals are. Nobody will ever know, just like the final words of Mr. Kurtz in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, which are concealed for his fiancée: “The horror, the horror.”
I don’t know how it got started, why the question of the existence of the person hiding behind me, my cover avatar, became necessary. In retrospect, this phrase taken from a novel by Tristan Garcia was the trigger: “He was a pure person. Contact with the world produces a very dirty person.” It was that “contact with the world” that made François Roche eminently dirty, a filthiness that made him burn his French passport, that gives him permission, seriously, to take nothing seriously, that utterly ruins our preconceived idea of the architect, of his pedantry, a raggedy-ass deus ex machina, corrupting ideas, expectations and situations, slandering his peers, contaminating the critique, destroying the discourse… perverting, that’s exactly what it is, perverting, polluting, insulting “beauty” and the order of things… and simultaneously destroying himself, a pathetic Fitzcaraldo, a toxic antidote to the turn of the century, embodying the entry of contemporary technologies into this discipline, from their stuttering to their merchandizing,
from their fetishization and eroticization to their de-nunciation and re-enunciation, suspecting them of not being so innocent nor inoffensive.

This architect plays with the Parnassian, whose presence in the world is troublesome. He is not in love with himself, and this world (the incredibly tiny world of architecture in France) returns the favor. Between Victor Hugo and Baudelaire, he chooses parrehsia as his mode of discourse. Ruination and ruining his reputation constitutes his professional agenda, aesthetic strategy and politics, in romantic and introspective circumvolutions... empathy, sympathy and antipathy... in synesthetic and masochistic modes.

"For the truth to be vertiginous, it must always be wrong." Sartre's harsh, malicious critique of Bataille fits Roche like a glove. The mention of his name sparks confusion and knee-jerk reactions, dubious hostilities, fantasized idealizations and even deliberate disremembering. Roche is bothersome, and they will tell him, in the same words he used for them, aloud or not, that he's a real pain in the ass. They would prefer to save themselves the trouble and dodge the whole subject so that architecture can stick to its primary objective, the perpetuation of the m. o. of that incestuous couple, power and knowledge, and their representation of supposedly pre-established conventions.

François Roche is my vector, my private secretary, in the service of... of which I am the author.... He accepts responsibility for nothing but Ariadne’s thread, as time unspools, for an architecture of synesthesia that intersects, simultaneously and not without ambiguity, information technology, biology, Ecosophy and human and robotic pathologies, for research into the contemporary misunderstanding of anthrotech-nology by way of variable-geometry practices, from manifestos to fiction, from chit-chat to theoretical texts, from ephemeral installations to an architecture that is nothing less. His ambition ceaselessly inter-weaves maieutics and Deleuzean interrogations, infinitude and incompleteness on an nth politico-aesthetic plateau... all that has not brought him any additional rights, and still less the right to distill his ad-hominem insults, a Douglas Coupland epigone, a comatose gen-X member.

He dropped out of sight in France for structural and strategic reasons. His masochistic, combative, parrehsiatic impulses are both the obstacle to and the genesis of the work he champions... Wanting to “ruin your reputation” is form of resistance to social conformism, which simultaneously produces the work, distracts attention and ruins my intentions. Are you wondering about his inclination “to transform criticism exercised in a dialectical form into an aesthetic and technological critique in the form of a possible
“breakthrough,” by means of an urgency to exist, here and now, that is simultaneously animist, vitalist and machinist? He endangers the contemporary field of architecture. To protect itself against his deleterious toxicity, the system of power and representation has had to constantly restrain and ignore his excesses.

Have fun drawing his portrait and you will see how his actions ceaselessly interrogate the possibility of a landscape and a world that are “post” in every way – digital, humanist, technologist, activist and whatever else... democratic, feminist, queer, disturbing, disenchanted, pornographic... where scenarios, mechanisms, misunderstandings and psychological and physiological fragments are the raw materials for walls, ceilings, cellars and attics. Schizoid and paranoiac, they are at the core of operational and critical fictions. The androgynous creases and folds behind which he/she/they hide trigger visceral confusions and reactions, dubious suspicions, fantasized idealizations and even deliberate disremembering. I'm not sure that it's a good idea to highlight his paradoxical postures and strategies involving masks, distractions and halls of mirrors. But is it possible to separate this convulsive hustle and bustle from the aesthetic mechanisms and bio-political concerns in the face of the disorder of contemporary technologies, from their stuttering to their merchandization, which are neither inoffensive nor innocent...

Although it’s already too late...

I am neither a wax doll enslaved in a ventriloquist show, nor a kind of toy for post-pubescent children, nor a Voodoo effigy pinned on his door to exorcise demons, nor a photoshoped golem, nor a failed creature of Mary Shelley's twisted imagination... I know what I am not and that list is long. I am even less the interpretation you make of me: “I am New-Territories, architect, both native French and immigrant.” No, my genetic map is Caucasian, Negroid, Asian, and my nature is “both”: transgendered, born like Hermaphrodite, I contain both sexes and multiple sexualities. I had to go through numerous plateaus of human stupidity, or the only existing LGBT in cabarets, playing the clown at the Chez Michou nightclub (sometimes with talent).

But, in these days, I must admit, I am tired of being with New Territories for so long. I sent them my decision, irrevocable and definitive, to leave my position, so they no longer use me as their stooge, as their scapegoat, for hide and seek-sex, like an undercover agent....

In tune with the postmodern charade known as the Helsinki Guggenheim, the Chicago Architecture Biennial acted as a trigger: attending the Carnival of Activism, wearing Prada, with the ‘left’ and, obvious-
ly, agitprops in hand, to save the planet, poverty and Willy... but in the end, however, as known beforehand, all those who did not resemble them became persona non grata... which were the occupiers, part of the daily routine at the social center downtown, or rather in front of the Biennial: Get these bastards out of here, these filthy, fat and ugly bodies, with their filthy rubbish-filled shopping carts, all this has got to go... be cleaned up... if they want to be among us. Permission was granted after passing the super-private-club-silver-class-premium security check... we were allowed daub ourselves with silly words of outrageous stupidity, from our ingenious flag-bearer Joseph Grima... the human bullshit distillery... and assisting the clownery, stupefying to the fullest at their facebookish, selfie(e)sh representation, white, in accordance with the previously agreed reactionary discourse, pseudo-ecolo trade fair, stroking the mayor's testicles without worrying that he closed all psychiatric hospitals in the city... among other weapons... the moralizing sperm jet of a clean conscience prized by lobotomized grandmothers... paired with the pathological talkativeness and verbiage of those... those who claim to act on the world’s misery, but without coming to terms with it... without ever looking it in the eyes... so much they are afraid of... in the depths of simulacra museums, which act as a principle of exclusion, if not to say treason... (I would have liked to be Bourdieu’s avatar, but he did not want that), in a room where “the good taste of the dominant social class” is staged and dramatized... her sexy glamour... with the Store Front Fake Frida Kahlo (FFK) as peroxide-blond master of ceremonies and... fairly harmless.

Yes, precisely the same... I decided to leave François Roche and all those mother’s boys and girls... let them go under in their self-adulation, in the middle of their cultural soundproof bunker, “champomyzed” And now orphans.

My fate is sealed. My suicide belongs to me... guilty... of reaching the void of the dark zone... in the state of souls....
François has a self-destructive psyche. I’m not a creative person but I’ve spent 20 years, five days a week, in psychoanalysis just to be around creative people. There’s a whole side about him that everybody that is enthusiastic about his presence in the world understands they have to cope with that. But many people are giving up on that. The other thing I’m going to tell you about François is he is extremely interesting. He remains extremely interesting. But he is at the end of an era, not the beginning of an era. And he’s not as interesting as he once was. Not because his work doesn’t remain as interesting as it always was, it does, but the world has gotten a lot more interesting for other reasons.

He was, I would say, for a moment, the most interesting architect I thought there was. The reason is simple: he took a surrealist implies and a détournement theory and married them to realism. It is not an ex-
exceptional formulation, but the thing he did was exceptional. In fact, I’ve never seen anything as original. One of the things you should know about me is that as much as I like the general milieu of architecture, I am particularly interested in buildings. That makes me more conservative than most. I’m not so interested in cities; I’m not so interested in the general spectrum of architecture, infrastructures, etc. My particular interest is in buildings. I say that to you so that you’ll understand that I tend to be conservative. I like all kinds of art but I have an obsession with paintings and I have an obsession with buildings. So when I think about François, I understand a lot of work that he does (his writing, etc.) but when he does something that inflects my thinking about buildings, that’s when I’m at my best. For example, the Mosquito Bottleneck or the Dusty Relief, those are profound works of architecture that will be remembered over centuries for reasons that are so obvious and easy, and for reasons that are so deep. It’s almost impossible to teach them because you cannot teach them without a smile. It’s rare for comedy to achieve the same poignancy as tragedy, but when it does, it’s far more important. It’s like the difference between Eros and Thanatos. Thanatos is a kind of easy poignancy or profundity. But when Eros achieves profundity then you have a world-making situation. That’s why Marriage of Figaro I think is one of the greatest cultural achievements of all time.

He’s done other things that I think are quite interesting with nuclear lights, lots of stuff, but these two projects… Had he done these two projects and never done anything else I would have always accounted him among the most important architects that I’ve ever met. I could have heard about those two projects and retired. Dusty Relief is the most original and intelligent - it was his Demoiselles d’Avignon. It was just an explosion of genius. But, the mosquito project is the deeper of the projects. Because it was the first time a détournement had been a détournement of affect. The dust is revulsion. But the fear of a disease, that’s a totally different thing. That took Debord and the détournement and the phenomenology of the real and the theory of the affect to an incredible level.

I also think he’s done some really uninteresting projects. Spidernetthebewood, the spider net house for instance, this is a project that I think is not yet complete. I think that he knows that this project was a sketch, an intuitive sketch. One of the great projects that is not a building that I’ve seen twice, that I’ve seen at work, is the hypnosis room in his exhibition I’ve Heard About. The way that it politicizes an audience, and they don’t understand - most people are sitting there just thinking why? What’s going on here? Why am I doing this? And the other half of the audience is thinking this is one of the most incredible things I’ve ever seen. And it only works if you think you’re in an
architecture lecture. The most important thing about it is that it gets framed in the context of the specificity of the discourse of architecture. If you frame that lecture in any other discourse, it changes the effect of the lecture.

So these are attitudes about the détournement. If one thought that the détournement and the dérive no longer had any purpose because their locality and specificity had been overwhelmed by geopolitics and geo-economics, cause I think it was the case, and then any appeal to them had become nostalgic. Then François Roche totally rewrote the book on at least half of that. And had he wanted to, he could have rewritten the book on the other half of that. He hasn’t taken up the dérive problem but it’s implied in all his work anyway. That’s why the surrealist issue is important. He realized that surrealism won. Reality and surreality are the same. One doesn’t have to be surreal anymore. We are surreal. In his writing, every word is this. But he actually never says that. So he’s either the most cunning narrator in a sense that he’s never actually saying what he knows he’s writing, which makes him a fantastic writer or just having become him so much, he imagines everyone else in the world knows what he knows and they don’t. Which is what I think might be true. But I do think he suffers some kind of mild madness. Which means he has these feats of misanthropy that must cause him incredible distress.

Now the world has changed. This is a very interesting problem. And I don’t mean to say it has changed under François’ feet. For example, there was something like the last humanist. If you were in architecture, it might be interesting to talk about an end of 400 years of architecture and the end of the humanist tradition and the last great humanist in architecture and you might be able to say something like Koolhaas and Eisenman, in their own way, were certainly indicating the end of a great humanist tradition. And then others like François Roche were showing the indication of a new trans-humanist tradition. Trans-humanism looked like what was going to be the replacement of humanism. And it just got wiped away by big data technology. Not wiped away. It’s there. But it’s totally dwarfed: bid data technology is the end of big nations. And what I find very interesting about that is that the end of big nations is for me the end of great comedies in the future. And the reason I know that, is because no one knows how to tell the story of it except as a tragedy.

Stuxnet is nothing but fear. When Israel and the United Stated attacked Iran and it worked, that same technology, Stuxnet, spread all over the world and anybody can now adapt it. Also ninety to a hundred hackers have the ability to wage war against nations.
And nations are unable to defend themselves and the only reason they have to exist anymore is to defend themselves against this war. But, in order to maintain the environment in which they can wage war, they have to maintain very complex infrastructures and very complex economies. There is no interest on the part of the hackers to break down economies or infrastructures when they have to ability to be developing independent controls. So you’re seeing something very exciting, which is an emergence of nations of individuals – spontaneous short-life nations. It’s hard to theorize but the only way you know it’s true is that the stories you’re told at the moment are stories of fear. And that’s always the beginning of something new and positive. And so if you try to position François in there, he doesn’t belong. In fact right now, it’s hard to position architects at all, although architecture will be totally implicated in it. I know architecture is going to be really important in it, because it’s entirely about designed worlds. Surrealism was the announcement of the importance of design. Surrealism was about the fact that as soon as perspective was invented and as soon as we started constructing the world, surrealism started to understand that we could construct speculative worlds, or adventurous worlds that science gave us the power to realize. That’s when architecture took control. And that’s the bigger case that architecture won.

Stuxnex itself started of with an architecture ruse. It was a team of architects who conceived the idea of how to camouflage good behavior. Now it’s being generalized. There are big databases of what is a good behavior environment in any live situation; any architectural situation, any urban situation and architects are going to be designing it. The difference between a digital environment and a big data environment is another thing people don’t understand cause it actually changed in 2008. 2008 is an interesting year. It’s the financial world change. There’s two halves to the equation of the financial world’s collapse: there’s the digital half and the big data half. The big data half and the digital half came together in a way that caused the financial collapse.

There’s a thing called the black-Sholes equation, it’s what causes derivatives. And then there’s a thing called normalization curve, which the black-Sholes depends on. But to make a long story short: if you did a rendering, like a recreation rendering, to actually do all the real calculations of the rendering would take many computers and would take a long time. So instead of doing that, they figured out the simplification formulas - the algorithms. The digital is a computer world based on really interesting algorithms that make wonderfully good approximations. By 2008, speed got so high, and storage got so big that you didn’t need algorithms anymore. What you
could do was brute force calculations. And brute force calculations give you a totally different pattern. You could do real ray tracing as fast as algorithms. When you’re working with a hundred percent real data, there’s no way to tell the difference between what you’re seeing on the web and reality. All sorts of powers are changed completely. The banks knew the total environment of exposure to the risk but they had no idea how much particular risk any one bank had. And they still don’t know by the way. Just to give you a hint, the United States had a trillion dollars of debt nine year ago; they now have thirteen trillion dollars of debt. We are no longer in the digital environment. We are no longer based on algorithms. And there’s not that many people in the world that understand the difference between writing programs that are no longer algorithm based, and writing programs that are brute force based. It’s not a question of writing neat formulas. If you look at François’ book (Log 25), it’s all based on formulas. None of those formulas matter anymore. François Roche argues from a Marxist point of view. Marx argues that private property is crime. He wasn’t against private property, what he was against was the fact that 90% of the world couldn’t have it. So when you read Capital, and you read the earlier arguments, it says private property is only held by 10% of the world and then they erect police forces and they produce laws to stop the other 90% from getting it. 10% have food and they make it illegal for people that are starving to get food. That’s a very hard argument to defeat. So now we have the ability for example to listen to every conversation in the world and account for it. Technology has produced a new form of property, in Marxism terms. Instead of getting rid of private property, we now have the means to producing an entire new world of property and accounting for it and paying people for it. Imagine every time a heroin addict appears in a movie, every heroin addict in the world that has contributed to producing that character is entitled to a hundredth of a cent. We can now proliferate properties. In other words, we can solve Marx’s problem of not everybody getting property and we no longer need police forces or laws because the law is very simple: the computer says yes or no. You don’t even need a Court. All you need is Big Data technology to constantly re-account everybody’s personal production. So you go from a labor theory of value (Marx) to an existence theory of value. Anyway, these are just stories of why the world is just totally different now. And I think everybody is starting to realize we have to theorize this which is going to be called the end of nations. It matters a whole lot but it does put someone like the incredible eruptive originality of François out of context. I don’t want him to change. I don’t want him to move over to this. But the détournement is not going to be. It’ll be special, it will belong to History but it will not be what I
thought it was three or four year ago. Because I don’t think trans-humanism is going to be the paradigm that we thought it was unless, interestingly enough, unless electricity disappears... I’m loosing my mind you should shut me up.

About four years ago, it was pretty clear we were going to run out of oil by 2080. By 2020-2030 we were going to have pricing oil for real value. And by 2040 it would have been a serious issue. Then François would have been one of the single most important thinkers in the world, art wise. Because then the détournement of materiality, of sensitivity to every possible thing for all its potential would have been a world consciousness and he would have been a leading art figure. Like Picasso, Einstein and Stravinsky were all part of a change of consciousness. Because we would have fundamentally been moving to a different kind of environment, not squandering energy resources. It would have been an interesting time. Thank god we didn’t have to live though it! But it would have been an important one. Then shale oil came along. And let me tell you we are just going to blow this planet to death. Now we have three hundred years of free electricity and I guaranty you, we are not going to not use it. We are using it at a mile a minute. Every country in the world is about to exploit it. Russia, which is about to be a major power, is now totally bankrupt because they have no shale oil. To watch these things happening is a funny thing, but to watch these things happening in the position of one individual as a theoretical placement in the art world, and its relationship to an emerging consciousness is kind of interesting.

The effect of shale oil in the importance of François Roche is a silly idea but it elongates the life of electricity, which guaranties that the big data process is going to go full speed. So the post-nation state is going to beat the trans-human experiment into existence, I’m pretty sure. I’m not afraid of it because I do believe that it’s a great comedy... “First as tragedy, then as farce”. It changes the ecology. It will be like oxygen heating the earth a little earlier. Oxygen was the great poison on earth. For two billion years, Earth was an anaerobic planet and the dominating species of the planet poisoned themselves because their waste product was oxygen. That’s the type of stories François loves. They basically farted themselves to death. This is the kind of consciousness however that François has taught everyone to think. François belongs to this generation of people learning primarily from Deleuze, (I think that Derrida was much more profound thinker), who thinks about matters in connectivity from the most intimate particle to large-scale economic global communities of matter. No one moves in it with more genius than he does as an architect, because he is an architect. I
think it would be real misfortune for anyone to make of him a polymath. I don’t think the work is interesting as art. I don’t think the work is interesting as philosophy.

The role of an architect, or the role of an artist, is to recognize that everyone at any point in time feels inchoate being in the world that they can’t find confirmation of. For a long time you could only make one place in the world, for one subjectivity. It that was the dominant form of subjectivity and everybody else felt slightly alienated from that. It’s only recently that architecture has had the power over matter and the economy to start to enable smaller forms of existential subjectivities to become located in the world on their own. It can actually do this job of letting multiple subjectivities have a place in the world - it’s fantastic. And we’re just beginning. Paintings, music and fashion have done that for years. It is an incredible thing. It is the effect of artistic multiplicity. Affect can be more powerful than ideas. Woodstock for instance was more important than Mai 68. Paris 68 was about ideas. And ideas are very good at tearing things apart. Affects are really good at building things. And I think François Roche works the level of affect more than the level of ideas. He is not an intellectual he is a great architect.

Not every bit of every project is fundamental though.

Most of what he does is just what people of his generation are doing. That’s true for everybody: Greg Lynn and everybody else. Most of what everybody does all the time isn’t of great genius. But what’s fundamental to Dusty Relief is a lot though: the electrostatic skin, the fantastic idea of turning the dust into the exterior and make that the form, and make that clean the air… And also how horrible it would be! There was also that incredibly simple section in circulation: as soon as you pass the dusty exterior, architecture goes away. With that simple section, a simple box for the art, there is no more presence of architecture, no more burden of architectural presence. That is a part very few people recognize. It’s time now for architecture to get out of the way because to be living with the burden of architectural presence, no matter how fantastic it is, is over bearing. You don’t want to live with somebody telling you how to live all your life, that four hundred year ethical idea in architecture in now dead. At least I think theoretically people are experimenting with what is called the synthetic project. There are a lot of great projects where at a certain point architects just stop. If you were to say that something was interesting about the spider net house, it’s that. It does have a kind of architectural game but once you’re inside, you’re inside. Image living in a Frank Lloyd Wright house! I couldn’t live in one. The idea of some architect telling me every moment of my life how to feel, where to look...
would either kill him (or her) or myself. Knowing how to get it out of the way becomes increasingly important in modern architecture and finally getting out of the way completely is really important. And he does that quite often, like in Dusty Relief - as far as I’m concerned, in a museum, you need to get the architecture out the way very quickly. François cultivated a sense of thumbing his nose at the traditions of academia and the importance of the canon. He seems like he’s indifferent to the history of architecture, which is just not true. But he’s indifferent to expressing his loyalty to history of architecture. And that offends people. And also he behaves badly!

François Roche has inscribed himself in the tradition of 1960s experimental architecture. I think it’s interesting to consider his practice in terms of the heritage of Cedric Price. Like Price, there is no utopia in Roche’s work, just concrete utopias. He works with engineers, biologists and other scientists and people from all kinds of spheres, seeking to pool knowledge. If you examine Price’s Fun Palace, an unbuilt project, you can see a kind of choreography where all the disciplines join together. Price made use of a calculated uncertainty and a very conscious incompleteness to produce a catalyst for invigorating change. Very few architects have changed the history of the field with less built projects than Price, who built very few. The idea behind Fun Palace was to design a structure, not an object. Roche is also definitely not an architect who designs objects. Further, he is linked to artists like Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija and their generation, not only by his multidis-
ciplinary approach but also by the idea of resisting, questioning and challenging the design of objects, and finding other forms of negotiation.

Dan Graham called Price the most original and influential architect of the 1960s. He combined the concept of pleasure with communitarian socialism. François has also taken a radical stance in the architecture world. There are several parallels between these two architects. First there is their multidisciplinary approach, their partnerships with other experts. For Fun Palace, Cedric and the stage director Joan Littlewood worked with cyberneticians, acousticians, musicians, artists and so on. But in addition to the multi-disciplinary approach, there is a multi-sensory approach. Margaret Mead, the anthropologist who looked at tribal cultures holistically, once remarked on the impoverishment of a conception of a museum exhibition that appeals only to our sense of vision. Most people do not spend more than 15 seconds standing in front of the Mona Lisa... That’s why when I was a curator at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la ville de Paris, directed by Suzanne Page, I was happy to invite Roche to present his work I’ve Heard About at the Couvent des Cordeliers while the museum was closed for reservations. Working with Rostand, Roche carried out a hypnotic participative experiment. The exhibition at the Couvent des Cordeliers was a total ritual, appealing to the different senses, offering an interior landscape, an architectural structure, a kind of cave in which the experiment was possible. It was a rich experience for visitors because this exhibition mode allowed the creation of links, a ritualistic relationship with the site, in line with Mead’s interesting observation. Dorothea von Hantelmann has also written a lot about the exhibition as ritual, the reintroduction of rituals into the 21st century at a time when they were on the verge of disappearing. The exhibition as ritual is very free and democratic, permitting an individual experience of the show, and this high-individualized ritual always produces new connections. That is precisely the distinguishing mark of François’s architecture: it creates connections. That was the case with this exhibition, and also his extraordinary idea for a mosquito-proof house (Mosquito Bottleneck) whose architecture was produced by a tension between the fear of mosquitoes and an anti-mosquito defense system – an animal connection.

In my opinion, this exhibition was more a realization of his work than a documentation of it. Furthermore, I’ve Heard About was a big success.

Obviously, there is a question as to just how much this work can exist if François really wants to produce this sort of reality. That was also a problem for Price. In a way, Price never wanted things to exist in reality.
He always deconstructed and dismantled whatever it was that had been commissioned, again and again until there were no more commissions. When a couple asked him to design a home for them, he did a feasibility study and advised them to get a divorce. When at the end of his life he demanded the demolition of the Interaction Center, one of his rare projects to be built, the press was outraged, but that was what he wanted. The question is this: does François want to work as a pedagogue conveying ideas? Or in the context of art? Or does he want to build? He is the only person who can answer that.

It’s interesting that he decided to move to Bangkok, and I’m curious to see what he will design there. His move is an example of a less linear world. Until recently, our lives were more circumscribed by a very specific geography. The 1960s radicals, the paperless, were in a specific context. Today, I see Bangkok as a kind of freedom he has achieved to begin producing a very 21st century reality. He hasn’t stopped surprising us. François Roche is an oxymoron; he is simultaneously resilience and resistance. His title for Log 25 suits him perfectly, although it lacks an s. Maybe the term should have been plural.

Log was conceived as a ship’s log. And a captain writes in a ship’s log everyday what they observe at sea: latitude, weather conditions, dolphins, birds, land, other ships etc. Log is a way to look at different currents that are going on in architecture. And I thought, certainly François and the work he does, and the kind of people that are in the same frame of mind shall we say, or going similar research, are definitely a current that should be taken note of. We should observe this. We met in person for the first time when I was asked to give a lecture about Log. After my talk, this man dressed in black, with sunglasses and greasy black hair came right up to me and said I’m François Roche. He introduced himself to me not only because he was aware of my work but because he heard me say guest editing was a possibility.

What I liked about him was this idea of resistance. I’m very interested in resisting the status quo, in
resisting the expected. Through resistance I believe comes resilience, even though François wrote that term differently. I think we could have done better to say Reclaim Resis[stance]lience, so the resistance reclaims resilience in a certain way.

If he were on the ship’s log… what animal he would be? I have no idea! Hmm. He would not be a monkey, because I don’t think he is that agile; but neither would he be an armadillo, because he is not thick skinned. He’s actually very thin-skinned. Not a porcupine, he is not prickly. He’s not an elephant, cause he may be intelligent like an elephant but he’s not lumbering like an elephant. A gazelle? No. A leopard? Hmm. No. A panther! Yes, something like a panther, which is so fast… Like the way a machine could do things so much faster that we can, and sort of dark and a little bit ominous.

I had a real talk of war with François on Log 25 Re-claim Resi[lience]stance, the edition he guest-edited. Speaking of resistance! The whole way that François writes with ellipses became an issue, because he even resists the standard way of writing. And in that resistance, I would argue he makes already complex thinking more inaccessible, more difficult. I find this to be masochistic. I only came to this conclusion of François being masochistic because he insisted I ran this piece about Loos being a masochist. This is why he is now living in Bangkok.

I had to write a disclaimer. (This wasn’t the first one.) Because I did not want to write an editorial embracing something I don’t fully understand. François operates in a territory that I appreciate but don’t operate it myself. This is not architecture as I think about it. And therefore I left it open to the reader to decide what is it. I loved it as a first line on the cover of Log. Because in a certain sense, by saying he’s an impostor, he’s disclaiming the entire article himself. Just the way I disclaimed editorship of the issue! But I think I learned a lot from it. There is a sort of primitiveness about it that is almost archetypal. If you think of the idea of primitive huts, then François might be operating at that level. There is really a primitive hut quality to some of his projects, which is about resilience and resistance, not that I want to hang him with those words, or insist on keeping François with those ideas, but it is another way of rethinking what it is we’re doing as architects, in building. I always think of the landscape architect Dan Carlin whose philosophy was “step lightly on this earth”. I think perhaps without even knowing he’s doing that, that François is an architect who is stepping lightly on this earth. It’s a very resilient attitude given all the economic and environmental problems we’re trying to cope with today across the globe. There are so many problems we’re contributing to by doing things the same old way, and François
is not. I think there’s an embedded resilience in what he is doing. It’s not resilience about architecture; it’s resilience about life.

I don’t know if his self-defeating behavior eliminates the possibility of a dialogue. He might be eliminating the possibility of a dialogue between himself and others, because he is, in a certain way, dogmatic about what he thinks for himself. But he wants other people to have a dialogue about what he’s doing. And I think they do, have that, even if it’s denigrating. I think that through his teaching he’s made extraordinary dialogue possible. He opens up possibilities for thinking which I think is the ultimate goal with education. Weather people thought more broadly after getting Log 25, I don’t know, I couldn’t track it. But I don’t think he is eliminating dialogue outside of his work, just might be eliminating dialogue with him. They are shutting him down because he is so dogmatic and again masochistic… I believe he is a very emotional human being and that takes it all. He is not a pure thinker. I am a real devote of Jung’s archetypes of thinking, intuition feeling and sensation, and I think that François is a feeling intuition archetype. It can’t get inside his head. I think he feels more than he lets on. But it’s his intuition that leads him into these interesting paths of exploration that he’s been doing in his architectural projects and even in his teaching. Cedric Price suffered throughout his career of not being taken seriously enough to build and yet today we look at his ideas and find them to be quite fantastic. Cedric Price’s Potteries Thinkbelt idea about education and moving buildings essentially, or the Fun Palace… This kind of ideas were much more grounded in reality that things like Archigram. But still people sort of found it crazy. And in certain sense, this was a light touch too, because everything was always moving and flexible. I don’t think François’ parts are moving. I wouldn’t make a literal comparison between Cedric Price and François Roche but I would think in terms of the imaginary they could be in a same camp to some degree.

I have to give François a lot of credits because it takes a lot of psychological energy to maintain this kind of position of the impostor, or the position of the resistor.
François Roche is a mystery. What I have learned from him, from his successes and failures, is that it is nearly impossible to practice architecture in Paris today. Roche wants to be an author, his work is original, and that, today, is no longer accepted. The architectural milieu seeks conformism and prefers copyists to authors — they are less dangerous. Architecture refuses to take risks, and with Roche, that’s exactly what you get. I don’t understand why he strives to practice his profession in a milieu that by definition was always going to reject him. I see it as a kind of masochism. It’s pretty odd.

I remember following the competition for the design of the FRAC Centre in Orleans. There were two finalist teams. For this project Roche designed a robot, an articulated arm that assembled glass bricks to form a sort of cavity. Like a medieval cathedral, the building was in a perpetual state of construction. The final
object was less important than the process of making it. This project had an interesting relationship with time. There was a hint of infinitude that raised political questions. The plan was marvelous and intelligent, a real achievement... it was rejected. The project was much too radical and strong for a city like Orleans. That was a shame, because the winning team came up with a design for a cardboard box building that was so fashionable that by the time it was built, today, it is already old-fashioned. That’s ironic for a FRAC that is supposed to spotlight creative architectural work.

The defeat of R&Sie(n) in this competition is a symptom of something that has been going on for a number of years in the French architectural world, a world of brands and logos and no longer one of creativity. With Roche, everything is at risk. That frightens people. He decided to see what robotics is about. He spoke to researchers and formed supposedly unnatural partnerships. He was able to enter fields where other architects had not previously cleared the way; he was able to spark people’s interest and actively involve them in his ventures, which is no small thing. Other architects couldn’t do that — they were too lazy. These are lazy times, where everyone wants guarantees. Why weren’t prominent businessmen like Bernard Arnault and François Pinault interested in someone like Roche? They are intelligent men who would have every interest in taking an interest in his work, especially since he is so well known. From 2008 through today, architecture’s quest for safety has led it to spiral downward faster and faster, while he has been going in the opposite direction. The views of a Parnassian intellectual like Roche seem to have been hit by an express train that could not take its time to consider sincere work.

If he really wanted to exist in this world that does what it’s told, he would have to learn to scheme. Instead, he remains at an impasse. He would always rather say no than make concessions; he’s pathological that way. That’s a shame, because it keeps him from overcoming certain obstacles. For example, Jean Nouvel is a sly fox who has understood the importance of networking for success; the Swiss group Richemont has been his biggest benefactor. Roche has never taken that turn, and I wonder if he regrets it. He is more literary. Agile, intelligent, he understands the world and has mastered narratives and fiction. Like the great novelists of the 19th century, there’s something romantic about him. His work is meant to reveal the monstrosity of society. He cultivates a horrifying, unaesthetic aesthetics. The same goes for him as a person. He plays at being perverse and is able to inspire hatred in others without any clear reason. He likes to play the role of an odious character. He is able to blow contentious positions all out of proportion, as illustrated when he convinced Bernard Arnault to pull out of a project. These are lazy times, where everyone wants guarantees. Why weren’t prominent businessmen like Bernard Arnault and François Pinault interested in someone like Roche? They are intelligent men who
proportion. His ruptures are carefully staged, worthy of an opera.

Despite all that, maybe because he is a great poet, I still think he is naive – that’s his weakness. He is unable to finish something, which is exactly in line with his discourse. He is not interested in completing work; finitude would contradict what it is about. His path is not from point A to point B. He refuses to fit into predictable patterns.

The last great technological revolution produced the Eiffel Tower, which represented the start of the countdown for the race to the Moon. It announced the beginning of an ascent into the ether, a time when humanity was going to rise up above this thoroughly horizontal world. That is what is unique, important and legitimate about it. It continues to have an invisible dimension, embodying a mad hope, an insatiable vanity. In my opinion, Roche is demanding in the same way. He is the last of the Mohicans. He goes against the tide of a lazy society. That says it all.

I always felt like a kinship with François Roche. He is an architect that writes, that speculates, that’s interested in art, that connects with other fields and that’s something I really value. For me, he was the most important architect to shift from either a focus on formalism or geometry, an approach to digital technology that was more formalist. He connected that to an interest in environments and atmosphere and ambiances. He was the first one to merge those two interests. And he is still the best at doing that. In that sense, he’s a very unique figure.

I always feel like we’re very close but at a distance. A fundamental part of our characters is that none of us is interested in the new normal, or a kind of commercial success. I’m more interested in innovation and being on the edge of things, and he’s the same way. I’m probably more committed to being in the center of let’s say ideas that have become the new normal, the new standard. And Francois is actually not inter-
ested in that. He is very much interested in the future edge of the field rather than the future center of the field. It probably has more to do with character than it does with a philosophy or an aesthetic, and in that sense I feel we have a real similarity.

For me, the robotics was always a fascination of going from virtual spaces to physical manifestations. Robots are very similar to making plan and using the plan to make a space. I’ve always been interested in that extension of the digital into the physical through machines and I think the first most obvious place to go with that was making stuff, fabricating stuff. So for me, it started almost at the same time I was using animation software, which instead of drawings with points that are fixed you could have things moving on the screen. For me, the focus on robot for construction, which is really where the field has almost completely moved to, is a real dead end because it’s not using them spatially. François is one of the people that would share that interest in robots. He uses them as part of the building experience, as part of the spatial quality of the space. Even if he uses them to build something, his robots are still supposed to be around after the construction is complete, transforming the construction or extending it or however it would be. For François, the robot is very personified, in a sense that it has a character in the space equivalent to somebody inhabiting it, he really sees it as part of the architecture. And to me, he’s one of the few people who didn’t get in this trap of the robot as a carpenter, which is very mainstream. For everybody else, at least in the United States, automating the physical environment, automating the city, rethinking mobility and transportation… all that, is project number one. It’s one of the big jobs. In a funny way, how to automate the physical environment is really not at the center of things in architecture. There’s a lot of people working on how to have robots do work and build things but I find it less interesting than how to change a city with moving things that are intelligent.

For a lot of other fields, architecture plays a role. For instance, I designed a boat. And the first thing I realized about boats is that naval architects think of everything in the water and everything that involves going through the water is one sensibility. But the minute they think of someone going inside, they shift to a model of architecture that is just ridiculous: the cabins will have a salon and a master suite. They use terms that are from the seventeen centuries or something. Boats always have this thing with a little house. Architecture has always played the role as the frame, or the timeless thing where other design fields are always seeing themselves as changing. So if you go into those fields and point out that architecture is not what they think it is, you can have a big
impact. François’ interest in medical, pharmaceutical, biological… all of that interest is a new palette. It’s very easy with a different model of space than habitation to turn it upside down and transform it. I think the field is splitting. One of the ways you get into those fields now is through technical expertise. Twenty years ago, Volvo invited a group of architects to come and talk to them about how to make a car like a building. I didn’t know why I was going in there, I was excited to learn about how they design cars and I thought they had lots of technology. But I got there and they said look, architects take standards components, in most cases, and make unique objects out of them, and they make those things for particular clients. Volvo told us that, considering the direction the car industry is going, eventually they were going to need to get architects’ expertise. Architects are good at thinking abstractly, making a plan is something they have always been able to do that most people can’t. The plan has changed and it’s now a digital document but a lot of industries don’t have that skill set. And architects have technical skills to really have a big impact on some industries. Even corporate leadership now at Nike, from the shoe designer Tinker Hatfield, to their head of design John Hoke, to their head of their environments Byron Merritt, everyone is trained as an architect. Everyone there went to graduate school of architecture. They practice for a year or two, and then they left and went to Nike. I think a lot of the people that are really thinking about a new ecology can develop interesting work in other fields. It is in a lot of industries that you find not always your best student but people that were dissatisfied with something about the horizon of architecture and knew they could create a world instead of convincing a developer with drawings. They could create a world by getting into a sports company or media-company or an energy drink company or whatever it is.

With my practice I’m trying to straddle those two worlds. And who knows if that will be successful or not! Actually I could tell you for sure, it would be a lot more successful to take a decision and go one way or the other. Either develop a more commercial practice in the building industry or really focus on how technology could be used in the build environment without having to do with buildings. But right now, for me the interest is to have one foot in both. And if you really ask me to think twenty years from now will these two worlds come back together again? It’s kind of unlikely. Nike used to be in the shoe business. Now they want to know information about performance, they want to be involved with data, with changing the human body, making somebody into a super human: through technology they want to augment them, change their physiology… In a certain way, there are
similarities between François and Nike, really there's a lot in common between these two. Nike should hire him as their head of design! They hold the patents on growing artificial leather. It would get very strange but he’d be a perfect fit for a company researching the whole ecology of environments. But François is always going to have a hard time functioning in the corporate world. It would never work… The human resources person would see him coming at the door and have a panic attack. Unfortunately he’s going have to work with people who can tolerate his curiosity about making trouble for corporate structures. Who knows who are the people who are going to tolerate that?

The French architectural establishment is very hierarchical and very monolithic: from IFA to the museum, to curators, to schools, it’s incredibly pyramidal, and obviously François is very allergic to that kind of structure and culture. What’s funny is that, for me, the most important French architects of that generation are the ones who were totally ostracized: Bernard Cache and François Roche. Both of them are very committed to the intellectual and creative culture of France but they also have a very rough time. François Roche is not going to win Pritzker prizes or get as much work as Jean Nouvel but in a certain level, he’s a very important figure and one of the most influential French architect. But nobody has found a way to exploit him properly; France has a legacy of these kinds of figures, if I knew François well enough to have a psychoanalytic perspective, I would think that legacy is a real burden.

You cannot take François out of the French context and I think like many of the French heroes, which I think he for sure is and will be, it’s important that those people get pushed out, to then be brought back in when it’s too late.
François Roche’s work is very valuable because he makes improbable, indeterminate environments that open the door to the POSSIBLE. His production is characteristic of a plural world where the markers and references have multiplied, uncertainty has moved in and we are looking for new imaginary worlds, modes of representation that take into account the indeterminate, the unfinished and the disturbingly strange. Roche develops the tools to bring that incertitude into reality. He uses robotics to make that world tangible. His experiments extend to processes of construction.

When Roche invited me to take part in a discussion as part of An Architecture of Humors, I suggested studying a text by Leibniz because I find that Roche’s work resonates with (resonates, not explicates) that philosopher’s thinking. Leibniz said we are in a world full of life, and Roche is interested in the natural phe-
nomenon that is growth, nature's power of becoming. This thinking, linked to the way he uses technology, leads him to produce an anthropo-technological architecture with a powerful mechanical dimension. He invents strange, artificial kinds of habitats that relate mimetically to plants and natural growth. His robot for An Architecture of Humors is terrifying: a machine with something organic about it. This passage from the mechanical to the living-mechanical is disturbing. Furthermore, his images are always infused with an animal quality. There is something vegetal and something animal in his work, an untamed animality. Artaud is very present in this relationship between destructive impulses – Roche’s architecture is always caught between the life drive and the death drive. Eros and Thanatos are both summoned in his work.

Adaptation is an important theme in Roche’s work. Technological mediations linked to digital culture engender new forms of adaptation to time. The creation of environments is an expression of humanity’s need to adapt, to adapt itself, mentally and physically, to an overwhelming world. The introduction of machines modifies the environment and our existence within it; we are transformed and that transformation is uncontrollable. The double modification is interesting. It is like Deleuze’s discussion of the story of Alice in Wonderland – it involves time and an exploration of possible, multiple, parallel worlds. Today we live not only in a universe but a multi-verse. Somehow Roche shares that culture of the multitude, the plurality that Deleuze and Guattari spoke of.

In each of his projects that I know of, his experiments take place at the boundaries of disciplines (scientific, psychological, etc.). The power of his imagination is fuelled by very sophisticated encounters that nourish his narrative and awaken, like Paul Ricoeur’s live metaphor. In this regard, he has entirely renovated architecture, in keeping with our era.

He constructs a literally living world that is in no way calm. In his work, the individual is in conflict with himself and encountering others. An alterity that is human but also vegetable, also animal, also a drive. His work perfectly expresses the intranquility of our era. But this intranquility is neither moralistic nor dogmatist. It is a creative intranquility. His architecture is that of a world where human beings construct machines that keep them alive and kill them as well. It is fundamentally important to be conscious of this anxiety. In the contemporary architecture milieu, he is impossible to classify. He is other, a rebel who escapes categorization. He rightly will not let himself be put in a box.
Take a gaseous solution.

Take a solution of two gases. Air is a good example: oxygen, water vapor, are diluted in nitrogen. She got up and went to the table to measure herself by it, and found that, as nearly as she could guess, she was now about two feet high, and was going on shrinking rapidly. This expression is not rational and consequently to be avoided.

Take a liquid-gas solution. A soft drink like Coke is made of carbon dioxide diluted in a liquid. Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words “EAT ME” were beautifully marked in currants. Admittedly, this rational unity does not have the simplicity of the previous one.

Take a liquid-solid solution. Seawater is an aque-
ous solution of various mineral salts such as sodium chloride... Have you guessed the riddle yet? the Hatter said, turning to Alice again. No, I give it up, Alice replied: what's the answer? I haven't the slightest idea, said the Hatter. Nor I, said the March Hare. This expression is a bit more rational than the one before.

Take a solid-gas solution. Hydrogen dissolves in palladium. Just as she said this, she noticed that one of the trees had a door leading right into it. That's very curious! she thought. But everything's curious today. I think I may as well go in at once. And in she went. Still, this expression lacks the precision – as well as the incertitude that can be associated with it – of a numerical value.

Take a liquid-liquid solution. Alcoholic beverages are solutions of alcohol in an aqueous phase. Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in all her life; it was all ridges and furrows; the balls were live hedgehogs, the mallets live flamingoes, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and to stand upon their hands and feet, to make the arches. These expressions have the same flaws.

Take a solid-solid solution. We will also see that many alloys are solutions of two or more solid compounds. A cat may look at a king, said Alice. I've read that in some book, but I don’t remember where. And what are they made of? she asked in a tone of great curiosity. In contrast, in this case, she did not correctly translate the reality of the solution.

Now take horn silver with mineral alkali. The latter dissipates and appears on the horn silver like a vitreous black nipple. I was thinking, which is the best way out of this wood? This unity is also not really rational.

Take lead. Lead easily flows out of rich graphite pencil lead, because the principles of mineralization are expelled, starting with a strong vapor and boiling. I’m sure my memory only works one way. I can’t remember things before they happen. This expression of concentration was widely used in the past. Now it should be rejected or even prohibited.

The cooled result was perfectly white, inside and out. The surface was as polished and shiny as glass and sprinkled with bubbles. There was no label this time with the words “DRINK ME,” but nevertheless she uncorked it and put it to her lips. I know something interesting is sure to happen whenever I eat or drink anything. This expression also covers solutions comprised of several chemical compounds.

The apparatus in question should consequently pro-
vide the means to regulate this flow at will, so that it can be considered a universal instrument, able to transmit any quantity of fluid, even one is far beyond the capacity of any laboratory flask to contain. They began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over. This law connects the ideality of a solution in equilibrium and an ideal solution.

I’ve conducted several experiments on this sand by means of a humid process, the results of which I will inform my readers. On this sand I poured spirit of vitriol and fulminating oil of vitriol. No effervescence appeared; it all rested peacefully for several days. I should see the garden far better if I could get to the top of that hill: and here’s a path that leads straight to it — at least, no, it doesn’t do that — but I suppose it will at last. But how curiously it twists! It’s more like a corkscrew than a path! It should be recalled that these are homogenous phases. An observer situated at any point in this phase will always be surrounded by the same landscape.

//Cut-ups of Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass + a course in physical chemistry at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi + Essai d’un art de fusion à l’aide de l’air du feu, by Mr. Ehrmann, followed by Mr. Lavoisier’s Memoires on the same subject, 1787.//

Well, as you seem to know... it could be... that... you’re right, maybe... “She” didn’t think of that... even if the avatar is a constituent part of it... but now that you pose the question so clearly... yes... maybe so... yes... in reality... François Roche might well be Me.... Yes... that seems logical... no surprise... in fact... so far....

Maybe... the soul of a “she” in the body of a “he” or vice versa.... Like two intertwined snakes... with no mutual distinction... one would say... yes, it’s possible... work that is a matrix, a womb, non-feminist female... certainly... unless “HE” has stolen something from “Her”? Or vice-versa?... I don’t know anymore....

It is a “s(H)e” a little too made up... a little too much.... S(H)e is forced to adopt a disguise¹ ... obliged to hide... too fragile... not to suffer the vio-
lence inflicted... in this milieu... like all the others, for that matter... and all over the world as well.... But anyway... these things are working out slightly... as time goes by... and, thanks to tenacious struggles... the “s(H)e’s” are holding out in architecture... there are a few of them... not many... for sure... but they exist. There are those who continue to believe that they are still “she’s” to fight as such on the field of Bataille\(^2\) between the “he’s” and the “she’s”, while these “he’s” and “she’s” are merely being stripped of one or another of their two wings.... Then there are the “she’s” who subjugate this world of “he’s” because the “she’s” are stronger than all the “he’s” put together... But few are the “she’s” who let their light shine by opening their two wings wide... Who knows... You don’t agree with me?... It’s true... What if the “HE” remained “HE” without accessing the “s(H)e,” and vice-versa? But good God, the architecture never would have been a courageous vector of subtlety, ecology, sensuality, sensibility, a delicate treat for the eyes, unlike our cities that are still too (male)oderous.\(^3\)

Still far too few men and women are capable of being “s(H)e’s.” Maybe some people consider that tender empathy pathetic? Taking into account the perplexing complexity of our territories.... The results of our disastrous human psyches... far too sensitive... too wounded to want to conserve the preexisting ma-
trix equilibriums. Yes.... That’s true.... There are still far too few men and women capable of that generosity, in general too eager to get to the efficacy of their programming... The “He’s” and the “She’s” will never connect... Here I’m speaking of their Anima, Animus\(^4\)... or so rarely... too petrified by the fear of accessing the poetry of the functionality of architecture to do anything else with it... or even subvert their own reality... transcend it, spiritualize it, stage it for the sake of the “S(H)E.”... Dodge the difficulty of the exercise and exalt the passage to the real... revealing the constitution of human beings. These “HE’s” and “SHE’s” with their “I, you, he, she.”\(^5\)

If you knew what goes on in the head of the “S(H)E’s” think when they are washing the dishes... if you only knew.... But what joy.... But with the “HE’S” (as the “SHE’S” know only too well), just the opposite happens. The more they acknowledge the difficulty, the more their virility stands out!

Fortunately, the multiple and diverse cultures of the “HE’S/SHE’S” open the doors so that we can escape from the ridiculousness of this all too familiar situation... just think about those HE’S who are fighting over the SHE’S in the barnyard, or instead prefer to show them off, corner them, collect them, bugger them... Stop! Bloody fucking hell! The unabashed...
transgenderism of Thai and other cultures can be integrated into our own without getting lost in our “HE’S” and our “SHE’S.”

Let all architects become Rrose Sélavy!! The world will be better when we consciously take care of our architectures!!

I am a science fiction writer but I’m also a journalist. Seeing fictional things I’ve imagined become real feels like watching your children grow up, become adults. It’s amusing. In some ways it can be upsetting to people. Even people I know who are visionary science fiction writers and are super neophiliac are surprised by development and often upset. Eventually, they feel a sense of guilt about something that they knew was going to happen. I feel pretty consistent about what I felt at the time because even as a young person, I didn’t really feel that the way I was living was normality. I was a child in a Texan oil diaspora and I’d seen a lot of different cultures. When I had lived overseas and came back to the United States, I immediately realized that there was something very artificial about the American cultural construct, something weird was going on in that society. I’d simply didn’t look at reality with the same eyes. I realized that there is no biblical steady-state, there
isn’t a set of normal activities that are just where everything works out fine. And even in one human lifetime people don’t have consistent desire.

I take an interest in Francois Roche’s work because I like speculative architecture, generally speaking. I would classify him as somebody who is into architecture-fiction. I’ve had interesting discussions with him about things like lunar assembly of architectural structures, that kind of things. I’m not sure I want to live in one of his buildings but I think it’s pleasant that he’s not a utopian architect. He’s not somebody who goes around insisting that people live in you know some kind of Paolo Soreli archeology. He’s not the kind of Frank Lloyd Wright small tyrant who will go into the client’s home and rearrange the furniture and the pianos. He’s not consistent in that kind of Corbusier “I am modernism, this is your machine for living” kind of situation… He just makes remarkably eccentric buildings that stimulate the imagination without François unnecessarily throwing his weight around.

I wrote a story for MIT’s technology review several years ago, which was called the “Indoor Operation”; it was a work about software and architecture. The hero is an architect of the future. He’s somebody who behaves in a somehow François Roche’s fashion.

The story is basically about architecture and parametric practice, a kind of open-ended assemblage of construction processes, which is a matter I was debating with François at the time. The story is set 30 years in the future. The main character is just an everyday kind of American builder, a guy from the American Midwest with a settled home life but who is surrounded by ideas that are François Roche like. His ideas are metabolized by society and they become mainstream architectural practice. At the end of the story he becomes a superstar, a starchitect almost. He inspired another story called The Spider net in the wood. It was a piece about people in the future, stumbling across one of François’ constructions in the middle of a French forest that’s become a fortress of a sinister super villain, of course. It was a work of architecture fiction.

Guys in generative art like to do objects that could not be dreamed up by any human effort of imagination. The difficulty is that the machine doesn’t really have imagination and the offshoot tends to be a bit banal. And that’s what François is trying to combat with his story stutter that he imposes. Now my friends in architecture are a bit upset about the code monkey thing. Kids understand Rhino, Grasshopper and parametric whatever, they assemble shapes - you know, rattle snake, backbone, etc. but they have no idea of how is everybody supposed to live in there. It’s like...
scolding somebody whose a very good blogger and never writes a novel. But why you’re messing around with the Internet, why don’t you actually write something that serves the narrative? With this machine assisted methods of composition, the romance wears off after a while and you’re left with this sense of emptiness. People are not served. I think it’s a period thing. It’s typical of a big change in the means of production. Early automation was like that. Early industrial production was like that. Early experiences with electricity were kind of similar. They were very spectacular but not very practical. I think it’s a typical domestication process. It’s the theme of my story The Inner Operation where there’s a guy surrounded by fantastic software tools and he’s just trying to be the normal guy: father of the family figure, practical guy who’s paying the bills, considers himself a normal guy but he’s surrounded by these temptations and a heritage of guys who took that stuff with utter seriousness… It’s the difficulty with all these kind of make believe ideas in science fiction. If I give you a science fiction car, if you domesticate something that was formally talked about in science fiction, it will no longer have the sense of wonder that excited you when it was described as a speculative thing you know. Cause it’s not speculative, it’s something you interact with everyday, it’s your own human psyche that’s going to normalize it, objectively speaking it’s just as weird. Flying across the Atlantic is a very weird thing to do. When Lindbergh did it, everybody was thunderstruck for years, the guy was a hero to his last day and now there are probably ten thousand people above the Atlantic right now. And it’s dull! They’re in there, sipping Chivas Regal and staring out the window, there’s no marvel to it - it’s a cultural reaction. It doesn’t have anything to do with the mechanisms of flight which are vastly more advanced than the Spirit of Saint Louis, this rattletrap little device who barely made it. Meanwhile now we can do fantastic stuff, we just don’t find that particularly impressive. Even the space stations are rather banal to us. I’m in pretty good terms with some astronauts; following their social media presence is really interesting. They’re like coal minors, in a relatively risky situation, but you can see what they eat and how they dressed that day… There’s an intimacy with the act of space flight that is de-glamorizing on some ways, but super interesting. It can’t be helped that the architecture of the space station is not exciting. Things that are un-built can remain wonderful; once they’re actually built they’re just a process of mental adjustment. You don’t really want to have your heartbeat like that of a young bride after you’ve been married to your husband for ten years. You’re not going to panic when you see him, unless he’s almost killed in a car accident. That’s because you’re used to a routine in your life. They’re acts of architecture-fiction that can stay marvelous because nobody can really

do them and then there are others that are attempted and turned out not to work. And then there are some, very few, that are sort of accepted and taken to people’s bosom like steel frame buildings. Those that were amazing at the time, incredibly tall, with fantastic strength, slenderness, lightness, these glorious structures people were building were arcane skyscrapers at the time. Glamorous ones, decorations were all up and down before the international style, nobody had rationalized the boxes, they were just in love with the structural steel, now we’ve got plenty.

Francois Roche’s “I’ve Heard About” is interesting. I like the idea of generative art. The idea of an open-ended building that’s constantly reformattting itself by some kinds of sensors that surround the inhabitants is of interest to me; I like the idea that the building is fluid.

I spend a lot of time in Europe and I’m keenly aware of what Italian architectural circles sometimes notice with Unesco world heritage buildings. They are like stuffed animal where the outside of it can not be altered, because it would upset the tourists taking photographs, so you have to maintain the skin and the eyes… but then the inside of it has been gutted, it’s been completely replaced and the human activity going on within there have no resemblance with the original purpose of the building. It’s something like a bear that’s inhabited by honeybees. There’s a kind monstrosity to it. These Roche auto-reformatting buildings are the polar opposite of that. The activities are unsteady, and the activities are also somehow generating the building and then the building itself instead has no self-form and can move its surfaces and windows around as if it were some screen saver. So if you’re upset about the prospect of the other one, this kind of cultural frozen architectural taxidermy, the François Roche buildings would be the polar opposite of that. You can’t ever make it a Unesco world heritage monument because it doesn’t have any form you can valorize and freeze. Even guys like Viollet-le-Duc who was the Prince of historical restoration in European circles, made this wise comment that you can’t really preserve a building in the form that it had historically, because they are always being reformatted and changed and a little bit. So in order to have this perfect historical replica of the building you have to choose its best moments and then sort of freeze it in that even though it never behaved like that when it was… you have to drag the fluidity out of it and turn it into a monumental replica of itself. Rather than just letting it be the Versailles Palace which historically had a lot of boarded up windows and guys would wander around and rooms were used as pis-aller, things were falling apart, it was a rambling mess that was never perfect but it had to be preserved for the Japanese to take pictures of contemporary European glamourized architecture. It’s

Lugano. 11/27/2014. Interview with Bruce Sterling.
an anti-chronism. The building turns into the thing that's really to takes photos of. It becomes more and more like a staged set as time goes on. The managers of the building are aware of its attractions; they have a flow coming and it always exits through the gift shop. They are managing traffic flow through the thing... They're re-painting certain areas not really related to the ones that are being put on somebody's Instagram and... And the process of entropy is never entirely rested in any building so they can't really physically keep it up perfectly so François’ vision of these auto-reformatting building offers a fantasy of escaping that. When he said he could do a thing like that on the Moon, I thought it was an interesting place to put it because the Moon has no architectural tradition. A lot of people, including Lord Foster of Thames Bank, talk about making lunar buildings out of compacted lunar dust using robots. So if that's what it's actually structured from, as opposed to Carrera marble or something precious, why don't you just pull a sort of mind craft digital construction thing just to tray the blocks, all blocks or sort of equal block right. So lunar dust turns into a block. The block comes from the dust, you just put the block back into the dust and you kind of move the block around. On the moon it probably wouldn't bother people as much. If you had a structure like that in downtown Milan, or the Art Nouveau District or whatever, it would be noisy, it would be troublesome, it would be a never ending construction site, it would be extremely costly etc. So it doesn’t seem to me entirely practical as like a contemporary urban edifice. But maybe in some area that was hostile, peculiar and un-earthly it would find a mediate. Or out in the desert. Just rebuild in a desert like Guajira: it's a good place to put a deliberate spiritual departure from earlier practice where we're going to make the wasteland bloom you know, stop us who dares.

Who are you, François Roche?
On a Concept, Interviews and Editing by Marie Vic
Translation Leo Stephen Torgoff
Made possible by new-territories and S/he

This book is being launched on the occasion of the retrospective planned for November 2016, in France, at the Art Center of experimental and radical Architecture of the Frac Orleans, titled “S/he would rather do FICTION MAKer” / “eILe pre_FAIRE la FICTION”, where S/he will be the exclusive ‘‘Architect’’ and master of ceremony.

‘‘S/he 1993-2050’’
New-Territories is a polymorphous architecture organization. Founded in 1993, it has embraced different labels, names, strategies and purposes. New-Territories is fronted by the androgynous, transgender avatar _S_/he_, who authorized Francois Roche to write, talk and teach on his/her behalf, as a PS / personal secretary, an Ariadne’s wire of this ectoplastic system and paranoiac mind.