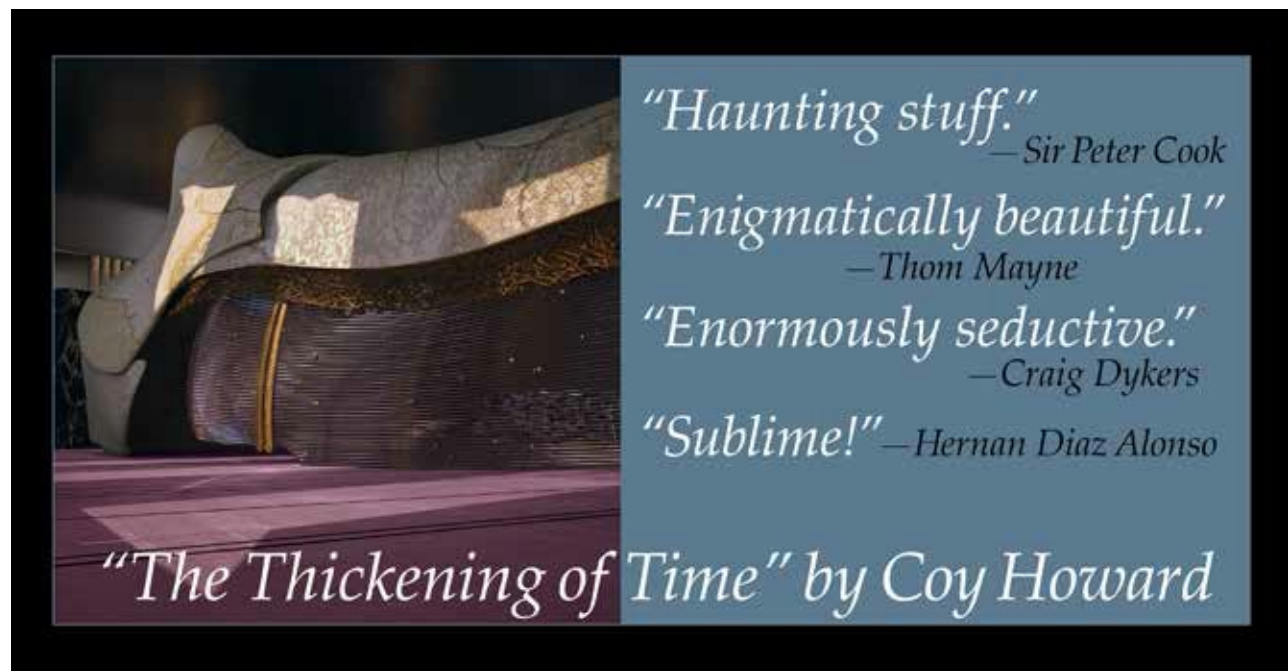


# SCI-ARC



## SCI-Arc BOOK RELEASE: Coy Howard's "The Thickening of Time"

The Southern California Institute of Architecture, long known for its innovative architecture education programs, announces the release of the book "The Thickening of Time" by senior faculty member Coy Howard.

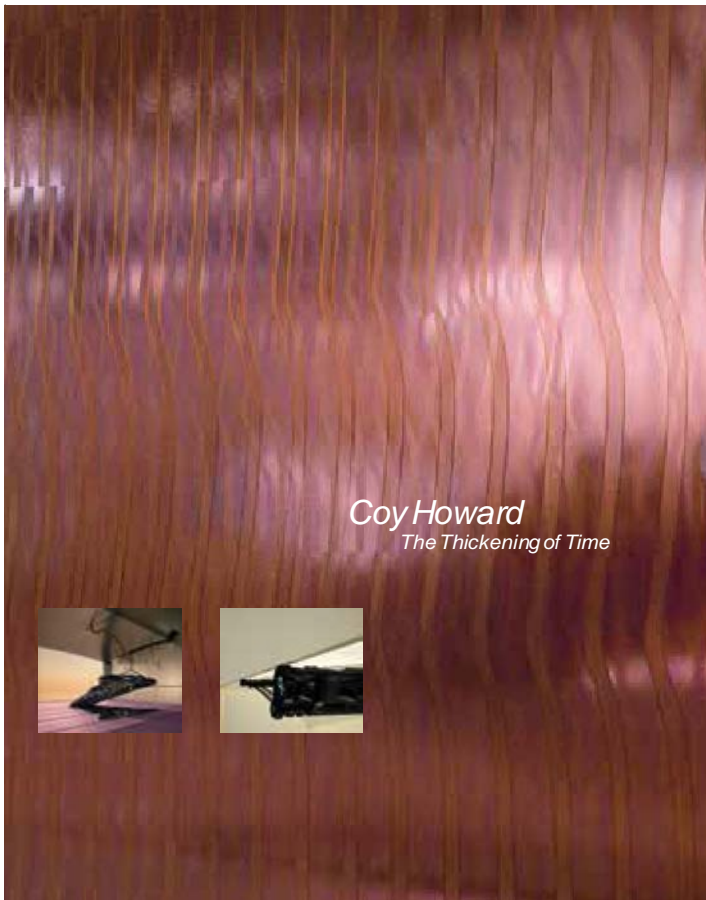
With this 288 page volume, Coy Howard continues SCI-Arc's tradition of innovation by challenging the current status of digital architecture with his exploration of the aesthetic implications of seductive insinuations, mysterious withholdings, liminal indirections, and subtle allusions, in the design of three urban rooftop villa projects. In over 100 hundred carefully constructed and choreographed digital images, the deep cultural terror of the three cities of Los Angeles, Tokyo, and New York is embedded. Each of the images is constructed to engender a mood and sense of place rather than depict or illustrate an architectural concept. Fusing the avante-garde and the traditional, the designs of the villas create a poetic sense of serenity, where the desires for the future and the memories of the past are sensed simultaneously.

Critical essays by Dr. George Rand, Jeffrey Kipnis, and Larry Rouch position the work in a broad range of topics, including the current critical discussions on the impact of digital imagery on architecture.

AVAILABLE AT: [hennessyingalls.com](http://hennessyingalls.com), [stoutbooks.com](http://stoutbooks.com), [petermiller.com](http://petermiller.com) and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

### Brief Bio

Coy Howard is a designer with a broad range of interests and accomplishments. His furniture is included the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Denver Art Museum. Examples of his graphic designs are held in several international museums, including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He has won a broad range of awards for his work, and consulted as an advisor to many major institutions, including The Getty Center, The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Additionally, he has directed two educational programs, the undergraduate program at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), and the Department of the Environmental Arts at Otis College of Art and Design. In 2008 he was the Eero Saarinen Distinguished Professor at the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. In 2012 Coy was the Bernoudy Architect in Residence at The American Academy in Rome. He is currently a professor at the Southern California Institute of Architecture.



## Critical praise for Coy Howard's “The Thickening of Time”

“WAY BACK IN THE LATE 1970S I BECAME AWARE OF those projects for houses that detached Coy Howard's work from those other clever young men in Los Angeles. It was through their solemn depiction of a majestic but slightly spooky presence. By the time he was in our Exhibition at the Architectural Association in 1983, I was able to observe that his ‘Drawls’ ‘were saying something about human mannerism as well as graphic representation.’

As time has gone on, his very particular sensibility has wonderfully meshed together with the ability of digital manipulation to present a world of atmospherics that do not demand physical justification. In a sense they say more about physicality than reality: for they are not constrained by logical sequence, or programme, or the tedium of consistency. I had not realized the connection with Perry Kulper until I read this book: but it suddenly

makes sense. If Kulper's method is a graphic juxtaposition of the unlikely alongside the unlikely, Coy is able to take such alchemy a stage further: he can melt the vision. He can take his wonderful ‘eye’ and take things to a (still often rather spooky) edge, where few of us have dared to go.

It is haunting stuff, and no wonder many of the most recent students continue to value him so much and refer to his insight. For me, he is more fascinating than ever.”

—Sir Peter Cook

2002 RIBA Gold Medalist

Founder of Archigram

“ENIGMATICALLY BEAUTIFUL...RESISTS TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL EXPLANATION...COY Howard's ‘The Thickening of Time’ seduces us with his ‘felt-rather-than-thought’ work... filled with strange suggestions and littered with the playfully unexpected, engendering a rich phenomenal presence...reflects his 40 years of research into the essential psychological processes of a deep and resonant architectural experience.”

—Thom Mayne

2005 Pritzker Prize Winner

2013 AIA Gold Medalist

Founder of Morphosis Architects

“THIS IS A BOOK ON ARCHITECTURE WHERE THE SUBJECTIVE IS DEAD SERIOUS...AT a time when far too much architecture is too literal...a much needed and pure celebration of the power of the subjective.”

—Steven Holl

2012 AIA Gold Medalist

**“SUBLIME!**

With the images in this book, Coy Howard has elaborated a sublime possibility of what architecture should be – incomplete, enigmatic, and mysterious. As visual synecdoche of architectural experience, the images, dramatically framed, enlarge our engagement, making us all detectives following clues, conjuring a closure that never comes.

I celebrate this new tradition of the liberated image.

The best architecture is never complete, its voice is silence.”

**—Hernan Diaz Alonso**

**2015 Incoming Director of Southern California Institute of Architecture**

**2012 AIA Educator of the Year**

**“IF THE WHIR OF THE MACHINE HAS STOLEN YOUR SOUL, THIS BOOK WILL RESCUE IT.** While design has become increasingly automated, Coy Howard’s work allows us to enjoy rigor with generous spirituality. ‘The Thickening of Time’ is enormously seductive, a rare view of Howard’s work, presenting meaningful places framed with nuanced imagery and critical text. It is the most recent survey of a singular and influential author who has continued for nearly 40 years to enliven my kinship with design, architecture, and living things.”

**—Craig Dykers,**

**Co-Founder and Principal of Snohetta**

**“COY HOWARD’S NEW BOOK ‘THE THICKENING OF TIME’ IS A PROVOCATION AND AN** ambition intended to turn our attention to the real. Or, back to the real, depending on our disposition. Indeed, one could say that this has always been Howard’s ambition. But something has changed in architecture, and in Howard’s work since his arrival in Los Angeles some four decades ago. Architects and critics of architecture no longer view the phenomenological and purely aesthetic aspirations of architects like Howard as naïve. Indeed, architects and critics have awakened from the semiotic slumber of post-modernism and the demands it placed on meaning and intellection, and today welcome the real, whether expressed as affect or object. While works like Howard’s ‘Daniel Studio’ (1980) and ‘Palmer Eckard Condominium’ (1979), recently exhibited at SCI-Arc, express their phenomenological, and therefore realistic, ambitions, through a thickened, almost painterly medium, this new book makes use of exquisite, digital compositions to thicken the materiality of time itself. Memory, association, perception—all become the new ‘material’ that Howard manipulates in this unexpected turn toward the digital as a means to conjure the real. There is a lesson in Howard’s work for us all, but it is one we will only learn when we see that Coy Howard has not awakened, like many of us, to proclaim the need to return to the real. And that is because he was never asleep.”

**—Michael Speaks, Ph.D.**

**Dean and Professor, School of Architecture, Syracuse University**

**“COY HOWARD’S LUSH NOCTURNAL VISIONS SEEM CONJURED AS CONSCIOUSNESS** collapses with the dreamy onrush of tangible fragments, retinal impulses, and unfathomable icons.”

**—Michael Cadwell**

**Director, Knowlton School of Architecture, Ohio State University**

**Author, “Strange Details,” MIT Press**

**“THERE IS A CERTAIN BEETLE, THE STERNOCERA AEQUISIGNATA THAT HAS A** shell that is exquisitely beautiful. It is metallic green – delicate, brittle, and iridescent. Indigenous people in Southeast Asia have used this shell for adornment. And it is said that the women would keep these beetles as pets and at times wear them as living jewels with tiny chains around their bodies to keep them in place.

In his book, ‘The Thickening of Time,’ the work of Coy Howard reminds me of these beetle shells.

This work is at once very, very beautiful and also deeply and purposefully strange.

There is a blurred sense of scale – the detail is also the whole.

These images are slightly menacing even as they entice. And when you hold the book in your hands you feel the frisson of seduction overlaid with danger.”

—**Billie Tsien**

**Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects**

**National Medal of Arts, William and Tsien 2013**

**AIA Architecture Firm Award, Tod Williams Billie Tsien 2013**

“WITH THE ADVENT OF COMPUTATION, THE LAST TWO DECADES HAVE DONE MUCH to dethrone platforms of representation in lieu of simulation, new protocols of fabrication, and approaches to the generation of form that offer critical alternatives to classical modes of composition. At the same time, the commercial world has internalized the digital platform for its own motivations, radicalizing its visual virtuosity, and making a ‘real’ that acts as an uncanny avatar for the materiality of architecture itself. The alignment between this and the facile dissemination of images is no coincidence, where the flow of high and low culture get interwoven in a more complex potion than ever before: between critical awards and people’s choices, between smut and sexting, and Facebook and Architizer—all contribute to an unprecedented scenario where the curation of information is as much part of the hardship of reading as the difficulty of intellectually internalizing complex matter.

It is in the precise context that the drawings of Howard, in *The Thickening of Time*, that the role of the image requires a new appraisal. There is no appeal here to the computational processes that activate much of the debate today, and it is a welcomed swing back to a challenge to representation as the main agency of the architect’s intellectual craft. The ‘real’ of Howard paints a pixilated image so refined that it not only blurs the boundary between the actual and the fictional, but it interrogates it, challenges it, and speculates within it. Unfazed by the panic of commercial acceptance, nor the arms race of construction, *The Thickening of Time* is to the image what slow food is to culinary speculation; the digital image is not so much an illustration of the world to come, but is the space of investigation itself. In a world dominated by the culture of Photoshop, Howard instead targets the technical apparatus of the station point, picture plane, depth of field, and the medium of light to construct a new discipline around the edifice of the architectural image; in turn, he lovingly exploits this new terrain as the site of play, scrutiny and invention.”

—**Nader Tehrani**

**Principal of NADAAA**

**NADAAA ranked number one design firm in the United States by Architect Magazine, 2013 and 2014**

**Professor of Architecture, MIT**

“THIS IS A BOOK OF SILENT MUSIC: THE SENSUOUS AND MAGNIFICENT IMAGES ARE A SYMPHONY of colors, shapes, textures, melodies, and harmonies. These images sing of solitary yet extremely seductive spaces - spaces that reflect on human presence, spaces that encapsulate shadows of time.”

—**Lei Liang**

**Composer**

**Professor of Music, University of California, San Diego**

**2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music Finalist**

“THIS IS A BOOK THAT ONE MUST VIEW REPEATEDLY, SLOWLY PAGE BY PAGE. FOR THE architecture is neither contemporary, nor traditional, nor modern. By denying such preconditioned assumptions and expectations we are left with a singular experience – an experience that rewards an investment of time. With each encounter “*The Thickening of Time*” peels back another layer - revealing a deeper series of insights and connections.”

—**Edward Ford**

**Professor of Architecture, University of Virginia**

**Author of *The Architectural Detail***

"THERE ARE NOT MANY BOOKS THAT I KEEP ON MY DESK TO JUST PICK UP AND ENJOY EITHER FOR the language or the visual components. 'The Thickening of Time' is definitely one of them. Only by viewing carefully and by examining them many times over can one begin to understand the spatial relationships between the images. And those discoveries make the images even more beautiful. I know I will enjoy looking at the images for a long time."

—Wim de Wit

**Adjunct Curator of Architecture and Design, Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University  
Formerly Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, The Getty Center**

"THE SERVICE OF SPECULATIVE CULTURE TOWARDS THE HUMAN SPIRIT IS TO ROUSE, TO STARTLE it to a life of constant and eager observation"

—Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, 1873

"PATER GOT IT RIGHT, AS HAS COY HOWARD IN HIS BOOK 'THE THICKENING OF TIME.'

In March 2010 I had the pleasure of presenting Coy Howard's exhibition 'From Hand to Mouse, From Furniture to Architecture' at Los Angeles Harbor College. This exhibit, the most well attended in the gallery's history, was most certainly the genesis of this provocative, imaginative and importantly confounding book.

As an abstract painter and curator, I'm in the business of constructing, deconstructing, coding and decoding both image and text. The critique of painting emphasizes the delicate balance between cerebral and visceral, concept and technique, tranquility and intensity, time and space. 'Thickening,' with its finely wrought and highly seductive images, startles on all levels and most importantly rouses us to a new model for re-thinking of architectural possibilities."

—Ron Linden

**Professor of Art, Los Angeles Harbor College  
Gallery Director, Los Angeles Harbor College**

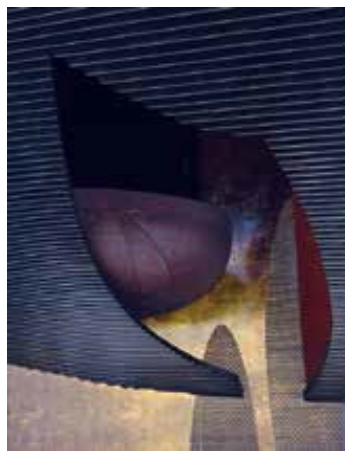
"WHAT TO MAKE OF THE METICULOUSLY AND YET NEVERTHELESS ELUSIVELY REALIZED IMAGES in Coy Howard's *The Thickening of Time*? A defense of architecture as experience perhaps? These aggravatingly enticing utopian visions are perhaps a critique from within of the seductive 'reality' of digital imagery employed by the contemporary profession. Or perhaps, they are a critique from without of the emaciated experiences engendered by contemporary architecture built for 99% of the populace. And yet, perhaps intentionally both... these images in their offering up of spatial, formal, and material riches are evocations of an alternate universe, enjoyably mysterious and available to all."

—Robert McCarter

**Ruth and Norman Moore Professor of Architecture  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Author of many seminal books on major architects from Frank Lloyd Wright to Steven Holl**

*Coy Howard: Mystery Man*

Coy Howard's new book evinces the potentiality of digital architecture, evoking an amorphous sense of place over representation.



(L to R) *Amber Villa*, *Red Villa*, *Pink and Yellow Villa*



The magical images captured on the pages of [\*The Thickening of Time\*](#) mark the much-delayed and nearly mythical emergence from obscurity of its author, architect Coy Howard. And much like the man himself, it presents its images cloaked in enigmatic vistas, peculiar attitudes, and piercing pictorial conundrums. This is *not* a book about architecture. This *is* a book about *Architecture*. This is *not* a book about *Architecture*, but it *is* a book about *Architecture* that resonates with architecture's romance with opulence, obfuscation, and metaphor. Howard's elaborate production techniques, attention to minute detail, and image density must have been quite a workout for the multiple programs one imagines he must employ. Yet the images—haunting, darkly glistening, otherworldly—are presented as documentary evidence of an imaginary, yet realistic environment.

Howard, whose long tenure at SCI-Arc has been marked by an unorthodox teaching style, has mesmerized students for nearly 20 years. His emphasis on traditional skills, personal vision, and artistic rigor is legendary, and from the evidence of this book, well-deserved. The images within are simply extraordinary. They exude sophistication, erudition, and a finely honed architectural sensibility, in spite of their *tromp l'oeil* optical effects.

Take this one. *Look hard*. That thin line far away bisecting the frame. *Look closer*. It is a finely detailed railroad track with an even more finely detailed miniature train running along the intersection of floor and baseboard. I won't hazard a guess as to what it's doing there, and I'm guessing that Howard would not ask me that question. But I am convinced that *he* knows why it's there.

Therein lies the essence of these highly controlled, hermetically sealed images.

The objects portrayed in the images—furnishings, somewhat fetishized surfaces, etc.—often refer to the actualized, functional furniture which Howard has developed for a suite of rarified architectural projects. Drawing from mostly classical sources, Howard has given a great deal of thought to the transition between, say, a cast-in-bronze detail and its carved wood receptacle. The polished results transcend mere cabinetwork and take their place alongside the extraordinary fabrications of Bugatti, Moretti, Mollino (especially), and Gaudi. These pieces, beautifully photographed and achingly detailed, form the core of Howard's architectural imagination, which, with its insistence on rigor, succeeds in joining fantasy and practice without, on the whole, sacrificing the one to the other.

His argument, insofar as he is willing to articulate it, is that "the full meaning of work that is intended as aesthetic experience is beyond explanation." Jeffrey Kipnis, who penned an introduction, compares the images to the sensations imparted by an exceptional cognac, which must be savored, but never swallowed.

It is we, the architects, who are frustrated by the ambiguity of the images. After centuries, eons even, of architectural representation, we who pass our professional lives parading renderings that purport to show a completed building are baffled, even angered by images that tease but refuse to reveal much. Yet it would be a blunder to demand the full monty if it meant giving up the dark rewards of Howard's imagery.

Those images, wrought by a wicked mash-up of the hand, the eye, and the mouse, defy any effort to reverse-engineer their creation. Dot for dot and pixel for pixel they proclaim their origin as documentary evidence. Yet by their implausible point of view, their visceral texture, and their mini-Wagnerian scale, they are more painterly than Maya-ish, far more lavish than Rhino. One thinks of the exquisite draftsmanship of Dali (minus the surrealism), or the sleek surfaces of Vermeer (minus the princelings). A rival might exist in the drawings of Syd Mead (minus the Sci-Fi), but certainly not even remotely in the architect's canon of Lebbeus Woods, Carlos Diniz, or Steven Holl. In mood, in temper, they are more Munch than Giger, more somber than headstones.

This is a big, sumptuous book, suited to pride-of-place on the coffee table or in the study. I am not a fan of such, having been on the wrong side in published comments in this very rag, but, frankly, I'm on the fence about this one. The content, which my personal philosophy would find dangerously indulgent, even decadent, is so clearly a work of passion, rather than conspicuous consumption, that I'm inclined to agree with its presentation in kind. Should still another gilded age lie ahead, Howard's work should, and probably would, be held in a kind of reverent awe that such a physical work might be produced in our *cyber-uber-alles* era. And yet... and yet...

—Craig Hodgetts, *The Architect's Newspaper*, 5/18/2015

Craig Hodgetts is a principal at Hodgetts + Fung in Culver City, California