not but recall the excitement and conscious audacity of our earlier Archigram rallies and the recognition that they in turn made towards the inherited audacities and battle cries of the Smithsons in the ’50s, CIAM in the ’30s, BrunO Taut or the Constructivists in the ’20s. But my instinctive gut feelings were confirmed in both cities by conversations with students who seriously admired the relentless achievement and growing sureness that accompanied the increasing naughtiness of the architecture. A bridge between the so different worlds of the late ’50s and the minimalist ’60s had been made and even consolidated in their work. The passing of time had added to their vocabulary of forms and tricks and had bred their own three-dimensional excitement of wings and diagrams—but a spirit ran through from then to now—a spirit upon an attack—a thrust forward, again and again a thrust into and about space. We were reminded that architecture is essentially to do with STUFF—not, thank goodness, semantics, semiotics, supplications or syllogisms.

Some months earlier, another, dual, event had announced, by its own simultaneity as much as anything, a rustle of wings in the architectural nest. Zaha Hadid had won the ‘Peak’ competition and Bernard Tschumi had won ‘a Ville’. Both with schemes of great verve and thrust, great confidence and a reaching out into space. The subsequent history of architecture—whether or not they got built could never be the same. An immediate sign-off was a feeling of elation amongst their friends and some students, who knew that these schemes were no flashes in the pan, but a recognition point in years of increasingly dynamic work. Hints of Hadid’s talent could have been been seen in her contribution to OMA’s Amsterdam City Hall, artistic flair in her Dublin Prime Minister’s House and sheer elation in her Belgravia apartment proposal. In a different way, Tschumi had long fascinated us, and by the time of his ‘Manhattan Transcripts’ he had offered a real challenge to our ideas about architectural dynamic: ‘The accident of murder . . . they had forgot out of the Park—quick . . . THE PARK’, ‘Possessed by a woman who was beautiful to look at but lethal to live THE STREET . . . ’ The elevator ride had turned into a chilling contest with violent death . . . THE TOWER . . . With its loose yards and its ruthless frames . . . where everything you want belongs to somebody else, and the only way to it is illegal, immoral or deadly . . . THE BLOCK’. Seeing his imagery holography with the human analogies, you realized that the whole morphoscape of urban architecture was being twisted, threatened, violated. The reality of the Parc de la Villette has come more like a freeze-frame in his equally dynamic architecture.

The subsequent months have seen the results of this recognition and an acceleration of a spatial architecture that is now surely pushing away the banner of the yuppie-pastel styles that has pervaded much of the United States and Northern Europe in recent years with its general sense of composure and flatness as it rests amongst the Berlin IBA or the fashionable backyards for cocktail drinking or child-playing (and just about everything in between in every city from Oslo to Mumbai)—and it was bound to crack open eventually. Some of us had begun to despair—for the well-developed method of brochures and stressering (misquoting at serious books and manifestations) had flooded most of the streets. Of course in Justus Kolbach there had been grumbles: ‘We’ve seen enough of the Americans’ said our own AA students—and of that at the almost unbelievable happened in the summer of ’84: a Michael Graves audience of 300 melt to 100 after the first hour, through sheer boredom. In any alternative to watching the cracks appear at the traffic junctions of New York, London or Berlin would be to peer at the barest hills, unknown plains, hidden valleys where original work has always been captured . . . for instance, where the smell of the Balkans results in an ultimate refusal to be intimidated by the sophistication and arrogance of Vienna and a bevy of strange architects has continued to breed. In the ’60s, the rivalry between Raimund Abraham, Friedrich St Florian, Günther Domagk (and ?) and Elfi Friedl-Huth gave impetus to their megastructures, inflatables, flying machines and respective diversions into beautiful atmospheric monuments, holograms, or animal buildings. The second generation of Heinz Georgens, Helmut Richter, Michael Szyszkowitz, Karla Konwalski and Volker Glienke seems equally talented . . . with a third generation of spatialists chasing them. There is a certain raw edge to the Grin work, a refusal to be forced into good manners which runs past the obvious sharing of free-form (and I am trying to avoid the term ‘Expressionism’).

In this region it has much to do with being surrounded by mountains, the consciousness of burning rocks, trapping streams, and the honing of forest timbers. Looking at their buildings one can almost imagine Szyszkowitz and Kowalski as a Titan couple wrestling with the landscape and having it and twisting it into shelter—hardly restrained by that series of sophistries known elsewhere as ‘architectural manners’. I am reminded of a parallel distinct in America which caused the more furtive parts of the midwest to be a natural context for ‘organic’, ‘craft’, ‘eclectic’ and finally ‘alternative’ architecture. In a longer analysis it would be fascinating to compare the psychological freedom that this might have offered to Bruce Goff, Buckminster Fuller, Paolo Soleri—alongside Günther Domagk. All their work is ultimately sophisticated, thoughtful and intricate yet none of them are city boys. Certainly, in his lectures, Domagk makes plenty of references to the natural landscape of his own Styrian valley and its surrounding mountains and, in particular, uses this to introduce his three or four year thinking that will soon lead to the building of his own Great House. On closer inspection however, one notices how much sharper and more aggressive are the more recent drawings of this project: how much more demanding it will be of its materials and details: how much more vicious and ‘international’ is its thrust than in his earlier work. Somehow, he is speaking back to Zaha Hadid and Co-op Himmelblau . . . the younger ‘townies’ . . . ‘take a peep down the valley, kids . . . that’s where it’ll happen’—and he is even willing to flood part of the building in order to grasp further with the elements of the structure then re-emerging from within the flood, shades of Captain Nemo at the in the ‘Nautlius’—often, incidentally, quoted by Archigram since it seemed to embody at once the idea of the architect as mad scientist, as musician and romantic, as possessor of both the mysterious cathedral and the ultimate world-conquering vehicle. In this time, universalism remains one of the most fascinating figures in our story and throws light upon the vexed question of suppression and in a late twentieth-century architecture, in the manner of things hierarchical and European, it seemed acceptable to the Viennese that Domagk could bear away expressionalism back in the hills.