9. The Deconstruction of the Axis
   Daniel Libeskind, Jewish Museum, 1989-1999
“Krauss’s discussion of the index drew on the distinctions between icon, symbol, and index first put forward by C.S. Pierce. If, for Peirce, an icon had a visual likeness to its object and a symbol had an agreed upon or conventional meaning, then an index was a trace or record of an actual event or a process.”

C.S. Pierce’s categories of signs
Icon – visual and formal similitude
Symbol – cultural meaning
Index – prior activity
“The index displaces the movement outward of both the icon and the symbol to a signified, while referring inwardly to its own processes.”

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What is the relationship between the “footprints in the sand” and index?

“But, most important for architecture, the index is also closely tied to the issue of presence and absence.”
What ‘registers of an index as both imprint and trace’ do the images above imply?

“The index, Krauss describes, ‘establishes its meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to its referent.’ The footprints are the trace of a previous presence, yet also reconrdrd the current absence of that presence.”
Discuss the first statement below using the images above.

“Another component of the footprint as index is its notation of time…The idea of presence and absence suggests a significant difference between an idea of an index or trace in a linguistic or photographic context, and an index in a physical context like architecture.”
Metaphysics: the theoretical or first principles of a particular discipline – a priori speculation upon questions that are unanswerable to scientific observation, analysis, or experiment.

“Krauss suggests that language presents us with an historical framework which preexists its own being, and therefore joins language to a metaphysics.”

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“...the idea of the index in architecture seeks to undermine the idea that its language is a decideable physical presence with a one-to-one relationship to a signified...Thus an index in architecture attempts to deny pure presence by presenting a condition of absence in presence.”
“Krauss describes the index as the mute presence of an uncoded event. She cites Gordon Matta-Clark, whose cutting of holes in floors and facades of buildings creates the ultimate icon for indexical architecture.”
“Krauss describes these cuts as akin to the linguistic shifter...a term in linguistics which is filled with signification only because it is empty. A word like this, as in this table or this chair...”
“The cut in Matta-Clark’s work becomes an empty sign of an event, a trace of someone’s having cut into the building.”
How does the cut empty the house of metaphysical content?
How do the cuts become a more literal presence than metaphysical?

“The cut also empties the metaphysical content of the house because the house is no longer functioning as a house.”
Discuss the quote below using the images above.

“The logic of such indexical signs seeks to undermine the iconic and symbolic, yet the index can easily be transformed into an icon of its own indexicality.”

Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting, 1974
“Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin…engages the index as a critique of architectural persistencies, in particular that of linear axially, which can be considered fundamental to Cartesian and classical space.”
Daniel Libeskind, Micromegas, Time Sections, 1978

How does the above drawing question Cartesian space?

“Libeskind’s indexical work begins with his 1978 Micromegas drawings, a series of lines that attempt to question Cartesian space.”
“If all sites contain axes, and if site specificity is an idea relating a particular building to a site, then all buildings contain axes which relate building to the subject’s movement through it… Libeskind…offers a critique of axiality, site specificity, and ultimately the classical subject/object relationship.”
“One of the dominant persistencies of architecture is the traditional movement of the subject from the entry of a building through its major spaces, which are typically perceived through symmetrical sequences…but to deny the idea of the subject’s understanding of space through Cartesian coordinates is to challenge one of the persistencies of architecture.”
"The ground level of Le Corbusier’s Unite provide an axial space defined by pairs of massive pilotis."

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“…these symmetries identify the path of the subject in much the same way as in a Palladian villa, the symmetry of columns providing a simple geometric means of recognition...make the time of the subject’s movement and the time of the object the same.”
“Libeskind’s *Line of Fire* project does just that by disrupting the possibility of axial movement around and through the Unite’s pilotis.”
"The zigzagging form of his installation denies the idea of an axis, both as a real pathway and as a concept of an axis of symmetry."

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How does the *Line of Fire* project differentiate the time of the subject’s movement and the time of the object?

“*When the installation was placed in an architectural context it disrupted the metaphysical idea of an axis...creating a disjunction in time and a dislocation in space.*”
“Libeskind’s installation suggests that this axis is not a pure and continuous vector, but one that may be modified by historical circumstances – in this case referring to the destinations of deported Jews in Nazi Germany.”

Deported Jews
“Libeskind...questions the relationship of the time of the object to the time of the subject... This is the central issue of Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, which is one of the first real evocations of an attempt to deny the continuity of the axial path to the object of architecture.”
Why does Eisenman make the statement below?

“The Jewish Museum in Berlin in one sense is itself a repetition, a trace and an index of the Line of Fire exhibition.”
“It could be argued then that the axially challenged by *Line of Fire* is displaced again, this time rotated in its context to produce the Berlin project.”
“Libeskind’s own argument that the Berlin project represents the fragmentation of a Jewish star, or is an index of the points in Berlin where the Jews were transported out of the city, has little to do with the argument here and its relation to Line of Fire.”

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“While Libeskind will always claim (symbolic resonance in his rhetoric)…the correspondence in form between the Jewish Museum and the *Line of Fire* seems to suggest other interpretations.”

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“In addition to the zigzagging form of the museum disrupting the x-axis, the walls were canted at various angles so that the vertical y-axis was similarly challenged.”

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“...in both the models of the project and in the realized building there remains a trace in the roof of the continuous axial path that is disjuncted, first by the angled body of the museum, and next by the actual inaccessible void which extends down to the floors from the roof terrace, denying any continuity along the x-axis.”
“The facades are already marked by indexical cuts similar to Matta-Clark’s, which articulate apertures in a building in a radically different manner from the conventional relationship of windows to their respective interiors.”
These cuts recall the lines in Micromegas, and shift the role of the window from function to indexical marker.
“The cuts work in a similar way to the openings in the sloping wall of Le Corbusier’s chapel at Ronchamp in that they relate to an implied vertical datum. Ronchamp is successful in that its sloped wall and its cut-outs play against an implied but nonexistent vertical plane.”
How does Eisenman explain the ‘random’ windows as being indexical?

“There is nothing more indexical in plan and elevation than the random, arbitrary cuts throughout the museum.”
“...the cuts still challenge the traditional use of windows for orientation, for the narrow cuts of light produce a strong contrast with the museum’s dark walls; the cuts create what in painting is called a halation, which causes the light to produce an after-image on the retina - in other words, an index of perception on the eye itself.”
“Thus, again the cuts become indexical, not so much of the political/historical narratives articulated by Libeskind as of the act of cutting itself.”
“Circulation plays a key role in a critique of the need to understand space through movement. The stairs of the museum do not provide connection, but in one sense function to interrupt continuous movement.”
“It is important to understand that one cannot follow a horizontal route, nor remain at a horizontal level when moving through the museum. The subject’s movement along a Cartesian conceptual axis is interrupted, as is the ability to remain on a single comprehensible horizontal datum.”
“Rather, the horizontal axis must be traversed through a sequence of interrupted levels, as stairs and ramps move the subject across the series of voids enclosed in the museum. Such disruptions frustrate programmatic and formal expectations, but more importantly separate the time of the experience of space from the comprehension of its organization.”
“The sequence of incaccessible voids at the center of the museum, while variously described in terms of poetic resonance, can also be interpreted as a continuation of Libeskind’s critique of Cartesian axially.”

Libeskind, Jewish Museum
“The visual parameters of what is being seen do not produce an overall image or gestalt, but produce something that is difficult to extrapolate from the experience of the building.”
“Ultimately Libeskind’s museum is a struggle between the indexicality of the building and the symbolic resonance of the rhetoric.”
Later projects suggest that the symbolic predominates over the indexical and diagrammatic nature of the earlier work. The new work becomes more open to expressionist gestures that move it closer to an iconic project, no longer requiring the close reading of indexical traces.