

Pompeii is both an indexical sign and an architectural and archaeological archive. In his discussion of the relation between index and archive with which he concludes his book *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida invokes Wilhelm Jensen's novella *Gradiva*. Jensen's story tells of a young archaeologist fascinated by an antique relief of a woman stepping forward. He becomes obsessed by the question of whether the woman's gait depicted in the carving could have been drawn from life, or whether it was entirely the invention of the artist. He searches for Gradiva's ambulatory manner among women passers-by in the streets of the town where he lives, but without success. As obsession becomes delirium his search becomes a quest for Gradiva herself. He dreams that he sees her at the moment of her death, engulfed by the ancient eruption which destroyed Pompeii, and travels to the ruined city to seek some trace of her. Jensen writes: "with her peculiar gait she must have left behind an imprint of her toes in the ashes distinct from all the rest." In his commentary, Derrida speaks of "the impression and the imprint, . . . the pressure and its trace in the unique instant where they are not yet distinguished the one from the other."³ This is the instant of a photographic exposure. More generally, it exemplifies the "subjectile" as construed by Derrida from the writings of Antonin Artaud.⁴ Derrida gives the example of a work by Artaud in which, "with the aid a match, Artaud opens holes in the paper, and the traces of burning perforation are part of a work in which it is impossible to distinguish between the subject of the representation and the support of this subject, in the layers of the material, between that which is above and that which is below, and thus between the subject and its outside . . ."⁵

Inadvertently anticipating a precept of architectural modernism, the ruin questions the distinction between interior and exterior, between public and private. The mid-eighteenth century excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum prompted both a renewed fascination for the ruin, and the neoclassical revival. In the archive at the CCA, an institution with a historical association with Mies van der Rohe, I think of Mies' German Pavilion for the 1929 International Exhibition in Barcelona. Mies van der Rohe visited Pompeii in 1911, and it is not so very far from there to this pavilion where ruin and neoclassicism combine. Demolished in 1930, the German Pavilion was reconstructed in 1986 only after a long and arduous work of archival research and archaeology. The archive failed to render the precise profile and dimensions of the pavilion's cruciform columns, but these were determined when a rusting stump of pillar was unearthed during the excavation of the site of the original building. In Phillip K. Dick's novel *Martian Time-Slip* there is a ten-year-old boy whose apparently autistic withdrawal from the world has led to his confinement in a mental institution.⁶ We learn that the space-time he inhabits is different from that occupied by those around him: where they see the present, he sees a palimpsest of present and future. What they are planning to construct, he sees as already in ruins. We are

³ Derrida 1995 (see note 1), p. 99.

⁴ Paul Thévenin and Jacques Derrida, *Antonin Artaud—Dessins et portraits* (Paris, 1986). The 1978 edition of the *Petit Robert* dictionary defines the *subjectile* as a "surface serving as support (wall, panel, canvas) for a painting." Derrida, however, notes that this is not how the term functions for Artaud, for whom the *subjectile* is that which lies "between the surfaces of the subject and the object" (Thévenin and Derrida 1986, p. 79). The *subjectile* is a "solidified interval" between "visible and invisible, before and behind, this side and that," the place where may be traced "the trajectories of the *objective*, the *subjective*, the *projectile*, of the *introjection*, the *interjection*, the *objection*, of *dejection*, and *abjection*, etc" (Ibid., p. 63).

⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶ Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip* (New York, 1964).