17° 00' N, 25° 03' E
Antiparos, Greece
Take a half-day ferry ride southeast out of Athens to Paros, then a short trip across the Amfiteio strait and you will land on Antiparos, a hardscrabble Cycladic island that in 1981 was the unlikely site of a project by Elia Zenghelis, then of the fledgling Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Without the bigness or urban complexity that the firm had up to that point harnessed with vitality in its projects and drawings, the design and placement of 16 villas on the island begged the creation of some sort of fabric from the ground up; the site a blank canvas awaiting its first brushstrokes. In painter Zoe Zenghelis's oil-on-paper rendering of the project, 16 delicate shapes are scattered like confetti across an unearthly ground, barely hinting at the underlying composition by which the villas are arranged. Such a technique of representation led to what the architect today would call an emblematic image: a visual presentation that illustrates “architectural form juxtaposed with programmatic idealism” and “highlights the ideological features without relinquishing the real-life concreteness of a project.” The project was not realized, but its image and idea endure.
"#hashtag"

# is rapidly becoming the first letter of your name, your home city, and every retrievable detail of your existence, whether you write it or not. As a keystroke it neither means nor adds anything, and yet the hashtag restructures all language – or what is left of it. Its crossing marks a gathering of scattered strings and phrases to bind and suspend while all else melts into air. Hashtag is the square that keeps reaching – lines run past an empty core, transgress all bounds – a pure remainder drawn by flows. Its emptiness is the very emblem of power and the stage for the rest of history.

After the death of the Sovereign (it is we who killed him), no body, human or divine, could collapse in itself the totality of the state. The Leviathan had been slain, indeed hashed to bits. The commonwealth required a new device to bind together the many and the one. As computing progressed, the people found its outer form in an unlikely symbol from medieval cartography: the octothorp, a village of eight fields around a square.¹ In the ASCII scheme, its inner form assumed a unique string of eight bits, a rhythmic ticking of silent zeroes and voiced ones reading 00100011. Strangely, when tapped out, # is the unmistakable backbeat of rock and roll whirring at inaudible frequencies on mid-century hard disks. #RollOverBeethoven

Invisible substructures encode the hashtag in different ways (35, 23, 47, 00100011, and # for decimal, hexadecimal, octal, binary, and graph), but however you slice it or dice it, it's all SHIFT+. No matter the language employed, a universal sequence of code places the hashtag third among all printable characters, just after ! and " but before $ and %. In practice, exclamation and quotation marks typically follow the hashtag rather than precede it, whereas dollar and percent surely bracket it on either end, as social media share prices confirm. While philosophers have long squabbled over the primacy of individual versus the collective, few successfully predicted that the big money was hidden in the artful inventions that could flutter between them. And while octagonal trading pits remain atwitter, most trading today happens
2. Arie Gosselain, Versailles and the
Mechanics of Power: The Subjugation of
Circus Art Etage (Rotterdam: OIO Publishers,
2001), 74–77. This effect of geospatial
domination was considerably heightened
by the mirrors in the Grand Salon, a flat
screen of glass upon which the image of
reality was continually updated, then the
largest of its kind on the globe.
4. Margaret B. Farrar, Building the Body
Politics: Power and Urban Space in Washington,
D.C. (Urbana and Chicago: University of
5. Claude Lefort, Democracy and Political
Theory (Minneapolis: University of

precisely nowhere, dematerialized in sublime exchanges of
global currency and bitcoin (where accepted).

How then is the space of power to be constructed? The
petitcin Le Nôtre scored the earth with anamorphic cuts to
engineer a victory over the horizon for Louis XIV; infinity
telescoped within the royal gaze, however briefly. In the
New World, L’Enfant borrowed this same principle to
buttress the yet unresolved experiment of self-governance,
but in this instance the strategy proved ineffectual and largely
symbolic, although suitable for cannon fire. Sites of history
no longer need such geometric convergence in order to link to
all points of reference. In a parallel Copernican revolution,
radiant networks have lost their centers and now interface: the
hashtag has replaced Versailles. When Claude Lefort proposed
that “the locus of power becomes an empty place,” he could
not have meant anything but this vacant square, even in 1988,
a year before Tiananmen. The truth ineluctably rushed in:
Tahrir, Taksim, Occupy. A gridlock of pent-up movement,
pounding on the walls and streets and signs, shouting in
eight-bit characters.

The hashtag is the suture for that disarticulated corpse, the
delivered body named the 99%. It unites us. Like the ubiquitous
etiquette of brim-tapping one’s fedora in postwar days, we
always tag our tweets before they go out in public. It is a sign
in the proverbial street that flashes in your breast pocket
midstride to cleave all events into before and after. You start
running through an intersection, not looking to either side,
moving directly toward (or away from) the square. The
square image of a crowd photographing itself alights on a
screen and captures the first people to drop to the ground as
a protester with a firearm hits send. Pixelated and amateur,
Walter Benjamin’s history of the victors is being rewritten
illegitimately, one camera phone at a time — that is, if it can
resist total dissolution. Tagging is a delicate art upon which
the very persistence of history may depend.

As we turn to gaze back, what vision remains? Tear gas
wafts from the cleared-out center. Linear barricades of riot
police form its edges. Discarded banners crisscross in multiple
directions, their ideologies intersecting across the marked
earth, shrouding the dead. The photo is square, the color
sepia red. The signal, weak but sufficient. At any rate, the
message will generate its own reception. Hashtagged, it finds
you, moves through you, animating digits as it ripples across
your personal periphery to touch every name, in every city,
whether you write it or not.