It seems to me that there is no way to camouflage the inability to speak about architecture coherently or from the beginning. The notion of an original point of departure, which presupposes a past, is in itself doubtful, because the past has never been experienced as being present. So I would rather skip the beginnings altogether and go straight to the middle, which in my case is the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum. But first I want to try to explain something about time—not only historical time, time in architecture, but also the time we are now living in. I came to the conclusion a while ago that when one is looking at time, looking at history, nothing seems to have taken place. One realizes that when one is looking at time, time is not playing along, time is not visible, so to speak, because one is looking for it. But then the minute you do not look for time you are transformed by it: suddenly it just happens overnight, so to speak, or between the drawings, or in between the works, that one has been completely transformed.

Thus, to speak about architecture (or to speak about Berlin and about the contemporary situation) is to speak about the paradigm of the irrational. In my view, the best works of the contemporary spirit come from the irrational, while what prevails in the world, what dominates and often kills, does so always in the name of Reason. The irrational as a nonbeginning of this project was my starting point. Berlin is not only a physical place, but also something in the mind, something belonging to a past which never was present. A spiritual reality that makes itself immediately comprehensible to
everyone in the world. We all know John F. Kennedy's statement "I am a Berliner"; but it occurs to me that not only is everyone a Berliner, but after the tragic and disastrous consequences of the Holocaust and its impact on Modernity, everyone is also a survivor. Everyone who witnessed these ultimate events is also a survivor, so one cannot die the death of an offering anymore.

The rabbis and the commentaries on the Talmud sometimes say that God created the world out of nothing, a something out of nothing, and that it is the responsibility of the faithful to try to extract from this something the creative nothingness from which it came. Now this obviously involves one in something irrational from the very beginning because I cannot tell you how "nothing" started. But I can tell you the three elements that interested me about the project of the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum.

I started by trying to plot a hexagonal figure; I don’t know why. In a way it sounds very kitschy, the star of David; it is such a cliché. Around the site on Lindenstrasse there lived so many famous Germans, and many famous Jews. Jews, Germans, all Berliners, people who formed the culture we know as "Berlin." I went about trying to find out the addresses of Berliners like Kleist, Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Mies van der Rohe, but also of more contemporary Berliners like Schönberg, Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin. Of course, where they lived is not significant for the pattern of the city; it is not important where those anonymous addresses were; but nevertheless I found them. I then tried to make a connection between those who were the carriers of the spiritual entity of Berlin as an emblem, and I ended up with a kind of distorted hexagonal set of lines. It was a framework: I did not want to begin with a grid, or with a square or a module, but I had to start somewhere in the nowhere. This rather irrational set of lines forms a nexus that links up certain anonymous places in Berlin, both East and West. But it is also a series of connections between unreal places and real people. That is one dimension; let’s call it the architectonic dimension, the irrational invisible matrix, of the project.

The second dimension of the project is a musical dimension. I have long been fascinated by Schönberg’s unfinished opera Moses and Aaron. What now interested me about the work was not only that it had twelve letters in the title (Moses and Aaron) and all its other serial aspects, but also the fact that Schönberg started it in Berlin, but could not finish it. Only acts I and II were composed. It is not only that he had no inspiration, so to speak, to complete act III but also the whole musical structure had ground to a halt, erasing the possibility of continuing in the operatic mode. It intrigued me that such a genius, an incredible intellect, and a great composer, was unable to complete act III. So I got out my records and started reading the libretto. Then I became aware that the opera really deals with the Berlin Museum. It was