



VORKURS

RITUALS Volume 07



VORKURS is the publication for the University of Florida's Graduate School of Architecture. Founded in August 2015, it developed as an ode to the Bauhaus foundation course of the same name and aims to question outside parties, both academics and professionals, in order to instill the ideas of the school's graduate students and faculty into the larger discourse of architecture. It does this through three lenses: **pedagogy, the transition from academia to practice, and the future of the profession.**

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REFLECTIONS



VORKURS: rituals examines the repetitive processes that shape our worldly experience in the past, present, and future state. Ritualistic operations like layering, erasure, collage and rewriting have the potential to reveal traces of memory that exploit sacred intersections within the larger context of architectural discourse.

We define rituals as repetitive actions performed that serve to define and measure our close interaction with our environment. These actions can be intentional or subconscious, observed or occupied, individual or en masse, occurring over seven minutes or seven millennia. The goal is to investigate these operations that have defined our architectural domain and how they will continue to do so in the future.

VORKURS: rituals explores the relationship of how rituals, as a collection of sacred moments or memories, shape and inform the architectural pedagogy. The process of layering, erasure, collage and rewriting create an architectural palimpsest that allows us to recognize themes of memory versus transformation, repetition versus progression, and tradition versus innovation. This publication is a ritual. A collection of work, compiled annually, with the intent of investigating a specific topic within the larger discourse of architecture.

Our individualistic, and perhaps ritualistic, perspectives create a unique and personal intersection between the built and unbuilt; we acknowledge this interstitial relationship is dependent upon rituals over time. As a result of the remaining traces evoked by rituals, our subsequent memories become a ritual within themselves.

We hope that this collection of rituals will lead you to embark on one of your own.

-Breanna McGrath
Executive Editor

"We all have rituals in our day, whether we're aware of them or not"

-Twyla Tharp

The Creative Habit. Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003. Pg15.



Rituals of Exile

Breanna McGrath

*I went looking for a problem worth solving
but I stumbled upon my own reflection
Water ripples an otherwise still silhouette
near the water's edge*

*Look down
Look up
Look out
Look in*

*Let the wind caress your face
Let the occasional trace
of life existing elsewhere
bring you back to this place*

*Step on the newly burdened leaves
Let the desire to hear the crunch
and each step closer under your feet
become a ritual the more frequent you retreat*

You're almost there

*Path of overgrown roots
Hollow but still whole
Wounds covered by scars
New things still grow*

There is healing here

VORKURS: AN ORIGIN STORY

Martin Gundersen

Professor Emeritus, University of Florida

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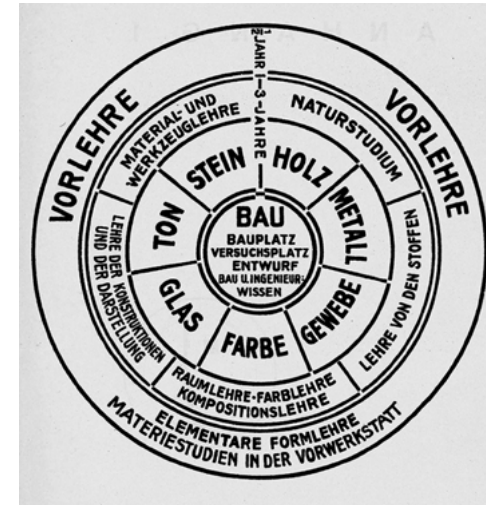
1 Saramago, Jose. *The Cave*. HarperVia, 2003.

2 Gropius, Walter, *Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar*, 1919.

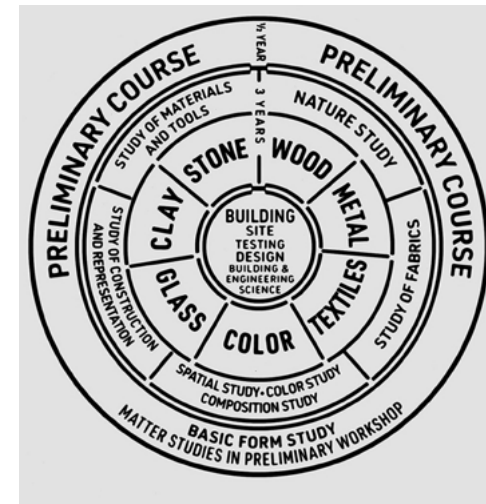
*"That is why the fingers have always excelled at uncovering what is concealed. Anything in the brain-in-our-head that appears to have an instinctive, magical, or supernatural quality --whatever that may mean--is taught to it by the small brains in our fingers. In order for the brain-in-the-head to know what a stone is, the fingers first have to touch it, to feel its rough surface, its weight and density, to cut themselves on it. Only long afterward does the brain realize that from a fragment of that rock one could make something the brain will call a knife or something it will call an idol. The brain-in-the-head always lagged behind the hands, and even now, when it seems to have overtaken them, the fingers still have to summarize for it the results of their tactile investigations...."*¹

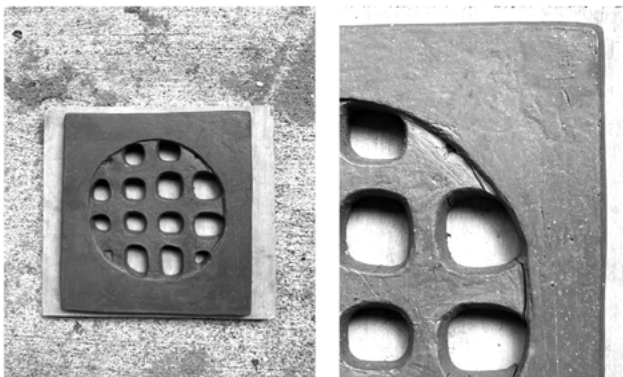
Saramago's quote describes a kind of knowing that comes from the ritual which brings the knowledge of the hand to the brain in the head. There is a phrase used among musicians early in their careers which suggests that you must "marry your instrument". This refers to the total commitment to make your hands and the instrument one. Only through this process can you begin to understand the deeper meaning of music. In music it begins with the simple 'practice ritual' which then develops into musical interpretation and finally the power of performance. Skills create knowledge which gives music its life. It follows that design skills create knowledge which gives architecture its life.

*"There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. Merciful heaven, in rare moments of illumination beyond man's will, may allow art to unconsciously blossom from the work of the hand, but the foundation of craft is indispensable to every artist. This is the original source of creative design."*²



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Minami Guido, *Clay Tile Process*. Graduate Design 1, Fall 2021. Professors Lee-Su Huang and Bradley Walters.

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From the beginning the Bauhaus, using the medieval guild as a model, emphasized making as a way of knowing. Foundational skills were taught in the Vorkurs course followed by an apprenticeship under a master. The Vorkurs Preliminary Course explored theories of color and form, principles of composition, studies in materiality, exercises in life drawing, and visual analysis. The primary course faculty (called Masters) were Johannes Itten, Laslo Maholy-Nagy and Josef Albers with accompanying courses in theory taught by Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky.

As the diagram demonstrates the preliminary course, Vorkurs (originally called *Vorlehre* - the pre apprentice course) was taken for one half year followed by three years during which a singular material was studied: clay, stone, wood, metal, textiles, color or glass. Only after this time as an apprentice were you then allowed to study *Bau* (building).

The Bauhaus existed from 1919 to 1933 when it was closed by the Nazis. Many of the most significant faculty fled Europe and immigrated to the United States. Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus, went to Harvard and established the Graduate School of Design. Josef Albers first went to Black Mountain in North Carolina and then directed the Graduate Design program at Yale. Mies van der Rohe, along with Maholy-Nagy went to Chicago and Illinois Institute of Technology.

These events cemented the Bauhaus model of design education in the United States.

Bernie Voichysonk and Harry Merritt

In the mid 1950's the academic administration of the Department of Architecture at the University of Florida wanted to reconstruct their design studio curriculum. There were concerns that design education was changing across the United States and the Department's curriculum was inadequate to cope with the changing landscape of architecture in Florida. Architecture itself was experiencing a modern transformation. The time for changing the educational model had come.

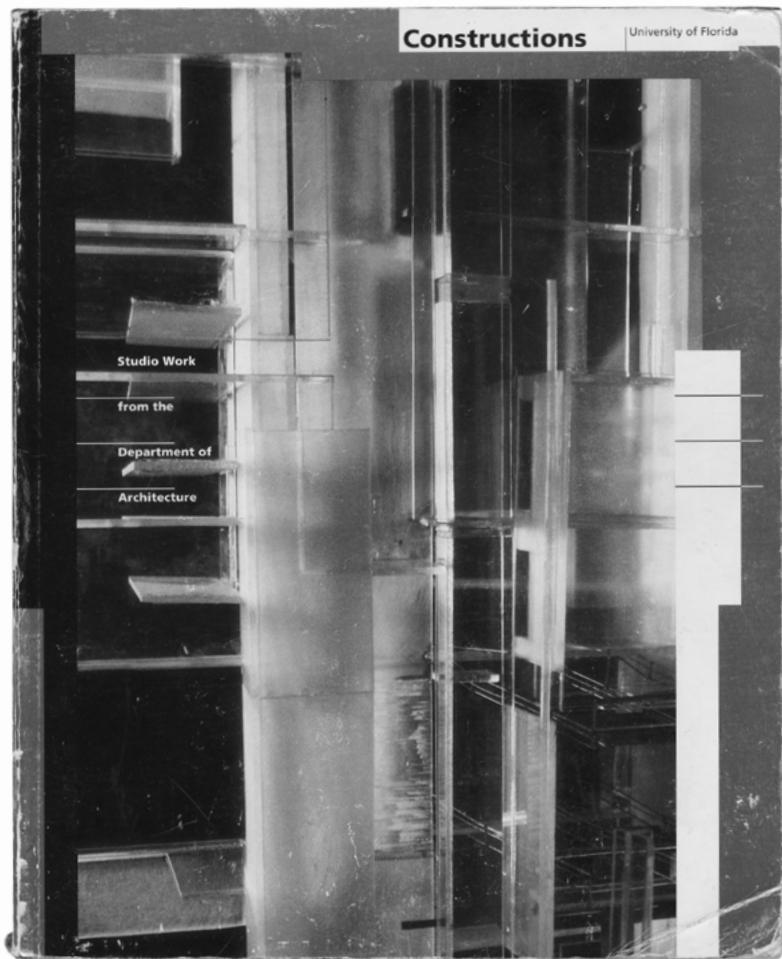
A call was made to Josef Albers, who at the time was teaching at Yale University. He introduced his early Bauhaus teaching experiences first to Black Mountain College in North Carolina and then to Yale University's School of Design. Albers' reputation as an innovative design educator was unparalleled. Bernie Voichysonk, a understudy of Albers for five years at Yale, was Albers' recommendation as the person to begin to develop the new design curriculum at the University of Florida. Voichysonk joined the faculty and became the director of the undergraduate program soon after.

After leaving Europe, Walter Gropius arrived at Harvard to establish the Graduate School of Design, where he would develop his model of design education. Harry Merritt graduated from Harvard several years later and Gropius suggested that he go to Florida and join the new wave of modern architecture. Merritt went to work for Paul Rudolph, one of Gropius' first students at the GSD, in Sarasota. After several years of practice, Merritt would become the director of the Graduate Design Program at the University of Florida.

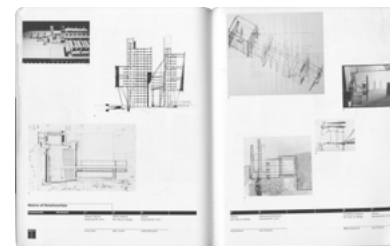
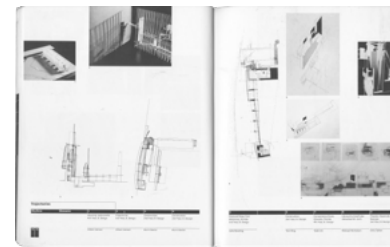
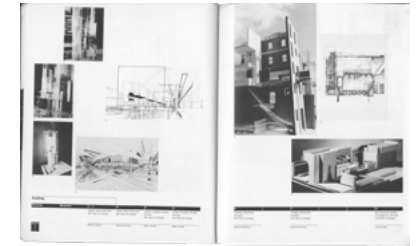
Both Voichysonk and Merritt were students of the master teachers from the Bauhaus. Voichysonk's career followed his mentor Albers. He became a lifelong teacher and mentor to the younger faculty. Voichysonk brought an intense rigor to the studio. Merritt followed in Gropius' footsteps and became a renowned builder and educator. The impact of their design teaching and their vision of design are part of the University of Florida's studio legacy.

Many other faculty transformed the early curriculum models of Voichysonk and Merritt. Jay Stoekle and Bill Tilson came from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Tech) and brought Olivio Ferrari's foundation course experiments to the SoA. Nina Hofer brought her experience from Cooper Union and John Hejduk's teachings which began with the Texas Rangers at University of Texas at Austin – also a Bauhaus influenced curriculum. Robert McCarter from Columbia University became Director and enthusiastically reinforced our curriculum sponsoring the first student workbook *Constructions*.

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Cover. *Constructions: Studio Work From The Department of Architecture*. 1993.



Selected Spreads. Constructions: Studio Work From The Department of Architecture. 1993.

Assignment Making

Voichysonk believed inventing assignments was the heart of design education. Each assignment has its own energy and focus. He believed that a design educators 'assignment making skill' is their most important tool. Carefully crafting assignments that reveal specific goals and objectives is the hallmark of successful design teaching. He always carefully planned his studio assignments focusing on specific skills and the method(s) and processes that best addressed the goals and objectives of the studio.

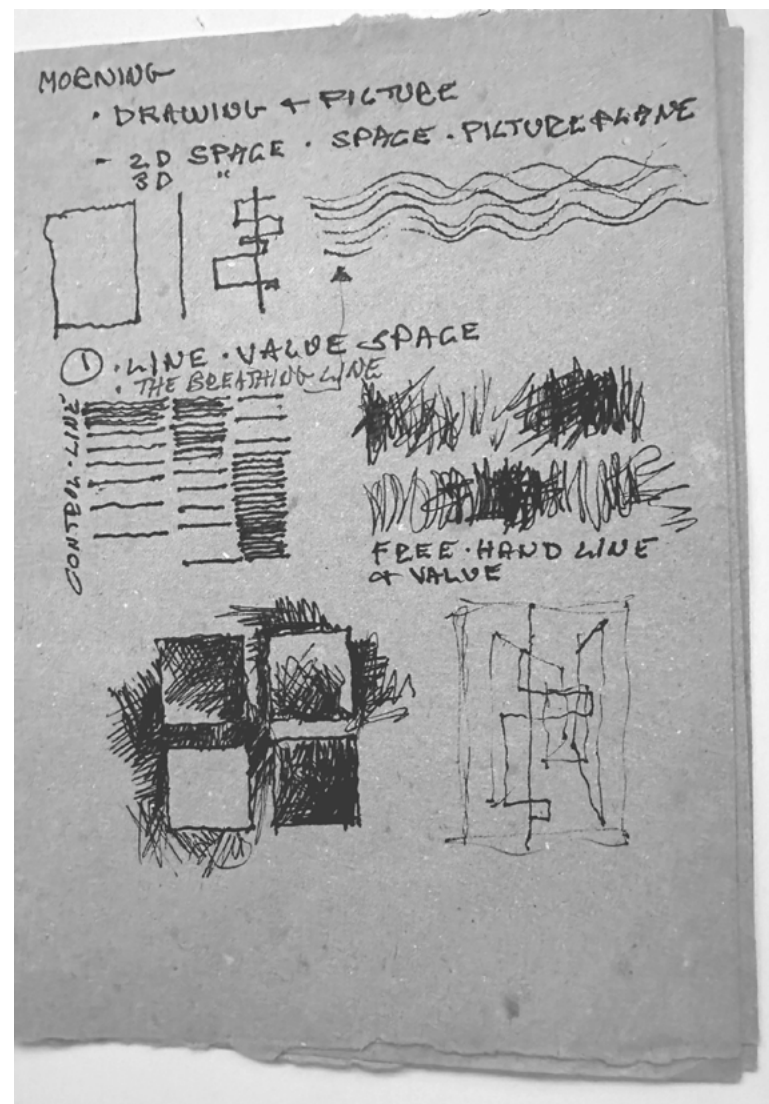
Historic examples are: Johannes Itten's thistle drawings, Josef Albers' folded paper constructions, Lazlo Maholy-Nagy's Light Modulator, Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, and John Hejduk's Nine-Square Problem, are all examples of assignments that have resonated through time. This is how Hejduk describes the importance of the Nine-Square assignment:

The Nine-Square Problem is used as a pedagogical tool in the introduction of architecture to new students. Working within this problem the student begins to discover and understand the elements of architecture. Grid, frame, post, beam, panel, center, periphery, field, edge, line, plane, volume, extension, section and details He learns to draw. He begins to comprehend the relationships between two-dimensional drawings, axonometric projection and three-dimensional (model) form...

An understanding of the elements is revealed – and the idea of fabrication emerges.³

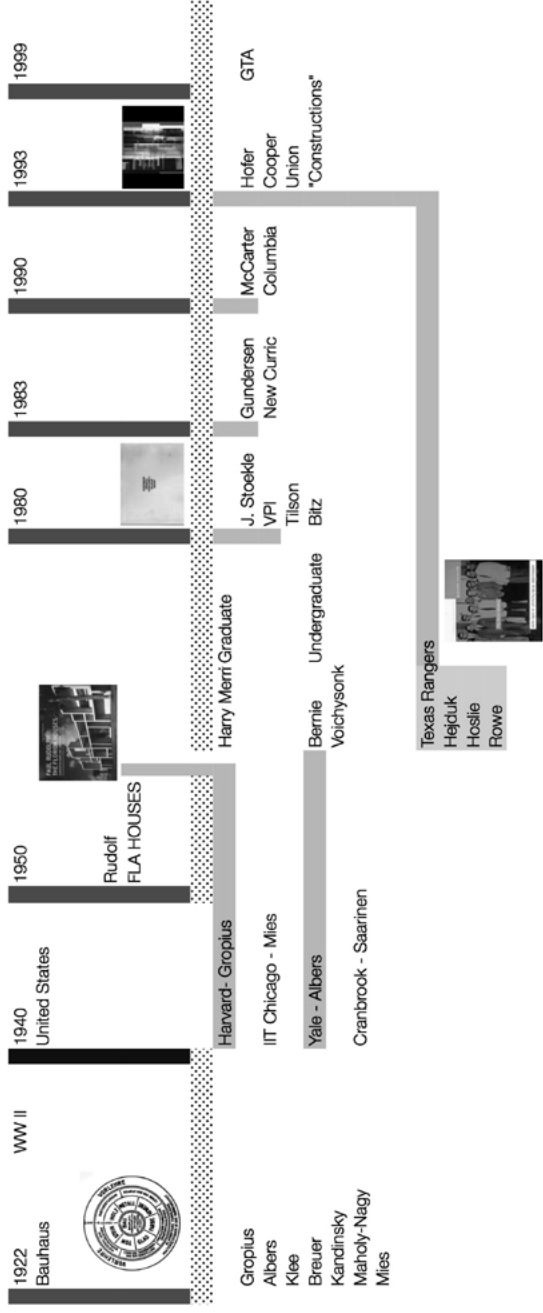
-John Hejduk, Dean The Cooper Union School of Architecture

At UF SoA, the assignments were a continuing discussion among the teaching faculty. Planning and limiting each assignment to address a particular skill, then building the skillset one upon the other, and finally constructing an overall framework for the semester was always challenging yet rewarding. Each semester's studio was conceived to reinforce the previous semester's experiences developing them and enhancing them. Positive redundancy was an important goal for each studio. To make and to make again, ritualized process.

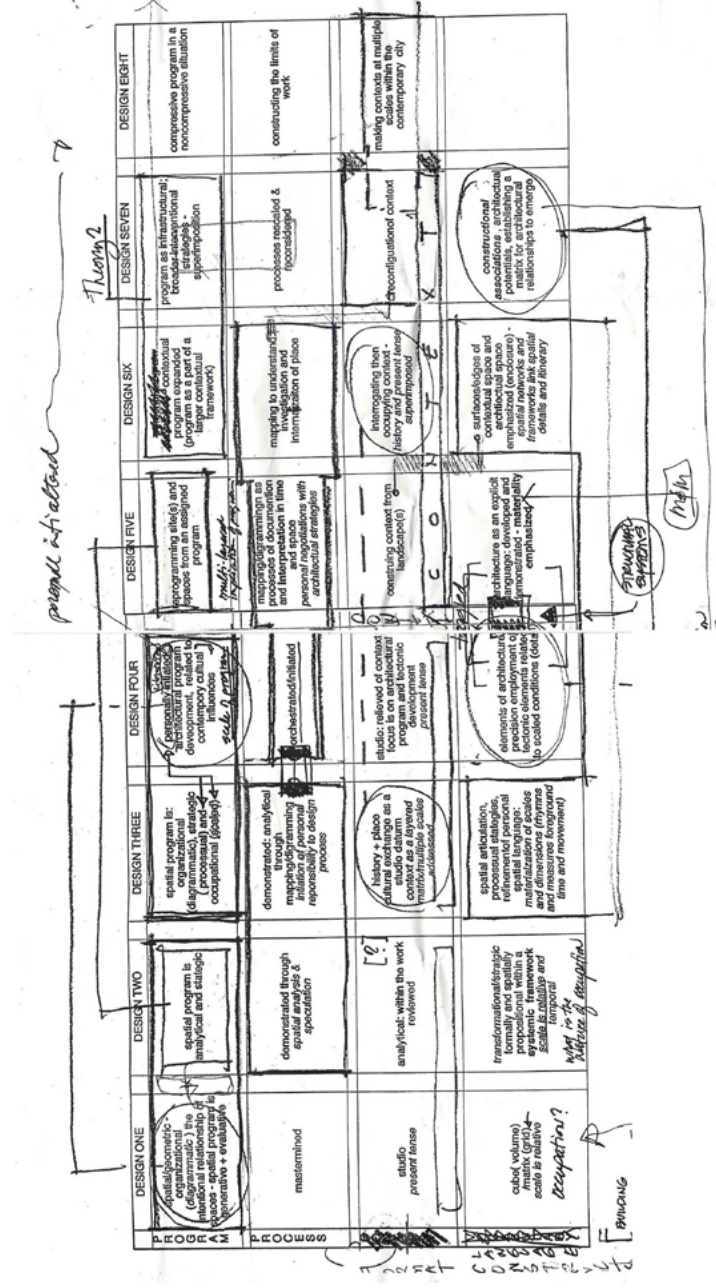


Bernard Voichysonk. Sketch of an assignment dealing with the fundamentals of drawing. n.d.

³ Hejduk, John. *Education of An Architect* A Point of View, 1999.



UF Design Curriculum Development Diagram.



Embedding Ritual - Positive Redundancy

In Design 1 you make something you have never made before, with materials you have probably never used or seen, tackling skills you have never developed. This is intentional. In architecture the more disciplinary skills you master by building, constructing, drawing, collaging, ...the more you will begin to embrace the discipline of architecture. John Hejduk spoke about the ability to 'fall into the drawing'. Becoming so involved in the interplay of hand and mind, that you lose yourself in the work.

Invention Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Makes

"Most students enter the first year of architecture school with some certainty that they know what architecture is. All too often this initial knowing is composed of a set of images; these images cover up another kind of knowledge – concepts, processes, materially and physically known things that may or may not at first seem relevant. The important "unteaching" that unbinds the learning process begins with the faculty and takes place through the formulation of studio project assignments as we attempt to introduce the constructed world in a way that will bypass preconceived assumptions and predetermined results."⁴

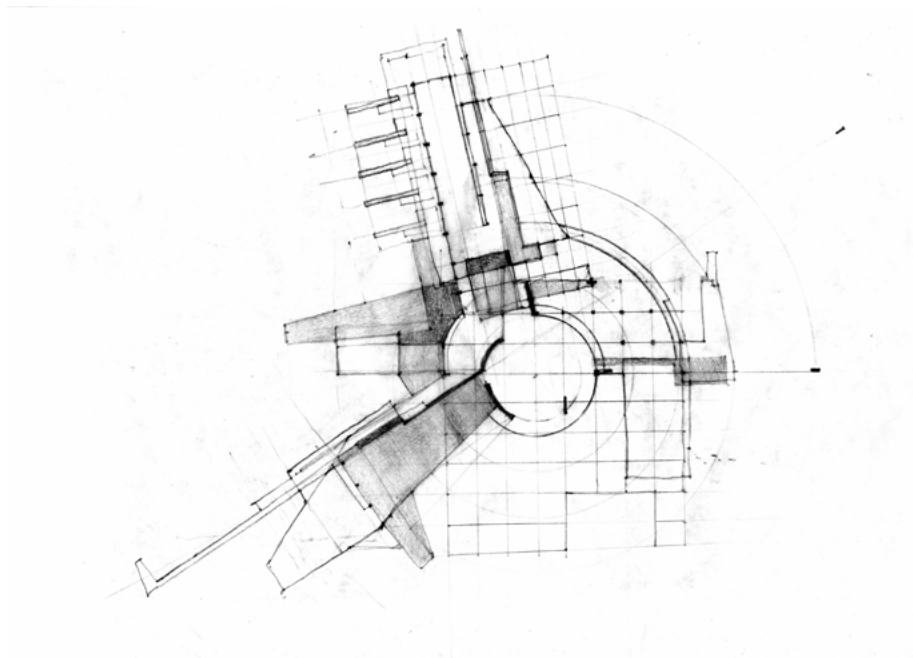
To not know what you are making yet 'make it you must' - means you will learn to trust your hands.

Skills practice is the basis of the Schools of Architecture's lower division. The Cube and Matrix in Design 1, Analytical Drawing in Design 2, Door Window Stair in Design 3, and Vertical Datum in Design 4 are all examples of the introduction, development and refinement of architectural disciplinary skills. Each one of these has been placed in this sequence to build skills and develop conceptual frameworks for design. The chart below is a working document from the mid 1990's that maps the design sequence and divides each course into 4 categories: Program, Process, Format, and Constructed Language

"The teaching in the studios develops the thinking eye and the disciplined hand, recognizing and building on the fact that in architectural design the hand and eye often know more than the head. The traditional academic placement of theory before practice is reversed, in the studio theory follows and analyzes the work of design – design does not follow theory. In the formation of an architectural scheme, spatial conceptions and propositions precede intellectual rationalizations or theories, and the student, as Albers put it, moves away from "an indirect and over emphasized intellectual contact with the world towards a more sensuous and direct contact with the world." ■

We learn by doing and we know only what we make – Le Corbusier said, "do not believe until you have drawn a thing, handled the form, touched it with your own fingers"

Robert McCarter, *With Obstinate Rigor, Constructions*, 1993



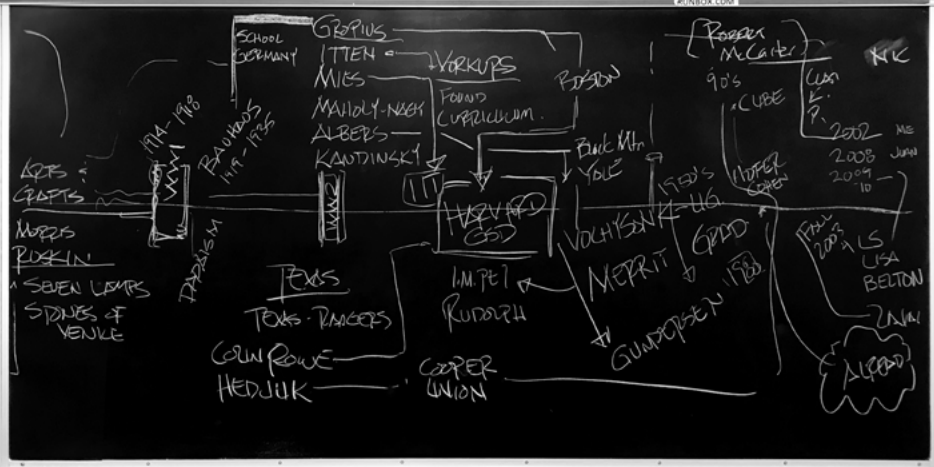
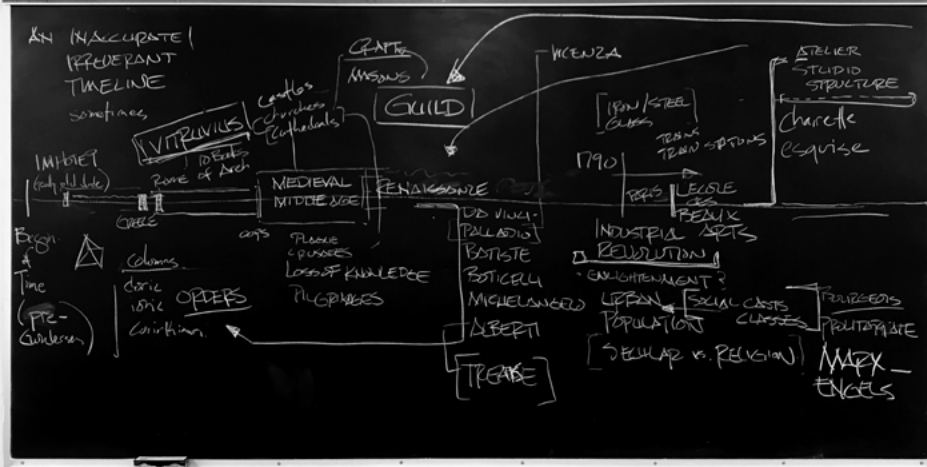
Illustrations:

- 1 *The Bauhaus Curriculum Diagram*. 1919.
- 2 Minami Guido, *Clay Tile Process*. Graduate Design 1, Fall 2021.
- 3 *Cover*. *Constructions: Studio Work From The Department of Architecture*. 1993.
- 4 *Selected Spreads*. *Constructions: Studio Work From The Department of Architecture*. 1993.
- 5 *UF Design Curriculum Development Diagram*.
- 6 *UF Curriculum Design Synthesis*
- 7 Bernard Voichysonk. *Sketch of an assignment dealing with the fundamentals of drawing*. n.d.
- 8 Suzanne Tielemans, *Process Plan*. Graduate Design 3, Fall 2022.



NOTE TO READ OR DRAW AT CLASSROOM UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

MATH TUTORING @ UNF BOX 2008



Mark McGlothlin
University of Florida

To write about something, you must first discover how the thing and yourself are the same. Things have form. They stand alone. And so do you.¹
-Paul Shephard

I could pose a simple question, *what is the thing that all designers do equally well with absolute certainty?* If you muttered “procrastinate,” then you would be in wonderful company. I asked this question to family, friends, and colleagues alike, and received the same response – designers are masterful procrastinators, if nothing else. Having missed the initial deadline by weeks, I am now scrambling to assemble words and sentences that might just add up to something useful (let us not set the bar too high). I should clarify that I do not believe our collective temptation towards delaying, or in this case disregarding, deadlines is evidence of some strange residue of an imbedded ritual to which we all unconsciously subscribe, or worse yet, some genetic trait that we are unable to avoid. Rather, I suspect that we are inclined to push deadlines for a range of overlapping reasons. The pursuit of perfection would certainly be included, accompanied by the difficult act of juggling discordant ideas, the shadow of unanswerable questions regarding compromise, the uncanny ability to misgauge how long things take, and, most prominent of all, the undeniable awareness that whatever we offer will be afforded great and potentially vicious scrutiny by our peers. We all hope for praise-worthy work, though I suspect there is a shared fear that even the smallest sin will be brought to the surface for ridicule... and such is the world of design. Architecture students are fully aware of the art of procrastination, as they too are experts at it (and at such a young age). More so, they are equally aware of the pressures that accompany criticism and the numerous tactics that can be deployed... so perhaps my admission of sharing the same struggle will offer some comfort in knowing that faculty are no different.

Given the prompt “ritual,” I have found myself chasing numerous rabbits down numerous holes, each a misfire of some kind followed by a quick retreat, only to then stare once again at the most daunting of proposals – a blank page. While my colleagues may contend otherwise, words are not my forte, and writing less so. Apparently, I am notorious for crafting preambles to assignments that appear as multi-tentacled monsters loaded

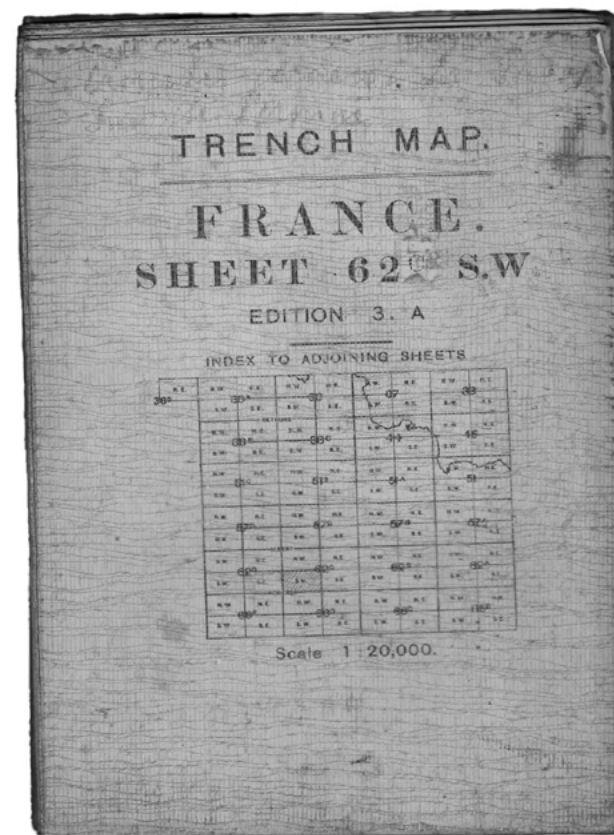
¹ Shephard, Paul. *Buildings: Between Living Time and Rocky Space*. 168. London, UK: Circa, 2016.



with peculiar references, careening with reckless abandon through pop culture, music, film, literature, and occasionally the depths of academia. In my defense, this is simply how I think. This process is not entirely absent method, but neither strictly methodical, and the tapestry of ideas rarely leads to a singular, epiphanic moment or profound conclusion. Instead, these scribbings are better understood to be many things at once, a discordant collection of fragments yet to be fully assembled. I am unsure that palimpsest is a fitting term, but some of the qualities of "an effaced manuscript" align with my notational webs and textual maps. And while I imagine them offering clues on where to head, I fear that they act more so as dispatches to my future self..." regarding chapters and books that I will never write. "

And so, I dive in, looking to the opening prompt by Paul Shephard. For me, his simple observation is a reminder that, however much we may imagine ourselves as part of a larger discipline with shared interests and common endeavors, we remain individuals, with peculiarities and preferences that appear increasingly concrete at one moment but retreat to a squishy state of being that can, summarily, be pressed to fit into any assortment of predetermined archetypes... the designer, the architect, the scholar, the teacher, the technician, the artist, the philosopher-genius hero ready to solve the world's ills. I am confident that other essays will delve more deftly into the bowels of architectural ritual and shed welcome light into the subject far beyond what I might bring. So rather than trying to keep up in this intellectual footrace, I will retreat to my preferred position at the margins and speak aloud a simple number repeated three times—eleven, eleven, eleven.

As many would attest, I have a peculiar fondness for things. My office is packed with them, and it is merely an annex to my house, itself a repository of even more things, both collected and ancestral. Truth be told, my parents like to joke about coming to visit "their things," to which I am but a dutiful caretaker... family is important, but there are other priorities to be upheld. Rather than wading through the full inventory, let me narrow the field of view and consider my desk. It is cluttered with common items – computers and screens, a container of dull pencils, piles upon piles of books and papers, assorted sticky notes littered with lists of things yet to be done, a wallet and keys, and a nearly empty pint in desperate need of a refill. The pile of books could be revealing, though most are closed with only the binding evident... *The Cultivated Wilderness*, *Fly Away Peter*, *In Flanders Fields*, *Condemned Building*, *Slow Manifesto*, 1984. A smallish folder lays atop this pile, the blue "By Air Mail *par avion*" sticker popping in stark contrast against the otherwise muted brown cardboard. It is only slightly larger than a standard envelope and holds within an even smaller map bound in canvas and folded as to fit into



Trench Map: Sheet 62c S.W. Edition 3.A

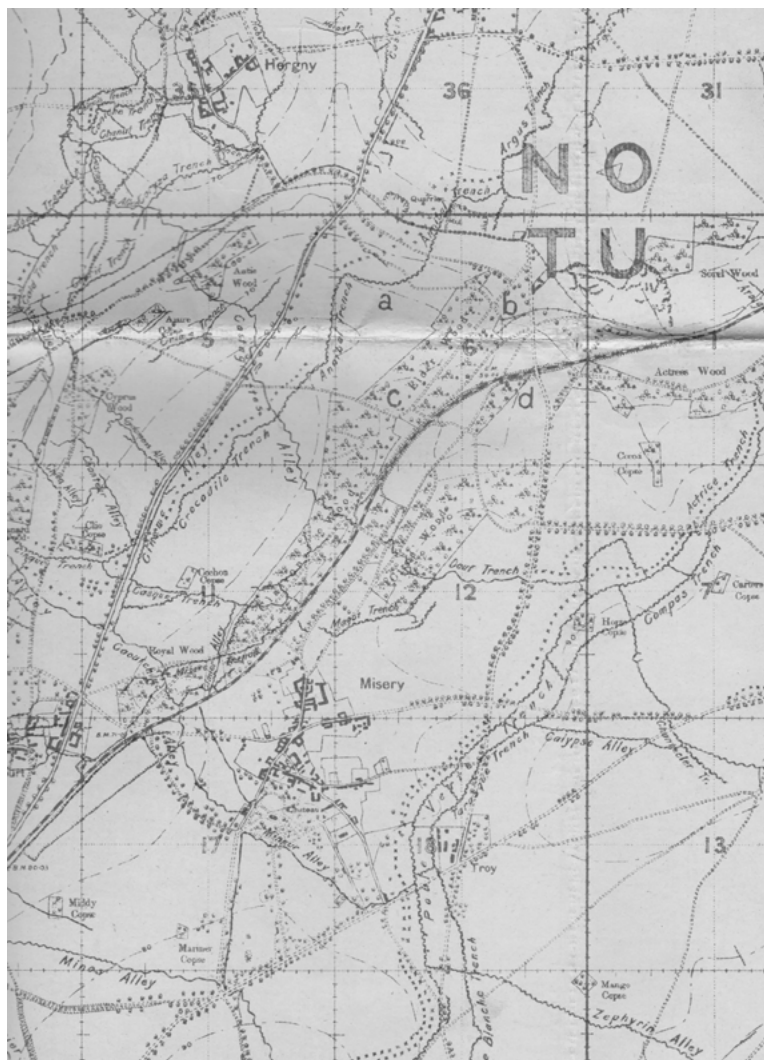
a small satchel or the breast pocket of a jacket. The title offers clarity: TRENCH MAP, FRANCE, SHEET 62c S.W., Edition 3A. Below the title is a small, gridded diagram with illegible numbers, save a note regarding scale... 1:20,000. When folded, the back holds faint handwriting in pencil, obscure numbers that are circled but otherwise worn away, leaving only a subtle shadow. Unfolding the map reveals a glossary along the back, with English words and French translations, while the front expands to reveal a map that seems rather ordinary... roads, villages, rivers and other geographical features, all simple notations that offer orientation

and navigation. With this map in hand, a traveler could find their way from Vermandovillers to Barleux via Soyecourt, Hergny, and Villers. The western side of the map speaks of the French agricultural landscape, carefully drawn and printed in crisp, black ink. The eastern side carries these lines and notations as well, though it is also littered with an additional network of lines that extend like spiderwebbing cracks in a broken, but intact pane of glass. Drawn in red, these lines carry tiny zigzags, reminiscent of the crenellations of a castle rampart. More so, they surround and swallow Barleux, Villers, and Hergny, and the commune of Misery as well, an ominously appropriate name of a place and time long forgotten. Some lines are accompanied by a fainter network of parallel dashed lines, each dash a tiny, red "X." Names appear alongside the red lines... Calypso Alley, Sebastopol Alley, Gaffe Alley, Licorne Trench, Crocodile Trench, Argus Trench. A logic emerges amidst the numerous names, with alleys largely running east-west and in the trenches, which tend to align more so to a North-South axis. The names are simple in themselves, but the differences in purpose are clear, with alleys allowing for movement (or communication, in proper lingo) back and forth between trenches, and trenches existing as a repeated interval of parallel lines that appear as pinstripes across a field roughly 1600 yards deep when measured from east to west. Like the alleys, the trenches hold more specific purposes, with the eastern most line serving as the firing line, or as we might more readily know it – the front line. This network forms a larger defensive field that is a mile wide, and this map holds but a fragment, as history tells us this line extends westerly to Switzerland and ends at the coast of the English Channel and North Sea to the east... 500 miles of the aptly named Western Front. The map is only partially revealing, as the red lines denote only German trenches. The British trench system is not drawn on this map, though other maps exist that include an equally labyrinthine network of blue lines that demark where and how the British trenches were assembled. The designation of 3A further clarifies its moment in time. "TRENCHES CORRECTED TO 14-1-17".

By circumstance, Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut* is playing with the final song now well underway. An excellent album with many good songs, but "The Gunner's Dream" stands out. It is lyrically powerful, a somber soliloquy steeped in ideas of memory, duty, nation, hope and loss, and the difficult balance between optimism and sacrifice. The song opens with a subtle lyrical reference that could be easily overlooked... "in the space between the heavens and the corner of some foreign field." The description between earth and sky is straightforward, speaking of an airman's descent to ground after being shot out of the sky. The specificity to ground, however, recalls a much older sonnet by Rupert Brooke. Written in 1914, *The Soldier* offers a noble sentiment on the importance of national sacrifice that permeated the unified attitude of soldiers during the Great War in its early years, with the opening lines as follows:

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.*²

This map is over a hundred years old and shows its age, with the folds and creases leaving small holes at several intersections. Despite this, the linework remains crisp and the map is otherwise



2 Brooke, R. (2007). "The Soldier." Poem. In *A corner of a foreign field: The illustrated poetry of the first World War*; Photographs by the Daily Mail, 112. Croxley Green, UK: Transatlantic Press, 2007.

clean from other defects, a suggestion that it may not have been carried into the field during combat. I have found others for sale that bear greater witness to field usage...tears, stains of one kind or another, smears of mud, hand-written notes, each a testament of how a moment in time can be imprinted onto a thing. Some maps carry names, usually scrawled on the cover, establishing some sense of provenance. I know of one that is particularly poignant, as the name on the map may be that of Lieutenant Hugh Edmund Lyddon, an officer killed in action during the Third Battle of Ypres. Various histories suggest that he was shot in the head by a sniper and given an impromptu field burial in a shell hole. His body was never recovered.³ His name, however, is etched into the Menin Gate, alongside 54,000 other members of the British Expeditionary Force killed during the three battles of the Ypres Salient with unknown graves prior to 16 August 1917. The 34,00 soldiers missing in battle in the salient after this date are commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial, some 9 kilometers away from Ypres.⁴

It seems both unfortunate and peculiar to find this kind of map for sale. More peculiar is my lingering but conflicted interest in buying it. I suspect that part of me wants to hold on to it as a token of a lost moment in time, to honor this man and his sacrifice, to ensure that it will not be cast into the dustbin, like so many other things. I could also admit that my interests may simply be a tacit acknowledgement that I was born in the wrong time, and this map may offer some connection to a time better suited for me. Our contemporary world is no more politically turbulent than that of the early twentieth century, but it does seem that the ideas of principle and purpose meant something different a century ago, with notions of sacrifice and duty resonating with a voice more enduring and robust, and one certainly less fleeting than anything in our technologically inebriated, media-obsessed, superficial world.

Brooke's 1914 poem is but a part of a larger catalog penned by soldier-poets, a true panoply. His poem holds a particular moment in history and is recognized as such but is eclipsed in importance by John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields*. McCrae was a more seasoned soldier than Brooke. Born into a military family and having served in the Boer War at the turn of the century, McCrae arrived on the Western Front as both a veteran and respected doctor, which positioned him to reflect not on combat alone, but also its aftermath. His take was particularly powerful and has become iconic beyond imagination. We think of poppies as being an essential part of war memorials and commemoration ceremonies but few of us are familiar with the symbolic origins. It was McCrae who put it to words.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*⁵

Various histories suggest that McCrae, following the second Battle of Ypres, noticed the upturned soil of Belgium turning scarlet as fields of wild poppies erupted from an otherwise lifeless ground, an immense carpet of red. In scientific terms, this can be reduced to the fact that poppies thrive in disturbed

3 The noted map and corresponding historical provenance are provided at Turner and Donovan Military Books. The description notes that initial research suggests this map to have been the property of Lt. Lyddon. <https://www.turnerdonovan.com/bookspsd.aspx?sectionID=200&mv=0>

4 There are numerous resources that expand on the details of the Menin Gate Memorial. As the memorial is under the supervision of The Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, the corresponding website can be considered a trustworthy resource and offers a good summary of the history of the Menin Gate Memorial and Tyne Cot Memorial. <https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/91800/ypres-menin-gate-memorial/>

5 Waters, Fiona, and John McCrae. "In Flanders Fields." Poem. In *A Corner of a Foreign Field, the Illustrated Poetry of the First World War*; Photographs by the *Daily Mail*, 13. Croxley Green, UK: Transatlantic Press, 2007.

soils, particularly when that soil is steeped in a nutrient-rich, but grotesque, stew of nitrogen, lime, blood, and bone. McCrae was observant enough, reflective enough, to recognize the conflicted imagery and put it down on paper.

It is said that McCrae wrote *In Flanders Fields* following the death of a friend, Alexis Helmer. Helmer's death was gruesome, as "a shell had dismembered his body to the point where the pieces were collected and buried with a few sandbags sewn together in an army blanket."⁶ McCrae was so distraught by the tragic loss that he penned *In Flanders Fields* on a scrap of wrapping paper. Its first publication was in 1915, with the poet remaining anonymous. Its legacy is immeasurable, powerfully rendering poppies as an eternal token of remembrance, though the final lines of the poem are equally potent.

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields⁷*

As a Canadian, McCrae's legacy is unquestioned. His poem carries the same national weight as that of the Gettysburg address for Americans. Children in Canada can recite the words and understand the call it offers to each subsequent generation – to acknowledge the sacrifice of your predecessors and "hold high" their torch.⁸ Americans would likely echo with Lincoln's words "that we here highly resolve that these dead have not died in vain..." Though nearly fifty years lay between them, the messages are cut from the same cloth, steeped within a deep reverence for sacrifice, nationalism, and continued perseverance toward the good and the right.

Later poems by McCrae would become increasingly somber, and rightfully so, as the horrors he witnessed revealed not the optimistic luster of a "war to end all wars" but rather its darkest shadow, the miraculous underbelly of modern industry unleashed. His fellow poets offered similar sentiments, with changes in tone that would depart from national pride and instead address mortality in more critical and personal terms. Wilfred Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est* is perhaps the most recognized of these poems and is a stark departure from both Brooke and McCrae. Owen suggests no noble cause or honorable death that might be afforded...

*Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*⁹

This is merely an excerpt of Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, recollecting chemical warfare with sobering candor. It can be fairly argued that biological warfare has a much longer history, stemming from medieval siege strategies during the time of the black death. Chemical warfare, however, is a uniquely modern construct that we seem unable to escape. Perhaps we need to

6 Betts, Amanda, ed., and Tim Cook. "Forged In Fire." Essay. In *In Flanders Fields: 100 Years: Writing on War, Loss and Remembrance*, 17–55. Canada: Knopf, 2015.

7 McCrae. *A Corner of a Foreign Field*, 13.

8 This passage references a larger collection of essays about the influence and impact of John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields*. The collection was instrumental in forming my brief summation of the history of McCrae, the writing of the poem, and its legacy. It is difficult to reduce the sentiments to a single essay, as each expands on the importance of McCrae's work in differing and intertwined manners. As such, I reference the entire collection. Betts, Amanda, ed., *In Flanders Fields: 100 Years: Writing on War, Loss and Remembrance*. Canada: Knopf, 2015.

9 Waters, Fiona, and Wilfred Owen. "Dulce Et Decorum Est." Poem. In *A Corner of a Foreign Field, the Illustrated Poetry of the First World War*; Photographs by the *Daily Mail*, 83. Croxley Green, UK: Transatlantic Press, 2007.

be reminded of Santayana's 1905 aphorism, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it."¹⁰ Then again, perhaps he was simply foreshadowing the problems that would come in the decades that would follow, when fervent nationalism would take center stage and place industrial convenience in the driver's seat, with indiscriminate ideology acting as the navigator. Owen's poem closes with a much earlier quote, pulled from Virgil:

*My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dolce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*¹¹

I once joked when presenting a paper, saying in Latin that "everything said in Latin sounds profound." It was a jab at academia's penchant for using obscure references in foreign tongues. In Owen's case, the point is unabashed, questioning Virgil's sentiments with a blunt retort that there is nothing "sweet and proper in dying for one's country." More telling is that these three poets would all die during the war, Brooke of sepsis from an insect bite, McCrae from pneumonia, and Owen from combat within a week of the armistice.

Fascinating, students might say, then ask...*what does this have to do with maps, or rituals, or palimpsests? What bloody rabbit hole have you taken me down, and why? I have things to do...studio, Starbucks, TikTok – plus Tay Tay's new album is about to drop, so can you move this bus along?*

My reply, like so many of my thoughts, is obscurely layered, with the first being a retreat to Paul Shephard and his second book *A Cultivated Wilderness*. The closing chapter addresses memory as held within landscape using the Western Front as a literary canvas.

*Another bus has pulled up. A party of Canadians gets out, all wearing Panama hats and sweating like pigs. Their air conditioning has broken down. They pass by the panting, furious Bill and his young helper, thinking that the Thiepval Arch is more like an embarkation camp than a place of meditation.*¹²

I recall talking with Paul Shephard many years ago about this chapter, and he noted that he had taken some artistic liberty with the story. The young helper in the quote is a real person, a former student, as is the trip to Thiepval, and as such the story that Shephard unveils is partly true. But "furious Bill" is a fictional veteran of the Great War that they encounter, a literary ghost of Shephard's creation that helps to prove a point about our complicated understanding of the scarred, the sublime, the sacred in our world... and that the more distant these things become in our collective memory, the more inclined we are to disregard, dismiss, or forget entirely, particularly when

momentary inconveniences in modern technology take center stage (how dare technology fail us). Knowing this, I could ask if sympathy should be afforded to an imaginary veteran performing silent rituals to honor his fallen comrades that simultaneously holds a frustrated lament to the loss of collective memory on the steps of the Thiepval Memorial. Or should sympathy be offered to this gaggle of Canadians, who have become disconnected from place and time, or rather, are only aware of immediacy as opposed to history, distracted by a momentary inconvenience and longing for a cool drink. They forget the ground upon which they stand... because it is hot outside. Shephard's point seems clear to me, but I am less certain how his argument rings for others. Is it true and centering, like the striking of a keening bell, or does it offer a hollow tone? I hope it is the former, but fear that many sympathize with the latter, favoring personal comforts over the strained search for beauty in a landscape steeped in misery. Like Shephard, I see beauty in this landscape, however tortured, difficult, and unsettling it may be. He notes,

Now, when people shudder and say to me, "Oh, Picardy, it's so grim there, with all those gravestones." I disabuse them.

"You silly buggers!" I say, "it's beautiful!"¹³

And thus, I retreat to a different, but more straightforward layer – the map itself, SHEET 62c S.W. EDITION 3.A. It is a simple map at one level, an insignificant historical piece of paper and linen. World War 1 was a war of maps. Millions were made, updated, revisited, and revised, to allow the top brass to reflect, rethink, strategize, and then send the troops in hellfire once again. Pink Floyd's *Us and Them*, from *Dark Side of the Moon*, captures this futility perfectly.

*"Forward," he cried from the rear
And the front rank died
The general sat and the lines on the map
Moved from side to side*

The Great War is the epitome of a war of attrition. Two sides fighting for years over a strip of broken ground that could never justify the sacrifice. Millions of lives lost, but more so, a sacrifice of the land itself. Portions of France remain so contaminated with toxins, debris, and unexploded ordnance as to be designated uninhabitable, appropriately named *Le Zone Rouge*. But the Western Front was too vast to be forever rendered as hallowed ground. Shephard's chapter centers on this point, the struggle to recover and rebuild across a landscape so destroyed as to yield no historical trace. He writes of the villages and communes that have attempted to return to their former selves, artifices that recall, but cannot recapture what was lost. Similarly, he notes that national cemeteries emerge across the landscape, surface-

10 Santayana, George. *The Life of Reason, or the Phase of Human Progress*. 172. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.

11 Owen, A *Corner of a Foreign Field*, 83.

12 Shephard, Peter. "Memory." Essay. In *The Cultivated Wilderness - or, What Is Landscape*, 196–230. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.

13 Shephard, *The Cultivated Wilderness - or, What Is Landscape*, 230.

More sobering are body density maps. Created late in the war, they are an attempt to denote where bodies were buried and assist with future recovery and proper burial. They resemble true palimpsests, with layers upon layers of lines and notations, overlaid by a gridded network to further demarcate the ground, as if in anticipation of a massive archaeological dig, with the numbered square grid measuring 1000 yards on each side. The numbers inside each cell were further divided into quadrants, noting the number of marked burials. They are, at times, unfathomable... 10, 32, 54, 59, 91, 234, 749, 808. More telling, these numbers only estimate known burials, and on occasion, noted only the marked crosses, which themselves might indicate the location of numerous buried soldiers.¹⁵ More so, these recordings could not fully account for the missing. The numbers noted at the Menin Gate and Tyne Cot Memorial offer a more sobering ally of the capacity for industrialization to reduce an army to nothing, to erase, to efface – and to take the land with it.

Hollywood tends to frame warfare as an act of individual heroism and sacrifice, and in doing so reduces the narratives to be readily consumed but leaves a misguided impression regarding the reach and impact of war. The Great War released upon the world the powers of industrial might in all its horrific glory. Industrial invention had found the cruelest of maternal muses. Artillery became an instrument of trench warfare so severe as to obliterate everything, leaving a geological trace of the war evident in the line of rust that can be found within the soil strata.¹⁶ If bodies were not utterly lost, they were buried, unearthed, and then reburied again. Thus, body density maps were a valiant, if often inaccurate, effort to record where soldiers' remains might be found. To this day, thousands upon thousands remain lost, and to this end, the maps offer a candid, but inadequate, reminder of the tragedy that hides within the ground.

Students might ask...*What does this yield? Design is supposed to be optimistic and forward-thinking. All you've offered is another grim reminder that people do terrible things, another view of the dark side of humanity and its outcomes – what the hell does this have to do with ritual, or palimpsests?* I could suggest a few things. I could argue that the military is as enrobed in ritual as any of the world's great religions. The rituals are different, though many are equally anchored to both meaning and place, and I can think of few that speak with more poetry than the daily playing of the "Last Post" at the Menin Gate. Each evening, traffic at the gate is stopped. A parade of military personnel moves to the gate and are brought to attention, followed by the playing of the "Last Post," a moment of silence, then the bugle call "Reveille." The "Last Post"

15 The Western Front Association offers an excellent summary of the emergence of Body Density Maps at the close of the war. For additional information, refer to <https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/trenchmapper-by-the-western-front-association/body-density-maps/>. The WFA also provides access to an immense online collection of maps from World War 1. For those interested in seeing numerous maps from World War One, including the Body Density Maps, please refer to the Trench Mapper project at <https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/trenchmapper-public/>

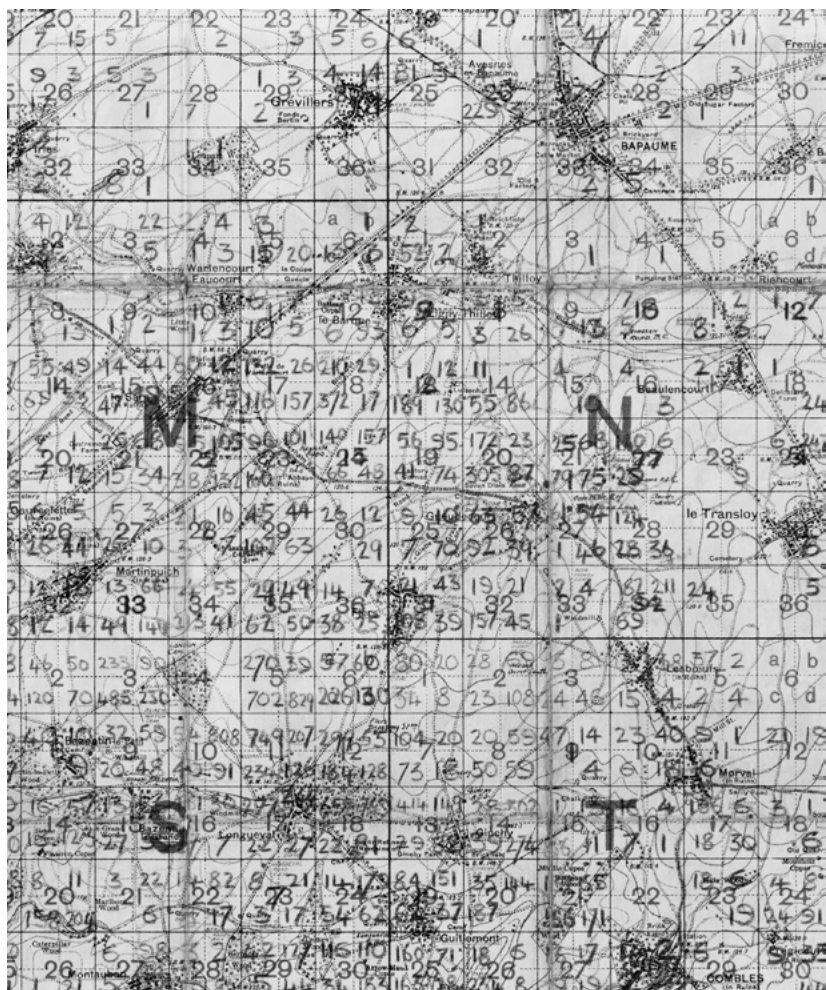
16 Digging Up the Trenches. (2015). *YouTube*. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5RhzH2hBg&t=145s>.

bound geographical markers of the dead, scattered across the hills and depressions, in some cases dense enough to visually connect the dots from one to the next. Often, these sacred moments are carefully maintained, gardens in themselves, yet abutting the more secular necessities of fields, farmyards, and mechanical shops. We might imagine this juxtaposition as being incongruous, problematic, even callous, but sentiment and pragmatism make clumsy dance partners – particularly when there is no other choice.

The ground, however, continues to offer reminders. Farmers plowing their fields frequently churn up unexploded shells and other debris. Rather than running in fear to notify the authorities, they simply set unearthed shells along the roadside to be collected for proper disposal, a reminder that the immensity of the war is not only still felt, but has become second nature, an unfortunate byproduct of the modern world. Similar discoveries are inevitably found during construction, though deeper excavations may yield traces of the subterranean existence of the war – trenches, duck boards, dug outs, bunkers, ammunition dumps, broken and discarded weaponry reduced to rust... and bodies. Rudyard Kipling's son died in the war, killed at the Battle of Loos in 1915, his body lost to the fields. Kipling would write several poems in response, as well as a short story titled *The Gardner*, which describes the melancholic search for lost loved ones.¹⁴ We think not of such things, but in World War 1 improvised burials were common and momentary locations were often lost, particularly when the next wave of artillery renewed the already pot-marked landscape with fresh craters and shell-holes, and the refreshing of soil for poppies.

One might think maps are of little use here, though the truth is more complex. Trenches could be drawn and redrawn with reasonable precision, particularly with the advent of aerial photography. This precision allowed maps to become more than simple notations of fixed lines. They became stages for a macabre choreography between artillery and troop advancement. Barrage maps were developed with enemy trenches noted, then overlaid with additional layers of parallel lines resembling topography, though the numeric notations do not suggest the rise and fall of hills and valleys, but instead mark the incremental creep of artillery across the land. The idea was that precise shelling could advance in a coordinated manner with infantry, demolishing the defenses first, closely followed by a wave of the ground troops to clear out any surviving combatants. A sobering reconsideration that time is not merely the plaything of poets and playwrights, but can also be scientific, precise, and deadly.

14 Though I do not make specific reference to Kipling's story, *The Gardner*, I feel it important to offer acknowledgement to the story. The text of *The Gardner* can be found on numerous online resources, though I may suggest as an alternative the 2017 analysis by Joe Fassler, done in conversation with Scott Spencer. Fassler, Joe. "How Rudyard Kipling Turned His Guilt into Fiction." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, June 27, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/06/by-heart-how-rudyard-kipling-turned-his-guilt-into-fiction/531786/>.



Enlargements, from AAM map 57C 1:40,000 Bapaume to Villers-Guislain 2 February 1917 with additional AAM notations showing part of the Somme Battlefield, including Bazentin, Longueval, and High Wood. Each lettered square is 6000yds by 6000yds, then subdivided into 36 smaller squares that are 1000yds by 1000yds each. These squares are further divided into quadrants that are 500yds by 500yds, or an area roughly 50 acres. Handwritten numbers within each subdivided quadrant indicate the identified burial markers within that area. Additionally, each marker may have noted several buried soldiers. Smaller handwritten notes with names identify known cemeteries. Image provided by the Western Front Association. https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/trenchmapper-public/MapID=m_5_000761. © WFA contributors. © IWM

the blank trace on his desk. I watched in amazement as he was determined to “DESIGN!” and, in doing so, overlooked the reality that the discarded arbitrary shavings held more explosive information, more clues and ideas, than anything he could design. Explosiveness is not an act of authorship, but instead might be found in the conscious release of authorship, like setting in motion an avalanche. His ability to see what was before him was overrun by his desire to create, to control, to design, leading only to a contrived and artificial result that was neither beautiful nor meaningful. The maps of the Great War are neither composed nor contrived. They are straightforward, factual, and unburdened from aesthetic critique. Perhaps this is their brilliance, as they are beautiful without trying to be, born without any concern for appearances while carrying stories far more profound and poignant than many artistic efforts could ever match.

I have used trenches maps in design studios as both a prompt and a context for students to address the conjoined ideas of “ruin” and “ruination.” Most students are good sports and approach the project with open minds, though others are far more reticent when confronted with the difficult issues that lay within. All are new to the subject of the Great War as evidenced within a map, and more surprisingly (and frustratingly), many are new to the Great War in general... as if the death of millions should be set aside as an unfortunate historical anecdote, a global conflict reduced to a few questions on a multiple-choice test.

Using the maps as a base, the drawing exercise that unfolds is inescapably complex, multi-layered, and held in shadow as much as light, as the discoveries are difficult and undoubtedly heavier than the students expect or would prefer. I can sympathize with their desire for something more light-hearted, and often find myself questioning the benefits of such weighty subjects in studio. Perhaps I should steer projects towards more comfortable territories, where the troubles of the world are inconsequential when measured against a wave of architectural optimism about to be released. Maybe I should become more a disciple of that annoyingly positive slogan “Design can save the world!” Maybe I should just stop asking “why” and move along to the next new thing. Alas, I have found such rosy glows unenticing, and am left asking myself... “Why should we dismiss these troubling histories and instead gravitate only to easy questions that make us happy? The world is full of difficult, unpleasant, and discomfiting issues. Avoiding them does not make them go away... so why do we seem so determined to avoid that fact?” To be honest, Lebbeus Woods says it better in his blog, *Terrible Beauty 2: the ineffable*, “We don’t want to feel uncomfortable; we don’t want to have to move in a way we are not habitually used to moving. But it is only when we are shaken out of our habits that we are able to change and to grow. What if to make things better, to enable people to cope creatively with the traumas of change, we have to make things more difficult, more risky, less secure? How often have architects dared to do that?”¹⁹

19 Woods, Lebbeus. “Terrible Beauty 2: The Ineffable.” Essay. In *Slow Manifesto - Lebbeus Woods Blog*, 147–48. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.

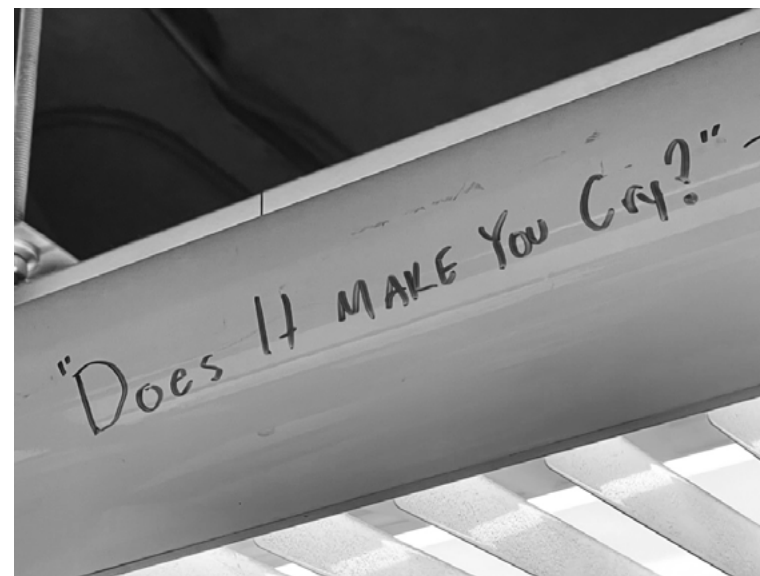
is the British bugle call signifying the closing of the day, though its meaning has extended as a commemoration to those who have died, an instrumental call for the lost to return home. Extended ceremonies may include an Exhortation, a lament played on the bagpipe, and the laying of wreaths at the gate, with “Reveille” to close the ceremony.¹⁷ I recall a bit of comedic vandalism in a second-year studio that suggested as a divine measure of architectural success, “Does it make you cry?” This is, of course, a silly note, and I suspect that it was written down verbatim as a response to professorial charges for students to do better work, to try harder, to make architecture the first thing, the only thing. My response... if you argue for the importance of emotion, for spaces and experiences that will make your eyes swell with tears, then perhaps you should consider moments where humility reigns supreme, where architectural ideas of space and time work in service of something other than themselves, where sacrifice is what is immeasurable. Architecture plays a role at the Menin Gate, but it is not the goal, nor should it be.

Similarly, consider that the ideas of palimpsests might be more than layered drawings that offer visual appeal, that look cool, that cater to current architectural fashions, that mistake slickness for meaning, that are trying so hard to look far over the horizon that they forget what is lying beneath their feet. I would contend that one does not, cannot, make a palimpsest, however enticing the poetic aspirations might be, as the anticipation of future effacement would render preliminary steps tentative, preparatory, absent a sense of deliberate action. Robert Rauschenberg commented on this property when making *Erased De Kooning*, noting that he needed to destroy someone else’s work, as he was making the process of future effacement too easy on himself.¹⁸ De Kooning’s reply was that the work had to make erasure difficult, and more importantly, had to mean something first – a sacrifice from both artists. It is a fascinating proposal, to make something and then let someone else deface, efface, destroy... to accept its demise rather than imagine its immortality. Should we think of such things? Architecture is eternal, no? Irreverent questions to ask, I suspect, particularly to those who struggle to see the difference between self-promotion and sacrifice.

More so, compositional logics are unavoidable. Palimpsests do not emerge by design, regardless of how much we may argue otherwise. Randomness cannot be its own deliberate act, and when imagined as being so, tends to yield results that are artificial, rationalized, and oxymoronic... planned chaos. Many years ago, I taught a graduate studio and asked the students to create a repository for the swelling collection of letters from the War Letters Project. One student wanted to venture into ideas of ordnance and explosives as a starting point but was struggling to design an explosion. We debated his methods but made little headway and only found growing frustration, at which point he turned to a scrap of paper, pulled the shavings from his pencil sharpener, and dumped them on the paper so he could return

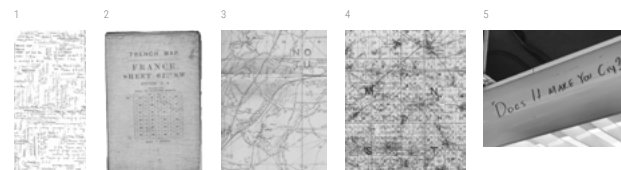
17 There are numerous resources online, including video of the Menin Gate ceremony. The ceremony at the Menin Gate is maintained by the Last Post Association. The specifics of each ceremony, activities, and participation, are available at: <https://lastpost.be/about/MeninGate>.

18 Robert Rauschenberg - Erased De Kooning. (2007). *YouTube*. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpCWh3FtDQ>.



Illustrations:

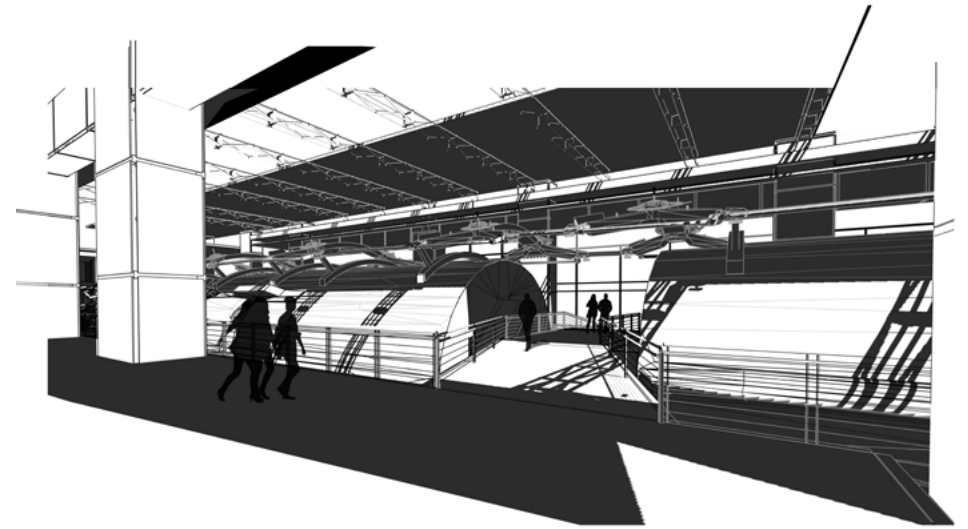
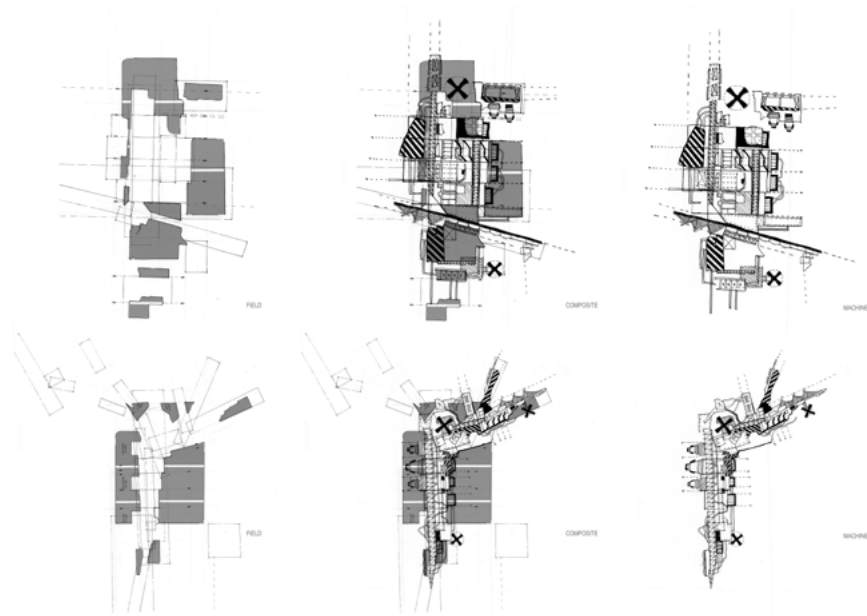
- 1 *Trench Map: Sheet 62C S.W. Edition 3.A*
- 2 *Enlargement, from Sheet 62C S.W Edition 3.A*
- 3 Mark McGlothlin, *Scribbling*, n.d.
- 4 Enlargement, from AAM map 57C 1:40,000 Bapaume to Villers-Guislain 2 February 1917 with additional AAM notations showing part of the Somme Battlefield, including Bazentin, Longueval, and High Wood. Each lettered square is 6000yds by 6000yds, then subdivided into 36 smaller squares that are 1000yds by 1000yds each. These squares are further divided into quadrants that are 500yds by 500yds, or an area roughly 50 acres. Handwritten numbers within each subdivided quadrant indicate the identified burial markers within that area. Additionally, each marker may have noted several buried soldiers. Smaller handwritten notes with names identify known cemeteries. Image provided by the Western Front Association. https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/trenchmapper-public/MapID=m_5_000761. © WFA contributors. © IWM
- 5 *Does It Make You Cry?* Photo: Mark McGlothlin. 2023.



Habits, rituals, obsessions, fixations, routines... overlapping ideas to which we all subscribe, though the distinctions within and between are hardly clear... like mud, I suspect. I admit that my preoccupation with trench maps is my own and may lean towards an unhealthy obsession rather than a productive field of study. I do not expect others to share in my fascination. But these maps are palimpsests none the less... and more potent than anything I might ever aspire to offer on my own. The stories they hold are unsettling, difficult to comprehend, and sickening at times, as the world they reveal exposes the levels of brutality that humans willingly inflict upon one another. More so, they remind us that the marks on the page are not mere abstractions but remain in the ground. They are real, and perhaps the problem is not with their unsettling existence, but rather with our inability to know what to do in response. The world itself is a palimpsest, whether we like it or not, and the Western Front may make this more apparent than nearly any other place on earth. Some prefer the rosy glow of optimism, the "Yes is More"²⁰ attitude that permeates current architectural discourse, the lovely idea that architectural endeavors are inherently good, that we merely need to build more to make sense of it all, that we need not sacrifice anything for the betterment of the world – all is possible if we just put our minds to it! Occasionally I wish for these things, but I am not inclined to agree that we only dream of a bright future and believe whatever we make as being better than the things that preceded it, particularly when we seem increasingly unable to look and understand where we are, on what ground we stand, and what sacrifices were made so that we could be here. Rather than gazing only at what "we can do", perhaps we should learn to look more patiently, carefully, and thoroughly before we act... and get our own egos out the way. I am inclined to quote a colleague, in reference to student presentations in studio..." what if it isn't about you... what you want... What if it is what the project needs?"

Now recall the three numbers repeated... *eleven, eleven, eleven*. If you cannot place the reference and need a bit more help before retreating to Google, consider them as markers of a specific moment in time... and then look again to see if you can figure out what they mean, why they are important, and I guarantee, once you understand, you will never forget them again. ■

20 This is a direct reference to the first book by Bjarke Ingels, titled "Yes is More. An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution." It resides among numerous manifestos and captures both the work of the firm, but also the zeitgeist of the millennium, wherein the attitudes of architectural optimism seem boundless. I do not own a copy... and likely never will. Ingels, Bjarke. *Yes Is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution Published on the Occasion of the Exhibition Held at the Danish Architecture Center, Copenhagen, 21 February - 31 May 2009*. Taschen, 2009.



Elizabeth Cronin

University of Florida, VORKURS Alumna

I sense them coming. Tomorrow, perhaps? The waves are unsettled. They grow nearer. One, two, three, four, they crest in swift succession, one on top of another, as if fighting for a glimpse of the shore. The shallows surge just out of reach, and they reflect sky on earth, a purple expansion of day's last light. I won't stay much longer. I am alone with a family struggling to close their tent in the wind. The storm alarm is calling, and people are running for cover. (Isn't it funny how quickly rain will clear a beach?) While the weather escalates, the landscape winds down. The sand stretches beneath a sheet of water, the sky snoozes behind dark clouds, the horizon keeps vigil.

Tomorrow, perhaps?...

Sometimes, I spot them after a big storm, when the tide is low and the beach is long. Have they been here all along — hidden edges uncovered by ebb tides, internal creases drifted to the surface, patterns of wind carved in wet sand? Like an emergent quilt, puckers of earth are stitched together by channels of water, ever changing and adjusting. This morning, the water is shin-deep. It draws from the ocean and flows in rivulets parallel to the beach. Each tributary has its own current, carves its own networks. A blink, and they appear: little mounds of wet sand. The small dunes stretch while the pools slashed between them grow deeper. I stand in a newly formed crease and watch the water wrinkle over my feet. A shell shimmers in a crook of mud, and I remember searching for shark's teeth within the shallow pockets. We chased fish too quick to catch and built mud cities that straddled land and sea; read books in the shallows and chatted on the water's edge. The landscape grew with us.



Elizabeth Cronin, *low tide: 8:06am – high tide: 2:35pm*.
Amelia Island, Florida. July 19, 2022, 9:59am.

We live in our tide pool world and laugh in surprise when it floods away. A wave bowls us into the earth, fills our bathing suits with mud, and sends us scrambling through thickened ground to snatch buckets and shovels from its pilfering hands. Then, retreat. It pulls chairs and towels, a pair of sunglasses, mud and shells and foam. It is never the same, and yet, it hasn't changed; always new, but never different.

A little boy in a blue hat splashes next to me. He shows me the sandfleas in his bucket and asks: why are you writing in the water? It hasn't been long, but the landscape has shifted. Edges are softening then melting. Earth swallows earth swallows feet that slow in sinking. I am knee-deep in water. Is it rising? Am I deepening? The intricate networks are submerged, and the pools are engulfed in one giant lake. Layers of earth, water, and sky delaminate. They vanish once more. ■

EMBODIED SPACE

Constructing For The Body and Its Rituals

Blanchard Fagan

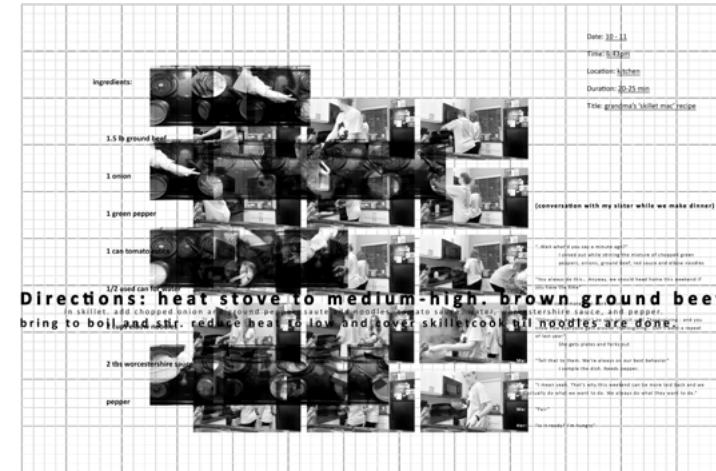
Chair: Bradley Walters
Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

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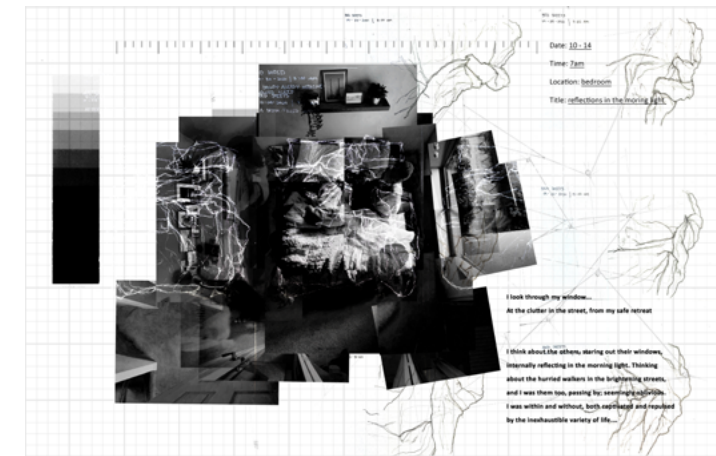
Exploring the marks of activity, the traces of time and the perception of place, this project seeks to capture the essence of inhabitation and proposes the development of an architectural character that reflects the body as transient impressions.

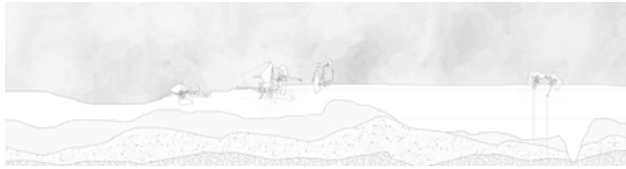
The scale of the body, relative to memory, involves remembering movement, phenomena, and emotions. There are specific movements that hold memories and aid in constructing the identity of spaces. When a human scale of operations is established within a place, the ideas of perception and choreography focuses on the conceptual understanding of memory, atmosphere, and form.

The idea of constructing space based on the body is the driver for this research. This design project begins with methods of studying the body and our daily experiences through observation, documentation, and repetition. Drawing becomes an iterative process that records this exploration, but it is also a means to engage the body and the hand. It is not a quantitative or data gathering method, rather the atmospheric, experiential, and immersive qualities of the body and its activities as the drivers for design. Its qualitative remnants create a visual vocabulary to produce an architecture that embodies the conceptual spirit of the body through physical and phenomenological form.



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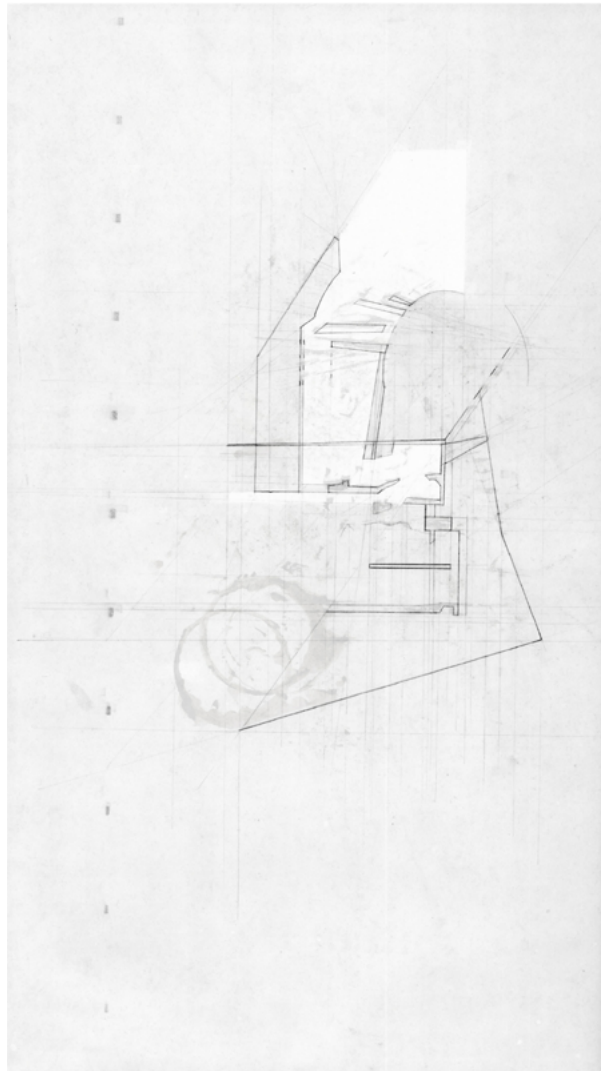


Site Section.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

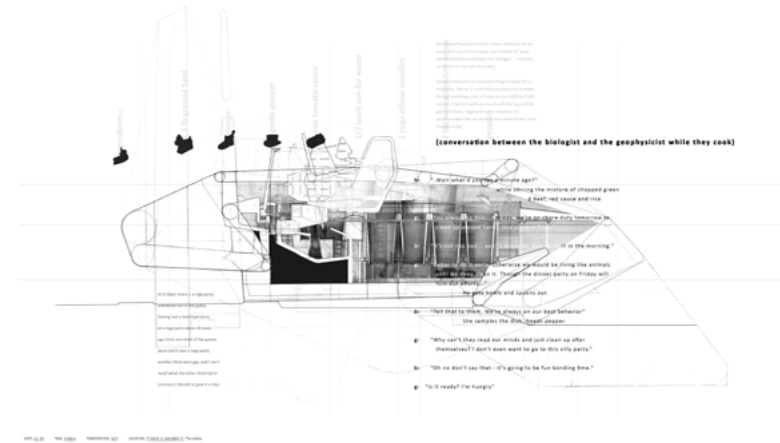
Spaces both house and shape bodily action. In a way, space is living. Lived experiences and memories are expressively and eternally embodied within space as places of inhabitation. Spaces are evocative of the memory of their creation, and they are specifically designed to the rituals of the everyday that happen within. I chose a place that I am comfortable with and habitually use, my apartment, to observe my own behavior and bodily interaction – to use sense of place to consider who it is we construct ourselves to be.

This project proposes an architecture that balances blurred space with refined geometry, enabling the underlying structure to disappear and the liveliness of inhabitation to be revealed. This research adopts atmospheric and aesthetic qualities of ritual and of the interaction of body within space and makes them tangible. The project contends the notion that our lived experience leaves a trace on architecture.

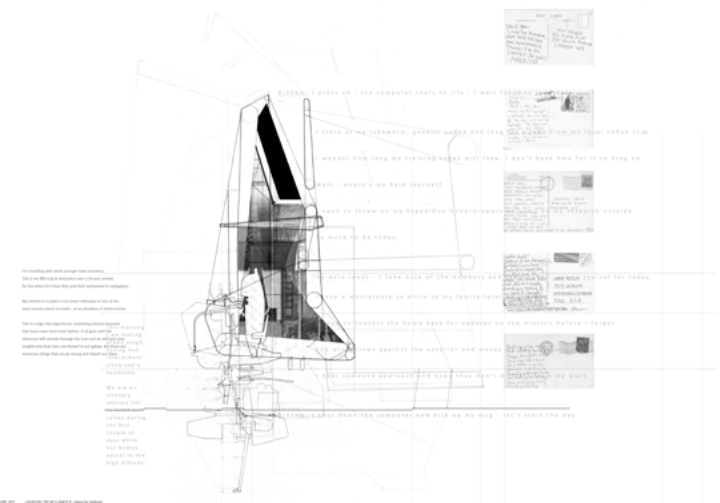




Hand Ritual.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey



ARCH 211 - THE SPACE - TRANSPARENT 01 - JEFFREY DEAN LINDNER - Thesis



ARCH 211 - THE SPACE - TRANSPARENT 01 - JEFFREY DEAN LINDNER - Thesis

The Gallery.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

Space for Solitude.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

SOMEDAY, YOU'RE GOING TO DIE

Recompose: A New Alternative
To Traditional Burial

Alan Maskin with Blair Payson and Bryan Samuel

*Principal/Owner, Olson Kundig
Seattle, Washington*

The following conversation includes three designers at different stages in their lives and careers: Alan Maskin, a principal/owner of Olson Kundig, has been practicing for over 30 years; Blair Payson has been at the firm since 2004 and became a principal/owner in 2022; Bryan Samuel, an emerging architect, has about five years of experience and joined the firm during the summer of 2021. Alan, Blair and Bryan recently completed the first facility for Recompose, a new alternative to traditional burial or cremation that converts human remains into soil, helping nourish new life after death.

Alan Maskin: Blair, do you recall the project coming into the office?

Blair Payson: I remember we were connected to our client, Recompose founder and CEO Katrina Spade, through Greg Lundgren, a local artist. She was working on an idea, which started as her thesis project in architecture school at the University of Massachusetts, that was all about reimagining death care and our relationship to death, as the living.

Bryan Samuel: Recompose was actually a project I had been aware of before even joining the firm. It was something that I was excited about and interested in, and I couldn't believe that I was going to have a chance to work on it. I didn't know what it even entailed, but I just knew the concept to work through something like that was really, really exciting.

Alan: It was exciting for me, too! I remember having my very first cup of tea with Katrina, and experiencing what I think happens to everyone when they first hear about this project, which is they start contemplating their own mortality – a sense of, “oh yeah, someday I'm going to die.” Followed quickly by the internal question, “could I or would I do this?” I immediately went there in my own mind and by the end of the conversation was pretty much convinced that this was something that not only would I do, but that I *should* do.

Blair: It's amazing where nuggets of ideas start. As a student, you have a road map of all these hoops you're going to jump through in your career – you get licensed, and then you work this many years, and then your role becomes this, then it changes to that. Alan, you didn't totally follow that path, and Katrina is another

example of somebody who didn't follow it. She got a completely new idea and then realized a project, not following any of the rules that you assume you have to follow.

Alan: It's not uncommon that your thesis project becomes something you work on – in some form, at some level – for the rest of your life. This happens to be one instance where, literally, her thesis project changed the world.

Blair: Opportunities like this one have a ripple effect that's bigger than the project or us or our firm, because of what it pushes us to do from a design perspective, and the conversations it allows us to have, like this one.

Alan: It's a part of our work that I find incredibly inspiring and energizing – working with entrepreneurs and innovators and people with big ideas, figuring out how to bring those ideas to fruition. Katrina may not have had the big budget and deep pockets that a tech entrepreneur would, but her ideas were just as big as any of theirs. She had the same fire.

Blair: Bryan, do you remember being asked to work on this project? You had just joined the firm, right?

Bryan: Yeah, it was my first week – I'd already had the most amazing few days of my life at this office, just talking to people and learning about their work. I remember during my first conversation with Blair about Recompose, he kind of jumped into updating me on the project, and we had been talking for maybe five minutes before he stopped and said, “I should probably ask, are you okay working on this?”

Blair: I should have led with that. “Welcome to Olson Kundig, are you afraid of death?”

Alan: Has your own mortality come up for either of you, working on a project like this? Did it push you into a different headspace? Blair: Well, that's interesting. I would say that death still feels far off for me. But it was humbling to work with the Recompose team, especially to see behind the scenes. Death care is a service that some people do all day long, very matter-of-factly. It was interesting to see the not-so-freaked-out side of death, it demystified it a little bit.



Alan: Most people are uncomfortable with death, and I think each of us had to come to terms with that, personally. I remember being in the facility and being surrounded by vessels that were actively composting bodies, and it stopped being an abstract concept to me and started being a real thing. It was kind of eerie, but at the same time so moving.

Blair: And something that wasn't possible before. If that was your final wish, the option didn't exist until now.

Bryan: Every time that we visited the client and the site, it never felt like we were surrounded by death. It wasn't front and center, but you can't not think about it, either.

Blair: Part of this project was understanding that they do take death very seriously – both the attention paid to the body and to the people coming to say goodbye. They are receiving people in all sorts of different situations. Sometimes it's a surprise, sometimes it's been planned, and they often don't know how people are going to react. People that are coming in probably don't know how they're going to react themselves.

Alan: It does strike me that death is a universal ritual that all human beings participate in – either with their own death or the loss of others. Is the death ritual similar to other processes? Is it different? Can it be innovative?

Bryan: Honestly, I thought of the ritual of death most when we were doing the photoshoot at the end of the project, because at that point we were re-enacting a ceremony and it felt very different than walking through the project site.

Alan: You're right, we recreated that sequence for our final documentation process, for the photographs. And as the eldest person in the room, I was the designated dead person. The perspective of lying in a shroud, having someone wash your hand or put flowers on your body, was really profound.

Bryan: Maybe in that sense – it wasn't like I was truly mourning or sad, but being present for a ceremony definitely felt very closely tied to the idea of life and death.

Blair: It's not only a process that we all will go through, but it's the most ritualistic natural process we've got. Every animal, every plant, every piece of wood, goes through this process. In terms of a ritual – I know this sounds hokey – it's the circle of life ritual, it completes all other rituals. We can layer on some of our other human rituals, but at its base, it completes the chorus of core rituals.

Alan: There was a point when we realized it would be beneficial to describe this new process, to show what Katrina was creating. We wanted to reflect the level of care and to reinvent the ritual, I think, experientially, but through design. We created a series of renderings, imagining the sequence of what happens when people arrive – what do they see? How are they greeted? What are the colors? What's the materials that this place should be about? How do they gather? How do they prepare the body? How do they meet to have some form of ceremony or ritual? And then where does the body go from there? It forced all of us to imagine what that ritual looked like as a sequence of moving through spaces.

Blair: Often our clients are our closest collaborators, and that was definitely true with Recompose, especially because Katrina was trained as an architect.

Alan: When you're creating a design prototype for an idea that's never happened before, your client is going to teach you the most, and it's that process that helped determine the line of comfort between future clients and direct confrontation with a human composting facility.

Blair: For the living, the process can be so mysterious. We thought a lot about how disconcerting the experience can be. If you go to a typical funeral home, you don't know what's around the corner. You don't know when you're going to see the body. You don't know what the next step of the process is. So, here, the design is guided by the idea that as you progress through these spaces, you always have a glimpse of what's coming next, so you can prepare yourself or at least you're not surprised.

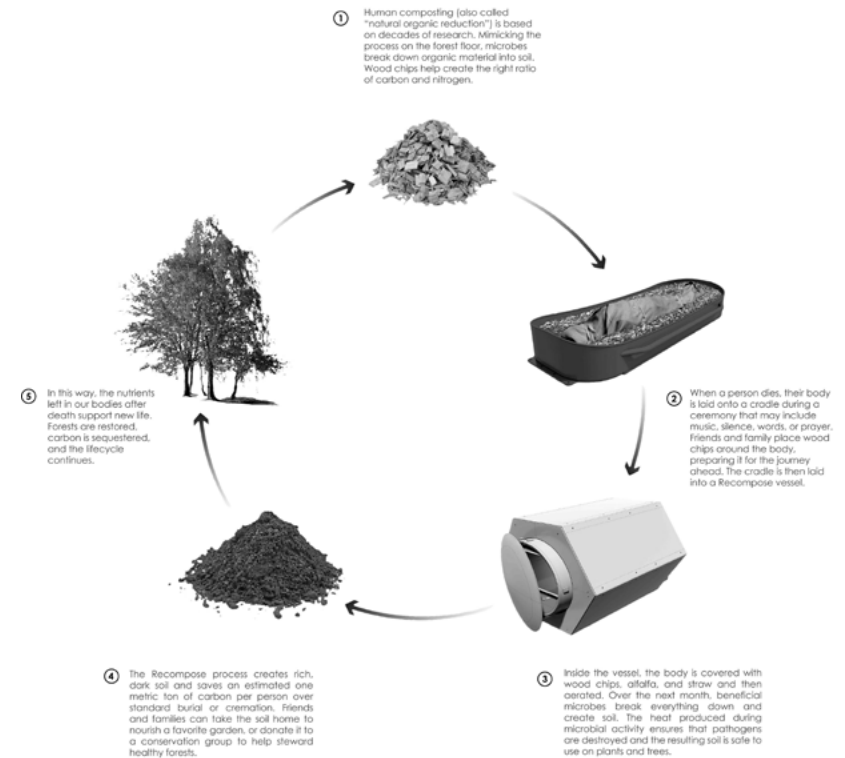
Alan: The ceremony space has vertical windows with green glass that look onto the vessel stack beyond. The idea is light comes through like you would find in a forest, filtering between the trees. It demystifies the experience and it's all related to what their loved one will become in the future.

Bryan: The big change when you look back at our original renderings was that we'd placed the ceremony space in the middle of everything. Holding the ceremony directly in the middle of all those vessels was not the ideal environment, there was too much noise. We wanted the process to be transparent, but we found out that much transparency was too much.

Alan: We still felt that people would respond to having reminders of the contributions that their body or their loved one's body would make in the future, and ultimately the best way to capture that was through nature. You enter through a garden, and we even encouraged our clients to create a mural on the outside of the building, which really sets the stage – these images of compost and flowers and a garden. People arrive and they can see right away this reminder that their loved ones are doing something really positive.

Bryan: Recompose is in the middle of this industrial island and they wanted to be certain that when you came upon it that you knew you were in the right place, because when you first turn into that street, you're not sure, but you know when you've arrived. It stands out.

how human composting works



Alan: The mural wraps around the entire building. For those who are coming and driving in with a truck to actually pick up compost, it's breadcrumbs. It's guiding you along the pathway to pick up your loved one. Which is a nice gesture, I think.

Blair: And when you get inside, from the lobby, you have a glimpse of the ceremony space, and even through that a little bit of a filtered view beyond to the vessels in the distance. You know when along the journey you're going to encounter the body, your loved one, and you can prepare yourself. This project really impacted how I think about the potential of architecture in creating that pathway.

Bryan: And not to mention the end of that path you're drawn to the light. I don't think this is the metaphor that we were going for – light at the end of the tunnel – but there's light filtered through the glass like light in a forest. You see that as soon as you come in, just painting the floor, your path forward.

Alan: I can't stop thinking about the idea of memory and space. It seems like our memories of the people in our lives are often a consequence of the ways that we interact with them in their bodies. If this is a space where a final memory is made of a person and then their body is out of the equation, every memory of them beyond this point is going to be in retrospect. Does that make sense?

Blair: It's a new memory in the sense of, my relative is choosing this process. It tells you a bit more about them than you maybe knew earlier in their life.

Alan: Absolutely. I think that's an experience many people have at a memorial service, "oh, I had no idea that so-and-so did this or that."

Bryan: Some people might say that the last moment that they were alive was the last memory, and this is the first reflection point, or it's a different kind of memory at the funeral.

Alan: I hear what you're saying. I hope it's a long, long time before you guys are here, when your parents or loved ones are in this position. The most potent memories of my father and my mother and others I've lost are the last times that I saw them. Here we've designed a space where you have your final encounter with the person you've lost, with their body, and then it enters the transitional vessel and the door closes. It's also a way of saying goodbye to any new memories that will be constructed around that person.

Blair: That's something about the laying-in space that I hadn't really thought about before. Unlike a traditional memorial service

where you might stand next to a casket, pay your respects and then leave the body as you leave the room, it's quite different in the case of Recompose. The body is physically pushed through an opening in the wall to the vessels in the adjacent space where the process continues. For me, it conveys a feeling more akin to sending along rather than leaving behind.

Bryan: When I think about death rituals, and rituals in general, one thing I wonder is why we do it or who is it for? We took great care in soundproofing the ceremony space for the benefit of visitors and loved ones. We were especially concerned about the ceremonial vessel, which makes one big hole in the middle of our acoustic wall. The side effect was that the ceremonial vessel became a relatively sound isolated pod, a quiet space for reflection and transition – for the body.

Alan: The body itself was probably given the most attention during design. There's even a message that's inscribed on the interior of the vessel, it's there for the dead person. A poetic idea of Katrina's, I think.

Bryan: The quote that was written was taken from a poem by a Recompose employee, A.O. Monroe: "May we not live in fear of decomposing, but in awe and gratitude of our future re-composing."

Blair: The design provides a space for many different types of ritual and interpretation. I'm fascinated by the science behind the process, that the composting process creates, naturally, some pretty high temperatures for about seven days. The body is generating this heat and there's nothing for me more poetic than thinking about that as the soul parting ways with the physical body. It wouldn't surprise me if there's some parallel in religious understandings of death, the same amount of time.

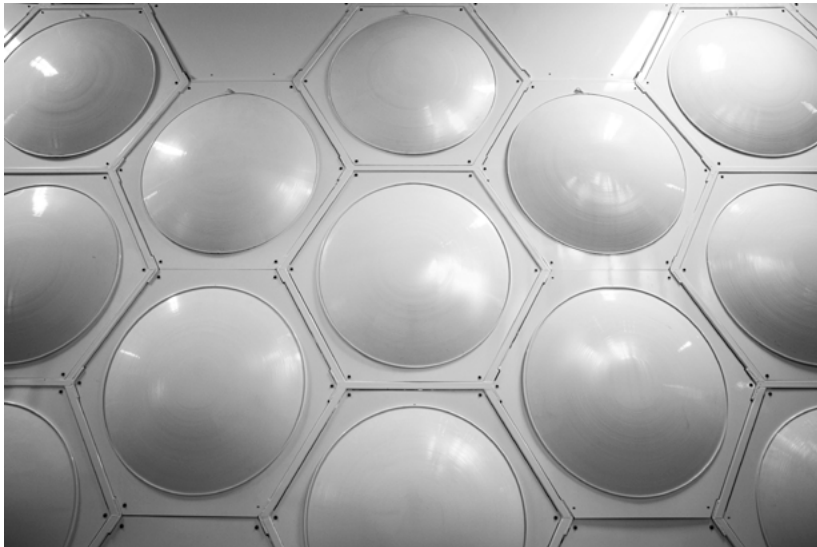
Bryan: I remember Katrina mentioning that the soil that's created is pretty much indistinguishable from regular soil, and being surprised. You want to think that if it's a human being, something special and completely unique would be produced, but it's just as poetic that it's the same as any other soil. The body is returned to the earth and it's just part of the normal ecosystem. Nothing else. Alan: There's another ritual piece that's been a surprise even to Recompose. Once the bodies are turned into compost, the family has a number of options. They can take a small box of that soil home, much like someone might take ashes. They can even take all of it home, a full cubic yard, if they want to put it in their own gardens. Or it can go to a sustainable forest at Bells Mountain and become part of a larger network of the growth of trees. But what has surprised them, and I think this is super interesting, is that way more people show up with trucks and want to take the soil away with them.



Recompose Headquarters III
Photo by Austin Wilson



Recompose Headquarters IV
Photo by Austin Wilson



Blair: It's kind of like flipping grieving from being something that's only sorrowful to something that's more joyful. I mean, I think that if you have something to see that's growing, how much more optimistic and reassuring is that than just dwelling on memories and the fear of having lost?

Alan: I always struggle with the term "celebration of life," because it's not usually how I feel at the moment, but it is a cause for celebration actually, that what people are doing is positive.

Blair: Don't you think it's kind of interesting that we looked at a bunch of spaces and some spaces just didn't feel right? We kept coming back to spaces that were almost church-like or chapel-like, that had symmetry and texture and volume.

Alan: We were looking at industrial spaces and they kept conjuring up aspects of other forms of architecture that we associate with spirituality or religion. And if it did that for us, it would do it for others. Those connotations, in terms of space and massing, serve us on a subconscious human level – it allows the space to be inclusive, to accommodate Orthodox spiritual beliefs and atheistic ones.

Bryan: I mean, talking about the circle of life, this could be extended to the idea of a refurbishment rather than a new building. There's a real conscious effort throughout this project to leave traces of what existed before. This place was an unusual building to begin with, not only just in its architecture, but there was a family who was living here upstairs. They had half walls dividing the spaces, their windows faced out towards an industrial working zone, trucks would roll by their front door. And there are traces of that in the building still – weird paint colors, raw concrete. I think that does fit into the mission, as well.

Alan: On almost every project that we remodel, we very intentionally don't try to erase the soul of what preceded us in the spaces. By saving parts and pieces, it becomes part of the story. Recompose will just be one chapter, one significant chapter, in the life of this building.

Bryan: The next tenant will definitely be sharing the story of what used to be here before!

Alan: What have both of you learned about ritual? This project is literally reinventing a ritual that all humans on the planet throughout the history of humanity have experienced or will experience. What do you think about ritual now that you've participated in supporting an organization that looks to reinvent that?

Blair: I keep thinking it both takes more care and it's more flexible than I thought it was going to be. I think there's so many little things that can throw a ritual off-balance. If just a few details aren't right, the whole thing feels wrong. Yet at the same time, with this client, there was a lot of openness about redefining that ritual, finding new things that felt right. That was exciting to me, discovering that it's not all rigid and pre-formed.

Bryan: When I first heard about Recompose, the first thing I thought was, why would it matter how someone chooses to deal with their own death or their family member's death? Why would it matter to other people? It seems like an interesting thing to have an opinion about, but it's clear that, for so many people, how things have always been done is how they should always continue to be done.

Alan: My sense of the funeral or death-related rituals is that they're tied super closely to traditions and the past. We come to them and we know how to behave because we've done it before. The great reinvention of this project is that there's a new final layer where our loved ones are actually adding something positive as their very last contribution as a human being, after their death. It's the ability to walk through forests or breathe clean air and realize that your loved ones are part of that much larger network.

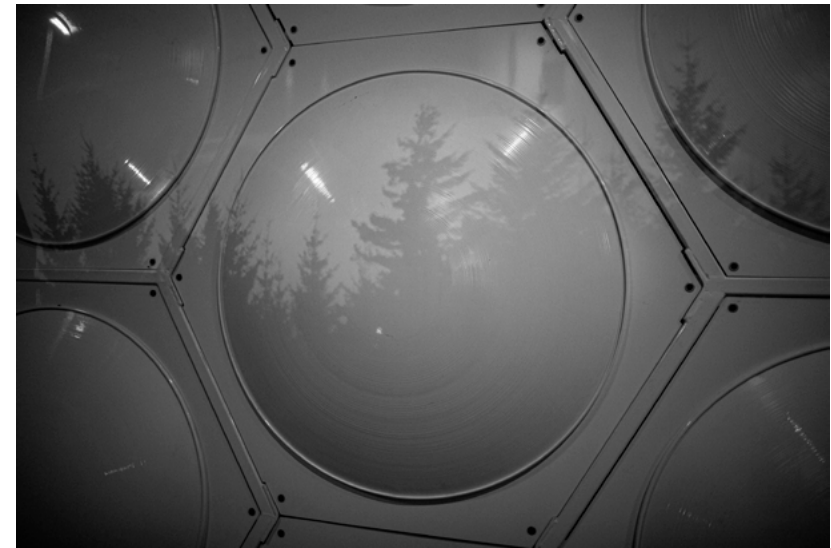
Bryan: I think one of the major successes with Recompose, or one of the reasons why it is appealing more so than other alternative burials, is because it ties back to something that is way more elemental. It goes back to nature. And if you can make that connection to something that precedes human rituals, you have a much stronger chance of success than if you're trying to invent something from scratch. There's a lot of new technologies and new movements that are happening, but this relies on an older, more sacred, more ingrained ritual in our human path.

Alan: Another coworker shared with me that his young son was walking with a teacher, and he turned to a tree and said, "Wouldn't it be great if that was my grandma?" Our colleague had been talking with him about this project and these ideas, and as a result this five- or six-year-old had completely reimagined death and the afterlife.

Blair: I love that. Architects can get hung up on the specific thing they're creating, but this is part of something so much bigger and more important than the three of us. It was a big deal to Katrina and her team, and to everyone at the firm, even our children and our families.

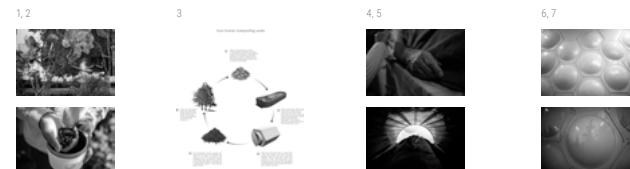
Alan: It's invited a new kind of engagement with and dialogue about life and death – and I hope it continues long after I'm a tree. ■

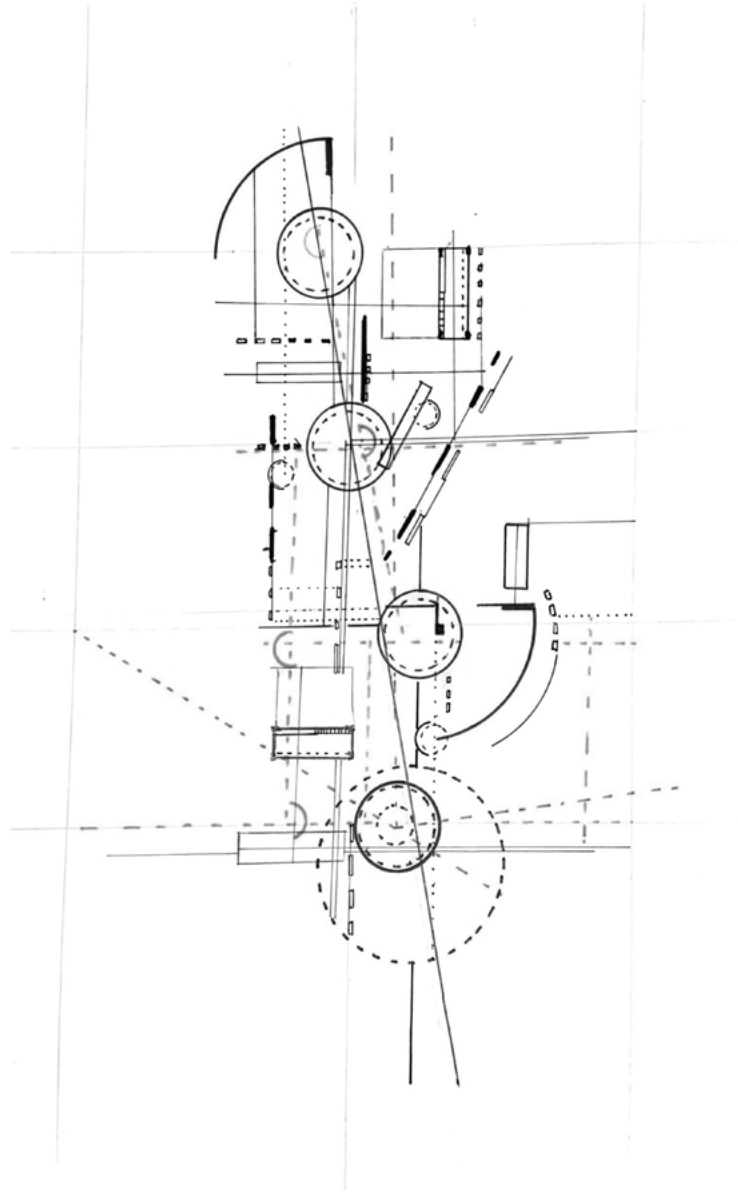
To learn more about Recompose, visit www.recompose.life.



Illustrations:

- 1 *Recompose Headquarters I*, Photo by Austin Wilson
- 2 *Recompose Headquarters II*, Photo by Austin Wilson
- 3 *How Human Composting Works*, Olson Kundig
- 4 *Recompose Headquarters III*, Photo by Austin Wilson
- 5 *Recompose Headquarters VI*, Photo by Austin Wilson
- 6 *Recompose Headquarters V*, Photo by Austin Wilson
- 7 *Recompose Headquarters VI*, Photo by Austin Wilson





Brooke Carlson, *The Winged Messenger*.
Graduate Design 2, Fall 2022.
Professor Jason Alread and Mark McGlothlin.



a space becomes a place.
Brooke Carlson and Avery Dunavant. Spring 2022.
Photograph: Avery Dunavant, March 2023.

A MORNING COFFEE

a ritual of gratitude

Mark Ignacio Wilson

Designer at Thoughtcraft Architects

UF SoA M.Arch 2021, B.Des 2019

VORKURS Alumnus

It is six in the morning. Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is still dark outside. Yet through the window, I can see a deep navy blue hue beginning to bleed into the inky sky. The Light is on its way, and in rhythm, my morning ritual is starting.

I roll myself out of bed and put on last night's cozy clothes. The layers are much needed as the air is cold these days. It is December now, Winter is on its way. Like the last brown leaves dangling on the limbs of the tree out the window, for now, Fall holds on.

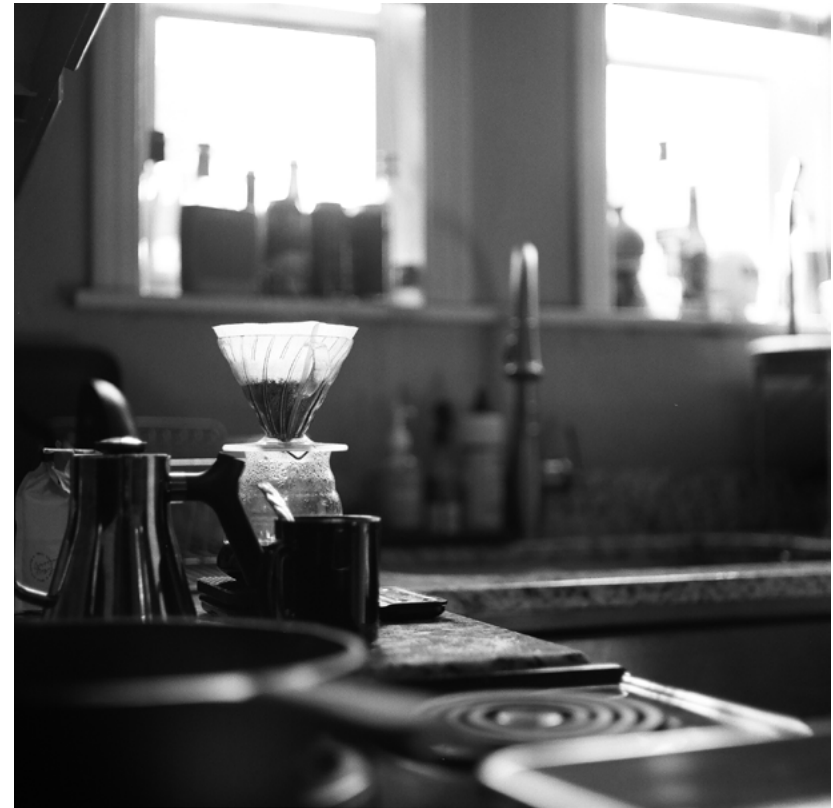
Things are changing constantly all around us. From the moment you started reading this, so much has changed. Can you feel it? Are you noticing it? I often do not. In this contemporary world, I am too busy or distracted. It is only during my morning ritual of making coffee that I can shield myself from the productive demands of life, and see the simple things. Rituals allow one to see, to feel, to notice things everyday. They command our focus, letting our problems, our worries, and responsibilities melt away. They are time set aside to be simply oneself.

Rituals are the gift of time.

—

I cross through the linear succession of doors, past the living room, into the kitchen. In this apartment, the kitchen is strangely the largest room. I am thankful for that. My first ritual of the day unfolds here. Every day for a brief moment, this kitchen is my church. The hardwood top of the central island is my altar. The walls, my congregation.

Outside, there are a few stirs with an occasional car passing by. On the weekdays, people in New England get up early. The sun sets at four in the afternoon so the clock is already ticking. Everyone can feel it. Sweet urgency, for as soon as the Light comes, so it goes. For now, there is stillness in the morning air. I break the silence with the harsh, rapid clicks of the gas burner. Blue flames jet out, heat rises to the underside of my kettle. Sometimes, I think of distant ancestors, striking flint to make this very flame. I am grateful to be alive today.



There is already water in the kettle. Filtered, soft, and at room temperature for now. Those details, while they seem small, are essential to the taste and texture of the coffee. As the water heats, I gather my tools: first the scale, then a tempered glass carafe, and a Hario V60 coffee dripper. There are three parts to this particular dripper. I gently put them together: I slide the slippery rubber gasket into the olivewood collar. I always run my hand over the smooth texture of the olivewood. The cold glass cone sets into the gasket with a satisfying, but soft, click. I set all of the tools neatly on the island.

The water is still heating. Eighty degrees Fahrenheit. Next comes the coffee grinder and the beans to feed it. I prefer darker roasts as the weather cools. These beans are from Guatemala, roasted down the road at Broadsheet Roasters. I store my beans these days in a vacuum-sealed container. To release the air, equalizing it with the room, like some sort of airlock in a space station, one presses a center button. Air rushes out with a satisfying hiss. My nose begins to recognize the sweet smell of fresh coffee. In an instant, I am connected to core memories of cafes in now faraway lands. Pigafetta in Vicenza, Elixir Coffee in Philadelphia, and the Sun Shoppe in my hometown of Melbourne, Florida to name a few. Smell, out of all the senses, connect us to our memory in the most powerful way. I am in all those places, I am also here now.

I grab my coffee scoop that is resting in the bed of beans. This is my first of many decisions of the day: do I make 200 ml of coffee or 300 ml? I have class later today; it is always a power move to drink black coffee while teaching, so I choose the latter. Twenty one ounces of coffee goes into the cup. My coffee grinder is manual. Not because I am pretentious, but because I am too cheap to buy a good electric one. Although, I do love to feel the vibrations of the coffee beans being ground down. Perhaps, I am a bit pretentious. I flip the measured beans into the top of the grinder, replace the top crank, and screw in the basin. Two taps to settle the beans and I crank until there are no more beans to grind. Oh, I do love the feeling of those coffee beans being ground down.

Satisfaction, sweet satisfaction. Is it too much to ask for?

We should be satisfied in our work, in our daily tasks, and in the paths we take. As people in the world (especially as designers), everyday we are asked to make things. Sometimes these things we have to make are difficult, complex, and highly technical. These days, I am a practicing designer who teaches on the side. My days can be highly varied. At one hour I am modifying a window jamb detail, being conscious of a hundred parts lapping into one small space. At another hour, I am crafting an email to a consultant. If they are behind in their coordination, I need to

be able to walk that interpersonal tightrope of creating urgency without projecting panic. At the next hour, I am consoling a student on their dissatisfaction with their drawing. They are letting the desire for controlled perfection conceal the fact that they have a drawing that is brimming with possibility. At another hour, I am sketching out iterations of an entry sequence and 3-D modeling it in Sketchup. I have to think of the correct thickness of everything I draw: I must be conscious of clearances, be aware of how it affects the look, and how it addresses the overall narrative. Designing can be hard. Life can be hard. While I am grateful for the challenge, sometimes one just needs to do something they can definitely win at. Rituals offer a reprieve from this turbulent world. They are shelter. A place to find consistency. A place to have those precious small victories.

Did you have a bad day at work? Go make yourself some comfort food with a tried and true recipe. One taste of that soup, that bowl of mac and cheese, a fork of baked potato with melted butter and I guarantee the bad day, at least for a moment, will melt away.

A daily ritual practice, like making a home cooked dinner or making coffee, is healing in a hurtful world.

—

The water is not to temperature yet. One hundred and seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit. I grab the rest of my tools: a paper filter, a horse-hair brush, and this Grey Goose cocktail stirrer that Molly's mom gave to me (I use it to stir the coffee grinds). I arrange everything neatly on the island.

With all of the tools arranged, the coffee beans ready to go, and the water almost to temperature, I have arrived at a brief intermission. Often, I use this time wisely to put away some dishes. However, neither out of laziness nor interest, I take a look out the window. The sun is up now, but it is hidden behind a veil of gray clouds. It is going to be one of those New England days where I will be thankful for the supplemental vitamin D in my multivitamin.

My apartment is next to a parking lot, so my east facing windows have unobstructed views. I can see people walking down the street, the dog-walkers, the strollers with bundled up children. I see the buildup of morning traffic under the naked tree branches. In the distance, the tops of the triple deckers with packed up roof decks, behind their silhouettes, rise the glass towers that make up the Boston skyline.

This window is my perch. Not too far above the ground, I am safe and protected. Sometimes, I find myself thinking of the hundreds

of thousands of people I can “see” from my perch. With my mind’s eye, I can peer through the walls. I can feel all of the souls of this city moving about their business. Perhaps, there is someone looking out their window too. I like to think we are thinking of each other; two perfect strangers who will never know one another.

Rituals allow one to connect to the oneness of everything. They provide the time to look outside of oneself, to look within and then to ponder that connection. This is a daily exercise in strengthening the connective tissues between our soul and the soul of the world. One cup of coffee at a time, we become more one with our environment. Besides the personal benefits of this practice of connection building, it too benefits us as designers. If it is the goal of architecture to provide nurturing and loving spaces, we first, as the prospective creators of those spaces, must love the world and our place in it. The seeds of equitable, quiet, and humble spaces are planted in the souls of grounded makers who have sound relationships with their collaborators, their communities, and, most importantly, themselves.

A good ritual is a practice of finding and nurturing our love for the world.

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The gauge on the kettle reads two hundred degrees. Perfect. It is time to start. Taking the kettle off the flame, I set it on a cork surface on the island to the right of the dripper. I press start on the timer and get to work.

I pick up the kettle and carefully tilt the spout, aiming for the center of the grounds. As the thin stream of hot water pours from the spout, so rises the dewy steam from the gurgling bed of freshly ground coffee. The people in the business call this the bloom. This is the first of three of them. The goal of this first one is to wet the grounds, allowing them to off-gas. Pouring, as the water wells up from the bottom of the cone, the forces of displacement ride the conic walls pushing the grinds up around the outer edge. While in the center, the force of the stream pushes the grinds down. What results is a spectacle of movement. It is dazzling on the days when I really take the time to watch it. With the steam rises that scent of coffee again. This scent is different from the first opening of the canister. It is beautiful how the smell evolves during this whole process. As I look into the dripper, watching the smooth consistency of the stream, a thin layer of dew begins to settle on my face, a blessing on these dry late-Fall days.

The sun is beginning to peak over the high rises of Boston across the Charles River. It will remain low, casting an ever-warming light through my southeast-facing windows.



This act of making coffee places me in the present. But too, mysteriously, this ritual connects me to my past selves. I connect to myself, standing in my apartment in Gainesville. My kitchen was smaller then. I would sometimes rest my scale on the electric coils of the stove. I have gas now. I connect to myself, standing in my childhood home. I would bring my whole setup home during the summer. I would either wake up after or before everyone. In my humble home, making coffee became my solace; a crucial opportunity to be alone. Sometimes, on weekends, my mother, who is an early riser like myself, would often come into the kitchen and watch what I was doing. When a Keurig was available, why would I take the time and effort to make coffee this way?

“Because I have to.” I would respond. That response worked then and still does now.

In addition to creating a feeling of presence and reverence for the past, rituals allow us to envision our futures. With freshly brewed coffee in my hand, I can see my future self now. I am standing in the kitchen of a house of my own. The beautiful sound of my children playing in the background. Perhaps they would watch me conduct my ritual with the same curiosity that my mom had long ago. Maybe they will help me grind my coffee and feel how nice it is to feel the grinding of coffee in your hands. The future holds exciting changes and chapters, but some things will remain constant. I will always have myself, the sun above, the ground beneath my feet, and my rituals. You see, this ritual is a through-line, a steady constant thread that I can trace my mind over as I navigate the depths of my memory. Rituals are a vehicle. And in this vehicle, we can ride waves of time freely. Every day, when we do our rituals, our timelines fold on themselves and collapse time into an incomprehensible singular yet infinite moment.

Rituals allow us to be timeless beings, untouchable, unfathomable, and surrounded by everything we love.

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The first bloom is done. I've poured just about one hundred and twenty milliliters of water over the coffee. I let the water drain down a bit until the beans begin to look less saturated. With the next pour, I rotate in the opposite direction. Rotating the spout counter-clockwise, I pour a stream of water until the grounds are fully submerged in the mixture. Below, in the carafe, I can see the deep brown coffee drip down, causing rapid ripples to bounce back and forth.

Rituals are done out of necessity. They are actions that prepare, ground and touch our everyday lives. Putting the dishes away, checking our mirrors before we drive, stretching when we get up from our office chairs. There is always a clear benefit. If there wasn't one, we would never keep up with them. In the case of my ritual coffee routine, the benefit is clear: caffeine. While there is a material and bodily benefit, there is also a more cosmic one. Rituals allow me to notice things. How do I feel? Where am I? What do I care about? By approaching an activity as a practice, where we revisit a world, again and again, we can learn our answers to these fundamental questions. With daily practice, one is able to measure the environment. A good ritual is a constant. And while we are engaged in this constant, we can detect even the smallest of changes.

Rituals are a barometer for change in our world.

Two hundred and twenty five milliliters of water poured. Only a little bit more. It is time for the third and final bloom.

Even with all of these numbers to keep track of, I am never too precise with this process. A few grams of coffee over? Brew time a little too long? Too short? A couple milliliters of water over? Who cares? This ritual has taught me that loose consistency trumps obsessive precision every time. Close enough is good enough. The coffee will still taste better than Starbucks. The slightly crooked line you drew will still read straight. The future inhabitants of the building you are designing will not notice that the mullions spacing does not align with the coursing pattern of the floor that you spent an entire day perfecting. I am not saying that we should give up and make wild and reckless moves. Of course, we must strive for correctness. That is why I use a scale, a stepped grinder and a thermometer. I have set up a framework for a successful ritual. As designers, we must also set up frameworks for our consistent success. Detail families, technologically proven materials and systems, performance evaluation tools to test and measure our decisions. Our tools create a framework for a loose consistency, providing us space for tolerance.

In that narrow space that ritual practice creates, our inventive spirit can play.

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The scale reads roughly three hundred milliliters. The grinds are still submerged in water. Taking the Grey Goose cocktail stirrer, I stir the mixture one half circle to the right, then one half circle to the left. This is done to make sure there is an even extraction and the bed of grinds are flat in the bottom of the cone. There is a little joy to this. Contrary to the instructions one gets as a child, I get to play with my food.

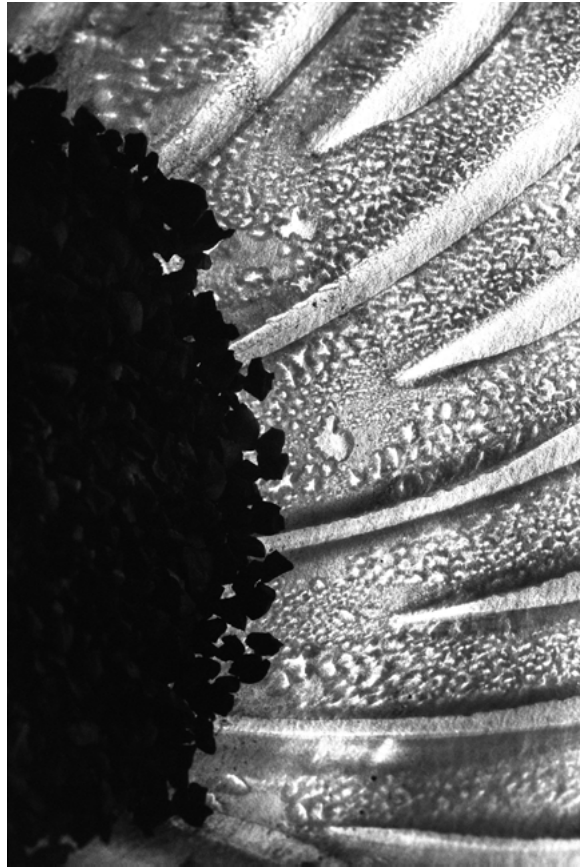
The last ounces of water have passed through the bed of coffee. A miracle, like water into wine, happens in this modest Cambridge apartment every morning. I was able to make something of value. Not monetarily valuable, but enriching in a more immediate and profound way.

It is now time for consumption. I use the last bit of hot water to heat my coffee cup. I have gone through many cups. Many have broken, others have gone out of favor. Today, I am using a titanium camping mug. It is impossibly light. It makes me feel as if I was camping on an out-of-reach trail. The smell of cedar and pine. But today, I am just in my apartment.

I swirl the hot water in my mug to prepare it to receive the coffee. I swirl and swirl until I begin to feel the heat begin to make it through the wall of the mug to my hand. This mug, being titanium, the heat transfers almost instantly. In my other mugs, like the thick glazed ceramic one, this process may take thirty seconds. This ritual is a daily date with materials. It is an opportunity to build a sense for material quality. Intentionally or unintentionally, we interact with and touch materials everyday. The soft rubber shell of our mouse; carefully and thoughtfully sculpted by a team of product designers. The piles of fallen leaves that gather at crosswalks; an oasis of natural cushion in a landscape of hard and unforgiving asphalt. These interactions, if we take the time to notice them, allow us to build a repertoire with our material world. As designers, we are tasked with arranging and composing material in an intentional way. We have a natural desire to



Mark I. Wilson, *Morning Dew I*, Cambridge, 2022.



Mark I. Wilson, *Morning Dew II*, Cambridge, 2022.

control materials, forcing them to do this and that. Perhaps, like in the teachings of Kahn, where we “ask the brick what it wants to be”, we should listen rather than speak for materials.¹

Through a daily ritual practice, we can intentionally interact with materials, so we can learn how to listen to them.

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The coffee is done now. It sits at the bottom of the carafe, a rich, deep brown and outlined by a thin amber layer. Steam rises from the cone, dissipating into the air about ten inches above the dripper. I lift the dripper from the carafe, pivot my body one hundred and eighty degrees and set it in the sink.

As I swirl the cup to take the first sip of coffee, I am often washed with a dull feeling of gratefulness. It is never an overwhelming feeling but instead, it is small. Its signal is just strong enough for my soul to register and acknowledge.

This subtle gratefulness is my daily prayer. I am thankful for this coffee and all it represents. This coffee is the product of effort, innovation, and, admittedly, a small tinge of colonialism. These beans were harvested in far off lands by people I will never know, carefully packaged and transported across the ill-tempered and unfathomable oceans, then brought from port to warehouse to vehicle to roaster. Next, these beans are then sorted and precisely roasted to a perfect degree. Then portioned, sealed, and delivered in snazzy packaging to the Whole Foods just down the street. Next, they are purchased with hard earned money. Behind the veil of currency lives a career enabled by my parents, my luck, and hard years of education. Here is where I feel so fortunate. I spent the first 18 years of my life behind the curve. Slow at school, slow at sports, slow to open up to others, slow to connect to the world. All that time in the dark sits quietly beneath the person holding this cup. In moments like this feeling of gratefulness, I let the darkness rise up and mix in with the light. Gratitude exists in that diluted mix. You see, by powers beyond me I rose from the darkness, and everyday I am still making steps towards the light.

A ritual of gratitude, like this coffee routine, are the steps in a staircase to the Light.

I swirl the water in the cup, gradually heating it as I did with the carafe. I, too, swirl the coffee in the carafe. They say it mixes the flavors of the coffee, so each sip has a consistent taste. I am not sure if they are telling the whole truth, but after years of muscle memory, it feels wrong if I don't swirl it. Mid-swirl, I tip the carafe, pouring the fresh coffee into my mug. There is a new smell in the air. There is a sound, like lapping waves but sped up double speed. As I write this, I can hear it now.



¹ Louis Kahn. 'My Architect: A Son's Journey by Nathaniel Kahn'. Master class at Penn, 1971.

Holding the mug to my nose, I take a whiff of the coffee, give it a swirl, and take a deep sip.

Active rituals are a path to connect, to understand, and to love the world that surrounds us. This path to that profound and meaningful love is what I hope to advocate for. I hope that describing my rituals in this way will inspire you to take stock of and re-invest in the rituals of your life. This personal recollection will lead you to your own unique relationship with the world. Rituals are a way to, as Pallasmaa puts it, "settle ourselves in the world."² Allowing us to reconcile our differences, creating a profound and lasting love with existence.

I lower the cup after I take the first sip. The warmth of the liquid settles in my empty stomach. In a space between my tongue, my nose, and my mind, I begin to call out the sensations. Behind the typical taste of coffee, hides sensual gems to discover. The taste of fresh banana bread with lots of roasty brown sugar notes, the smell of dull flowers sitting on a bed of soft dirt, the calming touch of aloe lotion on sunburnt skin.

Through this ritual, my senses can ride the waves of my memories.

Predicting the future; I am a time-traveler.
Holding this warm cup; I am a material-appreciator.
Standing in my kitchen, on my perch; I am a home-maker.
Warm with gratefulness; I am a wound-healer.
Connecting to my world; I am a love-builder.

I feel it all and then it fades.

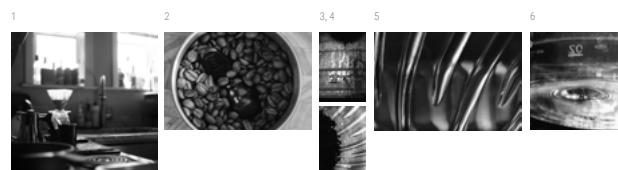
Rituals are a temporal experience. It is only through repeated practice that we can come to learn and respect them.

I am full and I am empty. I am here, wherever here is. ■



Illustrations:

- 1 Mark I. Wilson, *Light Shining on the Pour Over*, Gainesville, 2020.
- 2 Mark I. Wilson, *Steam in the Sun*, Cambridge, 2022.
- 3 Mark I. Wilson, *Morning Dew I*, Cambridge, 2022.
- 4 Mark I. Wilson, *Morning Dew II*, Cambridge, 2022.
- 5 Mark I. Wilson, *A Spectacle of Light*, Cambridge, 2022.
- 6 Mark I. Wilson, *A Ritual of Gratitude*, Cambridge, 2022.



² Pallasmaa, Juhani, *Eyes of the Skin*. (West Sussex: Wiley, 2012), 76.

DARK

Architecture Towards The Unknown

Christopher Martinez

Chair: Nina Hofer
Co-Chair: Hui Zou

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While some would say we as humans inhabit the world of light, there might be something to be said of the world of the dark.

So, we begin with the night. As day transitions to night, the veil of light falls to reveal the cosmos above. The cosmos, while beyond our own earthly existence, can serve as a tool to orienting, a universal context. We cannot reach the heavens above (although some might say science brings the cosmic and worldly planes ever closer), but we can understand, and we can imagine. This is the realm of this research; through darkness and shadow elevated by architectural methods, can we reach towards the tension between understanding and imagination?

A series of toolsets, methodologies, and ways of (understanding and imagining) formed through reaching into the field between understanding and imagination.

It begins with the sky, and the cosmos within it. The tools for reaching above were constructed, operated by the body, translating movements of the hand to movements of the earth and stars. Analytical studies work across this method, diagramming this methodology. At its core, this was a personal operation between understanding and imagination. Reaching for orientation within this world, platforming the emotional experience of inhabiting the tension between understanding and imagination.

How does one begin to architecturalize emotional experience, outer and inner worlds, and the tension between the understood and imagination?

The typology of the courtyard presented itself as an incredibly fertile precedent that reached across human experience. A space that exists both inside and out, reaching across the bounds of inner and outer understanding and imagination, framing the worlds above and within. A contemplative space, outward with an inward focus (or perhaps the other way around). While this spatial typology embodies these characteristics, the term itself is limiting to a basic typology. To understand the courtyard not simply as courtyard, but rather as a vessel of shadow is more appropriate. The courtyard is the tool for understanding the relationship between space, shadow, and inward/outward focus. The space between understanding and imagination.

The spaces are not static. Rather, to inhabit the space between understanding and imagination is an active process regardless of the tools employed. While architecture may be able to elevate this process, it is ultimately left to the individual to make of it what they will.

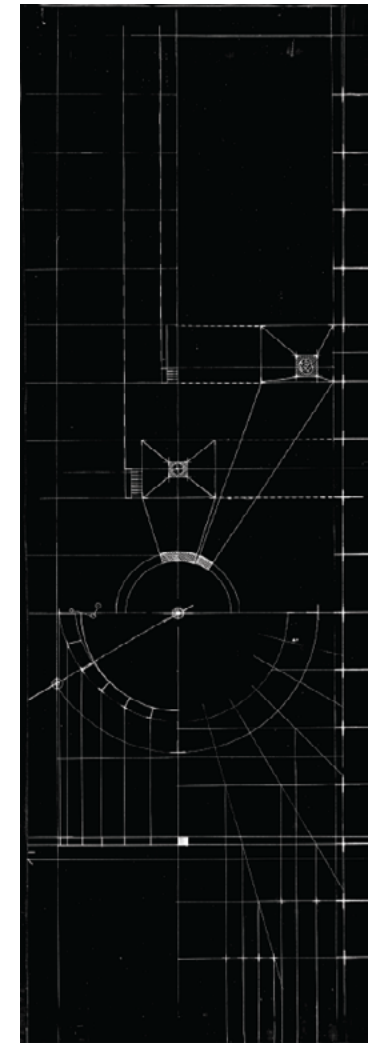
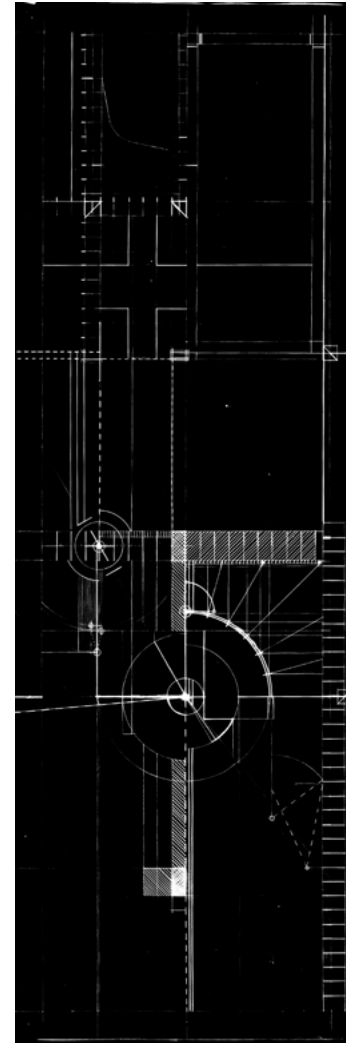


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A Walk Through The Swamp 1 + 2.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Fall 2021
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

At the Edge of the Wood.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Fall 2021
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey



Zeroing.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Fall 2021
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey

To The North Star.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Fall 2021
Chair: Bradley Walters, Co-Chair: Charlie Hailey



Courtyards.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Nina Hofer, Co-Chair: Hui Zou.



Concrete Forms in Shadow.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Nina Hofer, Co-Chair: Hui Zou.

Hui Zou

University of Florida

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In modern architecture, when evaluating buildings as Cartesian objects, we tend to perceive and understand space as a three-dimensional material enclosure that is external from the human being as the subject. Following the Cartesian spatiality of *extensio*¹ and the dualism of object vs. subject², a modern architect typically implements the building design as a composing and manipulating process of objective geometry which formulates spaces for fulfilling mechanized functions or technical applications. But, as a result, such a building always falls short in touching hearts and inspiring souls. On the urban scale, global cities are increasingly looking similar and homogeneous, lacking the spirit for expressing individuality, cultural identities and cross-cultural encounters. This prevalent human pathos of boredom and valueless nothingness was prophesied by Nietzsche as “nihilism” and defined by Heidegger as “homeless.”

In a mathematical architectural space, so-called Cartesian space, the oblique Z dimension (in depth) is understood and measured in the same way as X (in breadth) and Y (in height).³ When quantitatively measuring the three dimensions of geometrical space without traditional cosmic orientations, an architectural space can be manipulated as a completely controlled autonomous model (system) as represented in De Stijl's axonometric drawings for abstraction aesthetic, Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion bathroom for prefabricated efficiency, or Le Corbusier's bird's-eye-view of “cities for speed.” In such representational cases, the abstract Z dimension is differentiated from other dimensions through mathematical angles and measures, but excludes cosmic depth as represented in Renaissance symbolic perspective drawings or the poetical distance in Eastern landscape paintings.

Modern architectural resistance against the instrumental design of Cartesian space evolved from Le Corbusier's own philosophical change from his Platonic Villa Savoye (1931) to the “luminosity of darkness” in the “miracle of ineffable space” at the La Tourette monastery (1961),⁴ from his 1930s “new architecture” and “new cities” manifestoes to the 1950s *Poem of the Right Angle* (*Le Poème de l'Angle Droit*) which sought for human cosmic existence through poetical architecture.⁵ The postmodern “poetical resistance”⁶ against Cartesian objective space can be observed through the varied theoretical and design approaches

1 For a phenomenological analysis of Cartesian spatiality of *extensio*, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 122-25.

2 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Original Latin edition, 1641; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993).

3 The understanding of space as the “three-dimensional” enclosure and the Z axis as the direction of depth was popular in late-19th-century German art and architecture aesthetics. See Adolf Hilderbrand's discussion on “The Idea of Surface and Depth” and August Schmarsow's essay “The Essence of Architectural Creation,” in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center, 1994).

4 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “Le Corbusier's La Tourette and the Hermeneutic Imagination,” *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture*, v. 1 (Montreal: Rightangle International, 2016), 353-54. The author quotes Le Corbusier in the latter's *New World of Space* (1948): “A boundless depth opens up...accomplishes the miracle of ineffable space.”

of The New York Five, after their shared 1970s axonometric assemblage of disassembled Cartesian box from which Peter Eisenman moved to his *oblique* deconstruction of Cartesian space through a theoretical dialogue with Jacques Derrida,⁷ and John Hejduk carried out his phenomenological journey towards angelic architecture.⁸

Referring respectively to Heidegger and Derrida, both phenomenology and deconstruction lines in postmodern architecture developed their critical discourses during the 1990s by retrieving and translating Plato's concept of *chora*. In his *Timaeus*, besides the “intellectual” and “visible” forms of the universe, Plato famously metaphorizes the mystic third form, which is invisible and nameless but paradoxically acts as the “receptacle of becoming,” “nurse,” and “mother” and finally was named *chora* (connoting primordial space, or space of space).⁹ In his article “Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation” (1994), Alberto Pérez-Gómez interprets the *chora* as “a primordial gap, opening, or abyss, as well as a primordial substance...both cosmic place and abstract space...the mystery of depth” as embodied in Renaissance theatrical space or represented by G.B. Piranesi's engravings of disordered perspectival space.¹⁰

Although attempting to question Heidegger's ontology of Being, truth, and horizon, Derrida defines his concept of difference (his coined *différance*) as “the very opening of the space” which can only be traced through differing and deferring any finality; a process of tracing traces of difference which he calls “empirical wandering,” “temporizing detour,” and “spacing, the primordial constitution of time and space.”¹¹ Derrida's wandering and detouring as spacing may draw his attention to the text of Anatole France's *The Garden of Epicure* (*Le Jardin d'Épicure*, 1895) through which Derrida discovers the “fabulous scene” produced but erased by metaphysics and its application of metaphors, “the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring...an invisible *design* [my italic] covered over in the palimpsest.”¹² The fabulous scene staged through spacing is further explained by Derrida as Antonin Artaud's “Theater of Cruelty” (*Le théâtre de la cruauté*, 1948) which “measures only the strange distance which separates us from implacable necessity (note: such as architectural form follows function)...Within the space of the unique opening of this distance, the stage of cruelty rears its enigma for us.”¹³

Philosophical debate between the phenomenological understanding of distance as the lived mystic depth in theatrical space and the deconstructional proposition of distance as distancing and spacing towards otherness is well demonstrated in Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* (German edition, 1930s) and Derrida's *Introduction* (French edition, 1962) of Husserl's text. In his *Origin*, Husserl looks for “the original language of Euclid and in all translations...the *spiritual form* [my italic] itself, which is called an ‘ideal object’.” In a certain way ideal objects do exist objectively in the world, but...ultimately in virtue of sensibly embodying repetitions.” To define the origin of geometry as “ideal geometry,” besides “ideal objects,” he used such terms as “geometrical ideality,” “geometrical sense,” “the open horizon of things,” “an intersubjective being of its own,” “the historical origin of geometry,” “the historical surrounding world of the first geometers,” etc. He argues that ideal geometry acts as “the historical meaning which...give to the whole becoming

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5 I borrow here Dalibor Vesely's concept of “poetical architecture” which he defines as the making (*poiēsis*) of space generated by horizon of human condition, returning to its origin, and situated in the wholeness of the latent world. See Dalibor Vesely, “Toward a Poetics of Architecture,” *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

6 See Michael Roth, *The Poetics of Resistance: Heidegger's Line* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

7 I have in mind Eisenman's DAAP building extension (1996) at the University of Cincinnati, and his letter correspondence with Jacques Derrida in the journal *Assemblage*, n. 12 (August 1990).

8 John Hejduk, *Lines: No Fire Could Burn* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999).

9 Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 69, 71.

10 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation,” *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, v. 1 (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 9, 16, 26-27.

11 Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Original French edition, 1972; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 6-8.

of geometry its persisting truth-meaning." In other words, geometrical space and geometrical shapes, as created by architects, are finite spaces "within the horizon of an open infinity" and their formations should be "developed out of praxis and thought of in terms of [gradual] perfection." He called the creative process of spiritual geometrical spaces the "ideal construction" which "thus be capable of being handed down and reproduced with the identical intersubjective meaning. This condition is valid far beyond geometry for all spiritual structures."¹⁴ In Derrida's *Introduction* for Husserl, he attempts to demonstrate that Husserl's phenomenological process towards ideal geometry is in fact a "delay of discourse." There exists "the primordial Difference of the absolute Origin" of geometry, "the pure and interminable disquietude of thought striving to [phenomenologically] 'reduce' Difference by going beyond factual infinity toward the infinity of its sense and value."¹⁵ Following Husserl and Derrida, we may argue that if there is such an ideal distance measured through architecture, architectural measuring should strive to configure the distance that can be lived as distancing for infinite multiplicity and implication, a semantic depth.

The aesthetic issue of depth is rooted in Chinese cosmology, literature, landscape paintings, and gardens. In cosmology, it can mean symbolic distance (*tianrenheyi*, harmony) between cosmos and humans; in literature including poetry, emotional distance (*shenqing*, deep emotion); in landscape painting, poetical distance (*yixiang*, projected intention); in gardens, depth of scene (*jing*).¹⁶ A significant aesthetic concept of depth is *yijing*, which literally means "poetical environ" or architecturally, "poetic space." The term *yijing* originated from poetry commentary of the Tang dynasty (7th-8th centuries). The *jing* of *yi-jing* denotes "boundary" of space or time, and the *yi* denotes desire, emotion, intention, and idea. Combined, *yi-jing* can be metaphorically translated as "artistic conception in a mood" or "imaginary situation,"¹⁷ indicating the poetical unity of space and time in which scene and emotion, object and subject interact. The concept *yijing* does not only imply the harmony between scene and emotion across the distance but also the movement through the distance towards the invisible and unknown depth of mind and scene. It is an open field, a space and spacing, in which scene and emotion fuse into dynamic harmony.

The traditional aesthetic concept of *yijing* was developed into another concept, *jingjie*, by a late-Qing-dynasty scholar Wang Guowei in his masterpiece of poetry commentary entitled *Renjian cihua* (Commentary on Poetry in the Human World, 1910). Wang was a pioneer in introducing Kant and Schopenhauer's philosophies into Chinese poetry aesthetics. In his book, Wang advances the *jingjie*, which literally means "an environ with boundary" and can be metaphorically translated as "aesthetic realm."¹⁸ His theory of *jingjie* is outlined through translation as follows:

"Excellent poems express jingjie. If there is jingjie in a poem, the author's aesthetic level is high. The jingjie created by a great poet always resonates with nature and presents as the ideal. There is a type of jingjie with presence of the self in which scenes appear subjective, the so-called model of things perceived through the subject. There is another type of jingjie with absence of the self in which the only presence is pure things but fully fused with the self, the so-called [intersubjective] model of observing one thing

through another. The jingjie without the self is the best but the most difficult to achieve. It can only be gathered in serenity and therefore the most elegant. The realm of jingjie is not limited to pretty scenes but also includes emotions and heart. To judge if jingjie has been attained is to see if there has been an authentic scene and an authentic emotion. Regarding the scale of jingjie, there is no priority. It can take place at either an expansive or intimate scale. For a poet, there are three aesthetic levels of jingjie to accomplish: The first level is "[in solitude] standing alone on a tower, gaze along the road to the horizon;" the medium level is "[in yearning] having no regret though my clothes grow loose;" the highest level is "looking for her everywhere, suddenly I turn around, she is at a distant place with waning lamp light."¹⁹

Wang's analysis of the relationship between subject and object in the poetical situation of *jingjie* is comparable to Schopenhauer's and the excerpts of the latter are as follows:

"The expression of the Idea of mankind through poetry can be carried out in such a way that the depicted is also at the same time the depicter. This occurs in lyric poetry where the poet vividly perceives and describes only his own state. Or the depicter is entirely different from what is to be depicted, as is the case with all other kinds of poetry. Here, the depicter more or less conceals himself behind what is depicted, and finally altogether he disappears. The ballad is much more objective than the song but still has something subjective in it. This fades way more in the idyll. The drama is the most objective, and also the most difficult form of poetry."²⁰

In Chinese philosophy, the dialectic of human existence and the world is traditionally expressed as the relationship between heart (*xin*) and things (*wu*). This comparison demonstrates how Schopenhauer's theory of interaction between subject and object in poetry was translated into Wang's theory of *jingjie*, which is a mixture of Chinese traditional and Western modern aesthetics. Wang's three aesthetic levels of *jingjie* depict vividly the poet's three ways of engagement in the distance: in front of, within, and at a threshold (turn) of the distance. Compared with the emphasis on harmonic unity between scene and emotion in traditional *yijing*, Wang's *jingjie* draws "a deep insight into the inner nature of man" through the arrangement of poetical distance and distancing. As stated by Schopenhauer, "in the lyrical mood, willing and pure perception of the environment that presents itself are wonderfully blended with each other."²¹

Representation of poetical distance is predominant in Chinese landscape paintings. The famous painting theory of "three distances" was advanced by the Song dynasty painter Guo Xi (11th century) in his essay "Linquan gaozhi" (Lofty and Elegant Landscapes): high distance (*gaoyuan*), level distance (*pingyuan*), and deep distance (*shenyuan*).²² Regarding the "level distance" who's viewing point is closest to normal life, Guo states that its color should look some bright and some dark, its propensity should feel diffusive and ethereal, and its human figure should appear calm and bland (*chongdan*) and should not be out of the scale of surrounding landscapes.²³ Modern scholars relate Guo's theory of distance to the aesthetic *jingjie* of remoteness, emptiness, and blandness and take the "level distance" painting category as the most mature one to match *literatus* spirit.²⁴

12 Derrida, "Exergue," *ibid.*, 210, 213.

13 Jacques Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Original French edition, 1967; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 233.

14 Edmund Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry," in Appendix of Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (French edition, 1962; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 157-80.

15 Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (French edition, 1962; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 152-53.

16 Hui Zou, Ch. 3 "The Chinese Garden and the Concept of the Vision of Jing," *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011).

17 Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, trans. Maija Bell Samei (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 29, 142.

18 *Ibid.*, 209.

19 Wang Guowei, *Renjian cihua*, prefaced by Yu Pingbo (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2015). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

20 Arthur Schopenhauer, Section 51 [on poetry], *The World as Will and Representation*, v. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (German edition, 1819; New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 248-49.

21 *Ibid.*, 244, 250.

22 For an English translation of Guo Xi's "three distances" theory and a comparison between the distances in Chinese paintings and in Jesuit perspective in China, see Hui Zou, Ch. 4 "The Chinese Garden and Western Linear Perspective," *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing*.

23 Guo Xi, "Linquan gaozhi," in Yu Jianhua ed., *Zhongguo gudai hualun leibian*, v. 1 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998), 639.



Figure 1 Zhao Mengfu, *Autumn Colors on Que and Hua Mountains (Quehua Qiuse)*, 1295, Collected by the Palace Museum of Taipei

A “level distance” masterpiece can be exemplified in the painting *Quehua Qiuse (Autumn Colors on Que and Hua Mountains, 1295)* by the Yuan-dynasty painter Zhao Mengfu (Figure 1). The painting was created by Zhao based on his memory of the city Jinan in Shandong Province as a gift for his literary friend whose ancestral hometown was Jinan. In the painting stands two sublime mountains: Que Mountain on the left and Hua (Huabuzhu) Mountain on the right with the Yellow River (symbolically depicted as a stream) passing between. The unfolded view looks expansive and distant. The ground is flat, covered with lush trees and peaceful water, scattered with humble houses, floating skiffs, and solitude figures of fishermen, farmers and housewives, with the two iconic mountains rising above the horizon in the background. The painting depicts a paradise of hermitage in the northeastern suburb of Jinan. According to the colophons and collectors’ stamps on the painting scroll, the painting used to be collected by the Qing-dynasty emperor Qianlong whose 1748 colophon stated that he cherished this masterpiece so much and enjoyed comparing *in situ* the painting with the real views of mountain landscapes. He thought the wonderful “coincidence” between both sides was a “divine gift.” In his poems on the two mountains, he described them as two “heavenly blossoms” descending to the human world. In 1749, he recalled his vivid memory of touring the mountain landscape in Jinan and added another long colophon including multiple poems as a memoir inscribed on the painting scroll in his tiny Sanxitang studio at Forbidden City. In the poems, he described how he began to truly perceive the beauty of the local landscapes when he realized the “brush spirit” of the painting touched the “earthly spirit” of the site, and between mutually mirroring sky and water the two mountains are co-presented in a universal “mirror-like emptiness” (*jingkong*). The painting and its depicted landscape convinced him that divinity did exist. He imagined there would be a rainbow bridge called Queqiao (the heavenly bridge symbolizing love in Chinese mythology, sharing the same term of *que* [bird] of Que Mountain) over the distance between the two “heavenly blossom” mountains, and this imagination might demonstrate his hidden grief for his two recently lost wives.²⁵

Compared with the “high distance” and “deep distance” in Chinese paintings, why is the compositional “level distance” (*pingyuan*) taken as the suitable distance which expresses best the *literatus* spirit? From the painting of *Autumn Colors on Que and Hua Mountains* and its embodied historical meanings, we can understand that the level distance may be the very one acting as the threshold of space and spacing in-between divine and human, dream and reality, sky and earth, past and present, emotion and scene, etc. It is this level distance that draws the divine and human worlds into dialogue in aesthetic *jingjie*.

The poetical “level distance” in Chinese landscape paintings is reminiscent of the fixed 20-pace distance in Alberto Giacometti’s drawings and sculptures. From his early African-art influenced sculptures to his 1930s Surrealist geometrical work, 1940s-60s head drawings and statuettes, the “walking man” themed statues, and his sketches of *Paris sans fin* (Infinite Paris) in his last years of life, his whole life and entire artistic career seem to be on a journey searching for the best distance in perception and imagination which he finalized as the so-called 20-pace distance. This fixed

24 Chen Chuanxi, *Zhongguo shanshuihua shi* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, 2001), 128-29.

25 Emperor Qianlong’s wife Empress Xiaoxianchun (Fuca clan) passed away in 1748 and another wife Imperial Noble Consort Huixian (Gaojiya clan) passed away in 1745.

distance was evolved from his life experience of walking and perceiving in Paris and developed into his understanding that with the visual distance of 20 paces he could create the work of art in essence towards infinity. This distance originated from his perception of others' bodies and faces on the street or in café, as he narrated, "The only thing that remains of reality is appearance. If a person is at a distance of 20 meters – or 10 – I can no longer bring them back to the truth of positive reality. If I am on the terrace of a café and only see people walking on the other side of the street, I see them tiny....suddenly, I saw the depth... It was as if I was seeing the world for the first time. Since then, I have been aware of seeing people as I really see them. It is marvelous."²⁶ He finds that in this accidental but fundamental distance between persons in public spaces, he can capture the essence of human existence in its integrated body and spirit. The perceptual ambiguity and "spatial sphere" resulting from such a distance is represented universally in his head drawings, bust and body sculptures, and urban-scape sketches (Figure 2). This discovered distance helps define the threshold between dream and reality through which he communicated with the divine and human worlds and corresponded to his unbuilt Surrealist dream house named *The Palace at 4 a.m.* (1932) on which he wrote, "...a fantastic palace in the night, a very fragile palace of matchsticks: at the slightest false move a whole part of the minute construction would collapse. We would always build it again."²⁷

On the fixed distance in Giacometti's sculptures, his close friend philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre commented,

*"Giacometti has restored to statues an imaginary, indivisible space. His unequivocal acceptance of relativity has revealed the absolute. The fact is that he was the first to sculpture man as he is seen – from a distance. He confers absolute distance on his images just as the painter confers absolute distance on the inhabitants of his canvas. He creates a figure "ten steps away" or "twenty steps away," and do what you will, it remains there. The result is a leap into the realm of the unreal since its relation to you no longer depends on your relation to the block of plaster – the real liberation of Art."*²⁸

26 Alberto Giacometti, *Why I am a Sculptor* (Paris: Fondation-Giacometti, 2016), 36, 49.

27 *Ibid.*, 8.

28 Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Quest for the Absolute" (1948), *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin (New York: Citadel Press, 1993), 395-96.



Figure 2 Alberto Giacometti, a sketch of Paris, 1950s-60s. Image credit: Paris san fin (Paris: Fondation-Giacometti, 2016).

In another essay, Sartre differentiates Giacometti's absolute distance from Cartesian objective distance and analyzes the former as the "human space" in which human beings as solitudes engage the absolute distance with emotions and love. "Moving closer to the statue is to no avail, for the distance cannot be traversed. These solitudes repel the visitor with all the insuperable length of a room, a lawn, or a glade that none would dare to cross."²⁹ The distance is absolute and spiritually connected within which "figurines are solitary, but when placed together, no matter how, they are united by their solitude and transformed into a magical society ...a crowd... men crossing a public square without seeing each other; they pass, hopelessly alone and yet *together*."³⁰ The universal space of solitude is well represented by Giacometti's sculpture titled *Piazza* (1948, collected by Guggenheim Museum, New York).

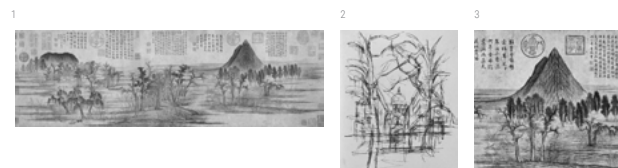
If we bring Sartre's perspective of the universe of solitudes which is magically united through the absolute distance into observing Zhao Mengfu's painting, it can be understood that Zhao's characteristic net-like brushwork of trees, ground, water, mountains, and figures interweave nature and human life into such an absolute distance in which ultimate harmony exists (Figure 3).

At the same time of Giacometti's work and Sartre's writings, Heidegger wrote his essay "The Thing" (1950) in which he expressed his concerns about the disappearance of distance and remoteness in modern space and time. Cartesian objective distance does not bring us near to the truth. Referring to Daoist Saint Laozi's discussion on a pottery jug,³¹ Heidegger analyzes that "the vessel's thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that holds."³² The void gathers and gives. For Heidegger, the service (function) of the jug is the gift of the outpouring, "a gift because it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals... It brings the four into the light of their mutual belonging." The fourfold cosmic space brings us near to truth. This nearness is fundamentally different from today's distanceless world in which everything present is equally near and equally far. If truth is remote, this nearness through cosmic space preserves that farness. By preserving farness of truth, "nearness presents nearness in nearing that farness." In other words, through cosmic space, nearness is at work in bringing near to remote truth. Heidegger calls the play of near and far in distance "the mirror-play of the world"³³ and argues that the failure of nearness to materialize (such as through architecture) will result in the abolition of all distances in which things do not exist as things in essence. In another essay "...Poetically Man Dwells..." (1951), quoting Hölderlin's poem *Vista*, Heidegger draws his conclusion that the distance which brings us near to truth is the poetical distance: "When far the dwelling life of man into the distance goes,... / That nature paints the seasons so complete.... / Crowns man, as blossoms crown the trees, with light."³⁴ The poem and its drawn poetical distance echo Wang Guowei's aesthetic *jingjie* where "suddenly I turn around, she is at a distant place with waning lamp light" and provide a comparative perspective for hermeneutically interpreting Zhao Mengfu's painting masterpiece. ■



Illustrations:

- 1 Zhao Mengfu, *Autumn Colors on Que and Hua Mountains (Quehua Qiuse)*, 1295, Collected by the Palace Museum of Taipei
- 2 Alberto Giacometti, *a sketch of Paris*, 1950s-60s. Image credit: Paris san fin (Paris: Foundation-Giacometti, 2016).
- 3 Partial view of Zhao Mengfu's painting *Autumn Colors on Que and Hua Mountains* (1295), with emperor Qianlong's colophons and collection stamps on both sides of the Hua Mountain.



29 Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Paintings of Giacometti" (1954), *ibid.*, 403.

30 *Ibid.*, 405.

31 For a comparative study of Dao (Tao) and Chora regarding the concept of space, see Hui Zou, "Dao and Chora: The Echoes of Empty Mountains," *Vorkurs_Echoes* (2019).

32 Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 169.

33 *Ibid.*, 173, 178, 181.

34 Martin Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." *ibid.*, 229.



CEREMONIAL FORM AND MEMORY

Asante Ahemfie:
Imperial Reference of
Kumase, Ghana

Amie Edwards

University of Florida
VORKURS Alumna

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- 1 Peter Blundell Jones, *Architecture and Ritual: How Buildings Shape Society*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 2-9.
- 2 William R. Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 1-93.
- 3 F.K Buah, *A History of Ghana*, (London: MacMillan Education LTD 1996), 1-29.

In the traditional procession ritual of the Asantehene, the Asante king, into the palace, *ahemfie*, the Golden Stool and the city of Kumase are a part of the space and place narratives. These narratives encompass cultural symbolic habitation and the geographical landscape. Architecture and rituals interconnect to define cultural identity. The implicit meaning of space is revealed through the interaction and movement of the society with buildings. Peter Jones, a British Architect, explains that ritual and architecture are interconnected to shaping the experience with structures. The intentional coded message in the aesthetics, the meanings established during rituals, and the relationships people enact with a building penetrate beyond traditional utility assumptions. Architecture reflects society as an element of time and memory.¹ The cosmical symbolism in the palace is a reduplication of structures made not with hands. Divine or heavenly association is interlinked with sacred ceremony, the building, and the urban context.² Architectonic components of a built environment and the natural landscape merge into a conscious spatial frame through rituals to establish space. Kumase is identified as the imperial city of the Asante nation. The metropolis of Kumase in the late 17th century was carved into the landscape to be the imperial center of politico-religious and economic power. To establish the city, the priest Okomfo Anokye planted one tree in three cities. The surviving kum tree promised a prosperous nation, thus the name Kum-ase which means "under the kum tree." In 1695 during the Odwira, purification festival, at the *bedwafie*, gathering house grounds, Okomfo Anokye caused the Golden Stool "*Sika Dwa Kofi*," Golden Stool born on Friday, to descend from the sky into the lap of the Asantehene Osei Tutu before the Akan nation. The act enshrined the soul of the kingdom to the religious, political, and economic power of the Asantehene Osei Tutu.³ The narrative of the *kuro*, city, entails mystical and cultural pragmatic events pertaining to rites and ceremonies.

Amantuo, groups of autonomous Akan nation states, unified under the hegemon rule of Asantehene Osei Tutu in 1695. The chiefs of the nation states were *adamfo*, friends, to the king and expected to visit the city for important funeral celebrations and settle disputes. The Asante king's court in the Asante palace *ahemfie*, was the highest court of appeal. Annually, the *Odwira*, purification, festival also known as the Yam festival in Kumase was



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Illustrations:

- 1 W.E.F. Ward, *The Golden Stool and Asantehene Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, A History of Ghana*, 1958.
- 2 Thomas Bodwich, *Odwira, Yam Festival of Purification*, 1819
- 3 Labelle Prussin, *Asante Palace 1896*, *Traditional Asante Architecture*, 1980.



an enforced attendance for the provincial chiefs.⁴ The purpose of these festivals in their rituals was to reenact, reinterpret and transmit Asante history, renew communion between the dead and the living and emphasize the unity of Asante nation. Everyone in the attendance of the festivals were theoretically united in their allegiance to the occupant of the Golden Stool, the center of the festivals.⁵ During the induction of each new Asante king into the palace, known as the enstoolment ceremony, the Asantehene is lowered and raised over the Golden Stool without touching it to establish his divine authority as the leader of the Asante nation. The establishment of place through the medium of ancestral attachment validates human existence. The Asante palace was a spiritual place for the Asante, and the symbolic cultural form that is the center of traditional ceremonies and rites for festivals, deaths, funerals, and kingship enstoolments.⁶

From a phenomenological point of view, the ritual culture explains the lived spatial experiences between the body, the building, and the phenomena associated with the Asante palace. In the understanding of phenomena, the symbolic cultural representation in the palatial architecture of the Asante reveals the philosophical meaning of "being" and existence in the Asante society.

From an ontological perspective, ritual and spiritual connections of the Asante material culture are linked to the palace. The concept of "being" references that the structure of experience is connected to the Golden Stool cultural object of meaning.

The temporality of the cultural element is the implication of the phenomena.⁷ The building, cultural objects, and ceremony create an intangible spatial experience. The Asante palace's ontological significance is based on the structure functioning as a sacred dwelling to the authority of the Asante king and ritual space for the Asante. Additionally, the presence of the building served as an emblematic structure of belonging, safety, and stability to the society. The aspects of symbolization in the 19th century Asante palace are critical cultural criteria to the concept of being, belonging, and identity.⁸ ■

4 Kwame Arhin, "The Structure of Greater Ashanti (1700-1824)," *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 1 (1967): 65-85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/180052>.

5 Kwame Arhin, "The Structure of Greater Ashanti (1700-1824)," 82.

6 Labelle Prussin, "Traditional Asante Architecture," *African Arts* 13, no. 2 (1980): 58.

7 A. Sloan and Brian Bowe, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy, the Methodologies and using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design," *Quality & Quantity*, Vol.48, no.3, (2014), 291-303.

8 Thomas Barrie, "Sacred Domesticities: The Ontology of Home," *Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Symposium*, (2014), 1-6.

THE PAPER OCULUS

Crafting An Architecture
of Experience Through The
Written Word

Ryan Gorday

Chair: Mark McGlothlin
Co-Chair: Nina Hofer

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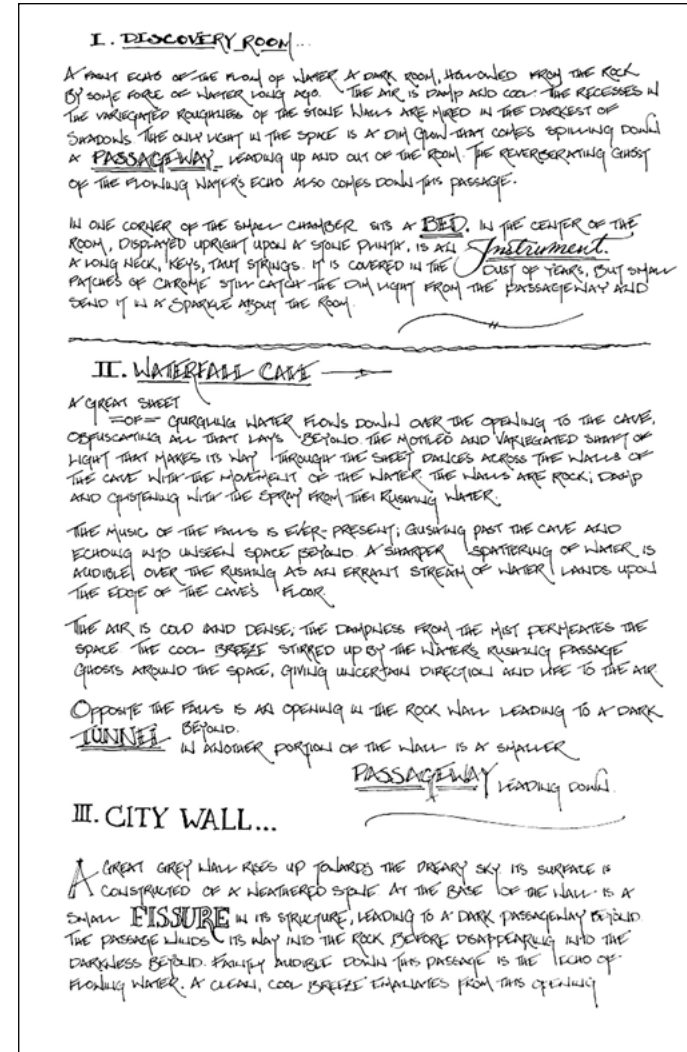
The written word is the most undeveloped and underutilized modeling medium in architecture. Students in the studio start with a line, a picture, a mapping, a model—visual media for what is regarded as a necessarily visual discipline. In some respects, the value of creative and persuasive writing—the ability to tell a story—is highly prized. Students and professionals alike must present their work, telling the story of its program and occupation, and weaving together the narrative of the drawings and objects that give shape to it. The value of learning to write, to speak, to articulate—though often lacking in the formal design curriculum and workplace, is recognized.

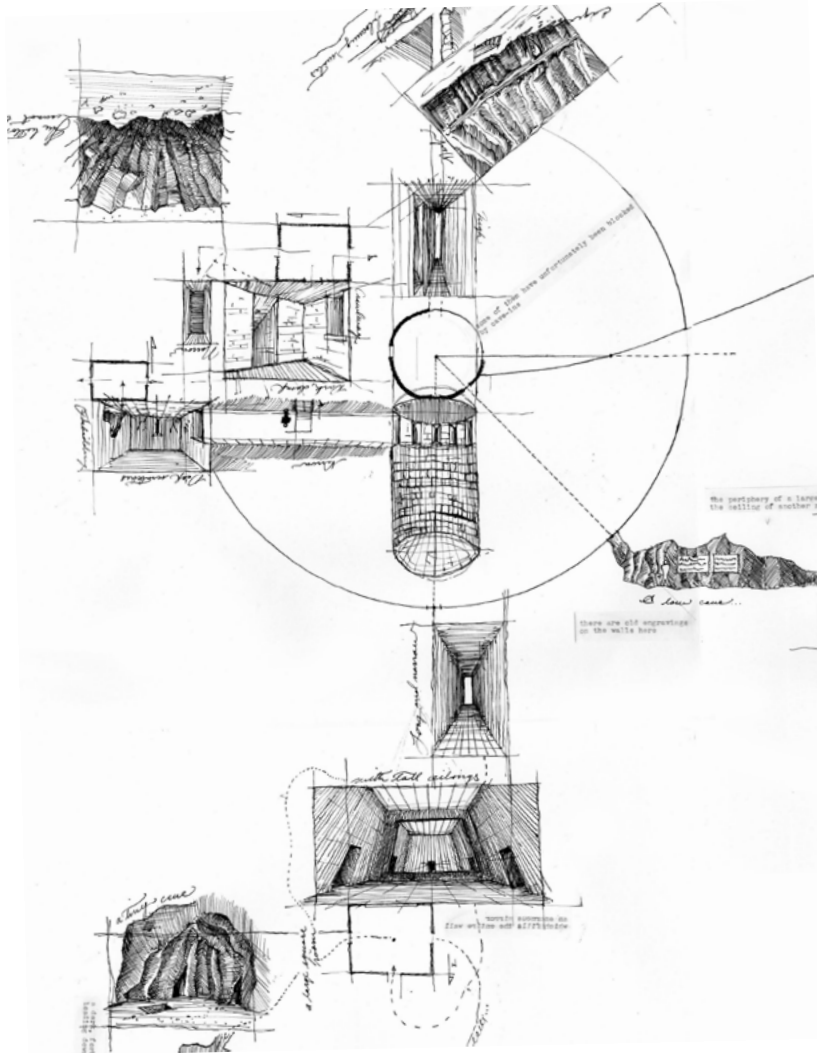
But these narrators of space are describing spaces whose stories have already been written. All too often, the writing follows the model, follows the line. The infinitum of complexity found in the process of generation of space is traditionally pursued with immediate art—something that speaks through itself. Film is immediate art. A painting is immediate art. Whatever poetic images or feelings these works inspire in the soul of the onlooker, they do so through the images and physical representations that they present. A line, however abstracted, still represents a threshold or a condition in a literal, visual, physical way.

Words are not this way. A word means nothing, except what it is understood to mean. They are sparks—catalysts that provoke, that call up an “image” in the schema and imagination of the perceiver. Is, then, the reader the architect? The writer?

This model of the mind and soul—an architecture of emotion, memory, and imagination, is what this research pursues. How do we learn to work with this medium? How do we model with it, for ourselves or others? Can a building, can “architecture”, be modeled entirely with only words that provoke its image? This is an attempt to learn how to design from the inside-out in the purest form—starting with the *feeling*.

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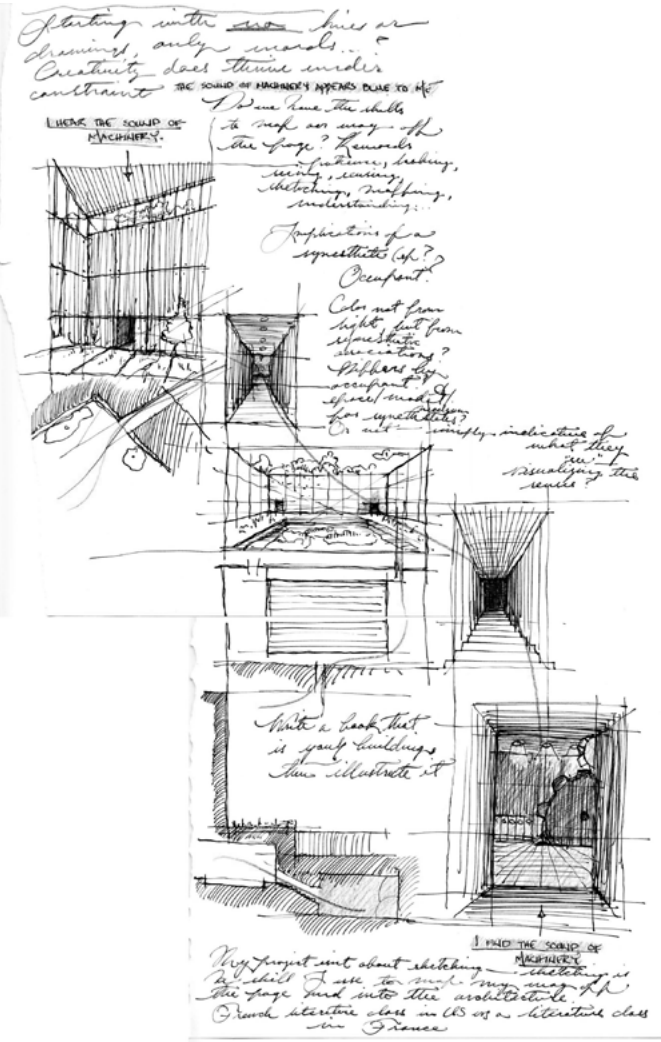




Creative writing plays a key role in the pursuit of this research. Site and precedent research in the form of atmospheric writings, mappings, and sketches are used to explore the already-built. Sites include real-world locations, as well as imagined ones. Original generative writings, and models assembled from them, are used to explore the yet-to-be-built.

One of the major media proposed for this study is the "interface". In the style of text-based adventure games from the early days of the home computer, text-based architectural experiences are assembled from creative writing passages. Opportunities that this style of modeling presents are analyzed. A passage of prose can invoke senses of smell, of sound, of time, and other aspects of perception unavailable in sketches or physical models but essential to the phenomena that make being in a space a complete experience.

This research ends where traditional generation begins. Sketching, diagramming, and other visual media are used extensively—but they are regarded as skills for realizing this transition rather than the focus of the research. The visual architecture begins when the architect maps the way off the written page and onto the drawing board; out of the model of the imagination and into the world; out of many dimensions and into just three.



TOPOGRAPHIC SPACE AND THE TEXTURE OF LIGHT

Parallels in Principle in the
Works of Richard Diebenkorn
and Tod Williams / Billie Tsien

Robert McCarter

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From its beginning, Modernism was understood by its leading practitioners to integrate and engage all the arts. Yet this Modern tradition was abandoned in the great majority of architecture built in the latter half of the 20th century, and today is almost entirely forgotten, edited out of both the canonical histories and daily practice of architecture and art. What were originally understood by their practitioners to be integrated, experientially based disciplines of making have now been segregated by professional specialization, educational hermeticism and critical isolation, leading to the all-too-common definition of architecture and art as entirely autonomous practices. Yet, despite being almost entirely overlooked in critical discourse and academic scholarship, this other Modern tradition has continued to evolve in practice through the 20th century to today.

This essay is part of a larger study by the author that examines this other Modern tradition—a tradition wherein spatial concepts, ordering principles, experiential precepts and design methods are shared in the work and teaching of both Modern painters and Modern architects; a tradition originating in the beginnings of Modernism and continuing unabated, if largely unrecognized, to this day. The study documents the ways a number of leading Modern architects initially established the tradition of actively engaging the implications of the spatial speculations to be found in Modern paintings; the manner in which later Modern architects built upon the tradition; and how contemporary architects continue to engage the tradition as an integral part of their Modern inheritance.

The core of this study are examples of three types of pairings of painters and architects: *parallels in practice*, an actual relationship where contemporaries were influenced by each other; *parallels across time*, an actual relationship where a contemporary architect draws upon the work of an earlier painter; and *parallels in principle*, a purely speculative “relationship” where contemporary painters and architects on spatially distant, non-crossing paths, largely unaware of each other’s work, are nevertheless found to employ similar ordering principles. The three types of artist-architect pairings serve as the most effective demonstration of this Modern tradition being put into practice within the studio disciplines, exemplifying the ongoing, active, and productive nature of this tradition today.

In the present essay, this other Modern tradition of shared principles of space, order, perception and design between art and architecture will be explored by pairing the American painter Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993) and the American architects Tod Williams (1943-) and Billie Tsien (1949-). This pairing is an example of *parallels in principle*, a purely speculative “relationship” where contemporary painters and architects on spatially distant, non-crossing paths are found to employ similar ordering principles.

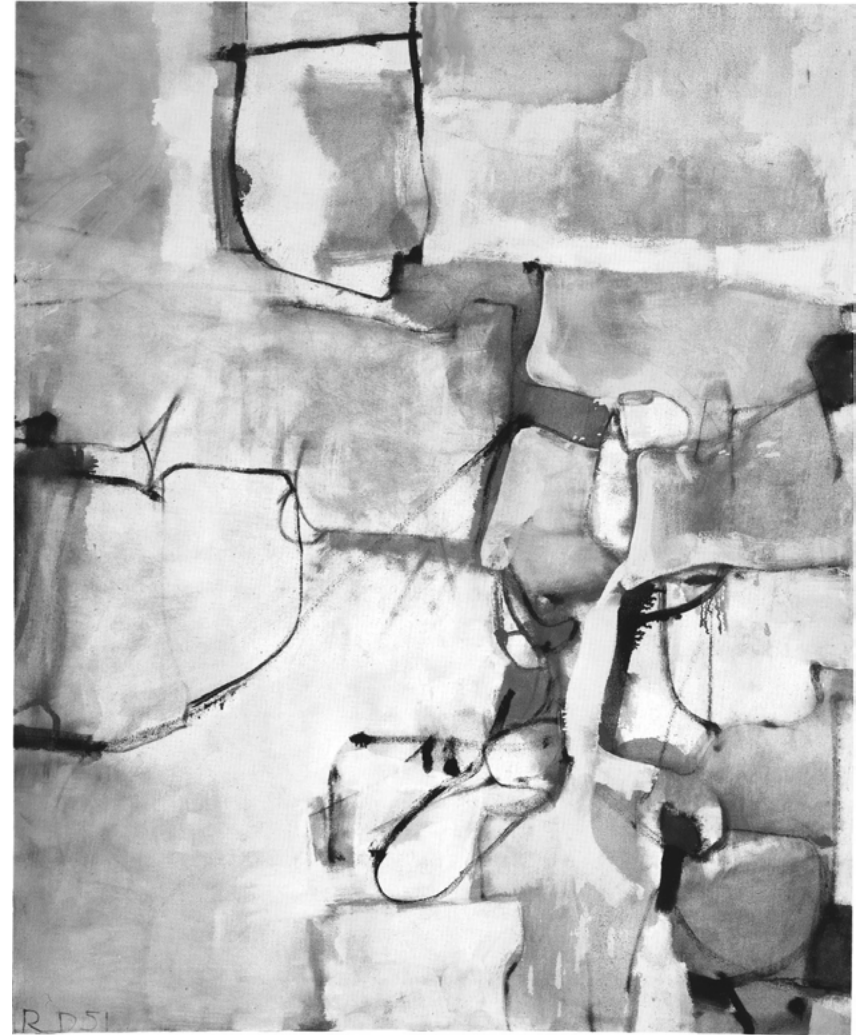
The painter Richard Diebenkorn was born in Portland, Oregon in 1922, and at the age of two he and his family moved to San Francisco, California, the state with which Diebenkorn was always to be identified. Diebenkorn enrolled in Stanford University in acquiescence to his parents’ desire that he train for medicine or business—not for art. Before declaring art as his major, Diebenkorn developed a keen appreciation of classical music—Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, and especially Mozart—as well as modern poetry—Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, and especially William Butler Yeats and Wallace Stevens (Louis Kahn’s favorite poet). In his initial painting studies, Diebenkorn “embraced [Edward] Hopper completely... It was his use of light and shade and the atmosphere... kind of drenched, saturated with mood, and its kind of austerity.” While at Stanford, Diebenkorn was also able to visit the collection of Michael and Sarah Stein, which included the second largest number of Matisse paintings in the world. A semester at University of California at Berkeley brought Diebenkorn into contact with Hans Hofmann, who was teaching there, and Erle Loran, who was at the time completing a book on Cézanne. While Diebenkorn at first rejected the “distortions of gravity” evidenced in Cézanne’s still-life’s, he would return to them for inspiration later in his career.

A US Marine during WWII, Diebenkorn was stationed in the Washington, DC area and thus able to visit galleries in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington. The works he studied almost every weekend, particularly at the Phillips Collection in Washington (the first museum in the US devoted exclusively to modern art), would prove to be of the utmost importance to his development. Two influences would prove pivotal, the first being Henri Matisse, and in particular his *Studio, Quay St. Michel* of 1916, where Matisse presents “both interior and exterior light in the same pictorial space,” as Jane Livingston has noted; Diebenkorn spoke of the painting’s “spatial amplitude; one saw a marvelous hollow or room yet the surface is right there... right up front.” Diebenkorn was also struck by the presence of signs of reworking, of over-painting in the Matisse. The second critical influence of this period would be Piet Mondrian, whose paintings also carried signs of reworking as part of the artist’s compositional and constructive process, something that would become very important to Diebenkorn. As Diebenkorn later noted, Mondrian “more than any other artist, showed me the possibility of non-representational painting.”

In 1946, after leaving the Marines and using the benefits of the GI Bill, Diebenkorn enrolled in the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, center of the northern California school of Abstract Expressionists that included John Grillo, Edward Corbett, David Park, Elmer Bischoff, Frank Lobdell, Hassel Smith, Clyfford Still, and the frequent visitor Mark Rothko. At the school Diebenkorn received immediate recognition for his painting,



Richard Diebenkorn, *Sausalito*, 1949.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.33)



Richard Diebenkorn, *Albuquerque No. 3*, 1951.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.46)

winning a grant at the end of his first semester, which he used to live and work in New York in spring 1947. He then returned to live in Sausalito, a small bayside community across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, becoming a member of the faculty of the San Francisco School of Fine Arts in fall 1947.

Diebenkorn's "Sausalito" painting series was important for two reasons: they were the first paintings to take the name of the place where they were made, a lifetime habit in titling works for Diebenkorn, and they present the first fully articulated example of Diebenkorn's characteristic structuring of the picture plane, the entire canvas surface, as a field fully engaged from edge to edge, rather than being organized in any figure-ground relationships. The "Sausalito" paintings are indebted in their color palette to Diebenkorn's fellow painters Smith, Still and Rothko, who relied on blacks, red and earth-tones in their own work during this same period. Here we can also see a reflection of Diebenkorn's admiration for Willem de Kooning, whom Diebenkorn believed to be the greatest American painter of his generation.

In 1949, Diebenkorn enrolled as a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, and his "Albuquerque" paintings give the first indication of the importance landscape, both in terms of landform and topography and in terms of colors, would have in Diebenkorn's work. Here we see the characteristic drastic change that relocation to a new place would have on Diebenkorn's work; the deserts and mesas can be felt in his use of charcoal construction lines, white paint, bare or thinly covered canvas, and large empty spaces punctuated by slack lines like shadows. In 1951, while his graduation exhibition was on display at the University Art Museum, Diebenkorn flew by small plane across the desert to visit the Arshile Gorky retrospective exhibit in San Francisco. Gorky's work had an immediate effect on Diebenkorn, but of far greater importance were the low-altitude flights in prop planes across the desert and the American southwest. Suddenly Diebenkorn became aware—in a kind of epiphany, as he said—of the topography, of the possibility of seeing spatial organization of the earth's surface as pattern, and from this experience dates his methods for incorporating aerial perspective in the development of his painterly compositions. In this, Diebenkorn confronted and incorporated the issues of plan versus elevation inherent in Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*: for Diebenkorn this meant that the inspiration for the vertically oriented painted canvas could originate in the horizontally oriented topographic space of the landscape.

In summer 1952, Diebenkorn accepted a teaching position at the University of Illinois at Urbana, where he soon became frustrated with being assigned to teach drawing and painting to architecture students. This was because the students who followed his suggestions were graded lower, for what the architecture faculty wanted from his course was the opposite of the personal, inventive work he encouraged. In Diebenkorn's "Urbana" paintings can be seen not only the typical dramatic change in color palette, but also the organization of the surface into horizontal zones or bands, something that would remain a common attribute of all his later work.



Richard Diebenkorn, *Berkeley No. 59*, 1955.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.83)

After a brief time in New York, Diebenkorn returned to the Bay Area and settled in Berkeley in 1953. After receiving another fellowship (which saved him from having to drive a taxi for a living), over the next two years Diebenkorn painted the "Berkeley" series, the second longest place-named series of his life at 66 paintings, each canvas an extraordinary balance of abstract form and almost recognizable landscape shapes, all realized in the rich greens, blues, red-browns, and golds of the northern California countryside.

In 1955, Diebenkorn, still in Berkeley, began to paint in a realistic, non-abstract, figural manner, for the next eleven years rejecting the popularity and success of Abstract Expressionism—of which he had been hailed as one of the best of the younger generation (he was aged 33 in 1955)—and instead engaging still-life's, landscapes, and his own unique construction, what I will call the "inside/outside" painting. While the landscapes from the start have a close relationship to his earlier abstract paintings, it is in the "inside/outside" paintings that Diebenkorn makes the critical spatial and compositional discoveries of this period. Almost all painted in his top-floor, triangle-shaped studio in Oakland, the "inside/outside" paintings focus on the issue of light, and the difference between interior and exterior light—herein the still-life (interior) and the landscape (exterior) are joined, fused into a single painting.



Richard Diebenkorn, *Interior with Book*, 1959.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.105)



Richard Diebenkorn, *Cityscape I*, 1963.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.112)

The Matisse paintings he had seen early on had this characteristic of the “interior of a room sharing the kind of light that was outside the room,” as he said. By 1964, as Diebenkorn said, he began to abandon the “traditional depth or space” in the painting, and “things really started to flatten out in [my] representational [paintings].” Diebenkorn recognized that Matisse’s work was “much flatter in its conception than my own,” and in January 1966, when Diebenkorn saw an exhibition of Matisse paintings in Los Angeles, the impact on him of the paintings *View of Notre Dame* and *French Window at Colliure*, both of 1914—on view for the first time in the US and depicting an “inside/outside” space in flattened perspective—cannot be overestimated.

In 1966, Diebenkorn moved from Berkeley to Los Angeles to teach at UCLA, setting up his studio in a top-floor space in Ocean Park, a section of the oceanfront community of Venice, California. Near the end of 1967, Diebenkorn painted the first of the monumental “Ocean Park” paintings, 140 canvases that are without question his *magnum opus*. From the beginning, Diebenkorn sized his canvases in the “Ocean Park” series to his own scale and arm’s reach—maximum 100 inches (8 feet, 4 inches) tall by 81 inches (6 feet, 9 inches) wide. As Diebenkorn’s friend William Brice pointed out: “He chose a scale that embodied his own extension. That means something.”

In his “Ocean Park” paintings, Diebenkorn consolidated and made explicit three elements that had characterized all of his former works. The first, instigated by his inability, unwillingness, and disinterest in “designing a painting in his head,” was his habit of making a beginning gesture, that then had to be reworked, over-painted and adjusted with other elements that emerged in the process, until the entire canvas, as a structured field, had achieved resolution. Second was Diebenkorn’s engagement of the culture and tradition of Modern painting constructed decades earlier by Cézanne, Matisse, and Mondrian. All of Diebenkorn’s paintings learn from, respond to, add to, and thereby change this living tradition—his work thus epitomizing the relationship described in T.S. Eliot’s 1919 essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Third was Diebenkorn’s commitment to the ethics of his art, a kind of moral imperative that made him reject the easy answer or the fashionable mode of working in order to pursue instead the ever elusive, but always felt ideal of integrity.

The “Ocean Park” paintings are each a singular chromatic universe, yet as a series they constitute something greater than the sum of the parts. They share a number of characteristics, such as their structured surface, which may be described as resembling a collage, weaving or quilt, where large blocks of color appear to have been moved about, cut, and reassembled on the surface. The space of the paintings is also topographic in nature (or the aerial view of landscape), pressed tightly onto the surface, yet also implying overlapping planes and depth. Also consistent is the paintings’ balance of improvisation and discipline, achieved through the slow process (many paintings took Diebenkorn years to finish) of working and reworking the surface, always keeping the marks of making from all the earlier iterations. In this Diebenkorn followed Mondrian’s statement of 1914, that paintings “must be constructed consciously, though not by calculation, and directed by higher intuition. [In this,] chance must be avoided as much as



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No. 40*, 1971.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.166)



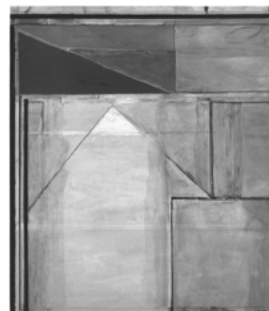
Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No. 70*, 1974.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.178)



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No. 79*, 1975.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.181)

calculation.” Diebenkorn’s friend William Brice noted his capacity for “penetrating insight:” Diebenkorn “talked a lot like he painted. He searched for words with his hands. He was always looking for *the* word. You felt him weighing the truth of things as he talked. That’s the way he painted.”

Several common spatial and structural themes are shared by the “Ocean Park” paintings, including, perhaps most powerfully, the varying depths or thicknesses of space presented by each block or volume of color in relation to its immediate neighbors, and to the total range or cosmos constructed on the canvas. Diebenkorn, in his long slow process of painting these large canvases, would often speak of a certain color needing “more space” on the picture plane, or a space needing “more red” to achieve the overall balanced composition he could perceive to be emerging. There is also the topographic play between the larger, more placid, recessive surfaces or volumes and the narrower, smaller, more intense bands and clusters that seem to move forward out of the picture plane. In addition, there is the constant tension between the vertical, architectural, elevational reading and the horizontal, landscape, topographic reading, often heightened by the presence of multiple horizon lines, ground-sky readings and their reversals, and ambiguous edge zones. There is also the persistent presence of diagonal lines, edges, seams, boundaries, often creating triangular volumes or spaces, but equally often creating the strong sense of a potential for the folding of the surface, particularly when the colors differ on either side of the diagonal line. This creates another kind of topographic reading, that of the folded plane, imparting to the adjacent rectilinear lines a three-dimensional implication, as if they too might be



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No. 94*, 1976.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.196)



Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No. 140*, 1985.
(Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.246)

read as folding forms. Finally, there is the constructive power of light, captured in the richly textured surface. It is revealing that Diebenkorn denied even being able to see the beautiful light of California until he had, as he said, “found it in the painting.”

The “Ocean Park” paintings are imbued with the themes of Diebenkorn’s life as a painter, in particular his sensitivity to place, to the topography of its landscape, and to the texture of its light, and the complementary fascination with the inhabited “inside/outside” space, with the structured surface composed of layered and modulated fields of color, and the texture of its light. He struggled all his life to achieve what Matisse seemed to do with such apparent ease—to bring together interior and exterior space, inside and outside light, on the same surface. In the “Ocean Park” paintings, with their figure-ground relationships entirely dissolved in abstract, topographic fields, Diebenkorn achieved what Livingston called “an incipiently architectonic structure which [is] nevertheless anchored firmly to the surface.”

It is important to close by noting that many have recognized Diebenkorn’s great strength to be the integrity with which he engaged his discipline, how his paintings reflect what Robert Motherwell said in 1951; “Every intelligent painter carries the whole culture of modern painting in his head. It is his real subject, of which anything he paints is both an homage and a critique.” Or, as Diebenkorn himself put it; “One would have to be very foolish not to notice the direction in which [one’s predecessors] worked. I am amazed that some people can be so lacking in anxiety as to imagine that they have grasped the truth in their art on the first try.” Diebenkorn died in 1993 at the age of 71.

References, Diebenkorn

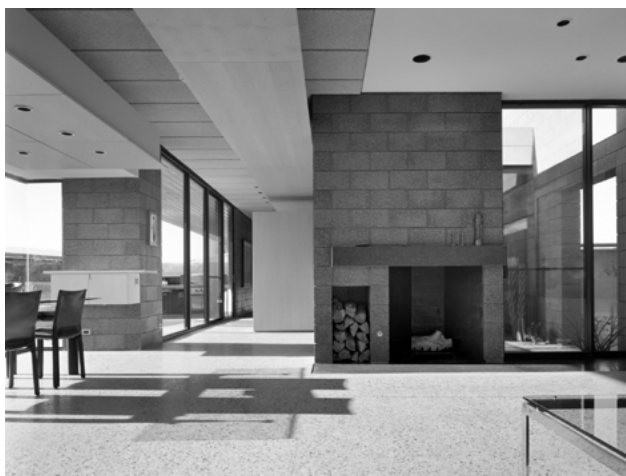
Jane Livingston, *The Art of Richard Diebenkorn* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997); essays by Jane Livingston, Ruth Fine and John Elderfield.

Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987).

Initially trained as a painter, Tsien emphasizes the tactile surface in the firm's work, whereas she holds that Williams focuses on the expanding spatial volume; and where Tsien designs toward a quiet stillness of enclosure, Williams seeks the perpetual motion of the *promenade architecturale*, always seeking to move out into the landscape. As Tsien describes it, this leads to a shared fascination with the shallow relief, the topographic space, with what lies close to the surface. This conception is most evident in their conception of the part played in architectural design by landform and the structured surface. Williams and Tsien emphasize in their work the first and fourth of Gottfried Semper's "four elements of architecture"—the marking of the ground and the cladding as a woven fabric. As Williams says, in beginning a design they seek to "find a crease, to cut and reshape the land" in order to make a root, a foundation that "would allow the sky, the sense of infinite extension, to come into" the building.

This responsibility of the architect "to mark the land" leads in Williams and Tsien's work to the landform being treated "like an etching," as Peter Zumthor has described it. Williams and Tsien have written that, for them, "architecture is connected to the earth... [We deal] with principles of gravity, atmosphere, and the very richness of the Earth's surface. Virtually all adults, standing, are connected to the ground with their feet, their line of vision a mere 4 to 6 feet above it... Architecture must first be concerned with this zone—our feet in contact with the ground. The surface of the Earth is the canvas of the architect. The precise detail of this zone is ours as architects to affect." This leads to an understanding that, as Williams put it, "the land is as important as the building... it is not about being inside or outside the building, but kind of a dialogue between" inside and outside.

In constructing the fabric of enclosure, the structured surface that forms and shapes space, interior and exterior, Williams and Tsien are especially sensitive and responsive to what the weaver Anni Albers called "the dictation of the materials." As Williams has said, they believe "there is a palette of materials that [are] appropriate to the project... [and] we allow that palette to tell us something, like whether the building should be heavy or whether it should be light." The materials thus determine the specific "gravity" of the place, the relation of horizontal to vertical, and the texture of its light. The multiple scales of people's experience of materials in space and surface is indicated by Williams and Tsien's statement: "You see the ocean, and then you see a grain of oddly colored sand. The boundaries of what one chooses to perceive are constantly expanding and contracting... There are the myriad stray thoughts, memories and images that are called up by what you see that color and shade the actual world."



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Freeman-Silverman House, Phoenix. (TWBTA website)

The architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien established their practice in New York in 1986. Williams was born in 1943 in Detroit, Michigan, attending high school in the Eliel Saarinen-designed Cranbrook High School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where his father was an inventor, engineer, and businessman. Williams studied architecture as an undergraduate at Cambridge University and received his Master of Architecture degree in 1967 from Princeton University. From 1967-73, Williams worked for Richard Meier, and in 1974 he set up his own practice, teaching at the Cooper Union for the next fifteen years, until 1989. Billie Tsien was born in 1949 in Ithaca, New York, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Yale in 1971, and worked as an artist from 1971-5. In 1977, she received a Master of Architecture degree from UCLA, and started work in Williams' office that same year, becoming a founding partner of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects (TWBTA) in 1986. She has taught at SCI-ARC, Yale, and Harvard, among others. Williams and Tsien have together taught at Columbia, the University of Virginia, and the Helsinki Technical University, and they have taught at Yale University for a number of years.



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Cranbrook Natatorium, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. (TWBTA website)



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona. (TWBTA website)

Williams and Tsien's deployment of topographic space, structured surface, and textured light may be seen operating at all scales in the Freeman-Silverman House outside Phoenix of 1995, where horizontal masonry walls anchor the house to the site while metal roof planes float and weave overhead to a counterpoint rhythm. The house sits astride and is split in two by an arroyo or desert wash, and the bridging space contains a window in the floor, allowing perception of the changing topography and sudden rush of the seasonal water runoff. The cut apart and reassembled character of the space is complemented by the literal reliefs created by casting the architects' study models into the face of the concrete walls. The Rifkind House on Long Island of 1996 is an elegant and restrained composition weaving together interior and exterior space with a series of rectangular surfaces of glass and wood, horizontal and vertical, solid and void, deep and shallow, structured by the black lines of steel. The Cranbrook Natatorium of 1999 is almost the opposite: a horizontal plane of ground/water with a second horizontal plane, blue, with celestial openings small and large, a roof/ceiling in the tradition of New York's Grand Central Station. In the Cranbrook Natatorium, the John Hopkins University buildings of 2001, the LeFrak Center in Prospect Park of 2013, and the Phoenix Art Museum of 2006, one

can speak of an underfoot and overhead topography of material surfaces and constructed planes of textured light that bring all the themes which parallel with Diebenkorn together into a single, complexly layered space of experience.

The folded, colored walls and folded wood panel of the Greenwich Village loft of 1991 were the inspiration for the folded vertical space and folded metal façade of the American Folk Art Museum in New York of 2001—the facade remarkably similar to a Diebenkorn “Ocean Park” painting. In three designs for towers, the Folk Art Museum, Skirkanich Hall at the University of Pennsylvania of 2006, and the Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago of 2012, the architects develop what might best be called a vertical topography in which we ascend by “walking up the walls,” the staircases rendered as steeply terraced landscapes whose stepping profiles are inscribed not only on the tops, but also on the bottoms of the treads and risers.

The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia of 2012, and the East Asian Library at the University of California, Berkeley of 2008, may best be described as a series of horizontal topographic spaces terraced into their sloping sites, which are then pinned into place at the center of the building by a vertical volume, which is shaped by floating diagonal planes of textured light suspended overhead. The Asia Society in Hong Kong of 2012 is the architects’ most literally topographic design to date, yet the dynamic ramps that connect the new galleries to the older existing buildings, both of which are embedded into the steeply sloping and heavily vegetated site, are elevated above the earth, allowing the visitors an architectural promenade through the treetops. In the Tata Consultancy in Banyan Park, India of 2014, the long narrow building volumes are partially embedded in the ground and surrounded by landscape, and the entire site is organized as an earthwork constructing shaded spaces beneath a thick, folded concrete roof, an overhead topography of textured light complementing the topography inscribed into the ground below.



In the Neurosciences Institute at the Scripps Research Center in La Jolla, California of 1995, we may speak of a true topographic space, blurring outside and inside, solid and void, in the ground and on the ground, with the ramp as the pivoting line structuring our experience. Sand-blasted concrete, fossil stone, sand-blasted glass railings, clear glass and redwood panels, are layered to create the inside-outside surfaces set into the earth. The walls of the auditorium are “origami-like” folded surfaces of hand-troweled plaster, an homage to Louis Kahn’s Fort Wayne Performing Arts Center, as the central courtyard is both an homage to, and a transformation of that at Kahn’s nearby Salk Institute. Throughout, the materials are carefully finished and positioned so as to create a serene, richly textured composition, one requiring that we touch the surfaces to gain a full understanding through their tactile qualities.

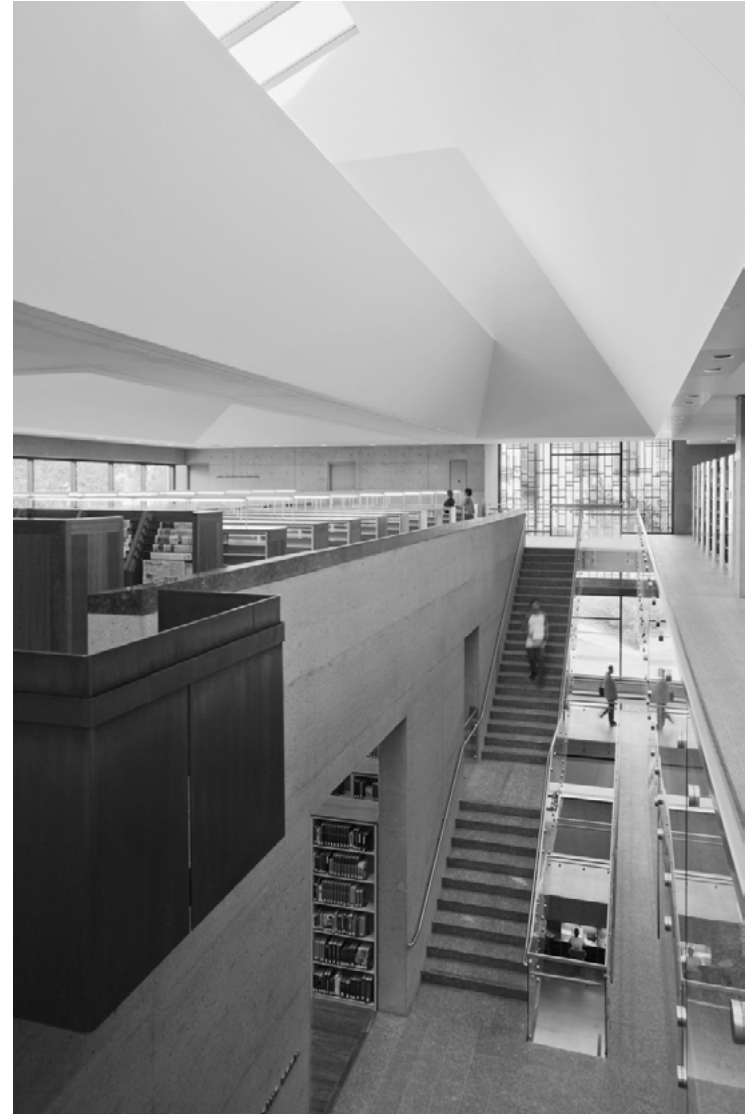
In the Andlinger Center for Energy and Environment at Princeton University of 2016, sited in a section of the campus with smaller historic buildings, the architects broke up the very large program into smaller volumes and organized it on several ground-planes, thinner elevated towers that reach up for the daylight, extensive sunken courts that draw the daylight down to larger labs partly buried in the earth, and a network of inhabited ground-planes that weave the campus ground level through the complex. Here again multiple levels above the ground, on the ground, and in the ground are pinned into place by the vertical light shaped by the textured surfaces of both the extruded towers and excavated courts. The study model reveals the way a topography of excavation and extrusion acts to merge figure-ground (object-field in painting), so that the entire, now multi-leveled ground plane (picture plane) is activated and inhabited.

In a close parallel to Diebenkorn’s return to the early modern ideals of the reworked surface and slow construction over time of the final composition, rather than the swift and mechanical execution of an idea already fully designed in one’s head, Williams and Tsien emphasize “the importance of slowness” in their work. Their description of their continued employment of “tools of the hand” to make their office drawings is directly comparable to Diebenkorn’s method of painting; “Buildings





Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Logan School of the Arts, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. (TWBTA website)



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley. (TWBTA website)



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Asia Society
Hong Kong Center, Admiralty, Hong Kong. (TWBTA
website)

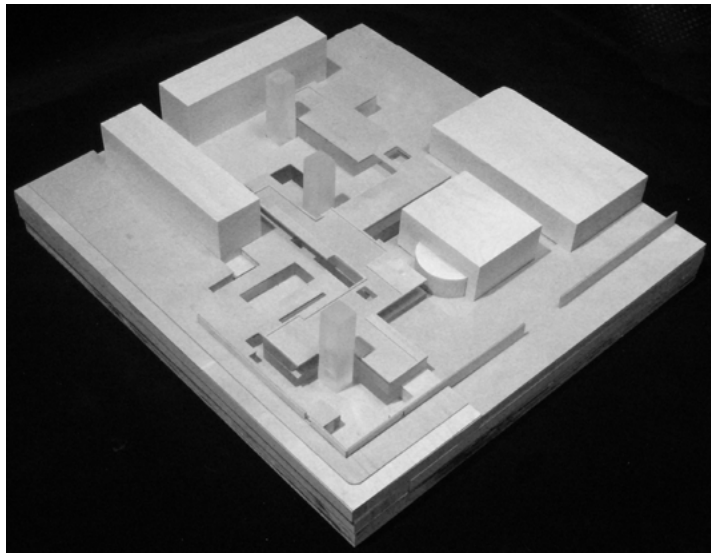
Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects,
Neurosciences Institute, La Jolla, California.
(TWBTA website)

are still constructed with hands [a point made by Josef Albers in 1944], and it seems that the hand still knows best what the hand is capable of doing. As our hand moves, we have the time to think and to observe our actions... When we make changes, they occur with effort and a fair amount of tedious scrubbing with erasers, erasing shields, and spit... So [drawings] are made slowly, after thoughtful investigation, because they are a commitment that has consequence. It is better to be slow... The grime that builds up [on the drawings] from being worked over is poignant and satisfying. We see the history of the presence of our hand... [For us, computer] printouts are too clean. They don't show the scrubbed and messy sections of erasure, so there is no evidence to indicate the history of the development of the idea... The presence of the hand-drawn pages documents both the path of thought and the destination."

In describing their design process, Williams and Tsien also parallel Diebenkorn's slow resolution of all elements on the canvas, from edge to edge; "In the buildings we design, we struggle to achieve a unity and sense of wholeness that can come from a balance of individual gestures within a larger and more singular container... The design is a slow and often uneven accumulation of stitches, that are often ripped out part way through while we struggle to make clear, or to understand, what the pattern and organization might be, even as we avoid as much as possible knowing what the final image might be." This is an almost exact echo of Diebenkorn's concept of process over preconceived image or form. It is therefore hardly surprising that, for Williams and Tsien, the defining "image" of the building, "the elevations, are always the last part of a building to be developed... [For] it is better not to provide [an elevation] before the interior habitation and the structure of the building has been given enough time to develop as the logic for the façade."



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects,
Neurosciences Institute, La Jolla, California.
(TWBTA website)



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Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Andlinger
Center for Energy and Environment, Princeton
University, Princeton, New Jersey; study model.
(Courtesy of TWBTA)



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Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Andlinger
Center for Energy and Environment, Princeton
University, Princeton, New Jersey.
(TWBTA website)

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Williams Tsien: Works 2G
(Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1999);
including essays "Slowness" and
"Slowly-Improving Vision,"
and interview with Peter
Zumthor.

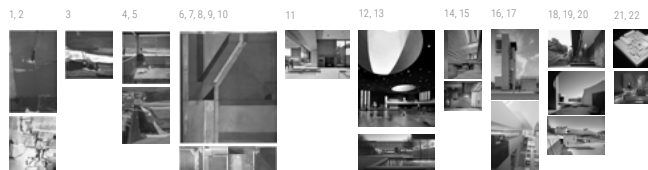
*Work Life: Tod Williams and Billie
Tsien* (New York: Monacelli,
2000).

Williams and Tsien share with Diebenkorn what have been called his two fundamental principles. First, Williams and Tsien believe themselves to be part of the Modern tradition, and in this their work is particularly indebted to Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn and Alvar Aalto. Since their time teaching at the Helsinki Institute of Technology, the influence of Aalto, in his grounded masonry rectangles with curved metal roof and skylight forms rising above, and Aalto's fellow Finnish modernists—see the remarkable parallel of the Cranbrook Natatorium with Aarne Ervi's Tapiola Swimming Hall of 1965, with their shared large, conical-shaped skylights—has become increasingly pronounced, particularly in Williams and Tsien's suburban and campus buildings. In a time dominated by the spectacular gesture in architecture, Williams and Tsien have followed another path, one that seeks to build upon the landmarks left by predecessors such as Aalto—in this they parallel Diebenkorn's stubborn dedication to learning from Cézanne, Matisse, and Mondrian.

Tsien identifies this as "a question of integrity. By not looking forward or backward, you concentrate on the thing at hand without the self-consciousness of trying to create a body of work or establish a reputation." This brings up the second fundamental principle shared with Diebenkorn—the ethical imperative to find the right way to make a painting, rather than the fashionable mode. Tsien states that Williams "brings an ethic to the practice. This ethic is a powerful generator of all that we do... We believe in building well, because it is a measure of our integrity." When asked, what was the "vision" of their work, Williams and Tsien responded by saying: "Perhaps we are looking for a clear vision rather than looking to be visionary. Vision can be attained after a long period of building. To be visionary is exclusive of building. We believe clear vision is slow evolving, as is good work. We are not visionary architects, but we are beginning to see more clearly... [As we get older], even as we may lose our ability to see *distance*, the accumulation of life as experience enables us to see *depth*." ■

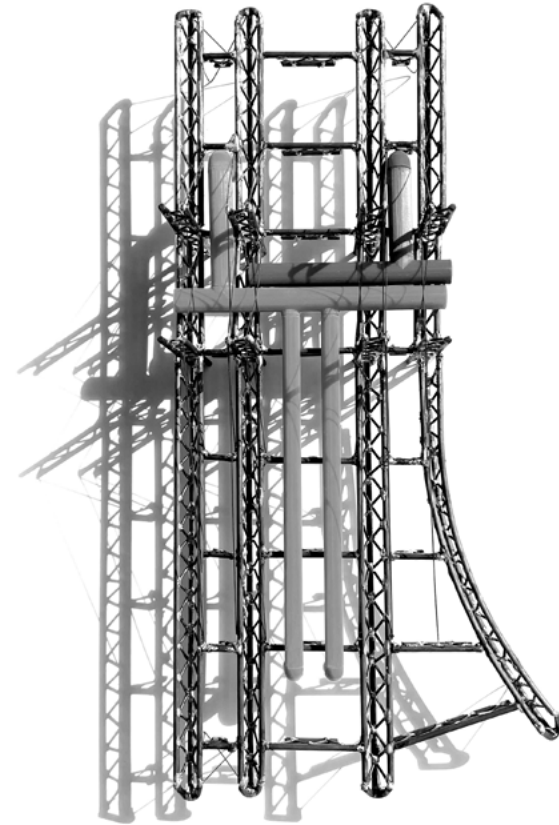
Illustrations:

- 1 Richard Diebenkorn, *Sausalito*, 1949. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.33)
- 2 Richard Diebenkorn, *Albuquerque No. 3*, 1951. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.46)
- 3 Richard Diebenkorn, *Berkeley No.59*, 1955. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.83)
- 4 Richard Diebenkorn, *Interior with Book*, 1959. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.105)
- 5 Richard Diebenkorn, *Cityscape I*, 1963. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.112)
- 6 Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No.40*, 1971. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.166)
- 7 Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No.70*, 1974. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.178)
- 8 Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No.79*, 1975. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.181)
- 9 Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No.94*, 1976. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.196)
- 10 Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park No.140*, 1985. (Gerald Nordland, *Richard Diebenkorn*, 1987, p.246)
- 11 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Freeman-Silverman House, Phoenix. (TWBTA website)
- 12 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Cranbrook Natatorium, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. (TWBTA website)
- 13 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona. (TWBTA website)
- 14 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, American Folk Art Museum, New York. (TWBTA website)
- 15 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Skirkanich Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (TWBTA website)
- 16 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Logan School of the Arts, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. (TWBTA website)
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- 18 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Admiralty, Hong Kong. (TWBTA website)
- 19 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Neurosciences Institute, La Jolla, California. (TWBTA website)
- 20 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Neurosciences Institute, La Jolla, California. (TWBTA website)
- 21 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Andlinger Center for Energy and Environment, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; study model. (Courtesy of TWBTA)
- 22 Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, Andlinger Center for Energy and Environment, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. (TWBTA website)





A Space For Gathering. Fall 2021
Photo: Minami Guido



Avery Dunavant, *High-Tech Model*. Graduate Design 2,
Spring 2022. Professors Jason Alread and Mark McGlothlin.

MEANING AND MEASURE IN LANDSCAPE

Somewhere Between Place
and Body

Carley Rynar

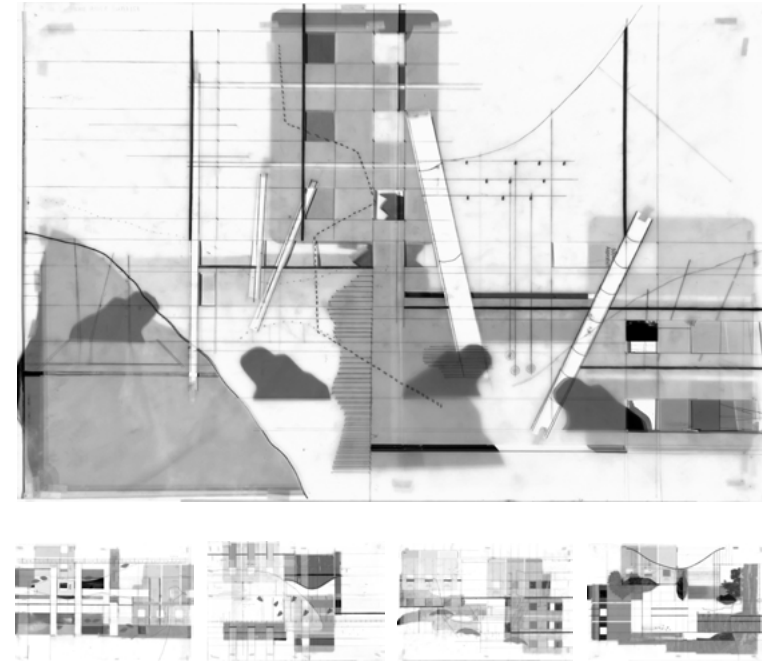
Chair: Nina Hofer

Co-Chair: Bradley Walters

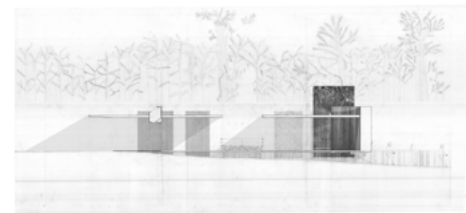
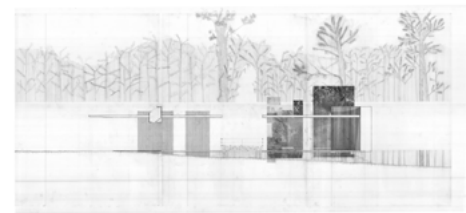
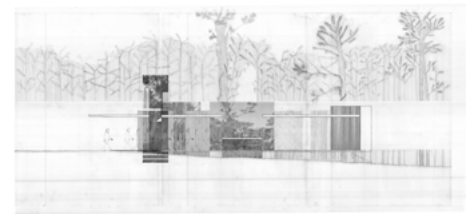
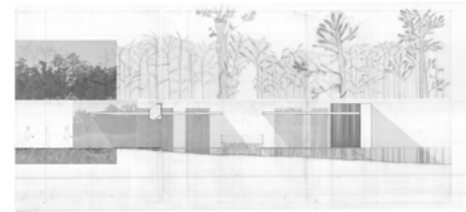
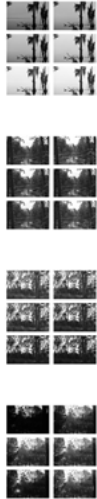
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Meaning and Measure in Landscape seeks to address the blatant and latent aspects of place which are often undermined and overlooked. This project uncovers the quantifiable and qualifiable characteristics of landscape through the process of ritual site visits involving extensive data collection of place. The landscapes which we operate within are not static, they are living bodies that are constantly changing and evolving. The act of ritual site visits allows for the slowing down of experience of place, revealing the tangible and intangible qualities of place which may have been concealed prior. Ritual data collection at site is composed of in-situ mappings, journaling, multiple photography typologies, sound recordings, and calibrated annotations. These collections speak to the human condition at place through experience, memory, and unconscious intuitions.

Somewhere between is the nature of this project, the work not settling in one distinct category but floating and moving amongst a series of categories, as most phenomena that exists in this world is, in fact, between. We as individuals are so intertwined with our experience of place we fail to distinguish between the physical landscape and the constructed landscape of experience. This project seeks to distill the personally constructed landscape by uncovering the blatant and latent aspects of site to create an architecture that conversates with these conditions, an architecture that mediates between place, body, and landscape.



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PLACE, RITUAL, AND THE PERFECT BREAKFAST SANDWICH

Musings on Mnemonic Meditation
and Muscle Memory Mastery

John Maze

University of Florida

It's vital to establish some rituals—automatic but decisive patterns of behavior—at the beginning of the creative process, when you are most at peril of turning back, chickening out, giving up, or going the wrong way... The ritual erases the question of whether or not I like it. It's also a friendly reminder that I'm doing the right thing. (I've done it before. It was good. I'll do it again.)¹

As I sit here in the airport awaiting my fate (a few hours in a cramped, flying incubator with people I've made it this far in life not knowing) I cannot help but think about the notion of Ritual and the role that rituals have played in my life. Note, this is not an intellectual text full of philosophical positions, or current theoretical mumbo-jumbo. I am simply sharing a few thoughts on the notion of "ritual" and what it means to me.

Daily rituals set us up for an inevitable success... as if a simple little act can - like a fortune cookie - assure us that we will meet our goals. For me, just such a thing gives me the opportunity to improve and perfect technique while giving my mind an opportunity to think ahead and plan for class. Every morning barring the occasional special occasion (i.e. 4am fishing trip, breakfast date with my lovely wife, travel) my ritual begins with opening the refrigerator and removing all I need to make the perfect breakfast sandwich. This sets off a clock in my head that the day is about to begin, and that it's time to mentally plan out the next several hours.

Mundane for most, this is absolutely essential for me. As the mind continually races, this manual ritual of making food sets up the rest of my day. I suppose it quiets the mind, or at least provides a quiet mental place for it to do what it does as my hands do what they do with the assembly. This is not as easy as it seems. Growing up as a swimmer, I'd attempt to quell the anxiety before a race with my headphones on blasting something obnoxious and raucous. AC/DC was a pre-race favorite for years. Typically if I performed used this technique, I was one step closer to reaching that inevitability of a race well swum.

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¹ Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit*. Simon & Schuster, New York, 2003. pg15.

8:00:00 remove from refrigerator muffins, cheese, ham, an egg, and Duke's mayonnaise
(morning ritual has begun - focus on collecting everything in one efficient trip so I waste as little electricity and effort as possible)

8:00:30 place muffin in toaster oven, place skillet on cooktop
(This actually takes me back to childhood at my grandmother's house in Calhoun County, West Virginia. She had a toaster oven, not a toaster, and loved to make the grandkids buttered toast. It was the best ever. Somehow, pulling open the door and setting the bread on the rack always connects me to her and my parents' roots in the mountains. Even the creak of the oven door sounds the same. It's amazing how quickly the years get moved through like a wormhole with these sensory flashbacks.)

8:01:00 butter skillet, place ham on skillet
*(wonder if students understood assignment for today)
(think perhaps instructions this year were somewhat convoluted)*

8:01:30 take out smallest plate possible, knife, and tiny glass put cheese slice on plate
*(think McGlothlin's students' DWS framework is stronger than mine...
...how did he do that)*

8:02:00 return rest of muffins and consolidated packing of cheese and ham to fridge
*(think about last minute changes to lecture - take out dad joke)
(wonder what the ASL sign is for "lake"... what is "horizon?")*

8:03:00 crack egg as neatly as possible and set on skillet - don't break yoke!

8:04:00 take tiny glass to fridge and pour out equally tiny portion of milk
(plan to take studio work out into atrium to critique - wonder if there is an event in atrium today. It's a shame we have to now reserve atrium, should be open as teaching tool. Oh well...)

8:04:30 flip egg, flip ham, add cheese slice, turn off skillet

8:05:00 remove muffin, and slather with thin layer of Duke's
*(why would anyone use anything but Duke's?..
...what's wrong with people?)*

8:06:00 assemble masterpiece, add Tabasco sauce, turn on/off music depending

8:06:30 eat and read - think about how day will go
(man, ...)

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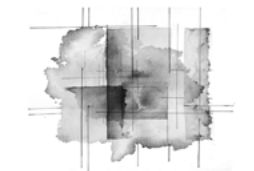
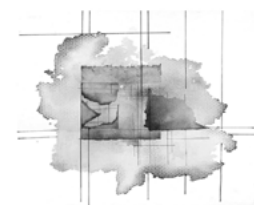
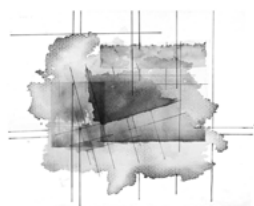
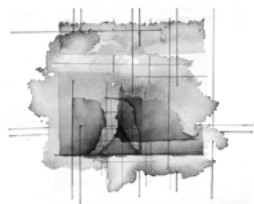
I was reminded of this as I visited family and found no muffins, cheese slices, nor skillet and had to improvise. By the third morning, it was operating like clockwork, and the days mental preparation unfolded as needed. I find that the complexities and unforeseen occurrences of life have less of an impact if one is adequately tuned, perhaps like an instrument. Negative things don't seem to hit as hard, and stress stays on the surface. Acknowledging the mundanity of this little shared quandary, I do find the necessity of a daily task by rote comforting and somehow reassuring. Perhaps it is like the hourly respite of the smoker - five minutes of quiet, peace, and solitude hidden away behind a bush somewhere. The regularity of the smoke break punctuates the day like the ticks of a clock. As a former smoker who long ago let go of the predictable respite, I have to think that perhaps it is this loss many years ago that led to a subconscious need of a daily ritual - and one that thankfully is less harmful.

First and foremost, in my mind, is the daily ritual that prepares me for what I may be facing after I leave the sanctity of home and enter campus, and that is the great muffin caper that begins each day. I think of these as a mini-sabbaths, to be performed either in preparation for a task or simply the toils of the day, or in conclusion of such.

Whether it be simply driving onto campus and being prepared for class, or a lengthier project, such as a beginning a new design enterprise, this brief but essential time bubble is as important as breathing. I feel that the repetition of very prescriptive motions doing what many would consider menial allows my brain to run through a checklist of things prior to setting forth on the greater task. It is a quiet before the storm, a pause before a statement, a rest before a note. As Rabbi Abraham Heschel says of the sabbath... "The seventh day as a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence. In its atmosphere, a discipline is a reminder of adjacency to eternity."²

Each observance of this silly little ritual - (not quite a "palace in time," more of a spatial threshold, like a foyer or antechamber) - string together across time and form a datum of consistency. Maybe it's a tonic or a continuous tone against which the rises and falls of a melodious activities harmonize and dissonate as the day passes. Zoom out and over time, the making of breakfast in this manner punctuates the flow of time like a metronome. I have to think that this will continue in perpetuity until another such ritual forms a tighter bond with my heart and soul. I think that maybe it is the soul that benefits the most from the rituals that we grow into.

² Abraham Heschel. *The Sabbath*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1951. pg15.



Let us shift gear dramatically from the daily and metronomic to the situational and procedural. Another type of ritual that I practice is not daily but precedes each and every design project. Before I can truly begin synthesizing program, budgets and context, and I must go and bond with the Place... Try through immersion to capture and experience the essence of the sites in a way that I cannot do from afar. A site visit is something that we all do. There's nothing special about that in and of itself. What I have become accustomed to doing is not only returning to the site multiple times at various times of day and during different weather conditions, but actually dwelling on the site as though I were living off of it for hours at a time. This is most poignant at the rising of and the setting of the sun while the transition between diurnal and nocturnal life is most vivid. I find these changes of time and the shifting of senses to be truly magical, and the ways that they reveal more nuanced and hidden aspects of a place. As the sun rises, we begin to hear the residents of the site wake up and announce their survival, calling out most loudly to others of their flock or herd "I am alive! I am here!"

I have found the same ritual, effective and more constructed urban environments as well, though the parameters are quite different. Whether it be sitting in a square with a book, or along the sidewalk with a cup of coffee, the senses reach out and intuit the surroundings. Like a magic eye illustration, by focusing on a menial task at hand, an unfocused subconscious can make better sense of the world and give us clues as to what the immutable essence of the place may be. I acknowledge that this may sound like some attempt at Heidegger-esque Dasein but it is not. It is purely a creative habit to foster one's intuitive excavation of a Place. It could actually be the enactment of purposeful being with (or in) a particular space that first brings forth the qualities of Place-ness for me. Without this first conscious act of finding the essence of a particular space, site, or condition, the Place is never allowed to come forth in my mind. In this instance, the ritual establishes the Place. So I wonder: is Place-ness an absolute or is it pure conjecture - a construct of the mind influenced by one's own intuition and memory?

This practice is akin to inverse meditation whereas one does not retreat inward into nothingness, one projects, one's senses out and absorbs. I find that over time one can learn to do this to still the mind, and just intuit one's surroundings. Very seldom does this ritual not yield a clue to what the site wishes to occur within it. Perhaps it is the thoughtless nature of the mind distracted by the smells, and sounds, and maybe the chill in the air or the rain on our back and that allows the subconscious to synthesize previous more strategic analysis and planning with the tactical experience of the place. Perhaps it is this enactment by rote of the site experience that allows ideas to come forth. In a way, I find congruence with the morning ritual... Occupy the lizard brain with a task and allow the deeper recesses of our consciousness to weave together a tale full of consequence or expectation.

There are other notions of Ritual that I find important, but it is these that are the most consistent. When performed enough to become distraction-less vessels of mental solitude (or fortitude), our rituals transcend time. Can I count how many breaths I took this week? The answer is probably not. But I can tell you fairly precisely how much time I have spent in a little personal bubble planning my day and solving the world's problems as I craft the most perfect breakfast sandwich. ■



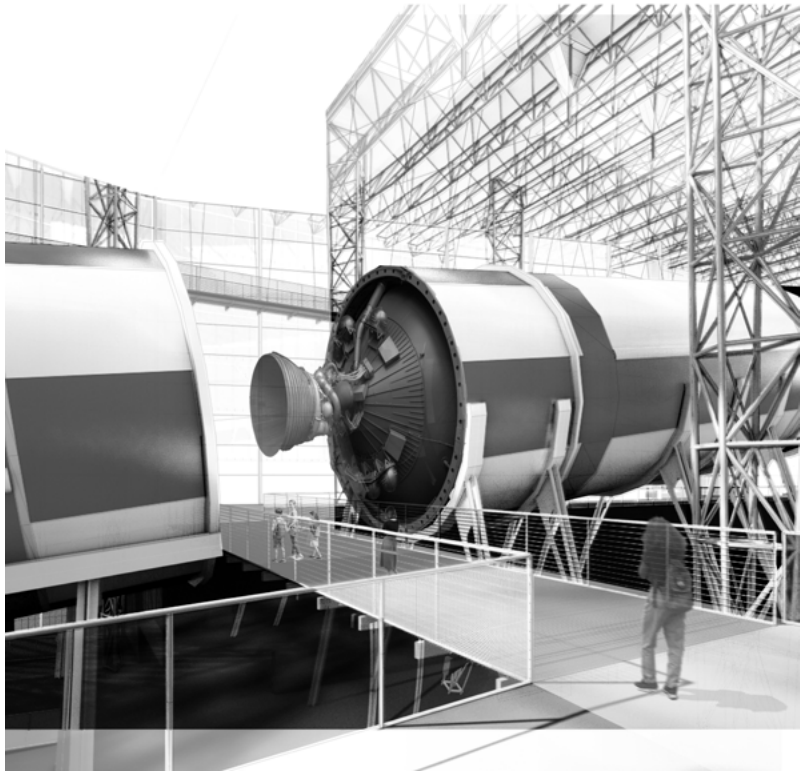
Afterword

In the time since I began this essay, I have had exactly 44 breakfast sandwiches... 44 daily rituals preceding the launch into whatever beyond-my-control events lay before me. I am tuned, and ready to play... as long as I finish my breakfast.

Illustrations:

- 1 Brooke Carlson, *Section Analysis*. Graduate Design 2, Spring 2022. Professors Jason Alread and Mark McGlothlin.
- 2 Stephanie Roberts, *spacey kacey*. Graduate Design 2, Spring 2022. Professors Jason Alread and Mark McGlothlin.





Alex Boucher and Suzanne Tielemans, *Saturn V Rocket Exhibit*. Graduate Design 2, Spring 2022. Professors Jason Alread and Mark McGlothlin.



Stephanie Roberts, *Mass Timber Detail Model* Photo. Graduate Design 1, Fall 2021. Professors Lee-Su Huang and Bradley Walters.

MAPLE ST. CONSTRUCTS

Mike Nesbit

Fine artist, based in Los Angeles

A ritual of thoughts, memories, conversations, and exhibitions from a community of Artists through Maple St. Construct that took place on Artist Thomas Prinz's property in Little Italy, Nebraska from early 2020 to the late Summer of 2021.

Like the water and bread that sustain our bodies,
It was the conversations and act of making that sustained our overall well being...

—

During the early parts of COVID we felt it a necessity to utilize our nonprofit, Maple St. Construct, as an opportunity to engage our community of artists as a means to not lose sight of our individual practices and understand that our work is still tied together no matter where we might be located and/or isolated. Little Italy, Nebraska and the property of artist Thomas Prinz became the physical Art/Architectural melting pot for these conversations and rituals of making.

To learn more, visit www.maplestconstruct.com.





From The Room and The Landscape, Photo: © Thomas Prinz

The Room And The Landscape

Mike Nesbit + Peter Goché + Thomas Prinz

March 27th, 2020

"It's about the wall, the wall of absence, the wall of presence. It's about the box being attached to the wall as opposed to the wall being attached to the box. It's about light, it's about dark, it's about transparency, translucency, it's about absence, about presence. The sense of layering, transparency, overlap. The wall has a sculptural quality which goes beyond an architectural quality, it's a combination of both. Perforated metal to overlap light apertures, a sense of structure, exposure of the building process. A combination of classical order with randomness, ramp, plinth."

- Thomas Prinz, Text message to Mike Nesbit. 22 March 2020.

making

*a thought confined to a room
springs tireless hands
an itch with no place to scratch
a thought delicate to the breeze
confinement of physicality
the hands search
materiality questioned
a decision made
the thought corralled*

*a thought confined to a landscape
springs tireless feet
an itch with no place to scratch
a thought delicate to the breeze
confinement of physicality
the feet search
materiality questioned
a decision made
the thought corralled*

*a tireless thought within a corral
patient hands tend the anxiousness
starting, stopping, moving, pausing
building, breaking, stacking, falling
patient hands slowly still
corralled thought less anxious*

*a tireless thought within a corral
patient feet tend the anxiousness
starting, stopping, moving, pausing
building, breaking, stacking, falling
patient feet slowly still
corralled thoughts less anxious*

*an object rests quietly confined
the hands begin to tremble
a thought towards the landscape
the object thrown from the room
the hands walk out like feet*

*an object rests quietly confined
the feet begin to tremble
a thought towards the room
the object thrown from the landscape
the feet carry in like hands*



From Highway Hypnosis, Photo: © Dan Schwalm

Highway Hypnosis

Mike Nesbit + Nicolas Shake + Levi Robb

June 26th, 2020

*"I don't know where we're going. I don't even always know what I'm looking at. Some of it moves me and some of it scares me and some of it leaves me at sea, disoriented, maybe already obsolete."*¹

- Olivia Laing

¹ "Say You're In: Wolfgang Tillmans." *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020).

You are driving on the 14 headed towards Palmdale while making your way to I-80 and Des Moines. You are by yourself; it is around dusk and the radio is silent while you travel through the flat endless landscape. The sound of the breeze passing through the window guides your pace as the sun slowly falls behind, casting your shadow east. Your mind begins to wonder. There is nothing ahead of you as you travel in this moment of colorful gray, just flatness. The shadows grow towards darkness as the landscape begins to collect the reflections of the rising twilight and your thoughts are brightened from the darkness. The objects within the landscape become re-invented as your mind wonders with every mile. The thing you considered for so long becomes erased and the sentiment of something new breathes life into the unknown landscape ahead. As the breeze begins to slow and the car comes to a stop, you listen...

*walking has become a constant
a frenetic pause
embedded in the subconscious
unnecessary visits
items leftover
body is set in motion
that rhythm has been broken
sensory instances of déjà vu
response and reuse
artifact collection
moment of freedom
built from the empty ground
collage nature
no evidence of that
forgotten areas*



From Silence and Intimacy, Photo: © Dan Schwalm

Silence and Intimacy

Mike Nesbit + Jessica Emmanuel + Shagha Ariannia + Thalia Rodgers
July 10th, 2020

¹ Going North: Roni Horn, vol. 1 (Potomac, Maryland: Glenstone Museum, 2017).

*"Life began in water and eventually some forms of life crawled out of it, though some, like the whales, changed their minds about the land and crawled back in. The earth is beautiful but uncertain."*¹

- Gary Indiana

*internal watercolors of thought
a separation of anxieties
silence finds intimacy
reflections of a mother's conversation
a jewelry box of precious cards
a state of the world through words
silent sounds of intimacy
a state of internal being
a state of exposure
intimacy comes into play
intimacy between thoughts
intimacy between community
intimacy between the things we make
silence plays a loud tone
projections of a far tomorrow
splashes of pink in the desert
undertones of dark skin against sand
listen to the silence of intimacy*



From Past Grounded in Nature, Photo: © Dan Schwalm

Past Grounded In Nature

Mike Nesbit + Vincent Pocsik + Ian Tredway

July 24th, 2020

¹ Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Object* (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser, 2006) 58.

*"And this gold leaf – we all know this but it really touched me when I saw it – the gold leaf shone right from the back of the room, out of a deep darkness. Which means gold seems to have the capacity to pick up even the smallest quantities of light and reflect them in the darkness."*¹

- Peter Zumthor

gather some materials
internet for service
muted and neutral-ish
depicted soil and rock
a mending element
moving and making
barrier between myself
the direct emotion
one red hat
old Byzantine wood sculptures
exposed structures
green, blue, or yellow
the layering of nature and culture
adding ornamentation
creating a barrier
Please do not apologize
walk off the main path
3 cement walls
years of layered spray paint
the color pink
blue, red, and yellow
the color fades rapid
rudimentary
even subconsciously
transition from rusted green to the blue
The blue of that bridge

industrial blue
a blue that works
blue in the sky
marks have been healed
relationship to material, nature, color
paved concrete
power lines transforming miles
imprints of the trees
taking field samples
nature and culture
carve it out of wood
take it back
art and ideology
a constant struggle
balance
dyed paper pulp
unorderly and unplanned
plants, rocks, concrete
the debris, and the humidity
the unchanging pole
an endless struggle
cast in resin
cope or restructure
exhausted and drunk
river and mountain
gold leaf



From *A Morning in Little Italy*, Photo: © Dan Schwalm

A Morning In Little Italy

Mike Nesbit + Thomas Prinz

September 11th, 2020

¹ "False Dawn." Harper's Magazine, August 2020.

*"One Thursday the robins flooded my morning. American, orange breasted on bare branches, aiming for the light behind thin clouds. I find out philodendrons need indirect sun. I move this living thing closer to shadow."*¹

- Khadijah Queen

*an orange sun glows through white curtains
soft and warm bare feet on whitewashed plywood
the train makes its presence
a view out the window towards a sliced shed
jeans and boots with no socks
a studio shirt worn many times
a brush of the teeth
a swirl of mouthwash
a twist of the back
mask in the back pocket
imitation Purell in the front
sunglasses hooked to the shirt
the door opens
humidity present
on a deck and in the landscape
a few steps towards a deconstructed box
revealed studs
horizontal and vertical cuts of landscape
the orange morning light
a family of ten wild turkeys meander and peck
fall in line from tall to short
short to tall
in the distance wild berries
burgundy with a bit of pollen
boots press upon gray limestone
white wildflowers collaged with berry stems
green leaves and dried wheat
perched upon EIFS sprayed block
the orange sun rises
the Little Italy canopy more apparent
a colonnade of branches cathedral like
the landscape magnetically placed
a Toyota truck cruises towards a morning stop*



From Dig, Photo: © Dan Schwalm

Dig

Mike Nesbit
August 8th, 2021

"TO BECOME...not knowing, not knowing, not knowing, not knowing this, not knowing that, let it be, adjust."

- Thomas Prinz. "Little Italy." Received by Mike Nesbit and Claire Dilworth, 27 September 2020.

Art as a communal act, to produce something that is larger than one individual. Art as the sum of parts, art as the sum of context, art as time, art as reflection, art as grief, art as birth, art as the sum of fears, art as the sum of risk, art as the sum of vulnerability, art as the sum of strength and teamwork, art as the sum of delayed gratification, art as the sum of a slow emerging process that is gray and impossible to objectify and at times justify. At a certain point art becomes a sensibility and a way of being that works through a mystical atmosphere. We can feel that through the excitement of process, the rush of taking something on that is larger than ourselves, a scale that forces all of us to question the values we set, to construct only to deconstruct.

Mike Nesbit [@mike.nesbit]. Instagram,
20 November 2020 - 21 August 2021.

20 November 2020: The first part of Dig is complete, the concrete has been planted. It will sit in the ground through the winter and grow from the melting snow. Harvest will come during the spring when we pull the 20-ton earth cast from the landscape it represents.

05 December 2020: An area of gray between sculpture and landscape, process and representation, ownership and meaning, scale and value.

14 December 2020: The first snowfall for 'Dig' and it appears that the four steel embeds that will be used to pull the 20-ton earth cast from the ground in spring have become a watering hole for the deer in Little Italy.

01 March 2021: A cut through the landscape, a generational process, about time, about the seasons, about patience, appreciate delayed gratification.

24 March 2021: Spring approaches as Dig prepares for harvest, a 20-ton earth cast recording an intimate dialogue with the Midwestern Landscape and its seasons.

20 May 2021: Awaiting the harvest of Dig.

07 August 2021: Two weeks away from the harvest of Dig.

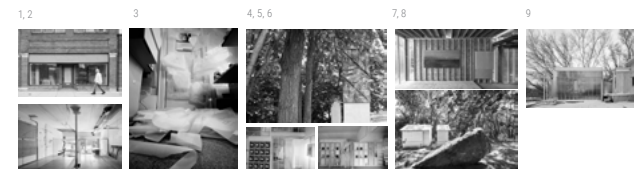
12 August 2021: As we prepare to harvest Dig next Saturday the 21st, it's been quite powerful to understand what it means to produce a sculptural representation of the Midwestern Landscape, as it's not just a 20-ton earth cast. It's something much greater. It's a recording of the seasons, it's a final resting place, it's a watering hole for the local wildlife that includes, deer, wild turkeys, and feral cats. Dig has become an earth sculpture that has integrated itself into the landscape and yet we still don't even know what it looks like. That's the beauty, as its physical representation is a byproduct of its context and embedded story. Although I am anxious to excavate it from the earth, it will be bittersweet. Going to have to provide a few more watering holes in the meantime.

21 August 2021: After nine months and all the seasons the Midwest could offer, we were able to harvest a piece of its Landscape. Working at this scale, nothing ever goes according to plan but with the right team and trust, you get there. Thanks to Maple St. Construct and Jonathan Schall for the jazz like moves when our cable broke and we had to lift up this 20-ton earth cast like the ancients, beyond grateful.



Illustrations:

- 1 Maple St. Construct Gallery Exterior, Photos: © Dan Schwalm
- 2 Maple St. Construct Gallery Interior, Photos: © Dan Schwalm
- 3 From The Room and The Landscape, Photo: © Thomas Prinz
- 4 From Highway Hypnosis, Photo: © Dan Schwalm
- 5 From Silence and Intimacy, Photo: © Dan Schwalm
- 6 From Past Grounded in Nature, Photo: © Dan Schwalm
- 7 From A Morning in Little Italy, Photo: © Dan Schwalm
- 8 From Dig, Photo: © Dan Schwalm
- 9 From Winter Saturdays are for Spring, Photo: © Dan Schwalm



LIGHT OF THE LABYRINTHINE

Convergence Of The Living
And The Departed

Amanda Herring

Chair: Mark McGlothlin
Co-Chair: Bradley Walters

"the uncanny is something which ought to have remained hidden
but had come to light"

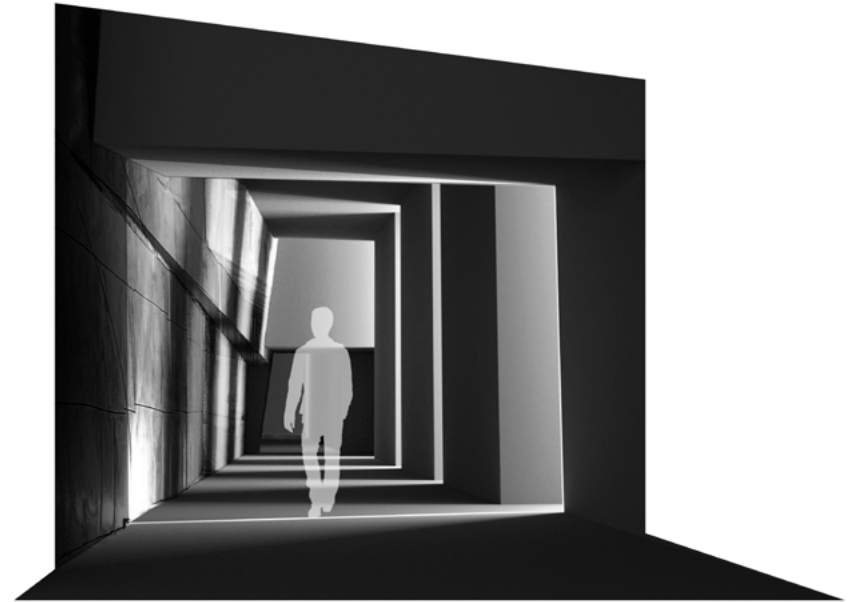
-Sigmund Freud

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¹ Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural
Uncanny: Essays in the Modern
Unhomely*. Cambridge, MA: MIT
Press, 1996. p.14.

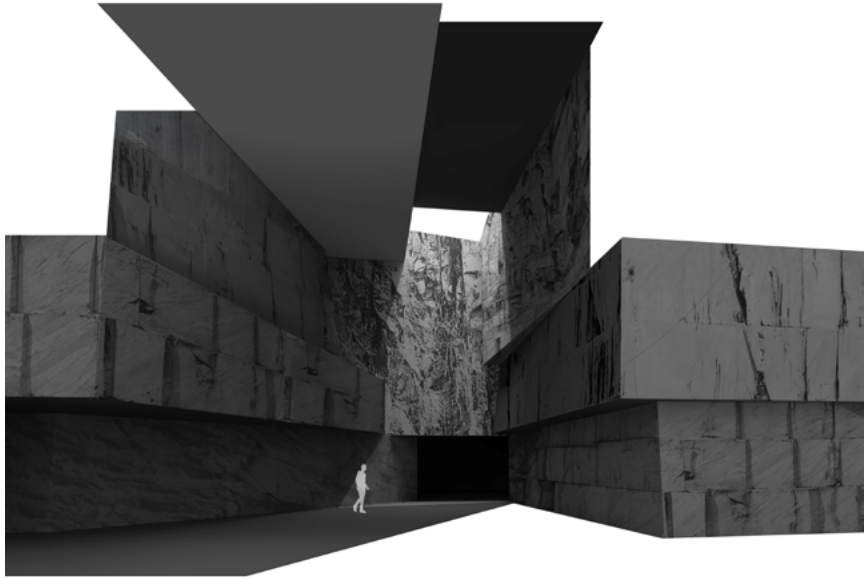
Lyrical music is empathetic in its lyrical nature. Written and composed from life experiences, the reverberations of instruments and a voice impact those who listen. The form of documenting music in a visual manner captures the undertones of the narrative, the connections between the lyrics and the instruments, and opens the gate for revelations within the sequence of songs in an album.

The intent of this project takes a narrative found in an album, written in the absence of a founding member after his death, analyzes the musical language of the songs to find the voids, and create habitats within those voids. The language of residing in the voids begins to unearth the bigger picture of the research. The main objective is to shed light on a topic of conversation that is not often embraced. This project interprets the musical language of an album written in the process of grief and allows the narrative of loss to be integral in creating spaces of interaction between the living and the departed within the construct of a labyrinthine.



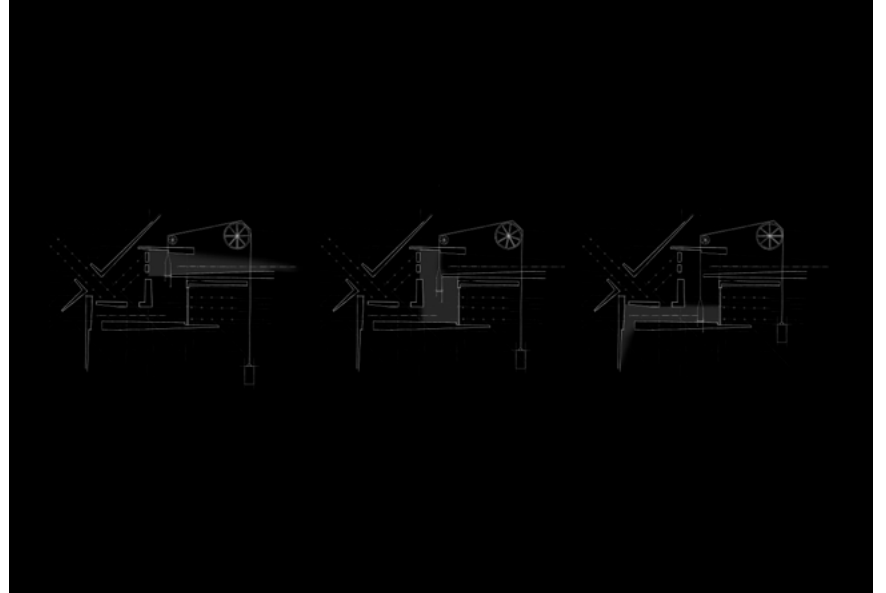
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traverse towards the unknown.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Mark McGlothlin, Co-Chair: Bradley Walters.

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movement within vessel of occupation.
Project in Lieu of Thesis, Spring 2022
Chair: Mark McGlothlin, Co-Chair: Bradley Walters.

CAPRICCIO

(10:49am, December 30, 2017)



172

Charlie Hailey

University of Florida

My laptop's lock screen sends me to Venice. Every time I sit down, and before I can check email, type, print, Zoom, write- I look south toward Giudecca. Across the canal, toward San Giorgio Maggiore, Le Zittelle, and Il Redentore; these churches float their horizons, set deep with the thinnest of freeboard. Closer, in the foreground, a dock folds up from my keyboard, out over water. Four figures and a boat.

Before I took this photograph, Nokia's ringtone bounced through the late morning's pall. The operator knows the rowers are on their way back, but takes off his glove, flips open his mobile and draws it to his ear under a flap of his trapper hat. Halfway across the canal, in the glow of water that makes its own light, the small boat smudges a vaporetto's wake. The operator turns and steps from the fondamenta's stones onto the dock's wooden planks.

Their boat moves in a direct line with San Giorgio Maggiore. If I quickly click through the series of other photos I took, it becomes many boats and builds a bridge halfway to the church. An ordinary procession, it marks a channel as it also bears the men in the boat on their training routine for the rowing club *Reale Società Canottieri Bucintoro*. Six months from now, another bridge of boats will be made for a festival that still marks the end of a sixteenth century plague that killed a third of the city. An extraordinary procession, tourists will cross the canal under fireworks and in the Doge's wake toward Il Redentore, built as a thank-offering. What do we construct after a pandemic? What should we build before inundation?

Two men stand and row. One oar feathers across chop, and the other, near the stern on the starboard side, digs into the water. They walk effortlessly across the canal. In Venice, you are always crossing water. Like I stood on the traghetto yesterday, crossing from Cannaregio to the fish market, relying not on practice for balance but rather on the Venetians packed onto the boat with me.

Closer now, each stroke anchors its rower to water, to shore, to deep traditions of rowing. *Dar zò* pushes water away from the hull, and *chiamar aequa* pulls it in. *Staire* corrects an errant stroke, or one that pushed or pulled too much. The rowers might

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be those two monks approaching Redentore in one of Canaletto's eighteenth century capriccio etchings, where ancient meets contemporary, distant places come near, and water laps at the church's steps as if the sea had already risen in 1742. A third monk waits on a landing, a basket in his hand. Here on shore, a white Nike swoosh trademarks the back of the operator's coat. He stands and waits for the boat to reach the dock, all the weight in his heels.

The operator presses buttons and the davit's arms swing in the clouds. Another button lowers the two slings into the water. He knows the tides and he knows where the elevator frame needs to be, but he still looks over the edge into the lagoon and its waving algae, already turgid with the day's traffic. Huddled low in the bow's wind shadow, a third figure looks backwards, away from the north winds that blow down from the Dolomites, over his hat's pom-pom bobbing up and down.

This davit crane is hard to place. It is related to hoists, derricks, windlasses, and other cranes found on the lagoon's western edges. But its real siblings might be found seaward in the smaller devices that launch dinghies and lifeboats from ships. Like those that cling to the cruise ship and will muscle through the canal this afternoon. It is as if one of those spars has abandoned ship: leapt overboard and crawled ashore, although not quite on land because it rises as a single column through the decking, its anchorage unseen in the mud below. The davit's splayed wings, taut railings, and tailing cables cast another lion of St. Marks poised at the top. This monument could lift a vessel fifty times the weight of this boat.

The two men stow their oars and gently touch the dock, tentatively as if to test its firmness, its material presence. Forcolas reach up above the gunnels like the arms of castaways. One last adjustment before the boat crosses the slings that flutter in the wind. I wonder at their pulses. This is the part of retrieval when I get nervous, that moment of alignment, gauging wind and current.

Here in Florida, I have launched and retrieved hundreds of times, but each return is different. And there are no davits or straps. Instead, we back trailers down into water. The truck's brakes redden the ramp's slick concrete, and trailer lights glow in tannin water as you throttle forward to drive your boat onto the trailer's bunks and hesitate between land and water.

Here on Zattere's fondamenta, air is the medium between water and land. The operator presses more buttons, the slings stretch, and the oarsmen crouch.

Taut now, the boat rises and floats on air. And I take the photograph. The Bucintoro's motto is "without wings you cannot fly," and for a moment this *sandolo* sails above the lagoon. But it also hangs fixed in suspense. In a capricious balance between past and future, at the height of *aqua alta*, its hull at the invisible but very present level the Adriatic Sea will be by the end of this century. One meter. When they stand again, the boat makes a little house.

The boat turns. Its sharpened bow and the full elegant sweep of its lines come into view. I have learned that it is a *puparin*, the only vessel in the *sandolo* family that shares a gondola's asymmetries. *Sandoli* were the flat-bottomed working boats of the lagoon. Jacopo de' Barbari's well-known map of Venice is full of *puparin* and other *sandoli*: *mascaréta*, *bragozzetto*, *balotina*, *dodesona*, *gondolone*, *gondonlino*, and many outfitted with sails. (I am partial to the *caorlina* because its name reminds me of my Carolina Skiff.) In the map, Barbari carefully drew the serrated roofs of the salt warehouses that are behind me, where the Bucintoro's club is housed. Before I took this photograph, I toured the space where their boats are stored, many in slings suspended from fourteenth century trusses and others tipped upward so that their sterns rest lightly on the stone floors and their bows press toward the ceiling's swell.

The boat brings water from the lagoon. It falls onto the dock in raindrops of light that dry and disappear, and new ones fall in their place. The warehouse's thick walls stored mounds of salt, and now they hold the absence of water. Memories evaporate, but when the laptop screen lights up, I taste the lagoon's brine.

The rowers climb overboard onto the dock's wooden planks. Up above, an unknown artist has tattooed the davit's steel with the scales of a dragon boat. Its arms marionette the boat and rowers over the dock. This daily trip is their watermark, along which tides will rise and fall and rise. Along which joy and sorrow come and go. A wave slaps against the seawall, wind blades into skin, and the operator makes eye contact. It is time for me to move on.

Wheels roll under the hull. A pewter spray of water glazes my cheeks where the fondamenta narrows. Over my shoulder, the boat, on its dolly now, rolls up a ramp into the gallery of vessels, and waits for water.

Five thousand miles away I begin to type as the sound of Maggiore's bells cross water. The screen flickers and my laptop's fan spins and whirs. ■

The author thanks Carla Brisotto, Melanie Hobson, Breanna McGrath, and Ludovico Sartor for their feedback on this essay.

Illustrations:

1 Charlie Hailey, photograph, December 30, 2017



Jenni Reuter

Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland

In a snowy Helsinki, November 28th, 2022

Our everyday life is built up of repetitive rituals such as washing ourselves, preparing food and eating, working and sleeping. Rituals where architecture can play a significant role to make us move with pleasure. As an architect you can influence everyone's life throughout the day, week and year. There is no other form of art that has such a strong impact on your daily life and quality of living.

The experience of architecture consists of perceptions produced by the body and the mind as we move through spaces. It is a multisensory experience. I will ask you some questions about your day where an architect could perhaps have had a role:

Do you have a calm place to sleep even if you live in a small apartment?

Does the morning sun wake you up?

How does it feel when you put your bare feet on the floor?

Is the light in the bathroom gentle to your face?

Do you have a good view when you read the morning news?

Does the news describe the urban plans for the new housing area?

Do you meet your neighbours on the way to work?

Do you say hi?

Is your bike stored in a safe place during the night?

Can you bike to work?

Do you see any trees on the way?

Do they get enough water?



Is it windy between the buildings?

Do you feel safe when passing through the neighbourhood?

Do you pass buildings from different time periods on your way to work?

What do they tell about our history?

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Can the buildings age in a dignified way and can you age with them?

Do the buildings live longer than you?

Do you easily find the entrance to the conference building?

Does the door handle invite to touch?

Do you feel welcome?

How is the building's health?

If it's ill, what went wrong in its design?

Is there an echo in the space?

Are the stairs too steep to climb?

Do you have natural light in the meeting room?

Are the carbon emissions from the building industry as high as last year?

Do they tear down the building from the eighties just to build up a new one with nearly the same building technique?

Does anyone interfere?

Do you have a place to call your kids in the afternoon without disturbing anyone else at the office?



Did you have a good day?

Do you have the possibility to bike to the care home where your mother is?

Can she see the sky when lying in her bed?

Does the ceiling view calm her thoughts?

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Do the materials in the room have a pleasant smell?

Can she move with her wheelchair and prepare a cup of tea for you two?

Do you have a place for an intimate discussion?

Is the bike path lit up on your way home?

Can you build a sand castle in the courtyard with your child in the evening?

Is the working table too low when you make the dishes?

The role of architecture is to dignify human existence and make it possible for all other kinds of life to flourish as well. It's an empathic act of imagination of how life could be. Sometimes an architect needs to be a bit of an activist to make change. I think the most powerful way to have an impact is through executed acts. We need encouraging examples on how this could happen.

Successful projects need the following:

- a wish to change the current state for the better
- a trustful teamwork
- interdisciplinarity

These are aspects I try to emphasize in my work as a practicing architect and professor. ■

Partly Based On A Lecture Given At The Aalto University In Helsinki, Finland

Illustrations:

- 1 *KWEICO Shelter House in Moshi, Tanzania* Designed by Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects. Photograph by Juha Ilohen.
- 2 *KWEICO Shelter House in Moshi, Tanzania* Designed by Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects. Photograph by Juha Ilohen.
- 3 *KWEICO Shelter House in Moshi, Tanzania* Designed by Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects. Photograph by Juha Ilohen.

1



2



3





Rituals For A Fall Saturday in the South.
Gainesville, Florida. 2023.
Photographs: Avery Dunavant.



The Great Point Lighthouse, Nantucket, Massachusetts.
July 2022. Photograph: Avery Dunavant.

COLLABORATORS

Charlie Hailey

Charlie Hailey is an architect, writer, and professor. A Guggenheim Fellow and Fulbright Scholar, he is the author of six books, including *Camps: A Guide to 21st Century Space* and *Slab City: Dispatches from the Last Free Place*. His most recent book is *The Porch: Meditations on the Edge of Nature* published by University of Chicago Press in Spring 2021. Hailey teaches design/build, studio, and theory at the University of Florida, where he was recently named Teacher/Scholar of the Year.

Robert McCarter

Robert McCarter is a practicing architect, author, and, since 2007, Ruth and Norman Moore Professor of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis; he has previously taught at the University of Florida (1991-2007), where he was also the founding Director of the School of Architecture; Columbia University (1986-1991) where he was also Assistant Dean; and as visiting professor at University of Arkansas; the University of Venice, Italy; the Berlage Institute, Rotterdam, Netherlands; University of Louisville; and North Carolina State University. Since 1982 he has had his own architectural practice in New York, Florida, and St. Louis, with twenty-five realized buildings. He is the author of twenty-four books, including *Louis I. Kahn* (2nd edition, 2022); *Place Matters: The Architecture of WG Clark* (2019); *Grafton Architects* (2018); *The Architecture of MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple* (2017); *Marcel Breuer* (2016); *The Space Within* (2016); *Steven Holl* (2015); *Aldo van Eyck* (2015); *Herman Hertzberger* (2015); *Alvar Aalto* (2014); *Carlo Scarpa* (2013); *Understanding Architecture* (2012, with Juhani Pallasmaa); *Wiel Arets* (2012); and *Frank Lloyd Wright* (1997). Among his awards, McCarter was one of seventy-one International Exhibitors selected for "Freespace," the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture, and he was named one of the "Ten Best Architecture Teachers in the US" in Architect in December 2009.

Juhani Pallasmaa

Juhani Pallasmaa was a Professor of Architecture and the Dean of Architecture at Helsinki University of Technology from 1991-1998. He is a highly acclaimed architectural writer and authored *The Eyes of the Skin*, which has become a standard text in architecture education. In 1999 he received the International Union of Architects' Jean Tschumi Prize for architectural criticism. He has also served on the jury for the Pritzker Prize for Architecture, and, in 1991, he was Finland's architectural representative at the Venice Biennale.

Nichole Wiedemann

Nichole Wiedemann received a Bachelor of Design in Architecture from the University of Florida and a Master of Architecture from Princeton University. She is currently an Associate Professor of Architecture and the Director of the Professional Residency Program at University of Texas at Austin, and, from 2008-2013, she was the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs. She has also taught at the University of Florida, Rhode Island School of Design, and MIT. She is a practicing architect, an architectural writer, and a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome.

CONTRIBUTORS

Martin Gundersen is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Florida, School of Architecture. He attended the University of Florida and received a Bachelor of Arts in Education (1970), Bachelor of Design (1970) and Master of Arts in Architecture (1980).

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Elizabeth Cronin is a PhD candidate at the University of Florida School of Architecture, where she received a Bachelor of Design in Architecture, a Master of Architecture, and a Master of Science in Architectural Studies. Her research focuses on making, textiles, and feminist practices in architectural design and pedagogy. Elizabeth was the founding Executive Editor of *Vorkurs*. She is also a winner of the Diana Bitz Book Award and the ARCC King Student Medal for Excellence in Architectural and Environmental Research. She has practiced in Miami, Tampa, and Jacksonville and taught architectural design courses at the University of Florida and the University of Miami.

Alan Maskin is a principal and owner of Olson Kundig, where he leads an interdisciplinary team of architects, designers, visual artists and researchers. His team designs buildings, parks and gardens, installations, sculptures, digital art, graphic novels and film. In recent years, Maskin has been awarded first place in multiple international design competitions, including The Bob Dylan Center, ANOHA – The Children's World of The Jewish Museum Berlin, and Fairy Tales 2016, the world's largest architectural ideas competition. Maskin's current work includes the new Bob Dylan Center; a master plan and renovation of the Bay Area Discovery Museum; an art park in Sacramento; and several narrative-based projects in South Korea.

Blair Payson joined Olson Kundig in 2004 and became a principal/owner in 2022. He has worked on architectural and exhibit design projects, including the Century Project at the Space Needle, [storefront] Olson Kundig and Recompose, as well as residential and cultural projects across the Western United States and Mexico. A maker at heart, Blair revels in the details, able to distill large, complex projects into distinct culminating moments. His current and recent work spans cultural, residential, urban revitalization and workplace projects. Blair is the recipient of multiple design awards as well as a frequent speaker at industry conferences.

Bryan Samuel is an architectural designer at Olson Kundig. Since 2021, he has been entrusted with a range of unusual projects, from houses in severe wildfire hazard zones to human composting facilities. His previous work spans net-zero passive house apartments, workplaces and facilities for medical research. Bryan's experience in fields outside of architecture, from a solar energy lobbying group to an urban planning think tank, allows him to approach design challenges from unexpected angles. He is a lover of the outdoors with a passion for sustainable and passive design driven by parametric environmental analysis.

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Ignacio Wilson is a designer in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He works for ThoughtCraft Architects, a small boutique office founded by two alumni of the University of Florida undergraduate program. In addition to practice, he is an adjunct lecturer at Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston. He is an alumnus of both the BDes and MArch programs at the University of Florida School of Architecture, graduating in 2021. During his time in the Master's program, he was the proud production editor of VORKURS: Domaine. His work, no matter the medium, seeks to explore authenticity, remembrance, and the timeless power of love. When not in the studio, Mark can be found taking photos with his film cameras, out for a run along the Charles River, or making a cup of coffee.

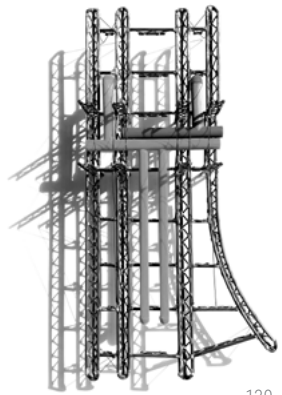
Dr. Hui Zou is a Professor of Architecture at the University of Florida. He teaches architectural history, theory and design and supervises graduate theses. His scholarship builds connections between eastern architectural history and modern critical philosophies. His recent research includes the topics of atmospheric space, poetical emotion, and the coincidence between genealogy and architecture in Qing-dynasty China.

Amie Edwards is a UF Ph.D. candidate researching African Architecture and Identity. Her topic of study is based on the meaning of cultural craft, symbols, rituals, and the connection to the case study of 19th century Asante Palace of Kumase, Ghana, according to the Akan Twi language and oral history. She has a Master of Architecture from the University of Florida in 2020 and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design from the Art Institute of Jacksonville in 2016. Amie is also a VORKURS Alumni that served as the Research Editor, and a writer for Vorkurs Vol. 4 Derive in 2020. Amie received the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship for the Akan Twi language of Ghana in 2021 and the Fulbright Hays DDRA Fellowship Award in 2022. She is interested in Architecture pedagogy, architecture history and theory, cultural space, and historical urban context.

John Maze is an Associate Professor at UF whose research and pedagogy focuses on early humanities and design integration with Place and Music Theory. He has authored four digital and design courses, two UF humanities courses – ARC1000 Architecture + Humanity and ARC1101 Places and Spaces, and was part of the steering committee for What is the Good Life. He has taught design studios at all levels and collaborated in interdisciplinary graduate seminars with the Digital Worlds Institute. Previously, Maze taught at The University of Virginia. He practiced in Los Angeles with ROTO Architects, in Phoenix with Taliesin West, and in New York with Eisenman Architects.

Mike Nesbit is a fine artist based in Los Angeles. With a background in architecture, his multidisciplinary interests greatly inform his artwork, allowing Nesbit to explore areas between art and architecture with a focus on technique, repetition, and representation. Nesbit has participated in solo and group shows throughout the United States. He received a Bachelor of Architecture from the Southern California Institute of Architecture. Before art and architecture Nesbit played four years of professional baseball with the Seattle Mariners. Nesbit is a founder of the Non-Profit/Artist-Run Space, Maple St. Construct, located in Omaha, Nebraska. Maple St. Construct, is a gallery/residency program that looks to bridge the gap between Los Angeles and The Midwest by providing artists in Los Angeles and The Midwest the resources to create work outside of their typical environments.

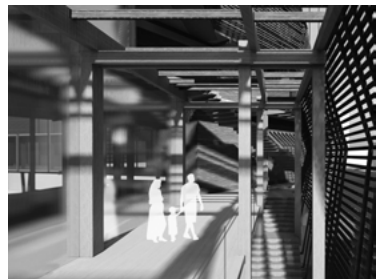
Jenni Reuter is Associate Professor in Architectural Principles and Theory at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland. She also works as a practicing architect, both in her own office and together with architects Saija Hollmén and Helena Sandman. The group started their collaboration in 1995 with the Women's Centre project in Rufisque, Senegal. They work in Finland as well as with several underprivileged communities around the world. At the moment they are designing dormitories for girls in the Iringa region in Southern Tanzania. In 2007 they founded the NGO Ukumbi, the mission of which is to offer architectural services to communities in need. Their works have been honoured with both national and international awards and have been published and exhibited widely, among others at the Venice Art biennale and the Venice Architecture biennale several times. Jenni Reuter has since 2001 been lecturing and teaching in universities and institutions around the world. She has several positions of trust as well as jury commitments.



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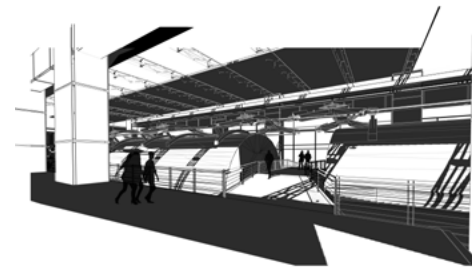
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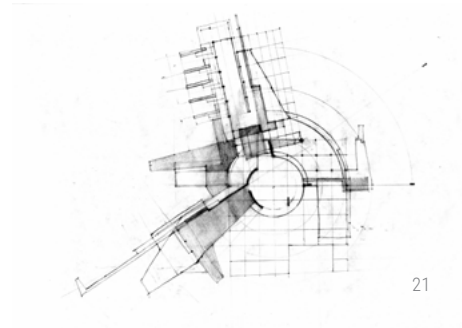
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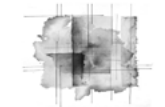
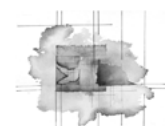
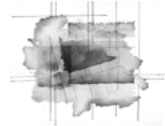
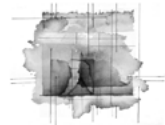
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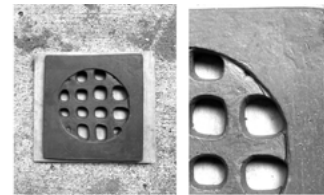
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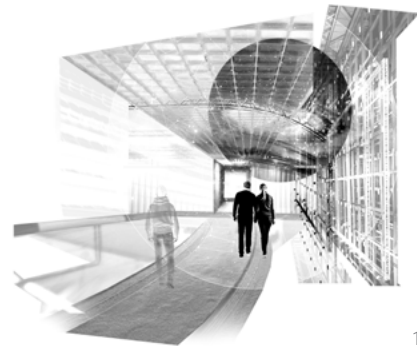
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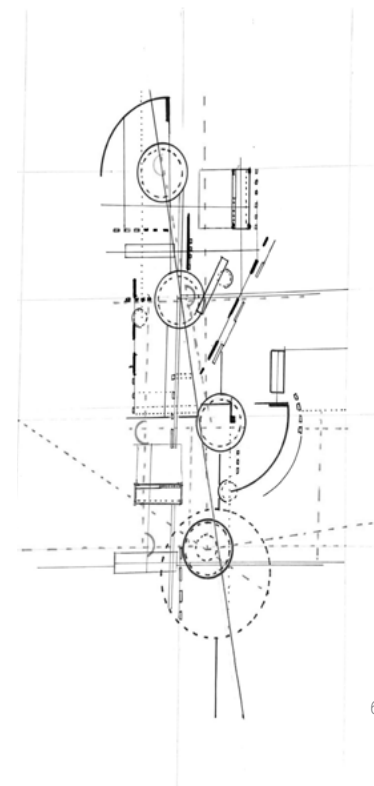
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