Memory is born a living entity into a spatial and temporal context. As that context changes, it remains imprinted in the mind and over time fades away. Memory lives and dies, and in the process of dying can give us further meaning: like the weathering of materials, which immediately reveals the history of an object.

How do we construct memory?

One way to answer this question is to look at how we construct our built world and our lives within it - to look at the contexts within which memories of place are formed today. We live in a global market economy, which is based on an exchange of *commodities*. Thus, for something to have a place in this system, it must be stripped of everything except its exchange value - it must be transformed into a product. As the object becomes a means for profit alone, its intrinsic use-value and connection to life is forgotten and we rely on marketing to 'remind' us of its purpose. The commodity transforms everything into neatly packaged, consumable bits: food, shelter, and culture; objects, space, and time; we even speak of ourselves as labour capital. The commodity 'kills' the object, moving it from a natural context to an artificial construction: transforming the unit and fragmenting the whole.

This process of commodification has transformed our physical world. The architect, farmer, or any other person providing basic needs like food and shelter, sees how the reductive logic behind the commodity has led to an unsustainable, over-simplified world. One manifestation is *monoculture*, be it of crops, suburbs or culture, in which a vast uniformity requires incredible energy and product inputs to sustain it. Another is the inversion of the master-servant relationship between structure and *infrastructure*. Infrastructure, 'the mover of commodities,' is now king, and it is the infrastructure - not the structures - that now organizes our cities and our experiences of them. Decisions on where to build, how to build, even what to built are no longer dependent on site, but on infrastructure. All our needs are brought to us by a network of roads, tracks, pipes, wires, and electromagnetic waves. The extent of our infrastructure defines the limit of our built environment, which is ever expanding. All locations becoming *equally accessible* has made it possible to separate and disperse spaces of interconnected activities across a large area.

Has the computer chip become our cosmological symbol? Electronic chips require out of physical necessity the rigid surface of the circuit board on which to locate, but in themselves and in their functioning have nothing to do with the board. They respond to a flow of impulses that originate elsewhere within a closed system. So too our buildings find themselves disassociated from the ground and from their immediate physical environment. Buildings have become *containers*, isolated from their surroundings - containers to house commodities.

By a process of *distancing*, whole building types and their associated activities are removed from our daily experience. Places of agriculture, manufacturing, and production - industries on which society depends - are absent. They have moved to countries where cheap labour can be exploited or to industrial areas; in either case, they have become invisible. We have lost our connection to the source of things, and the sources of life. Our spatial memory of society must be satisfied by a reduced palette of experiences, converging on distribution, display, and consumption.

Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as objects.

-Martin Heidegger,
The Question Concerning Technology.

Editorial   *Richard Klopp*

Bead: EVERETT

Ceci est architecture, autant que mémoire, et clin d'oeil à une vieille maison. Le titre, Bead: Everett, fait référence aux perles sur une ficelle, où cette dernière est la vie et les perles, les endroits où nous avons vécu. Bead: Everett est un extrait d'une oeuvre de plus grande envergure au lequel l'auteur travaille présentement.

An ebony telephone sits on a low oak table seemingly designed to bear the heavy organically formed Bakelite device. Polished from countless hands gripped in conversation, it occupies a central place within the house. A tiny alcove, three walls are doors, the fourth,

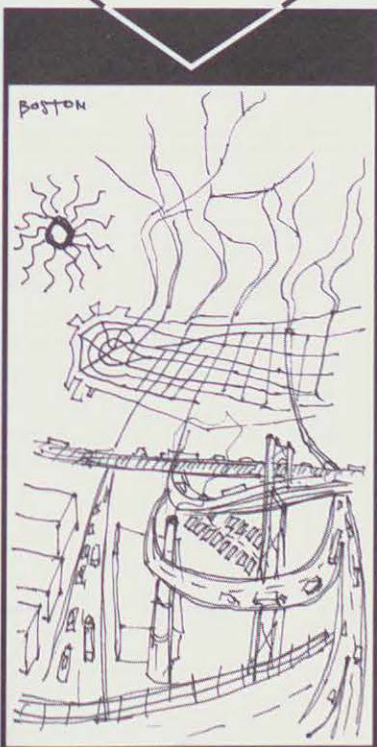Commodities

Monoculture

Infrastructure

Equal access

Distancing

Dependencies

Containers

Fragmentation

BOSTON

This is 'the secret live of buildings:' the hidden dependencies and addictions, which isolate and allow buildings to avoid confronting the reality of their basic physical existence. Dependencies are desirable in a market economy, because they ensure a steady stream of commodities to purchasing consumers. The infrastructure and vehicles supporting these dependencies have created a fragmented landscape where infrastructure exceeds structure, where distance and time collapse. This *fragmentation* is everywhere. The fragmentation of history in museums, the fragmentation of knowledge at universities, the fragmentation of culture on television, the fragmentation of information on the Internet, the fragmentation of loved ones by telephone, the fragmentation of our cities by personal transportation - fragmentation has become our aesthetic and our world view. And what holds these fragments together: webs, grids, networks, infrastructure - memory?

The contemporary context for memory today is one of separated, seemingly autonomous, fragments. Like the plan of a disassembled model, where the pieces are scattered over the landscape of the page and held together by an assembly diagram; the whole is implied, but not visible. We can no longer understand our built environment by mere observation of the order of things. We can no longer think in terms of greater wholes beyond the individual property or service connection. Each of us draw upon these fragments to construct our own concept of the whole and build our own models from a selection of fragments, because there are too many to use them all. We try to construct memory, because memory has been separated from a unifying context, like parts separated from the whole. This is the landscape of pluralism, where everything means the same, or nothing - or does it?

The commodity-driven, information-based world in which we live is a construction where image, accessibility, and marketability attempt to override aspects of shelter, community, and place. But information does not feed, clothe, or shelter us - it has merely become a way to commodify these things and a way for a large segment of our society to earn its livelihood. Our livelihood will always be primarily a function of a basic physical nature first. The architect struggling to give meaning to a place where memory may reside, must look to the primary sources of our existence to overcome the pervasive commodity, which abstracts, isolates, and kills meaning.

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As waves of byte sized memories relentlessly pound the silicon beaches, we surf with nets and find them disparagingly empty.

For those who see the World-Wide-Web as simulating the neural networks of our mind and becoming a storehouse for our collective memory - memory that is instantaneously accessed and then quickly forgotten, but held in suspension for infinite replays - to this, Thamus would reply as he did to Theuth, who claimed to have discovered a receipt for memory and wisdom:

Theuth, my paragon of inventors... you who are the father of writing have out of fondness for your off-spring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of by internal resources. What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality: they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. And because they are filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom, they will be a burden to society.

-Plato, *Phaedrus and letters VII and VIII.*